# Potential rise in UK university enrolments linked to Trump's return to office



A recent report from the British Council highlights a potential shift in international student enrolments, suggesting that the return of Donald Trump to office could result in increased interest in UK universities. The report indicates that a notable decline in international student numbers in the United States could lead to more students considering the UK as their study destination.

During Trump’s presidency from 2017 to 2021, the US faced a consistent annual drop in international enrolments, with a significant reduction of 50,000 international students reported for the 2019-2020 academic year compared to earlier figures. This decline was particularly pronounced among students from regions including the Middle East and North Africa, North America and Central America, and Europe, although the US did see an uptick in international students from East Asia.

In contrast, UK universities have observed a 4.7% increase in applications for international undergraduate courses for the 2025 intake. This marks a reversal of the trend seen in the first three quarters of the previous year, indicating a burgeoning interest among prospective overseas students. A contributing factor to this increase is that approximately 60% of UK universities have expanded their degree programme offerings over the last three years, enhancing the appeal of UK education for international applicants.

The report also notes that UK institutions are diversifying by providing more degree programmes with January start dates, a format that tends to attract international students. Maddalaine Ansell, the director of education at the British Council, emphasised the need for UK universities to avoid complacency in the competitive landscape for international students. Speaking to The Guardian, she stated, “While our English-speaking competitors might be experiencing challenges, we must not grow complacent.”

Ansell further elaborated on the necessity for universities to enhance their recruitment strategies, highlighting the importance of reaching out to a wider range of smaller markets. The report suggests that there may be a need for strategic investments in transnational education and initiatives to ensure that the UK continues to attract highly qualified international students globally.

As the dynamics of international student recruitment evolve, the report indicates that UK universities may need to reconsider their traditional markets. With demand from countries like India showing signs of slowing and improvements in higher education quality observed in East Asia, UK institutions are encouraged to adapt their offerings, particularly by considering the introduction of more cost-effective options to attract prospective students.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.britishcouncil.us/sites/default/files/uk-us_higher_education_partnerships_executive_summary_0.pdf> - This report highlights the importance of UK-US higher education partnerships and the need for strategic engagement to maintain the UK's position in attracting international students. It emphasizes the competitive landscape and the need for UK universities to adapt their strategies.
2. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/kings-academics-implications-of-trumps-victory> - This article discusses the implications of Trump's presidency on various policy areas, including potential impacts on international relations and economies, which could influence international student decisions.
3. <https://opportunities-insight.britishcouncil.org/download/data/42010/19509> - This document provides insights into the US education system and its global standing, which can influence international student choices. It also touches on economic policies under Trump that might affect student mobility.
4. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings> - This ranking highlights the global reputation of UK and US universities, which is crucial for attracting international students. The UK's increase in international applications could be linked to its strong educational offerings.
5. <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors> - The Open Doors report provides data on international student trends in the US, including declines during Trump's presidency. This decline could lead more students to consider the UK as an alternative.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/education> - The Guardian often reports on trends in higher education, including strategies for attracting international students. Quotes from education leaders like Maddalaine Ansell emphasize the need for UK universities to adapt their recruitment strategies.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/feb/21/trumps-re-election-to-boost-uk-universities-as-fewer-students-choose-us> - Please view link - unable to able to access data