Transnational education (TNE) data report

Background

This document is an attempt by Jisc and Internet2 to collect, collate and analyse data related to Transnational Education (TNE) activities under Workstream One of the TNE Special Interest Group (TNE-SIG) under the guidance of GÉANT.

TNE “involves programmes and providers moving across national borders to deliver higher education programmes and credentials to students in their home or neighbouring country instead of students moving to the country of the foreign higher education institution/provider for their full academic programme.”¹ It should be considered as distinct from international student recruitment, through which the student will cross national borders to undertake study at an overseas institution.

Our intention in providing this document is to demonstrate, to the best of our abilities and to the extent of existing data, the “Top 10” countries engaged in TNE as host or sending countries. To that end, we have written short profiles of the TNE characteristics of each country from the perspective of relevance to NRENs; these profiles are based on the data presented in the attached appendices. In some cases we have referred to a country’s international student numbers as a useful indicator of interest and demand for their higher education programmes.

The data is subject to constraints around the availability, consistency, and accuracy of TNE data, well-documented and addressed by the British Council and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in their joint attempt at creating a new data classification framework². The diversity in the profiles often mirrors the challenges in accessing, collecting and analysing TNE data; the authors’ efforts were hampered in part by the paucity of data available for most countries profiled, whether that is due to lack of a central authority collecting the information, a difference in understanding of what TNE programmes comprise, or data being available only in a foreign language or otherwise inaccessible to us. We hope that the efforts of the TNE-SIG and collaboration with other RENs across the world will allow us to jointly fill in the missing blanks.

In terms of data reliability and accuracy, we can speak with confidence to information collected on International Branch Campuses (IBCs) - the most prevalent form of TNE delivery and the one of most interest to NRENs in their role of supporting educational institutions - as well as, in most countries, the number of students enrolled in


² “Transnational Education – A Classification Framework and data collection guidelines for International Programme and Provider Mobility (IPPM)”
these branch campuses. The remaining data should be treated as indicative of certain trends, approximative, and constantly changing.

Sources are provided and referred to for further consultation as needed. We do not aim to achieve a precise ranking of the countries; however, the below information should be an accurate reflection of the countries most involved in these types of activities (as well as those projected to become players on the scene in the next few years). As such, it is our hope that our analysis will be of interest and use to NRENs which may be called upon in the future to support the TNE activities of the education institutions they serve.
Top 10 Host Countries

1. China
2. United Arab Emirates (incl. Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Ras al-Khaimah)
3. Malaysia
4. Singapore
5. Qatar
6. South Korea
7. Hong Kong
8. Mauritius
9. Vietnam
10. Emergent destinations for TNE

Country profiles

1. China: China currently hosts a total of 32 International Branch Campuses, the largest of any host country. It has 550,000 students studying for a TNE programme delivered by an overseas provider. There is currently a total of 1,979 TNE programmes in China with 577 out of 2500 total Chinese universities involved in TNE through dual or joint programmes. “China has now edged out the UAE as the top host country, reflecting both a slight decline in IBCs in the Emirates (from 32 campuses at the end of 2010 to 31 by end of 2015) as well as a dramatic increase in IBC operations within China (from 13 in 2010 to 32 today).” Growth is expected to continue in China, with five new campuses currently in development.

NREN: CERNET (serving higher education institutions and universities), CSTNET (serving the Chinese Academy of Sciences and research institutes)

2. United Arab Emirates: With a total of 31 branch campuses in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Ras al-Khaimah, the UAE remains a top destination for foreign institutions, only surpassed in the past few years by China (data from 2014 still showed UAE as “hosting the largest number of IBCs of any country in the world”). Three new campuses are currently in development. The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) attributes the softening global share of the UAE to “market saturation, changing strategies of local governments, and concern over instability in other parts of the region.”

NREN: Ankabut

3. **Malaysia** hosts 10 branch campuses, with nearly half of those being campuses of UK institutions, followed closely by Australian ones. The collaborations with the UK and Australia are particularly strong, because of “historical ties in the case of the U.K., and strong trade relations and geographic proximity in the case of Australia.” Malaysia is quickly turning into an international education hub, due in large part to government policies supporting TNE, which were modified in the late 1990’s to allow local private institutions to award degrees offered through collaborative or twinning arrangements with foreign universities. “This has resulted in an increasing number of local students with foreign degrees earned either entirely at home or partly at home and partly overseas. Malaysia is the largest market for U.K. TNE provision. Despite the fact that the U.S. is the leading country for international branch campuses, it has barely any presence in the Malaysian market – fewer than 10 U.S. higher education institutions have a transnational degree program in Malaysia.” In 2017, the British Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) singled out Malaysia as one of three countries for an in-depth, in-country review (alongside the Republic of Ireland and Hong Kong), “taking into account the strategic importance for UK TNE.” Although recently the Malaysian minister for higher education called for a moratorium on building new campuses in Malaysia, this is likely only a temporary measure and will also not impact the development of joint or dual degree programmes.

NREN: **MYREN**

4. **Singapore** currently hosts 11 branch campuses and also is the location for many other TNE collaborations (including dual and joint degree programmes with foreign universities). Singapore has hitherto been a hospitable environment for TNE initiatives, although relatively recent measures have been introduced “to tighten up on the quality, financial viability and information provided by private higher education institutions in Singapore, including foreign branch campuses that offer external degrees from foreign institutions.” These measures include requiring branch campuses to participate in a graduate employment survey, but do not seem to have dampened enthusiasm for continued collaboration with Singapore.

NREN: **SingAREN**

5. **Qatar**: Qatar hosts 12 Branch Campuses, the majority of which are from North American sending countries (six from US, two from Canada). There are 6,000 – 6,500 students enrolled across all branch campuses, which is made of up 40% Qatari students; 60% Non-Qatari students. The drive to open new branch universities in Qatar has slowed significantly in the past few years, with no new branch campuses in development.

NREN: **Qatar Foundation**

6. **South Korea** hosts five branch campuses, with two from the US and one each from a handful of different countries. The majority of these are housed together at the **Seoul Incheon Global Campus (IGC)**, where “national and local governments have invested about one trillion won ($918 million), aiming to host 10 prestigious

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5 https://wenr.wes.org/2014/12/malaysia-shifting-mobility-with-branch-campuses
6 https://wenr.wes.org/2014/12/malaysia-shifting-mobility-with-branch-campuses
7 http://www.qaa.ac.uk/newsroom/in-country-reviews-of-uk-transnational-education-(tne)-provision-in-ireland-hong-kong-and-malaysia#.WpWoJS0ZPB1
universities there. They envision the IGC, located in the Incheon Free Economic Zone, as a regional educational hub where about 10,000 students study at modern, state-of-the-art facilities.10

NRENs: KREONET/KISTI, NIA

7. **Hong Kong** hosts five IBCs, with the majority (three) being US institutions. British and Australian higher education institutions are the key players, as seventy-two percent of registered offshore programmes are from the United Kingdom and fourteen percent from Australia. Most offshore programmes are in the business field and the majority is provided at bachelor’s degree level11. Hong Kong’s importance for the UK TNE scene is highlighted by it being one of three countries selected for the next three years of in-country reviews under the newly developed TNE Review method by the QAA (UK)12. Apart from programme mobility, the Hong Kong Government has also encouraged institutional mobility. The former Deputy Secretary for Education Michelle Li has said that one role of transnational education was to attract non-local students to build Hong Kong into a regional education hub13. NREN: JUCC

8. **Mauritius** hosts three IBCs, two of which are from UK-based institutions (Aberystwyth University’s Mauritius campus is set to close this year, just two years after it opened, due partly to low numbers of enrolling students, financial losses, and lack of support from the home campus university council14). The island’s strategic location in the Indian Ocean and stable government makes Mauritius an attractive destination for Asian, Africa and European students. Mauritius has ambitions to become a regional knowledge hub, attracting students from both Asia and Africa, further bolstered by the official language being English15. It remains to be seen how successful these ventures are over the long term.

NREN: None in existence

9. **Vietnam**: “TNE in Vietnam is growing, even though very few reputable foreign institutions have established actual branch campuses in the country – two so far16”. TNE is quite new for Vietnam with a majority of universities having one or two programmes17. The government is trying to expand English-language education in Vietnam and promote transnational cooperation and exchange with countries like Australia, France, the U.S., Japan, and Germany18. Most of TNE foreign partners are English-speaking countries19. In line with other countries in the region, UK, USA, and Australia are among the largest countries-providers in Vietnam. At the programme level, the number of government-approved TNE programmes has increased significantly in recent years, growing by **45 percent** between 2010 and 2011 alone, with universities from countries like France, the UK,

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and Australia being the main partners in twinning agreements and transnational degree programmes (France is the largest provider in terms of the number of provided programmes). "TNE in Vietnam continues to face some challenges, including quality problems, high taxation, lengthy approval processes and a difficult regulatory environment in which the Communist party seeks to maintain control over foreign institutions, while simultaneously trying to attract more foreign providers to Vietnam". In 2017, in response to concerns about the quality of programmes offered by private institutions, the government further tightened restrictions and required foreign institutions to front a minimum investment of USD $45 million. The main focus of TNE programmes is business.

NREN: VinaREN under the National Agency for Science and Technology Information (NASATI)

10. "Emergent TNE destinations" - Botswana, Egypt, India, Japan, Oman, Sri Lanka

For the tenth position, there did not seem to be a clear leader. A number of countries are developing their receptivity towards TNE programmes and, depending on regulation and other factors, may soon become even more attractive host countries. Botswana and Egypt each have one IBC and, in the case of Botswana, have made significant efforts to attract further foreign investment by creating the Botswana Education Hub. Another sign of this dedication is Botswana’s effort to track TNE data.

Since fall 2017, Egypt has made a concerted effort to grow the number of their branch campuses. An MOU signed in January 2018 with the UK highlights the importance of the partnership to the British, and a proposed new law on international branch campuses opens the door to more physical campuses supplementing the already significant number of collaborations (Egypt is the top host country in the MENA region for UK transnational education and the fifth in the world, with nearly 20,000 students studying for UK degrees through joint programmes in 2015-16).

Although they do not host foreign branch campuses (primarily due to regulation of the higher education sector), India and Japan are very active in international educational collaborations.

For historical reasons, India has very close relationships with the English-speaking countries and thus the majority of its TNE programmes are collaborations with the UK and the US. Most of these collaborations are in the form of joint or dual degree programmes, as the regulatory and legal framework until now has not been

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23 Perspectives in Transnational Higher Education, edited by Emmanuel Jean Francois, Mejai B. M. Avoseh, Wendy Griswold, p.45. Accessed online at: https://books.google.com/books?id=ihPNCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA45&lpg=PA45&dq=Botswana+TNE&source=bl&ots=GyTnVdrOUd&sig=CysDsYy2Q9EFFBVFpPeDonSbEOE&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjS2fu17zZAhVnT9gKHcCn4Q6AEISDAE#v=onepage&q=Botswana%20TNE&f=false
particularly friendly to foreign branch campuses. A 2015 British Council report details the current UK-India landscape and provides encouragement for future initiatives. India is also the second largest educational partner of the US when it comes to the amount of joint programmes.

**Japan** – Foreign institutions’ branch campuses on Japanese soil are not recognized as higher education institutions in Japan unless authorized by the minister as universities or colleges under Japanese law. However, recent trends suggest there may be more interest in including IBCs in the existing higher education framework, and Japan has a large number of collaborations particularly with the US and the UK in terms of joint and dual-degree programmes.

**Oman** has a supportive regulatory framework which has enabled TNE to thrive. Royal Decree 67/2000 regulates privates higher education institutions and encourages them to forge academic affiliations with reputable overseas HEIs. Widening access to higher education is a key driver for the development of TNE in Oman; roughly 80% of students studying at private universities are government-funded. The latest data on student enrolments at private universities, published by the Omani Ministry of Higher Education, reports 61,957 students in 2013-14. UK has a strong TNE presence in the country with approximately 20,000 students studying for a UK qualification in Oman.

“**Sri Lanka** has the potential to build a strong TNE sector due to a keen demand for education and relatively high education attainment levels. The government sees TNE as an opportunity to increase the physical capacity of higher education institutions and address the lack of open enrolment spots within the highly competitive and oversubscribed public university system. As such, Sri Lanka aims to become a leading higher education hub in South Asia by 2020, with education as one of its six major exports. Currently, most TNE takes the form of franchise arrangements with local institutions.”

NRENs:

- **Botswana:** in development
- **India:** NKN (National Knowledge Network)
- **Egypt:** EUN – (Egyptian Universities Network) / ENSTINET – (Egyptian National Science and Technology Network)
- **Japan:** SINET (Science Information Network)
- **Oman:** OMREN (Oman Research and Education Network)
- **Sri Lanka:** LEARN (Lanka Education and Research Network) - with Gigabit connectivity to NKN.

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Top 10 Sending Countries

1. United Kingdom
2. United States
3. Australia
4. France
5. Germany
6. Netherlands
7. Russia
8. China
9. Canada
10. India

Country profiles

1. United Kingdom: In 2015-16, around 700,000 students worldwide were studying offshore towards a UK higher education programme, and over 80 per cent of all UK degree-awarding bodies are engaged in some form in TNE. Universities, sector agencies and the UK government are prioritizing TNE as a growing area of activity. UK HE TNE student numbers grew by 37% from 2012-13 to 2015-16. Distance learning programmes offered by Oxford Brookes University, Open University and University of London International Programmes account for 55% of total number of UK TNE students. Excluding these programmes, the remaining number of UK students is around 315,000, which is predominantly delivered through dual and joint programmes or other collaborative provision. 8% of UK TNE students are studying at an international branch campus. The UK’s top host countries in order are Malaysia, Singapore, China, Hong Kong and Egypt. UK universities have 40 IBCs in 18 different countries.

The UK benefits from having a centralised data register for TNE activity, the Aggregate Offshore Record (AOR), collected by the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA). The AOR is a report completed by UK university administrators to capture the numbers of offshore learners studying on courses, programmes and degrees, associated with the UK university in some way. The AOR classifies a continuum of UK university course enrolment using five reporting codes (1 to 5), based on the notion of students being ‘registered’ at either the ‘reporting provider’, meaning the UK university (codes 1 -3), or at the ‘overseas partner organisation’ (code 4) or not required to be registered at all (Code 5). It can be viewed as mapping a level of affiliation to the reporting UK

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university for students in receipt of awards, running from strong (registered at an IBCs) to weak (validated through overseas partner organisation).

NREN: Jisc

2. The United States has been, alongside the UK, a leading provider of TNE abroad, particularly in China, UAE, Qatar, Canada, France (for IBCs) and in China, India, France, South Korea, Germany, and Japan (for other types of TNE programmes). Although the drive toward establishing physical presence such as IBCs abroad has slowed among US institutions, it is likely that universities will strengthen their presence abroad in other ways, particularly given that the number of foreign students enrolled in US universities on the mainland is starting to decrease (data indicates a "nearly three percent drop in first-time undergraduate numbers"33). "A new report highlights that the world's leading study destinations – the US and UK – will continue to see their market share of internationally mobile students decline through 2025.34"

The US does not have any one agency responsible for collecting TNE data; the data presented in this report comes primarily from work done by the C-BERT team (assessing the number of US branch campuses abroad) and Internet2 staff's research on member universities' programmes overseas.

NREN: Internet2

3. Australia is one of the pioneers of TNE and a leading sending country of higher education programmes and vocational education and training programmes. Its main TNE modes of delivery are international branch campuses (known as offshore campuses), twinning arrangements and distance learning programmes. Responsibility for curricular development and quality assurance rests primarily with the Australian universities. Australia’s main TNE partner countries are Singapore, China, Malaysia, Vietnam and Hong Kong SAR, and there were approximately 110,000 students enrolled in Australian TNE programmes in 2015. It should be noted that the data collected by the Australian government only includes TNE activity through branch campus and online/distance learning provision. As such the reported numbers are significantly lower than the UK.

Australian universities do undertake other forms such as dual and joint programmes, however, the data are not systematically collected.

NREN: AARNet

4. France has 27 IBCs abroad, with the most in Morocco, Singapore, UAE, UK, China, Spain, Germany and Tunisia. The host countries for the IBCs are not surprising given France’s historical ties to many countries on this list. A 2016 report on TNE delivered by a French government agency called for a “new national strategy to expand its market share of higher education programming abroad.” “French institutions currently deliver just over 600 programmes abroad [which] enrol an estimated 37,000 students, including nearly 6,000 in distance learning. Roughly 40% of France’s transnational education (TNE) enrolment is in Asia, another 30% in Africa, and 20% in the Middle East. And nearly half of the students enrolled in French TNE programmes are found in five countries: China, Lebanon, Morocco, Vietnam, and India35.” One of the facts hampering expansion of French TNE programmes is that currently the majority are at Master’s level and delivered in French. The report

33 http://monitor.icef.com/2017/11/record-high-foreign-enrolment-us-commencements-decline-first-time-12-years/  
34 http://monitor.icef.com/2016/03/us-and-uk-losing-market-share-to-regional-destinations/  
suggested that a cohesive, nation-wide strategy, rather than individual schools’ efforts at internationalisation, would help increase France’s market share in TNE.

NREN: RENATER

5. Germany has four IBCs, one each in China, Egypt, Oman and South Korea. The two largest projects in 2014 were the German University Cairo and the German Jordanian University, with 10,491 and 3,717 students enrolled.

TNE data collected is mainly branch campus data, as the agency collecting the data, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), funds the branch campuses. So, for example, there is no data collection (as of now) on double degrees or other kinds of partnerships. However, DAAD in partnership with the British Council has been advocating for a unified system of collecting TNE data, co-authoring the report mentioned in the introduction to this analysis, and so it seems likely that a more cohesive dataset on German TNE activities will be available in the future.

NREN: DFN-Verein

6. Netherlands: The Netherlands has a total of eight IBCs, one each in the following countries: South Africa, China, Kuwait, Nigeria, Qatar, Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea. Until 2017, none of the Dutch institutions was able to offer a full degree programme overseas due to a requirement that students spend at least a quarter of their programme in the Netherlands (and joint or double degree students had to pay tuition fees to both the Dutch university and the foreign partner institutions). However, a new bill proposed in 2017 aimed to relax these requirements substantially. "More than 240 Dutch institutions currently offer degrees overseas […] In stark contrast, there is only one publicly funded Dutch university with campuses overseas – Stenden University of Applied Sciences, which opened four locations between 2000 and 2009. Its campuses in South Africa, Qatar, Thailand and Indonesia now enroll some 600 students, plus an additional 500 ‘intercampus’ mobile students.36"

"Universities won’t be allowed to spend any public money on establishing a branch campus, and only degrees that are also taught within the Netherlands will be permitted in TNE offerings37" thus necessitating public-private partnerships. Interestingly enough, earlier this year the University of Groningen decided to withdraw from an IBC planned in Yantai, China, thus sending mixed signals as to the potential growth of TNE activities from the Netherlands, even in light of the new bill38.

NREN: SURFnet

7. Russia has a total of 21 campuses abroad, all located in host countries linked by previous historical ties to Russia (six in Armenia, four in Kazakhstan, three in Uzbekistan, two in Belarus, two in Kyrgyzstan, one each in Azerbaijan, Latvia, Tajikistan, Ukraine). The only campuses outside of Central Asia and Eastern Europe are two in the UAE. We are unable to ascertain the full extent of TNE data available due to linguistic barriers.

NREN: RIPN

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8. China has a total of six IBCs, with one each in Italy, Japan, Laos, Malaysia\textsuperscript{39}, Singapore, and Thailand. As can be seen, the IBCs are heavily concentrated in Asia with only one in Europe, although there are plans to open a campus on the US West Coast and Peking University is planning to open a branch of its HSBC Business School in Oxford\textsuperscript{40}.

9. Canada has established six branch campuses abroad, with two in Qatar, one in China, one in China Hong Kong SAR, one in Japan and one in Saudi Arabia. The "majority of Canadian postsecondary programmes offered abroad […] are delivered through partner universities. Many of the partnerships are twinning programmes that let students study partly in Canada and lead to a double or joint degree. This type of arrangement allows Canadian institutions to use existing infrastructure and to spread the financial risk, said the CBIE report. Much less common are satellite campuses of Canadian universities.\textsuperscript{41}"

NREN: CANARIE

10. India: Like China, India is one of the few countries listed here to be both on the list of top 10 sending and receiving countries for TNE. India's seven IBCs are spread across three countries, with the majority (five) in the UAE, one in neighbouring Nepal, and one in Mauritius with one under development in Sri Lanka. These are predominantly founded by private Indian universities, such as Amity University and Manipal University.

NREN: NKN

\textsuperscript{39} https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/07/going-global-china-exports-soft-power-with-first-large-scale-university-in-malaysia

\textsuperscript{40} https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/apr/06/chinese-university-to-open-in-oxford-despite-ideological-crackdown-at-home

\textsuperscript{41} https://www.universityaffairs.ca/news/news-article/universities-open-campuses-in-foreign-countries-with-mixed-results/