UHI | PERTH

International Strategy 2026-2031







Introduction

The International and Partnerships Strategy for UHI Perth is aligned with the UHI Perth Strategy and contributes to and supports the vision for UHI Perth.

It sets out UHI Perth's ambition to significantly impact the growth of international recruitment and extend our international activity, both within the UHI Perth campus in Perth and overseas with our international partners.



We will achieve this through:

Strategic Objective	Priority Weighting	Rationale
Grow international student numbers	20%	Primary driver of internationalisation and diversification of income
Expand Transnational Education partnerships	30%	Long-term sustainable international growth
Expand online international provision	20%	Scalable global reach
Enhance international student experience	15%	Student success, retention and reputation
Support international partnership development across UHI	5%	Institutional collaboration and sector impact
Increase student and staff mobility	5%	Internationalisation of curriculum and graduate outcomes
Promote international research, knowledge exchange and innovation	5%	Reputation, research impact and external funding

The weighting reflects the relative strategic contribution of each objective to institutional growth, financial sustainability, international reputation and student experience over the lifetime of this strategy. The seven weights total 100% and will guide the prioritisation of leadership attention, delivery planning and performance reporting. They do not represent a fixed allocation of budget or staff time. Progress against each objective will be monitored annually through institutional performance reporting, with operational activity and resourcing adjusted through the annual planning and budgeting process.



The International and Partnership Strategy links to UHI Perth Strategic Plan

Our overall goal is to embed international collaboration and meaningful global engagement into everything that we do across our core activities in Perth and around the world.

We are dedicated to UHI Perth's values of being Student Centred, Innovative, Ambitious, Respectful, Inclusive and Collaborative.

Our current partnerships and programmes reflect our values, with our ongoing international activities, including teaching and learning, actively contributing to creating good global citizens able to engage across cultures and borders.

With the UHI Perth values as a baseline, it is through deepening our partnerships and networks, developing our TNE and focusing our international activities around our curriculum strengths that we can address global challenges, raise our international reputation, generate additional commercial income and strengthen our existing student and staff mobility opportunities and develop new ones in line with our academic priorities.

In developing new international partnerships, our focus is on strategic partnerships that are fit-for-purpose, mutually beneficially, reciprocal, clearly conveyed and transparent in their alignment to wider UHI Perth strategic and academic priorities. At present, UHI Perth has more than 20 active partnerships worldwide across a characteristically diverse range of well-respected institutions, ranging from small vocational training colleges to larger multi-campus research universities. Our overall aim is to collaborate more meaningfully as we build alliances globally across universities, industry, politics and society, particularly with communities that are in need of high-quality higher education.

The UHI Perth International and Partnerships Strategy provides a coherent road map for attaining our international goals. UHI Perth will review, strengthen and expand our international partnerships across TNE and exchange, focusing on quality and value over quantity.



Strategic Performance Measures

The indicators below describe the direction of travel for UHI Perth's international activity over the lifetime of this strategy.

They cover growth in student numbers across on-campus, transnational and online delivery, the breadth of our partnership portfolio, our international footprint and the growth of international income. Detailed annual targets are set through the institutional planning and budgeting process, with progress monitored annually through institutional performance reporting.

Performance will be measured against the following strategic indicators.

Measure	Baseline/current position	2030/31 target
Growth in international student numbers (on-campus, TNE and online)	2026/27 baseline across on-campus, TNE and online provision	Sustained year-on-year growth in international student numbers across all delivery modes
Active international institutional partnerships	20+	30+
Active TNE partnerships	Established TNE partner institutions in Asia and Europe	Extend active TNE provision to new partner institutions in priority markets
Countries with active international provision	China, Nepal, Iceland and Vietnam	Extend active provision to include Sri Lanka, the UAE, India and European countries, subject to approval and viability.
Total international income	Baseline established in 2026/27	Sustained growth in international income from diversified sources

Annual operational and financial targets will be agreed through the institutional planning and budgeting process and reviewed at least annually to reflect actual performance, delivery costs, contribution, market conditions, Government policy, approval dependencies and University priorities.

New opportunities progress through UHI Perth's academic, quality and financial approval processes before launch, so that every partnership meets our standards for quality, value and student experience. Where performance varies materially from plan, delivery priorities will be reviewed and adjusted.

SWOT Analysis: Justifying a Partnership-Based Approach

Considering the current trends and challenges facing the UK higher education sector, particularly in Scotland, adopting a partnership-based approach rather than focusing solely on direct international student recruitment is a strategic decision.

SWOT Analysis for UHI Perth

Strengths

UHI Perth benefits from competitive tuition fees compared to other UK institutions, small class sizes ensuring personalised attention and a high-quality learning experience, world-leading research centres in specialised fields, strong academic programmes and high-quality courses, and attractive natural landscapes that enhance the student experience.

Weaknesses

Despite these strengths, UHI has not yet achieved a position in major global ranking tables, and many courses are delivered in a networked format rather than face-to-face. The geographic locations are primarily in small towns, which may deter some international students, and accommodation options for international students remain limited.

Opportunities

There are significant opportunities to expand Transnational Education partnerships to reach students who prefer to study in their home countries, leverage digital education to provide flexible learning options to international students, develop strategic alliances with institutions in emerging markets to increase global reach, and offer joint research initiatives and academic exchanges to build institutional reputation.

Threats

Threats include a national decline in direct international student recruitment due to evolving immigration policies and economic factors, increasing competition from institutions with stronger global brand recognition, economic uncertainties and shifting geopolitical landscapes affecting student mobility, and risks related to the UK Student Visa Route, where students may be rejected or face delays in obtaining visas. Furthermore, the slow responsiveness of current approval structures risks missing time-sensitive opportunities in competitive markets, potentially undermining UHI Perth's ability to secure new partnerships and maintain momentum in international expansion.

Strategic implications and response

SWOT area	What the position means for UHI Perth	Strategic response retained in this strategy
Strengths	Competitive fees, personalised learning, specialist academic and research strengths, and an established international partnership base create credible points of differentiation.	Concentrate international activity around curriculum strengths; deepen high-quality partnerships; use partner networks to build local reputation and reach.
Weaknesses	Limited global ranking visibility, networked delivery, location and accommodation constraints can reduce the competitiveness of direct recruitment. Approval lead times may also constrain responsiveness.	Balance direct recruitment with TNE, online and collaborative delivery; strengthen student support; prioritise quality and value; plan approvals early and monitor delivery milestones.
Opportunities	Demand for TNE provision, flexible online learning, emerging-market partnerships, research, exchange and industry collaboration offers several routes to growth.	Develop a diversified portfolio across TNE, franchising, online provision, mobility, research and industry collaboration in selected markets.
Threats	Immigration and visa change, economic and geopolitical volatility, competition, partner financial or quality weakness, regulatory change and delayed approvals can affect recruitment, delivery, income and reputation.	Diversify markets and delivery models; apply robust due diligence and quality assurance; monitor regulation, recruitment and financial performance; maintain contingency plans and escalation routes.

Justification of a partnership-based, market-led approach based on SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis demonstrates that no single internationalisation model will enable UHI Perth to achieve sustainable long-term growth.

While the institution possesses significant strengths in teaching quality, specialist academic provision and established international partnerships, these must be leveraged to address structural challenges and an increasingly uncertain external environment. Consequently, this strategy adopts a diversified, partnership-led approach that balances international student recruitment with Transnational Education, online provision, research collaboration and global partnerships, reducing institutional risk while supporting sustainable growth.

Relying solely on direct international recruitment is not a sustainable strategy for UHI Perth due to a variety of challenges highlighted in the SWOT analysis.

Firstly, direct recruitment is highly susceptible to external factors such as shifting immigration policies and economic conditions, which can impact the flow of international students. The risks associated with the Student Visa Route—where students may face visa rejections or delays—further complicate the recruitment process.

Additionally, UHI Perth faces strong competition from institutions with more established global brand recognition, making it harder to attract students solely through direct recruitment efforts. Geographical limitations, such as being located in small towns, coupled with a lack of on-campus accommodation for international students, can also deter potential candidates.

Furthermore, UHI's absence from major global rankings limits its visibility in a highly competitive global education market.

Given these barriers, relying only on direct recruitment could lead to unpredictable results, highlighting the need for more diversified approaches like partnerships and Transnational Education (TNE) to ensure a steady and sustainable influx of international students.

Working with partners offers numerous advantages for UHI Perth, particularly in ensuring long-term sustainability and growth. One key benefit is the longevity that partnerships provide, as they foster ongoing relationships that reduce the uncertainty and volatility associated with direct recruitment. These partnerships enable UHI Perth to attract high-quality student applications from focused, well-prepared students who are specifically suited to the university's strengths.

Moreover, students benefit from a more customised experience through contextualised programmes tailored to local needs, ensuring they feel supported both academically and personally. Unlike direct recruitment, partnerships do not rely heavily on global rankings but can help elevate UHI Perth's brand awareness in local regions, building recognition where it matters most. With an established track record of successful international partnerships, UHI Perth is well-positioned to continue expanding its global footprint and providing students with high-quality education and meaningful international experiences.



International Student Recruitment and On-Campus Engagement

A cornerstone of our international strategy is to increase the recruitment of international students on campus, enhancing UHI Perth's diverse academic community.

We will build upon our existing relationships with international partners, while simultaneously fostering direct connections with potential students through partnership focused marketing campaigns.

Our student recruitment efforts will focus on countries where we see growing demand for high-quality education, such as Brunei, China, and Nepal. Furthermore, we aim to diversify our recruitment strategy by engaging with new markets, particularly in regions where demand for transnational education (TNE) and online learning is rapidly increasing.

To ensure the success of these recruitment efforts, UHI Perth will continue to enhance its international student support services. We aim to provide a seamless transition for students, offering guidance on visa applications, accommodation, cultural integration, and academic support. We will also prioritise the creation of student engagement programs that cater specifically to the needs of international students, helping them feel connected to both their peers and the broader UHI Perth community.

To ensure our recruitment approach is inclusive, our international marketing and communications will use accessible formats and easy-to-understand English, with translations provided where appropriate. We will continue to strengthen pre-arrival and on-campus support, including visa guidance, accommodation support, induction and academic support, so that international students can transition smoothly and succeed.

Through strong recruitment practices and comprehensive student services, we aim to create a vibrant, inclusive international student body that benefits from a rich, collaborative learning environment.

Expanding Transnational Education (TNE) Partnerships

UHI Perth has established a strong foundation in Transnational Education (TNE) through its partnerships in China and Nepal.

Building on this success, we will continue to expand our TNE provision through both flying faculty and franchise delivery models.

The flying faculty model enables UHI Perth academic staff to deliver programmes in-country, providing students with a high-quality UK education while allowing them to remain connected to their local communities. The franchise model enables students to study UHI programmes through approved overseas partner institutions, with academic standards, quality assurance and the student experience aligned with those of UHI Perth.

We are strategically expanding TNE into other regions, particularly those where demand for UK higher education is increasing, such as Southeast Asia and the Middle East. These partnerships will be developed with leading institutions that align with our academic strengths in Engineering, Technology and Management, ensuring that both teaching and learning outcomes meet our high standards.

We will also continue to assess the viability of TNE opportunities in emerging markets and work closely with potential international partners to ensure mutual benefits, including academic exchange, shared resources, and joint research initiatives. By focusing on long-term, sustainable partnerships, we aim to strengthen UHI Perth's reputation as a global provider of high-quality education.

Online Education Expansion

The growing demand for flexible, online education presents an opportunity for UHI Perth to expand its reach to students in countries such as Iceland, where we already have established online learning partnerships, but also to other countries with new opportunities in the UAE and India.

We will continue to enhance our online learning portfolio to cater to a wider international audience, focusing on high-demand fields such as business, engineering and technology.

We will strengthen our digital infrastructure to ensure that our online courses meet the needs of students across different time zones and cultural contexts. This includes adapting our online offerings to local preferences while maintaining the academic rigour and high-quality standards that define UHI Perth.

Collaborating with partners in countries where online education is gaining traction will allow UHI Perth to establish a strong presence in the global market, offering students access to flexible learning opportunities that align with their educational and professional aspirations.

Franchising and Collaborative Delivery in Emerging Markets

UHI Perth will continue to explore franchising opportunities in regions where demand for high-quality higher education is increasing, including Nepal, Vietnam and Sri Lanka.

The franchise model provides a pathway for expanding our educational offerings in these markets while maintaining strong quality assurance frameworks.

These partnerships will be carefully evaluated to ensure alignment with UHI Perth's academic objectives and values. We will focus on building capacity within partner institutions, offering training, resources, and ongoing academic support to ensure the highest standard of education is maintained. Additionally, we will explore opportunities for collaborative research and professional development that benefit both UHI Perth and our international franchise partners.

Our strategic focus will be on developing scalable, sustainable partnerships that offer long-term benefits to both parties. By carefully selecting partners who share our commitment to academic excellence and student success, we will establish UHI Perth as a trusted partner in higher education across emerging markets.

Strategic Risk Matrix

Risks are assessed using a three-point scale (Low = 1, Medium = 2, High = 3). The overall rating is the product of likelihood and impact: 1-2 Low, 3-4 Moderate, 6 High and 9 Extreme. Ratings are reviewed at least quarterly and whenever a material trigger occurs. The Director of Partnerships coordinates monitoring, with specialist and executive ownership assigned through UHI Perth's operational risk arrangements.

Strategic risk	L	I	Rating Residual	Mitigation, monitoring and trigger
UK immigration policy changes reduce on-campus recruitment	H	H	Extreme (9) → Moderate (4)	Diversify through TNE, online provision and multiple source markets. Monitor policy change, applications, conversion, visa outcomes and enrolments; review immediately following material policy change.
Overdependence on one overseas market	M	H	High (6) → Moderate (4)	Broaden the geographic and delivery portfolio. Monitor the proportion of students and income by country and partner each quarter; escalate increasing concentration.
Financial pressures affecting partner institutions	M	M	Moderate (4) → Low (2)	Apply financial due diligence and regular partnership monitoring. Triggers include adverse financial information, delayed payments or material changes in ownership or demand.
Failure to recruit sufficient international students	M	H	High (6) → Low (2)	Use diversified recruitment channels and targeted marketing. Monitor applications, offers, conversion, enrolments and income against plan during each recruitment cycle; reforecast where variance is material.
Partner quality issues	L	H	Moderate (3) → Low (2)	Maintain quality assurance, academic governance and periodic review. Monitor student outcomes, feedback, complaints, moderation and review actions; escalate significant or repeated concerns.
Geopolitical instability	M	H	High (6) → Moderate (4)	Maintain market diversification and contingency planning. Monitor Government travel advice, local disruption and partner communications; activate contingency arrangements where safety or delivery is affected.
Regulatory changes affecting TNE	M	M	Moderate (4) → Low (2)	Maintain continuous compliance monitoring and seek legal or specialist review where required. Track changes to UK, UHI and host-country requirements and approval conditions, and respond promptly to new regulatory requirements in partner countries.
Reputation risk arising from overseas delivery	L	H	Moderate (3) → Low (2)	Maintain academic oversight, governance, due diligence and quality assurance. Monitor complaints, audit findings, adverse media and partner conduct; escalate material issues promptly.
Approval delays affect launch dates and planned income	M	H	High (6) → Moderate (4)	Plan backwards from committee and external approval deadlines, maintain milestone and dependency logs, and escalate slippage. Include new provision in plans only once approval, timing and delivery assumptions are sufficiently robust, and revise plans when critical milestones are missed.

Risk scores describe the current strategic exposure before detailed programme-level controls. Each live partnership or programme will continue to maintain proportionate due diligence, approval, quality, financial and delivery records through the relevant institutional processes. Residual ratings show the assessed exposure once the stated mitigations are operating effectively.

Enhancing Global Mobility and Industry Collaboration

In line with our commitment to fostering a global learning environment, we will expand opportunities for student and staff mobility, including exchange programmes, internships and short-term study visits. We will ensure inclusive recruitment and marketing for mobility opportunities by using accessible formats and easy-to-understand English, with translations provided where appropriate.

We will strengthen pre-arrival and on-campus support for international and mobile students, including clear visa guidance, support with accommodation, structured induction and ongoing academic support. Where mobility activity includes online or blended delivery, we will verify that provision meets accessibility standards and ensure reasonable adjustments are in place, including support for mobility needs.

We will promote belonging and safety throughout the mobility journey by embedding intercultural training and mentoring, and by clearly communicating reporting routes for bullying, harassment and discrimination, particularly for students undertaking placements or study away from campus.

Collaborations with industry partners will play a central role in enhancing the employability of our graduates. We will strengthen our connections with international industries to provide work placement opportunities, internships and industry-specific training, particularly in sectors such as technology, engineering and business.

We will continue to foster these partnerships through joint research initiatives, professional development programmes and shared resources, ensuring that UHI Perth remains at the forefront of global educational and industry trends. Partnership due diligence will include clear Equality Diversity and Inclusivity expectations, confirmation of partner quality assurance and safeguarding arrangements, and appropriate briefing and support for staff involved in overseas delivery.



Conclusion

This strategy provides a clear framework for the sustainable growth of UHI Perth's international activity over the period 2026–2031. Through strategic partnerships, high-quality Transnational Education, international student recruitment, online provision and global collaboration, UHI Perth will strengthen its international reputation while creating meaningful educational, research and commercial opportunities for the institution and its partners


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