

International higher education partnerships contribute to all 17 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

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International higher education partnerships contribute significantly to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), according to a new study published today by the British Council and the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU).

The research finds clear links between partnership activities and positive outcomes in all 17 SDGs, with Quality Education, Partnerships for the Goals, and Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, emerging strongly.

International higher education partnerships contribute to the SDGs by helping students, academics, industry and wider society to share knowledge and ideas, to drive research and innovation, and to build skills through teaching and learning and in practice.

However, the SDGs are interlinked and unlikely to be achieved in isolation, highlighting the need for interdisciplinary approaches.

International higher education partnerships are better equipped than single organisations to address societal issues because they bring together various types of partners from various disciplines, sectors and countries. The study provides evidence that international aid interventions in the form of an international partnership deliver added value, compared to other interventions.

The study also finds that mutual trust and open communication, a shared vision and long-term commitment to working together are vital to the success of the partnerships, along with the engagement of senior institutional leaders. Challenges are also highlighted, including the COVID-19 pandemic, complex governance structures and resistance to change in the higher education sector, and a volatile funding environment

The study, conducted by Technopolis on behalf of British Council and ACU, identified partnership activities and outcomes for each SDG. The ten case studies within the research include Prepared for Practice, a partnership between universities in the UK and in Somaliland to address Good Health and Well-being; and GroFutures, a programme involving 11 partner universities and research institutes across seven countries that contributes to several SDGs including Zero Hunger, Clean Water and Sanitation, Gender Equality, and Life on Land.

Maddalaine Ansell, Director of Education at the British Council, said 'Successful international collaboration brings benefits to all partners, including strengthened curricula, innovative pedagogies and improved international reputation. The partnership model itself adds a significant value to investment from international donors and funders.

'The international HE community has a crucial role in addressing global challenges. Because of its strength in higher education and through convening organisations like the British Council and the ACU, the UK can be at the heart of partnerships committed to achieving the SDGs.

Dr Joanna Newman MBE, Chief Executive and Secretary General of the ACU, said 'None of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved without the contribution of higher education. This study provides valuable evidence of the benefits that international partnerships between universities deliver for individuals, communities and societies.'

'In order to maximise these benefits, we need to maintain and grow sustainable and innovative funding environments for higher education, based on the principles of equitable partnerships.'

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Editor's notes

To read the report, summary factsheet, and detailed case studies visit <https://www.britishcouncil.org/international-higher-education-partnerships-and-sdgs-report-launch-event-12-jan-2022>

The British Council is the UK's international culture and education organisation. It provides opportunities for universities, colleges, governments, education bodies, researchers, academics and students around the world to collaborate and partner with the UK. Through working together in mutually beneficial partnerships, the British Council contributes to stronger, more inclusive and globally connected education systems which support economic and social growth. Alongside this, the work of the British Council deepens educational and cultural ties between people in the UK and their international partners.

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) is an international organisation dedicated to building a better world through higher education, with over 500 member universities in more than 50 countries. International collaboration is central to this ambition: by bringing universities together from around the world – and crucially the people who study and work within them – the ACU helps to advance knowledge, promote understanding, broaden minds, and improve lives. Accredited by the Commonwealth and the United Nations, the ACU champions higher education as a cornerstone of stronger societies, supporting its members, partners, and stakeholders as they adapt to a changing world. For more information, visit acu.ac.uk

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