

# The Management of **Outward Student Mobility Programmes in the UK**

## INTRODUCTION

Universities UK International's *Go International: Stand Out* campaign is designed to help the sector to deliver on our national target for outward student mobility:

*'to double the percentage of UK-domiciled, full-time, first degree, undergraduate students who have an international placement as part of their university programme by 2020.'*

In summer 2018, UUKi designed and disseminated a mobility management survey. The aim of this survey and accompanying analysis is to provide the sector with a fuller picture of the breadth and scale of mobility operations across the UK. The survey also provides insight for UUKi which will inform the development of the *Go International: Stand Out* campaign.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 83% of the universities responding to the survey include outward mobility in their **institution's strategic plan** and 46% have a dedicated **outward student mobility strategy**
- 65% of universities have an outward **mobility target**
- For half of universities the growth area in mobility is **short-term programmes**
- 90% of universities reported that their budget for outward mobility had either **increased or stayed the same**, however 46% of universities reported being **under resourced**
- Over half of universities have increased funding allocated to outward **mobility scholarships**

## METHODOLOGY

Between July and August 2018, UUKi circulated a survey to UK universities with the goal of understanding more about how they manage their outward student mobility programmes. The survey was circulated to UUKi's Outward Student Mobility Network, via the *Stand Out* campaign newsletters and the UUKi Director's update. The survey was hosted on SurveyMonkey and was open to all UK universities for four weeks.

The survey focused on three key areas: i) strategy; ii) programmes; and iii) resourcing. 89 responses were received from universities across the UK, and of these responses 65 were complete and able to be analysed. This represents 47% of the total UUK membership. Partial and incomplete submissions were removed to ensure robust findings. This report shares the results of the survey. Individual responses have been anonymised, with the focus on aggregated findings and trends across the UK.

## WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY?

89 responses were received from 65 universities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with the following breakdown:

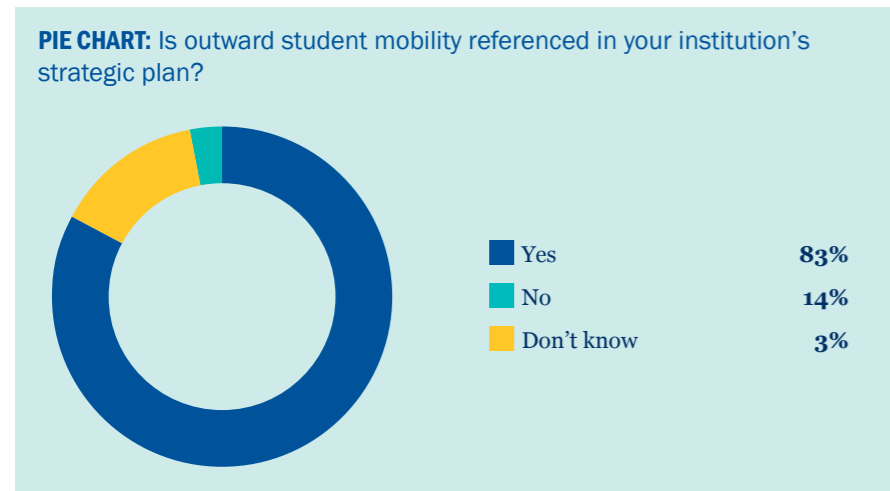
- 51 universities in England
- 9 universities in Scotland
- 4 universities in Wales
- 1 university in Northern Ireland

The survey received responses from universities across a mix of different mission groups: 20 universities in the Russell Group, eight universities in the University Alliance, six universities in the Million+ group, and five universities in GuildHE. 31 universities were not affiliated to any group.

91% of institutions that completed the survey had pledged to the *Go International: Stand Out* campaign, with a further 8% of respondents planning to pledge to the campaign. 2% of respondents did not know what their institution's plans were with regards to the campaign.

# FINDINGS

## Strategies



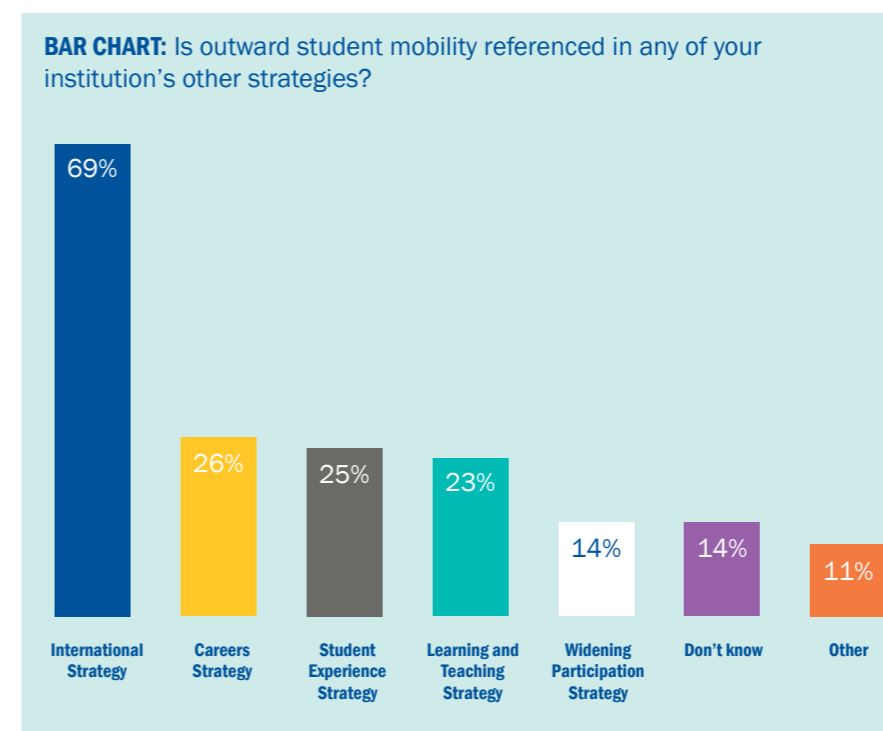
83% of universities responding to the survey confirmed that outward student mobility is included in their institution's overall strategic plan. In addition to the inclusion of outward student mobility in the institutional strategy, nearly half (46%) of respondents have a dedicated outward mobility strategy.

Introducing a mobility strategy can be an important step for teams to take, as it provides direction for activities and encourages evaluation of the impact of programmes and wider provision against established KPIs.

Respondents were asked if mobility was included in any of their other institutional strategies.



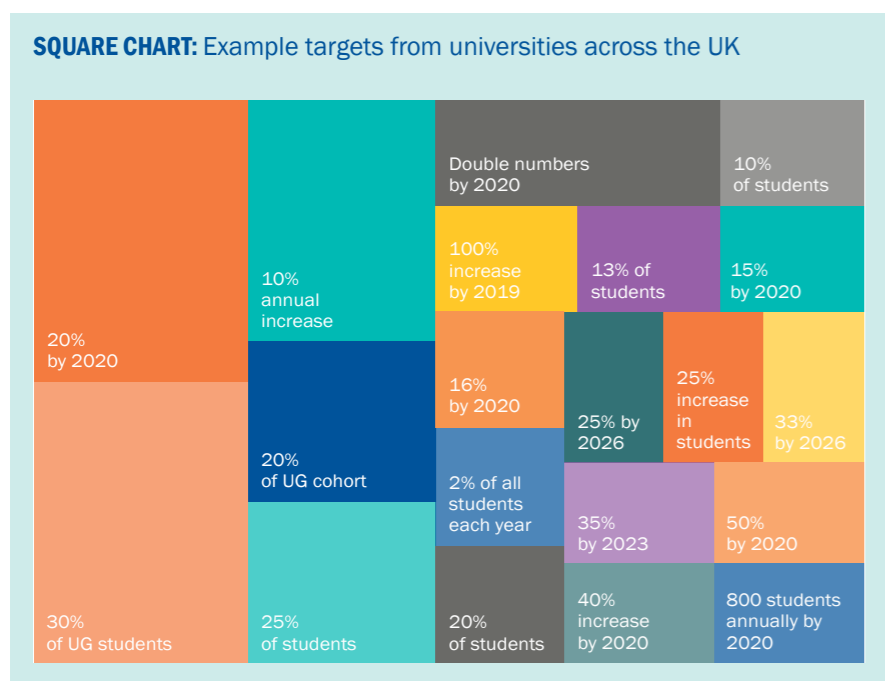
*Nearly half (46%) of respondents have a dedicated outward mobility strategy.*



69% of institutions answered that they include outward mobility within their International Strategy, over a third of respondents include mobility in their Careers Strategy (36%), while a quarter of respondents include it in their Student Experience Strategy (25%) and Learning and Teaching Strategy (23%). Mobility is beginning to be embedded in the access agenda in universities, with 14% of universities including mobility in their Widening Participation Strategy. 11% of respondents include mobility in other institutional strategies, such as Education Strategy, TEF Strategy and Work-based Learning Strategy.

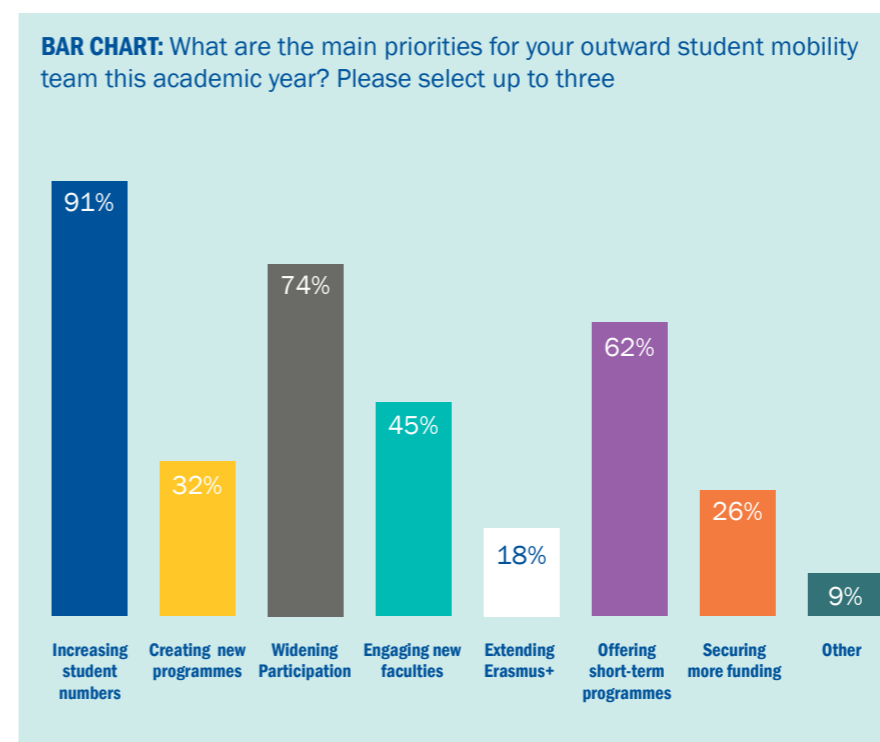
65% of university respondents reported an outward student mobility target, with more institutions hoping to introduce targets in the next year. 17% of universities also have specific targets for widening participation in outward student mobility. These types of targets varied, including an overall increase in the mobility of widening participation groups, but were mainly targets that aim to make the mobile student cohort reflect the make-up of the student body.

*17% of universities also have specific targets for widening participation in outward student mobility.*

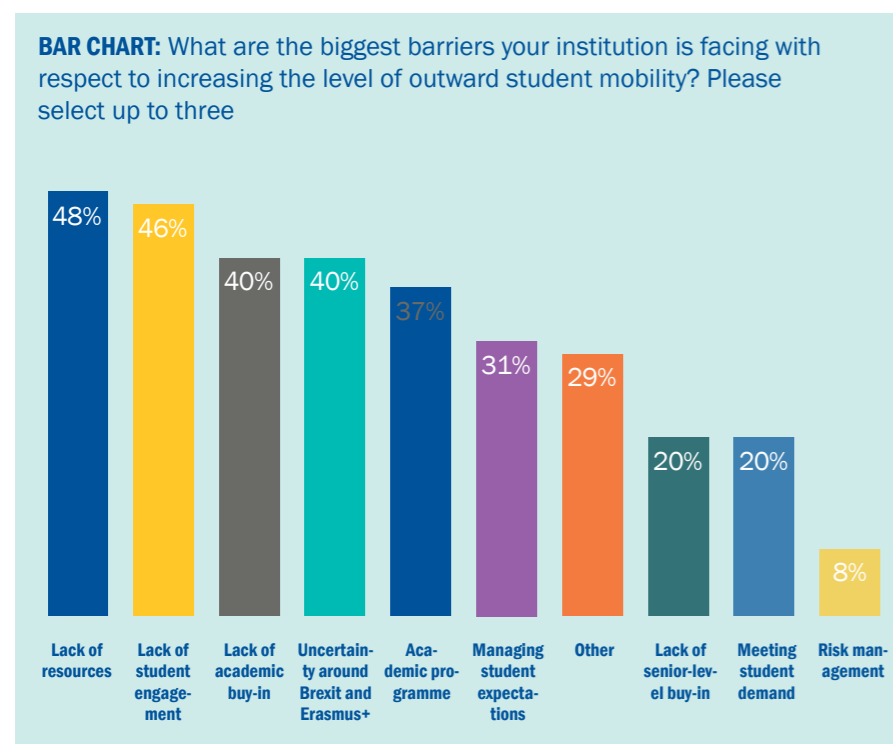


*A number of universities go beyond the 2020 UK target, aiming for 20% of students to be mobile by 2020*

Mobility targets vary across the sector: some focus on a percentage increase in participation annually, others on a goal participation rate for the graduating cohort. In some cases, numbers of outgoing students annually have been targeted. Targets also focus on mobility activities; for example an increase in the number of work placement programmes, a target for every department to offer mobility programmes to students, or ensuring that credit from outward student mobility is recognised on all programmes. A number of universities go beyond the UK target: 13% of undergraduate students to be outwardly mobile by 2020.



Increasing student numbers is the number one priority for the sector with 91% flagging this as a priority for the upcoming year. This was followed by widening participation in outward mobility programmes (74%) and offering short term mobilities (62%). Other priorities include engaging new faculties, schools and departments (45%) and creating new programmes (32%). 18% of respondents will be extending their Erasmus+ offer. Other priorities listed include introducing Summer Schools, increasing numbers of incoming students, enhancing re-entry activities, and developing short-term traineeships.

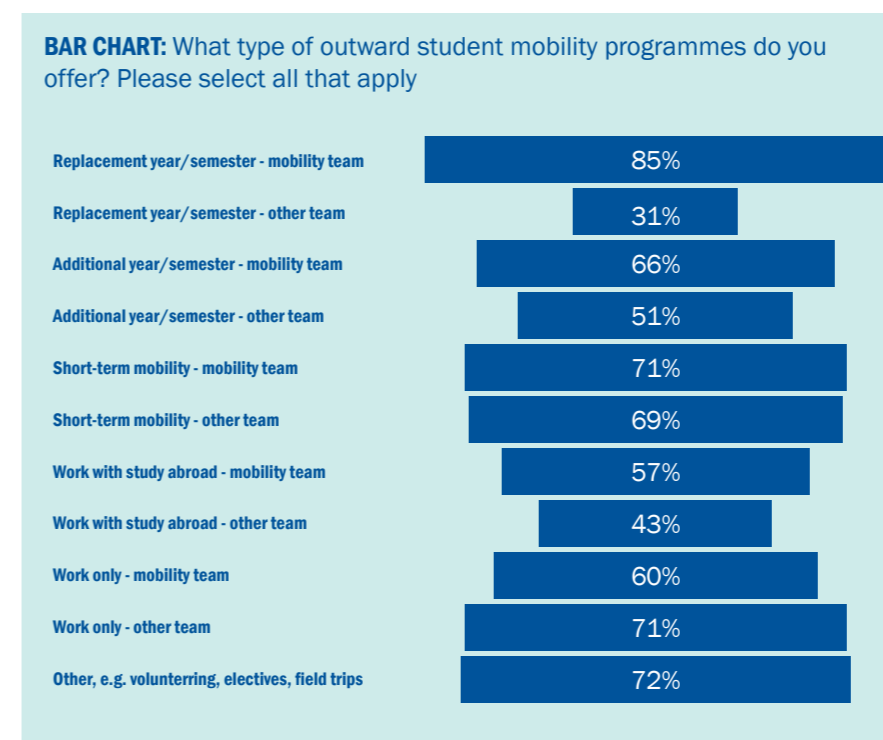


Nearly half of institutions (48%) flagged a lack of resource and a lack of student engagement (46%).

Barriers to mobility varied across the sector, with no clear front-runner. Nearly half of institutions (48%) flagged a lack of resource and a lack of student engagement (46%). Uncertainty around Brexit is a barrier for 40% of universities. A lack of academic buy-in was also flagged as a challenge by 40% of respondents, and for a third of universities it was restrictions on academic programmes (37%). Managing student expectations was flagged by almost a third of institutions (31%). Other (29%) barriers listed include mobility not being an institutional priority, a lack of available partnerships and managing incoming students' balance.

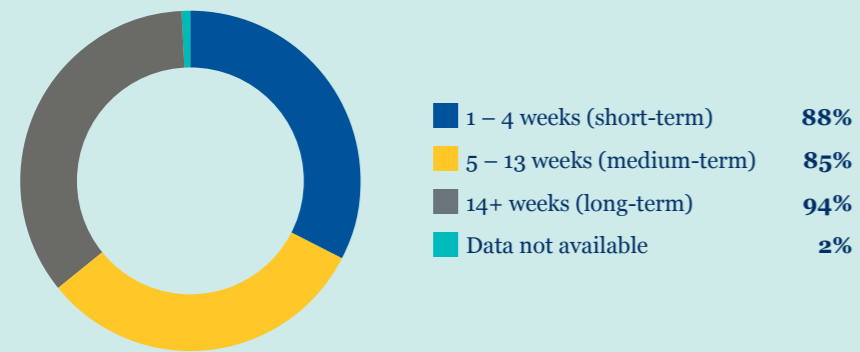
## Programmes

The range of overseas programmes, placements and other experiences on offer to students is extremely varied across the sector; everything from a replacement year or semester abroad or an additional year or semester abroad to short-term programmes, internships, volunteering opportunities, field trips and work placements.



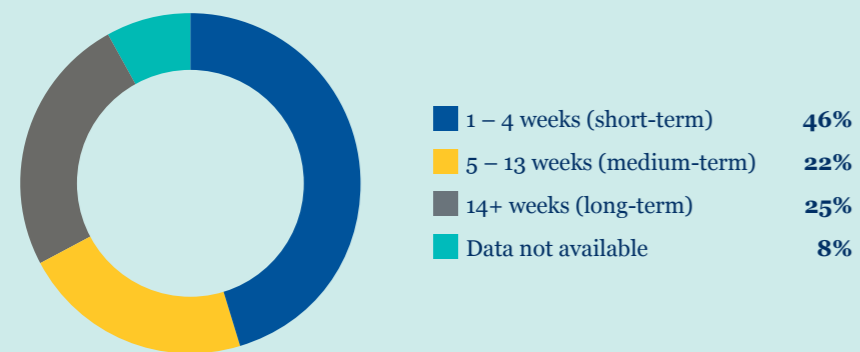
The most popular programme was a replacement year or semester abroad delivered by the institution's mobility team (85%). In most cases, the mobility programmes were delivered by a central mobility team, except in the case of work programmes, which were more often delivered by another team at the university. Short-term mobility programmes are also being delivered by teams outside of universities' central mobility team.

**PIE CHART:** What duration of outward student mobility opportunities did your institution offer during the 2017-18 academic year?



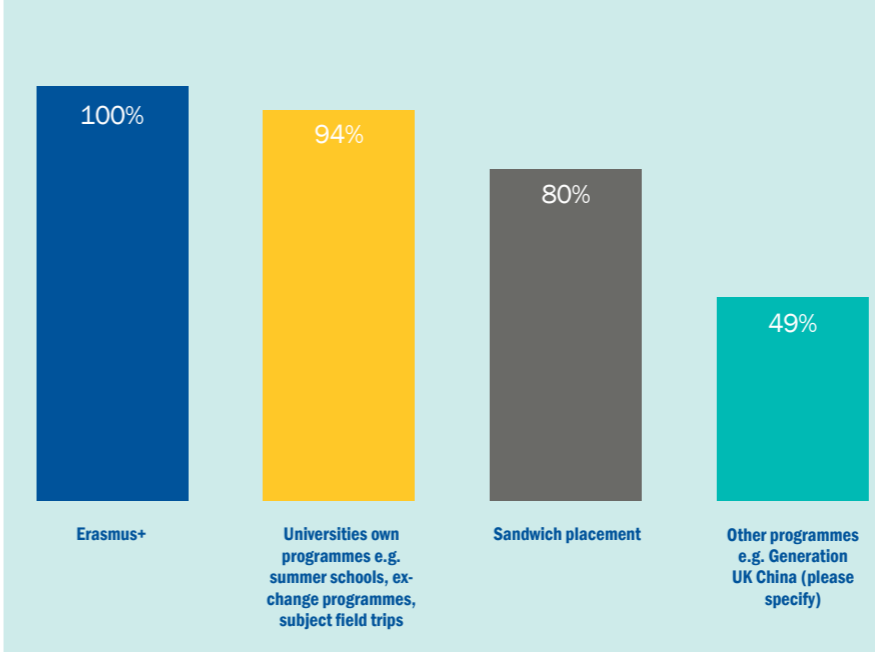
Most UK universities offer short, medium and long-term programmes, providing a range of options to suit different students: 14+ weeks is delivered across almost all universities (94%), with 88% delivering one to four-week programmes (short-term) and 85% offering 5 – 13 week opportunities (medium-term).

**PIE CHART:** Which mobility length has had the biggest increase in offerings over the last three academic years?



For almost half of universities most new opportunities being created are for short-term mobilities (46%); the remaining responses are split between medium-term, with 22% reporting this as the area of growth, and long-term, with a quarter of universities seeing growth in offerings this area (25%).

**BAR CHART:** Did you offer the following mobility programmes during the 2017-18 academic year?

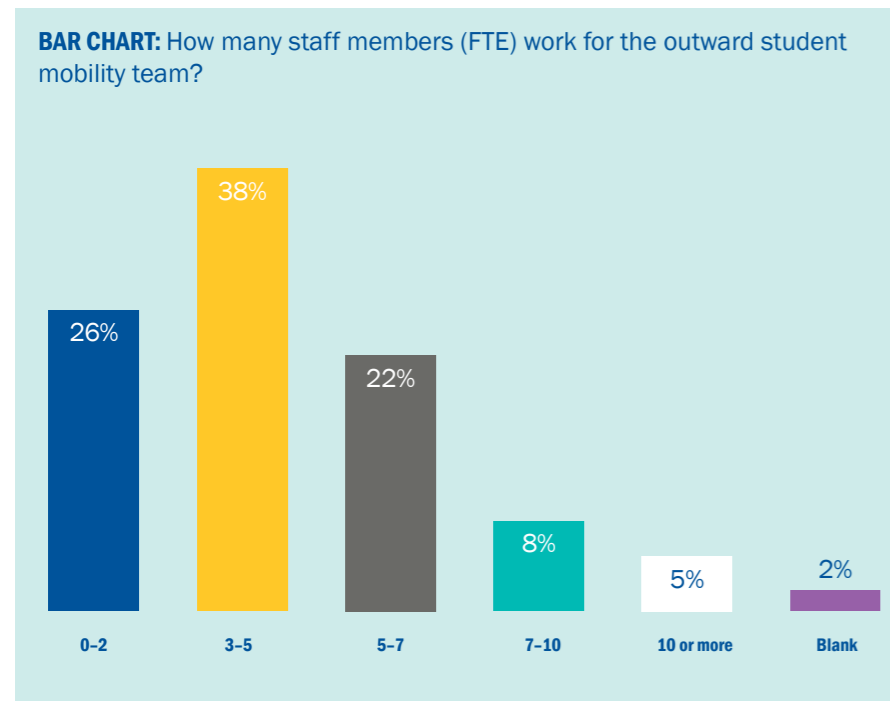


Every university that responded to the survey provided Erasmus+ mobility (100%). 94% of universities offer their own mobility programmes such as summer schools, exchange programmes, and subject field trips. 80% of institutions provide sandwich placements for students in industry. Almost half of respondents (49%) provide mobility via an external programme. Examples of external programmes listed include:

- British Council Teaching Assistant
- BUNAC
- Camp America
- CERN Summer Programme
- CII Teach Argentina
- Common Purpose
- CRCC Asia
- Generation UK China
- Huawei Work Experience Scheme
- IAESTE
- InternChina
- Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme
- Nanjing Youth Programme
- Raleigh International
- Red Tree
- SLV Global
- Study China Programme
- Think Pacific
- Vulcanus

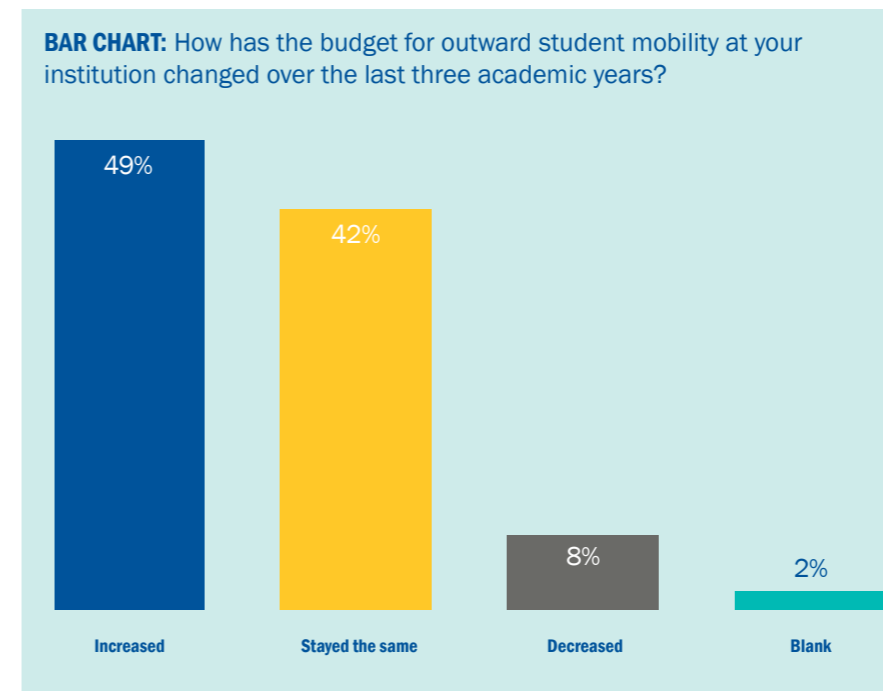
## Resourcing

In over half of all responses, mobility sits with the International team (57%). The remaining universities' mobility teams sit across a wide variety of directorates. 11% are based in recruitment offices, 9% in Careers teams but almost a quarter (22%) are based in other offices including: Registry Services (4%); Academic Schools or Faculties; Student Support and Wellbeing; Communications and Marketing; Admissions; and Widening Participation.



*64% of mobility programmes across the UK are delivered by teams of five or fewer staff.*

64% of mobility programmes across the UK are delivered by teams of five or fewer staff, with 26% operating with a team of up to two members of staff, and 38% operating with three to five members of staff. Larger teams of five to seven colleagues deliver mobility in 22% of universities, with teams of seven – 10 colleagues operating in 8% of universities. Only 5% of institutions operate with a team of 10 or more.

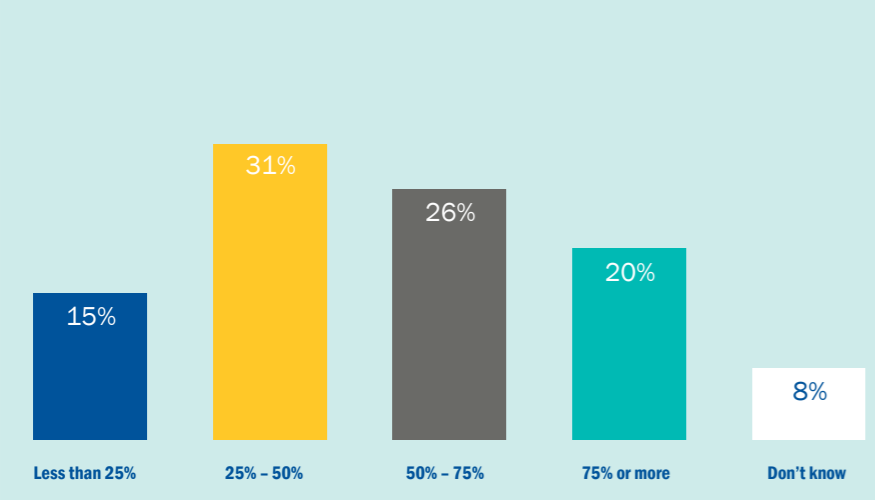


91% of universities reported that their budget for outward mobility had either increased (49%) or stayed the same (42%) over the last three academic years. However, despite this increase in budget, nearly half of universities report being under-resourced.



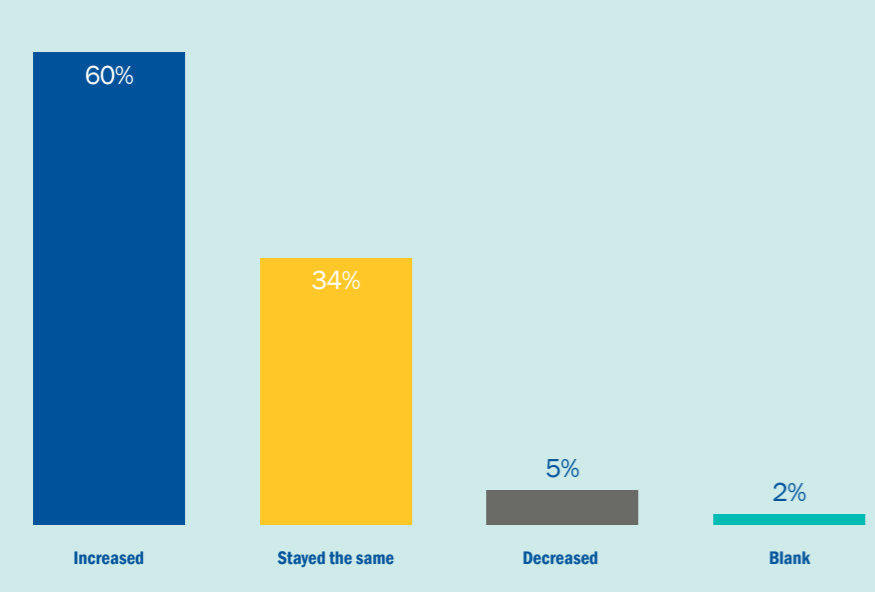
*Nearly half of universities report being under-resourced.*

**BAR CHART:** What percentage of outward student mobility at your institution is funded via the Erasmus+ programme?



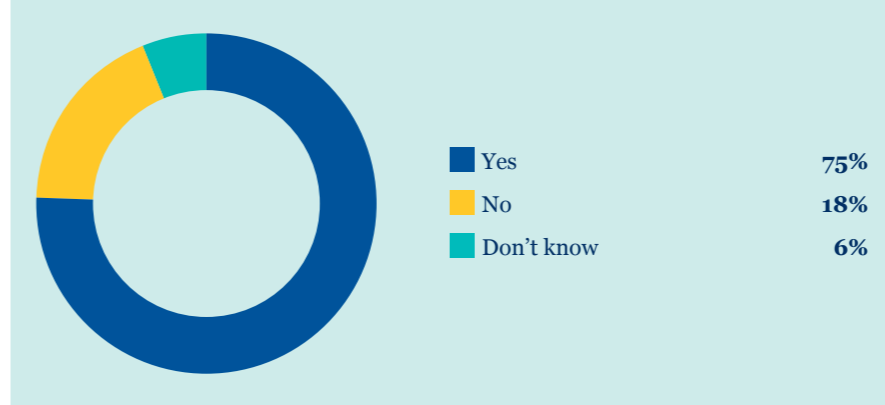
For almost half of universities who responded (46%), the Erasmus+ programme funds 50% or more of their mobility offer, while 20% of universities reported that Erasmus+ was responsible for funding 75% or more of their mobility offer to students.

**BAR CHART:** How has the funding allocated to student mobility scholarships, bursaries and grants at your institution changed over the last three academic years?



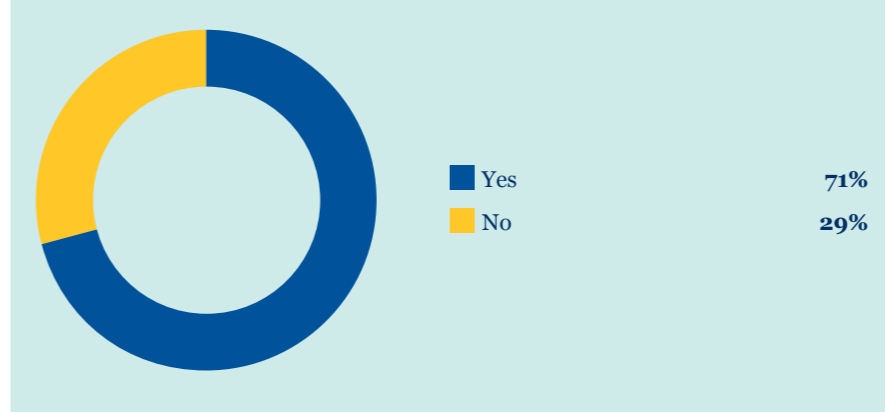
Over half (60%) of universities have increased the funding they allocate to mobility scholarships, bursaries and grants, with 34% maintaining their funding level over the last three years.

**PIE CHART:** Do you offer a tuition fee waiver/limit for year abroad (or any other period abroad)?



The majority of respondents (75%) offer a fee waiver or fee limit for year abroad programmes.

**PIE CHART:** Does your institution offer any specific mobility scholarships or funding packages that target disadvantaged or underrepresented students?

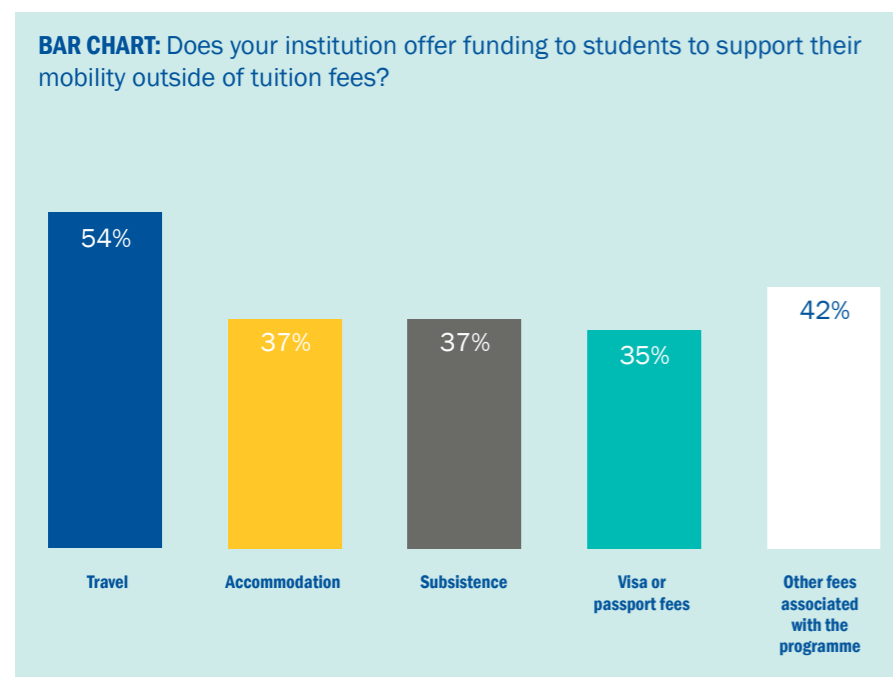


The majority (75%) of universities that responded to the survey offer mobility scholarships or funding packages that target students who are disadvantaged or underrepresented in outward mobility.



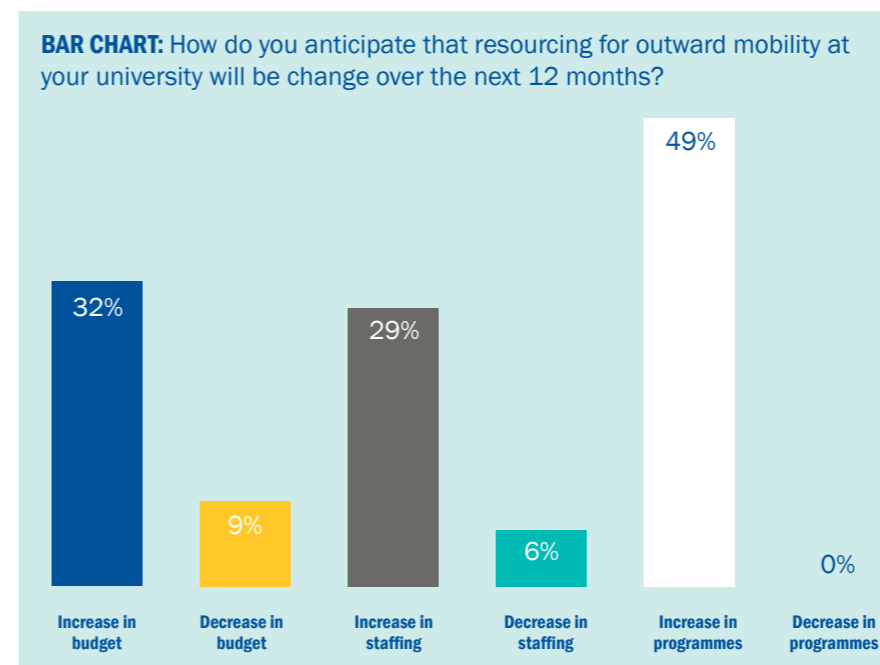
Of those universities that provide specific mobility scholarships or funding packages for disadvantaged or underrepresented students, 65% provide targeted funding for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Around a third of universities allocate funding for students from low participation neighbourhoods (32%), students with disabilities (31%) or students who are care leavers (31%). Around a quarter of universities provide targeted funding to Black and Minority Ethnic students (26%) and students who are carers (26%). 22% provide funding for mature students and 15% provide targeted funding for estranged students.

23% of universities flagged other groups who were provided with targeted funding. These included a general fund for widening participation students, funding for those in financial hardship, those in receipt of university bursaries, or students who could evidence a need for the additional funding.



Universities offered students funding for a variety of different purposes including travel (54%), accommodation (37%), subsistence while abroad (37%), and visa or passport fees (35%). 27% of universities offered funding for all four purposes.

## LOOKING FORWARD



We asked universities about their planned resourcing for outward mobility programmes in the next 12 months. Almost half of universities (49%) plan to increase their mobility offer, by introducing new programmes and partnerships. A third (32%) of universities expect to increase their budget for mobility. A third of respondents expect to increase their staffing levels (29%) next year. No respondents plan to cut their programme offer.

We asked universities if they anticipated any major changes over the next 12 months for their outward mobility programme. Key areas flagged included:

- offering more short-term outward mobility opportunities;
- greater engagement with new areas and departments across the institution;
- reviewing processes and better data capture;
- restructuring of departments and teams;
- increasing the number of widening participation students going abroad;
- introduction of more postgraduate mobility programmes; and
- diversifying funding sources.

## CONCLUSION

The findings from this survey paint a broadly positive picture: they show that outward student mobility is on institutional agendas, through engagement with the *Stand Out* Campaign, inclusion of mobility programmes in institutions' strategic plans and the growing number of outward mobility targets. The reported increase in funding for mobility is a positive finding, but the issue of under-resourcing in around half of institutions needs to be addressed if programmes are to be delivered in an effective and sustainable way. It is great to see increased investment in mobility scholarships and bursaries, and growth in the offer of short-term programmes. The growing strategic importance of mobility activities is underscored by the support across the sector for the *Go International: Stand Out* campaign, which over 80 universities have joined in the first year.

### Strategies

83% of the universities responding to the survey include outward mobility in their institution's strategic plan, 46% have a dedicated outward student mobility strategy and 65% have an outward mobility target. This is a very encouraging finding which shows that outward mobility has become a strategic priority for universities across the UK. One of the key recommendations of the *Stand Out* campaign is to take a whole institutional approach to delivering outward mobility, and to collaborate with colleagues and different departments across the university.<sup>1</sup> Strategies help to formalise these collaborative activities, and targets can be an important tool to drive forward mobility ambitions within institutions.

### Programmes

The range of programmes, placements and other experiences on offer to students is extremely varied across the sector from a replacement year or semester abroad to short-term programmes, volunteering opportunities and work placements. This was another positive finding as a recommendation of the campaign is to diversify mobility offers to engage with as many students as possible, some of whom may have limitations on the types of

mobility they can participate in either due to restrictions on their academic programme, or due to commitments in their personal life.<sup>2</sup>

The survey also found that the UK sector has a strong engagement with the Erasmus+ mobility programme: all respondents offer the programme, and for 46% of universities the programme is responsible for more than half their mobility offer. This finding shows the sector's reliance on the Erasmus+ programme to deliver outward mobility activities.

### Resourcing

90% of universities reported that their budget for outward mobility had either increased or stayed the same over the last three academic years. This is an encouraging finding as it shows a continued commitment to mobility programmes, and in half of cases, a commitment to growing mobility activities, programmes and support. However, 46% of universities reported being under-resourced which needs to be addressed if universities are to deliver sustainable programmes.

Over half of universities have increased funding allocated to outward mobility scholarships, showing a commitment from the sector not only in delivering programmes, but in providing support to address financial barriers to mobility, which was the primary barrier to going abroad flagged by the Student Perspectives report.<sup>3</sup>

UK universities' continued commitment to outward mobility has enabled more students than ever before to study, work or volunteer abroad.<sup>4</sup> The actions taken by universities to further embed mobility programmes across institutions should lead to an even greater take up of mobility opportunities by students, and a diversification of the mobile student body.

The Mobility Management Survey will be circulated in the summer of 2020 to provide further insights and note any change in trends at a national level in the management of mobility.

Thank you to all the universities that completed this survey.

1. [Widening Participation in Outward Student Mobility project, 2017](#)  
2. [Widening Participation in Outward Student Mobility project, 2017](#)

3. [Student perspectives on going international, 2015](#)  
4. [Gone International: Expanding Opportunities, 2018](#)

**Universities UK International**

Woburn House  
20 Tavistock Square  
London  
WC1H 9HQ

[www.international.ac.uk](http://www.international.ac.uk)  
[www.go.international.ac.uk](http://www.go.international.ac.uk)

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