

INTERNATIONAL TALENT AND HIRING

**THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL
ACADEMICS TO UNIVERSITY STRATEGIES
AND HOW BEST TO RECRUIT THEM**



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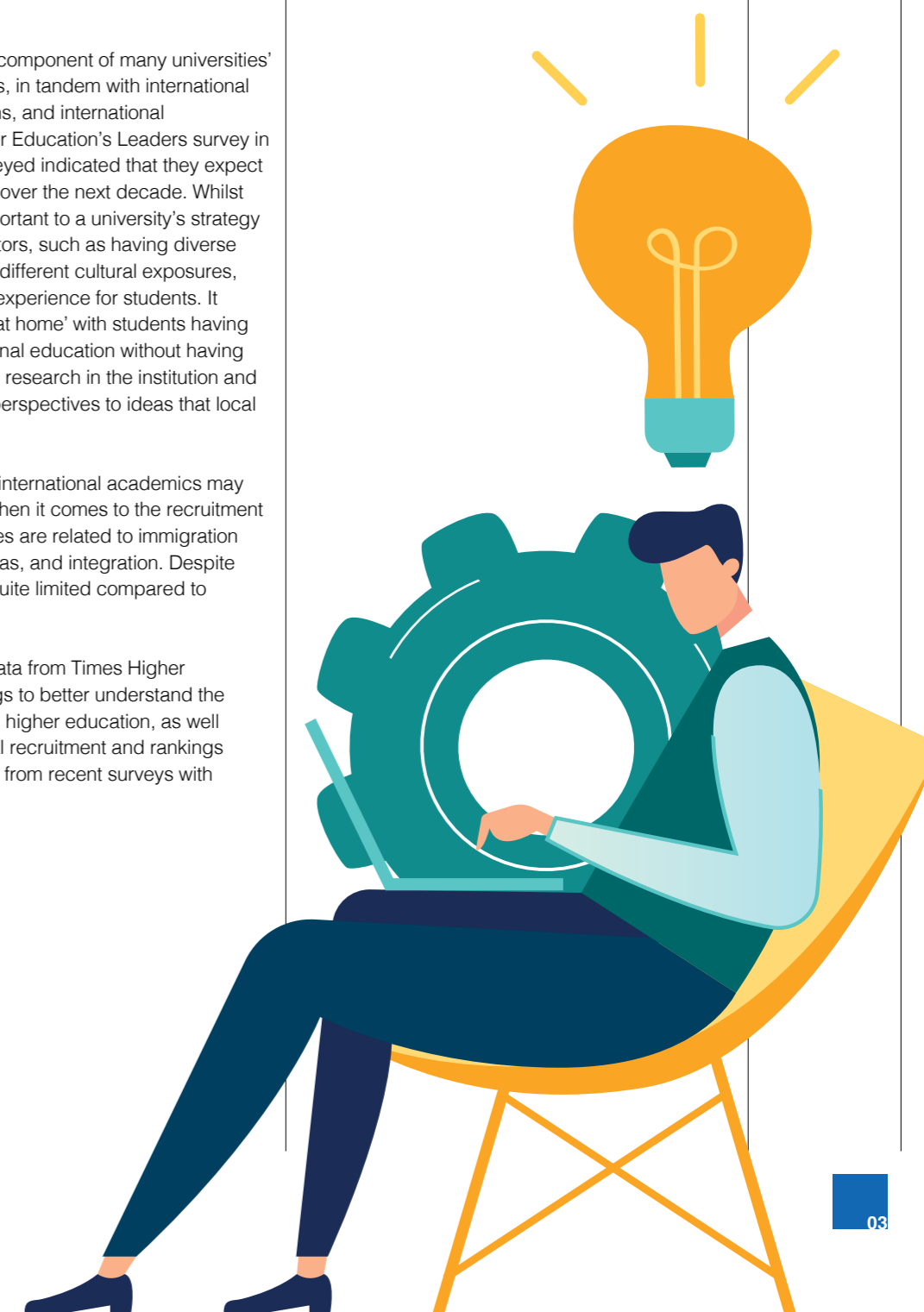
INTRODUCTION

Attracting and retaining international talent has been associated with multiple benefits for universities and the wider ecosystem in which they operate. The UK is an example of applying efforts to reap the rewards from international talent in its aims to increase R&D investment to 2.4% of GDP by 2027; where it is acknowledged that the UK will not be able to fulfil these targets by depending on British nationals and will need to deploy talent from abroad.

International faculty mobility is a key component of many universities' broader internationalisation strategies, in tandem with international student mobility, curricular innovations, and international partnerships. Indeed, in Times Higher Education's Leaders survey in 2022, 84% of university leaders surveyed indicated that they expect to hire more international academics over the next decade. Whilst employing international faculty is important to a university's strategy and rankings performance, other factors, such as having diverse international knowledge sharing and different cultural exposures, can be integrated into the university experience for students. It also helps bring 'internationalisation at home' with students having exposure to elements of an international education without having to leave the country. This also boosts research in the institution and incorporates different thoughts and perspectives to ideas that local faculty may not have thought of.

Whilst the potential benefits of hiring international academics may be abundant, there are challenges when it comes to the recruitment process, and much of these difficulties are related to immigration controls, bureaucratic processes, visas, and integration. Despite this, studies around this have been quite limited compared to international student mobility.

In this report we look to draw upon data from Times Higher Education's World University Rankings to better understand the trends of international staff mobility in higher education, as well as explore links between international recruitment and rankings performance, before sharing insights from recent surveys with academics carried out by THE.



GLOBAL MOBILITY TRENDS

Sector-wide data on international staff in universities is available in some countries. For example, Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) data for the UK in 2021-2022 shows that international academic staff in the country predominantly came from Italy, China, Germany, Ireland and the United States, which has been the case since 2005-2006. The data also shows that whilst over half of those international staff came from EU countries, over the past 5 years there has been a growth in numbers of international academic staff from outside the EU, namely India, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Utilising data from the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (WUR), it is possible to explore trends over time in the proportion of international academic staff reported by universities across the many countries represented in the ranking. This data comes from the international staff metric which assesses the proportion of a university's academic staff who are international. The data related to international staff is submitted by universities directly to THE. The international staff metric combines with other metrics focused on international students and international co-authorship to provide an assessment of universities' overall international outlook.

Exploring trends in the international staff metric data shows that among countries with at least 10 universities who were ranked in both WUR 2016 and WUR 2023, all had increased their proportion of international staff (see chart and table overleaf). This ranges from a very marginal increase of 0.1% among the universities in Spain ranked in both WUR 2016 and WUR 2023, to an average increase of 11.2% among 13 universities from the Netherlands appearing in both rankings.

In the case of the Netherlands, an increase in the proportion of international staff was reported from each of the 13 universities ranked in both WUR 2016 and WUR 2023. This ranged from an increase of 5 percentage points in international staff at Tilburg University (from 25% to 30%) to a 17 percentage point increase at the University of Twente (23% to 41%). What is common among these universities is that they are all relatively high performing in the THE World University Rankings with seven of the 13 ranked among the top 100 in WUR 2023 and the remainder all ranked among the top 300. Whilst there are numerous strengths of the Dutch higher education system, its attractiveness to international academics – and international outlook in general – are key aspects to the sector's strength.

The importance in general of international academics and rankings performance is discussed in the next two sections.

AVERAGE PROPORTION OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF IN COUNTRIES WITH AT LEAST 10 UNIVERSITIES RANKED IN BOTH WUR 2016 AND WUR 2023

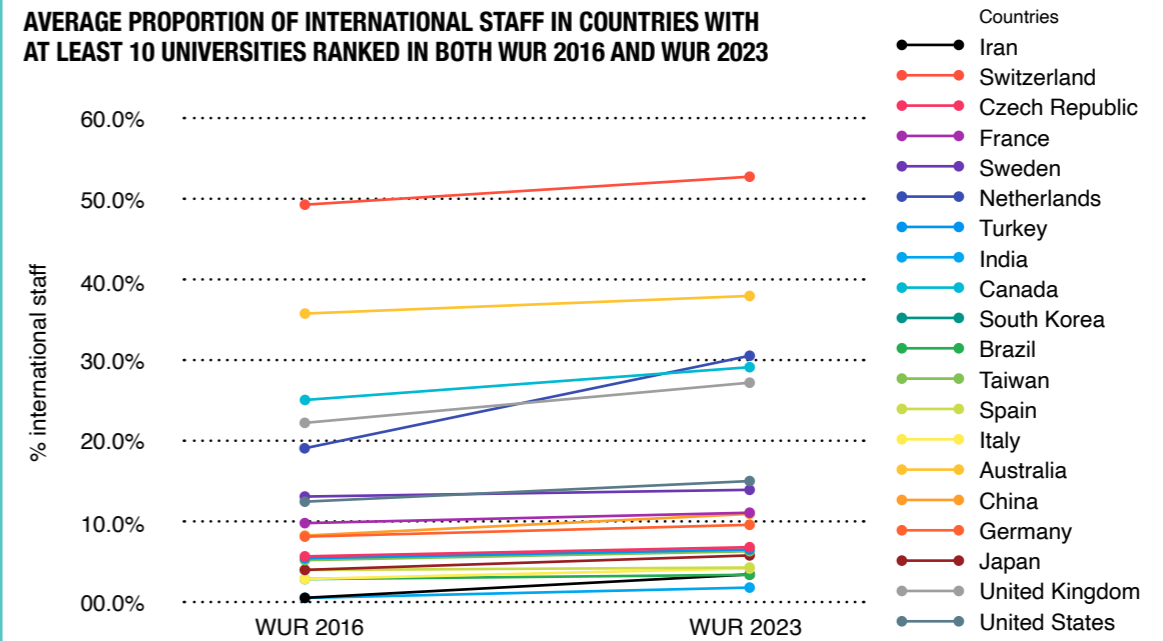


Figure 1

COUNTRY	NO. UNIVERSITIES IN BOTH RANKINGS	AVERAGE % INTL. STAFF (WUR 2016)	AVERAGE % INTL. STAFF (WUR 2023)	DIFFERENCE
Netherlands	13	19.3%	30.4%	11.2%
United Kingdom	102	22.1%	27.3%	5.2%
Canada	22	25.2%	29.3%	4.1%
Switzerland	10	49.2%	52.7%	3.4%
Iran	10	0.6%	3.4%	2.8%
China	35	8.3%	10.9%	2.5%
United States	128	12.5%	15.0%	2.5%
Australia	33	35.8%	38.0%	2.2%
Japan	44	4.1%	5.9%	1.8%
France	11	9.8%	11.1%	1.3%
India	16	0.7%	1.9%	1.2%
Taiwan	25	4.8%	6.0%	1.2%
Italy	32	3.1%	4.3%	1.2%
Germany	36	8.7%	9.9%	1.2%
Sweden	11	12.9%	14.0%	1.1%
South Korea	23	8.5%	9.6%	1.1%
Czech Republic	11	5.3%	6.3%	1.0%
Turkey	15	5.2%	6.1%	0.9%
Brazil	25	2.9%	3.2%	0.3%
Spain	26	4.0%	4.1%	0.1%

Source: THE World University Rankings

INTERNATIONAL TALENT AND RANKINGS PERFORMANCE

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings assesses research-intensive universities across five pillars which are designed to reflect their common core missions.

These are:

Teaching
environment

Research
environment

Research
quality
(citations)

International
outlook

Industry

Within these pillars – and the underlying metrics – there are many metrics which could potentially be improved by universities expanding their diaspora of international academics. Over the next two chapters we take a look at two of them specifically: **international collaborations** and **reputation**.



IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL TALENT FOR RESEARCH COLLABORATION

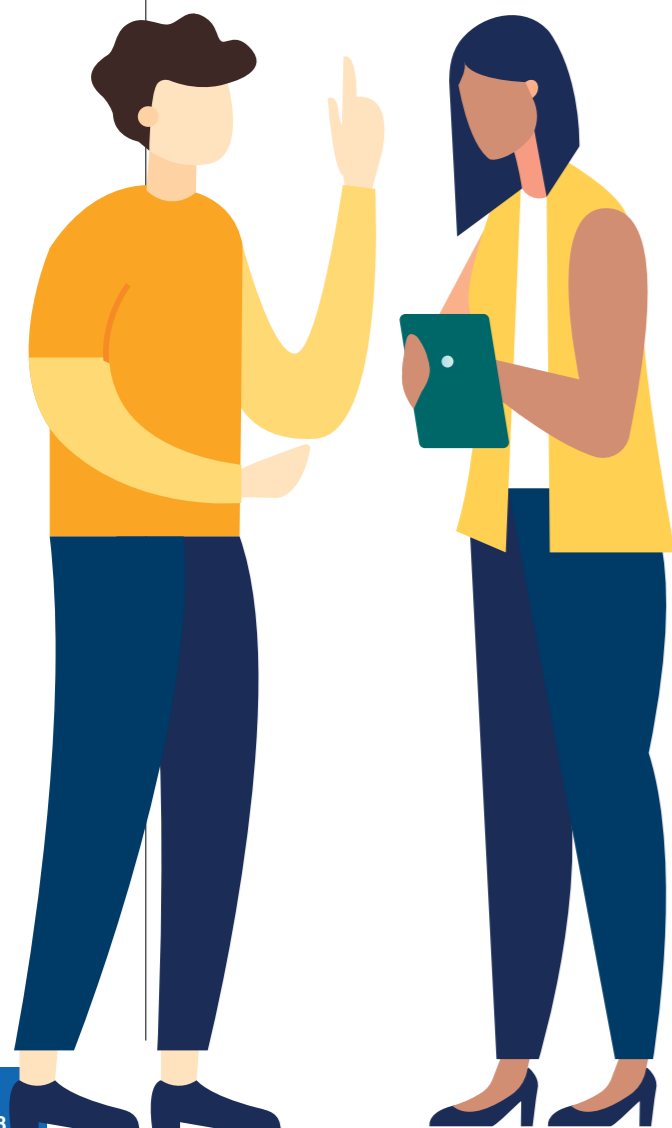
In a globalised world, which enables researchers and academics to collaborate with fewer geographical barriers, international collaboration can offer academics and universities the opportunity to share skills, knowledge and newly developed techniques, while also building their reputations and research impact.

In recognition of the fact that international collaboration, and internationalisation in general, are key tenets of many universities' core missions, the THE World University Rankings includes a metric which directly measures the proportion of a university's publications with international co-authorship. As well as this direct impact on a university's rank, international collaboration can also impact performance in other metrics, such as the highly weighted citations and research reputation metrics.

The recruitment of international academics may assist in a university's efforts to expand and deepen their network of international collaborators by harnessing the existing networks of connections and collaborators that the academic has. This is important because, as evidenced in a survey of 9,606 academics carried out by THE in 2022, the role of interpersonal relationships, trust and rapport were key themes when exploring the factors that allow for an international research collaboration to commence.

On the flip side, as shown in Figure 2, when asked about the main barriers to initiating a new international research collaboration, almost half (46%) cited a lack of in-person interactions as a major impediment, with 20% identifying this as the single most significant barrier. A lack of existing strong ties or networks was also identified as a major challenge by 44% of respondents.

Attracting academics from different countries may assist universities in establishing partnerships and research collaborations with institutions around the world. These connections facilitate knowledge exchange, joint projects, and research breakthroughs which can help build reputation, a topic which is discussed in the next chapter.



MOST SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO INITIATING A NEW INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION

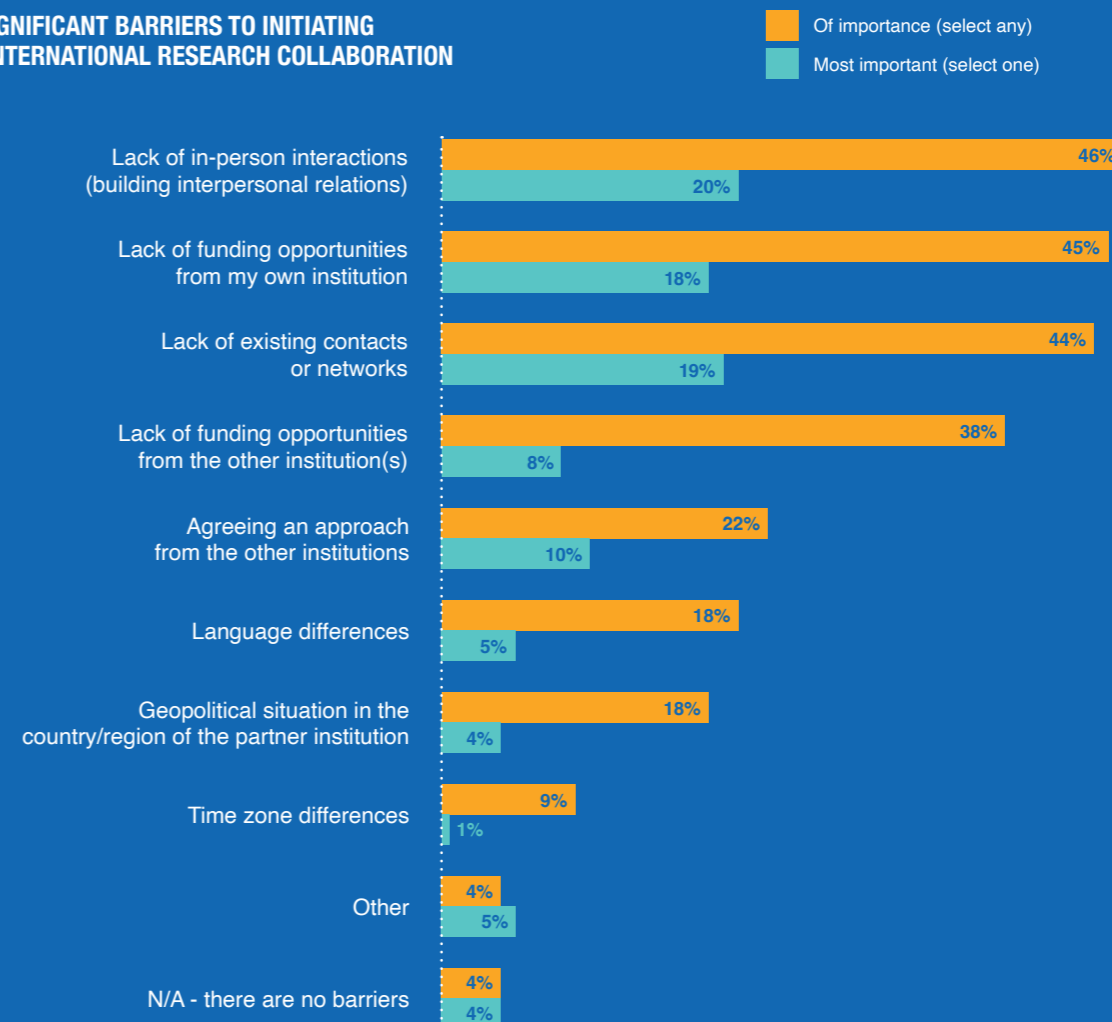


Figure 2

IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL TALENT FOR INSTITUTIONAL REPUTATION

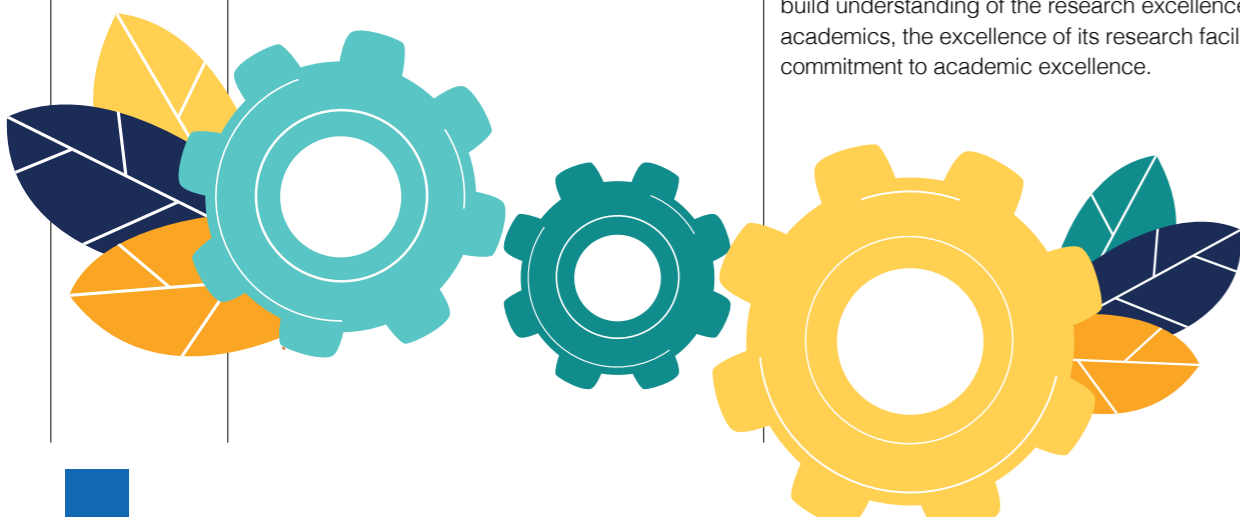
The reputation metrics in the THE World University Rankings account for 33% of the overall weighted score (18% for research reputation and 15% for teaching reputation). The data for these metrics are captured from an annual survey of approximately 30,000 published academics from around the globe. In the survey they are asked to nominate up to 15 universities that they consider to be producing the best research in their field of expertise and, separate to that, up to 15 universities they consider to be providing the best teaching in their subject area.

At THE we are often asked whether there is a link between a university having a more international staff profile and reputation. It is a link that is hard to prove decisively, not least because the factors that inform reputation votes are multifaceted. What we do see, nevertheless, is that the more geographically diverse a university's recognition is – as measured by the number of countries in which they receive at least one reputation vote – the higher the university will typically rank (see Figure 3). The chart and accompanying table show that universities in the top 100 on average receive research reputation votes from academics in over 70 different countries and that this geographic diversity in votes steadily decreases for lower rankings bands.

If we then consider the factors that inform votes in the reputation survey (as reported by academics casting votes in the survey), Figure 4 shows that the top four most important factors are:

- Formal publications (i.e. academics reviewing a university's scholarly output and inferring research excellence from that)
- Having a leadership position in the academic's own speciality
- Reputation for academic excellence
- Interactions had with academics or alumni from the university.

This last factor links to the discussion in the previous chapter about international collaborations. It seems reasonable to suggest that the broader a university's global footprint of research collaborations and partnerships, the more opportunity there is to showcase and build understanding of the research excellence of the university's academics, the excellence of its research facilities and general commitment to academic excellence.



GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY OF REPUTATION VOTES AND RANK IN THE WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2023

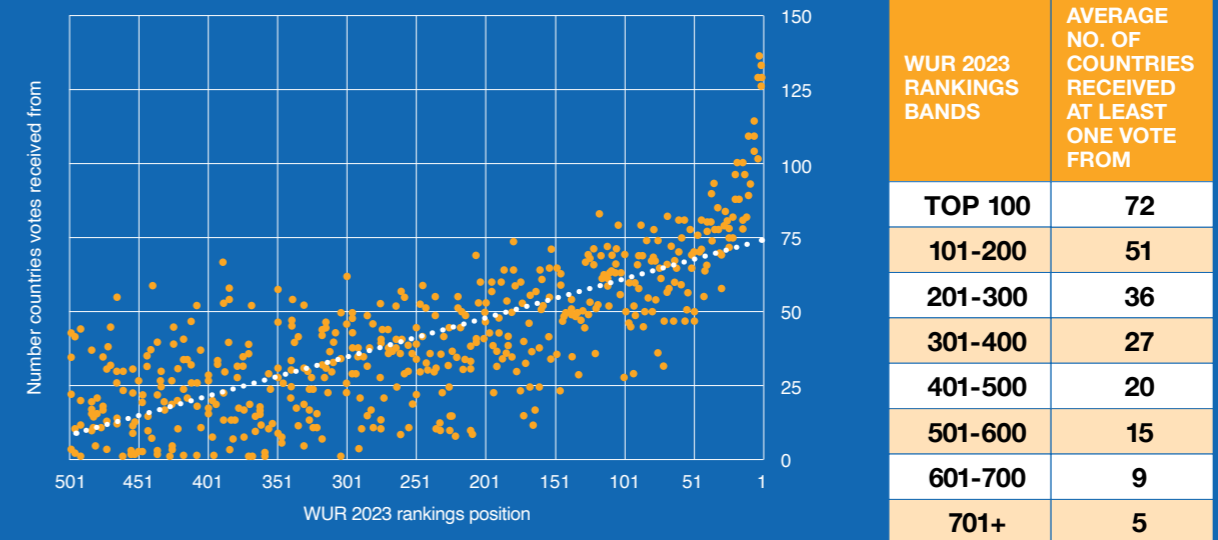


Figure 3

Source: THE World University Rankings 2023

FACTORS INFORMING VOTES IN THE THE ACADEMIC REPUTATION SURVEY 2022

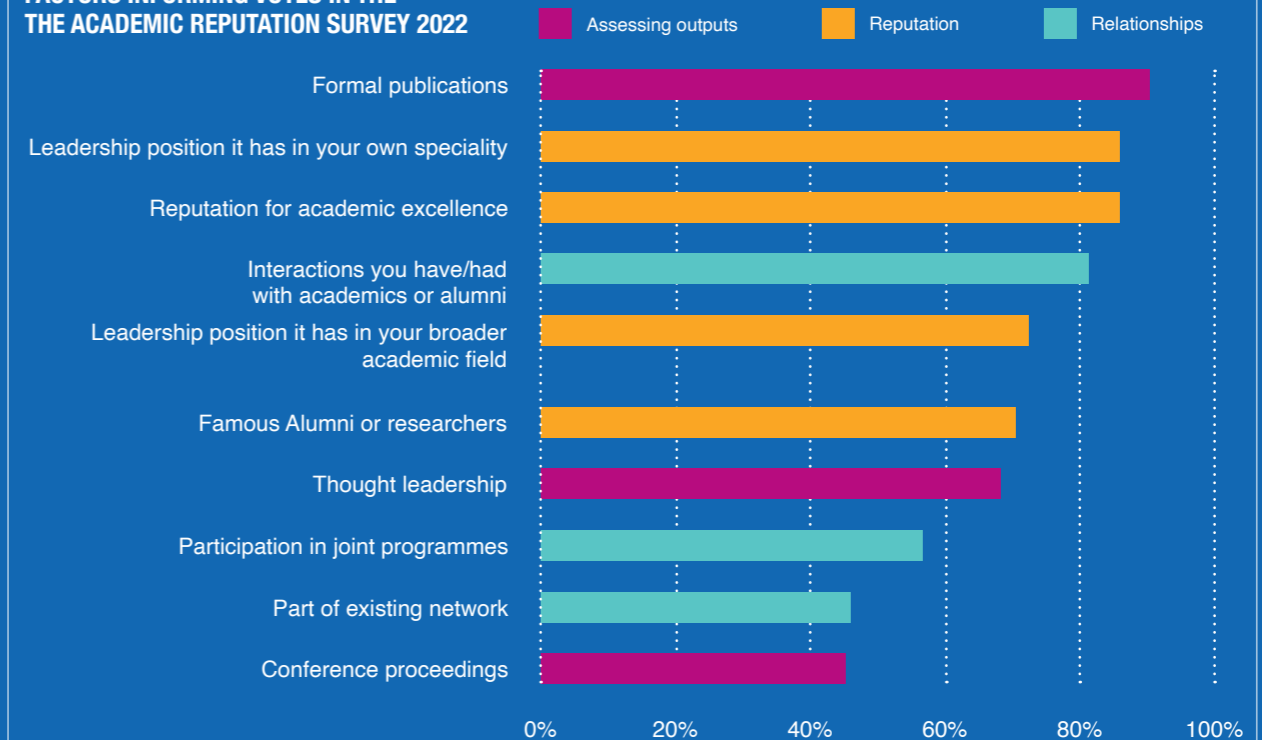


Figure 4

Source: THE Academic Reputation Survey 2022

WHAT DO ACADEMICS LOOK FOR WHEN MOVING JOBS?

Having discussed the importance of international faculty for developing the internationalisation of universities and how it may link to performance in university rankings, the following chapters share insights from surveys conducted by THE which aim to inform efforts to recruit international faculty.

In 2022 Times Higher Education Consultancy conducted a survey of 9,606 research-active academics from around the world. This survey included the question: if you were to consider moving to work at a new university, which of the following are most important to you? As shown in Figure 5, four factors were considered most important by over half of those surveyed:

- Funding opportunities to conduct research (65%)
- Location (62%)
- Salary (62%)
- The quality of research produced by the university's academics (61%)
- Having the desired split of teaching, research and administrative workload (55%)

These factors highlight the importance for hiring institutions to demonstrate how they will support and facilitate their newly recruited academics' research interests through both funding and ensuring a balance between research, teaching and administrative responsibilities.

Interestingly there were some differences in these factors depending on geographic location of the responding academics. Whilst the proportion placing importance on research funding opportunities, salary and quality of research of the university's academics were consistent across geographies, the proportion placing importance on location itself was higher among academics based in Europe, North America and Oceania (ranging from 67% to 72%) compared with academics based in Asia, South America and Africa (ranging from 47% to 49%). There was a similar geographic difference in the proportion placing importance on the split of teaching, research and administrative workloads with this factor deemed more important for academics based in Europe, North America and Oceania (ranging from 58% to 63%) compared with academics based in Asia, South America and Africa (ranging from 39% to 48%).

FACTORS CONSIDERED MOST IMPORTANT WHEN CONSIDERING MOVING TO WORK AT A NEW UNIVERSITY

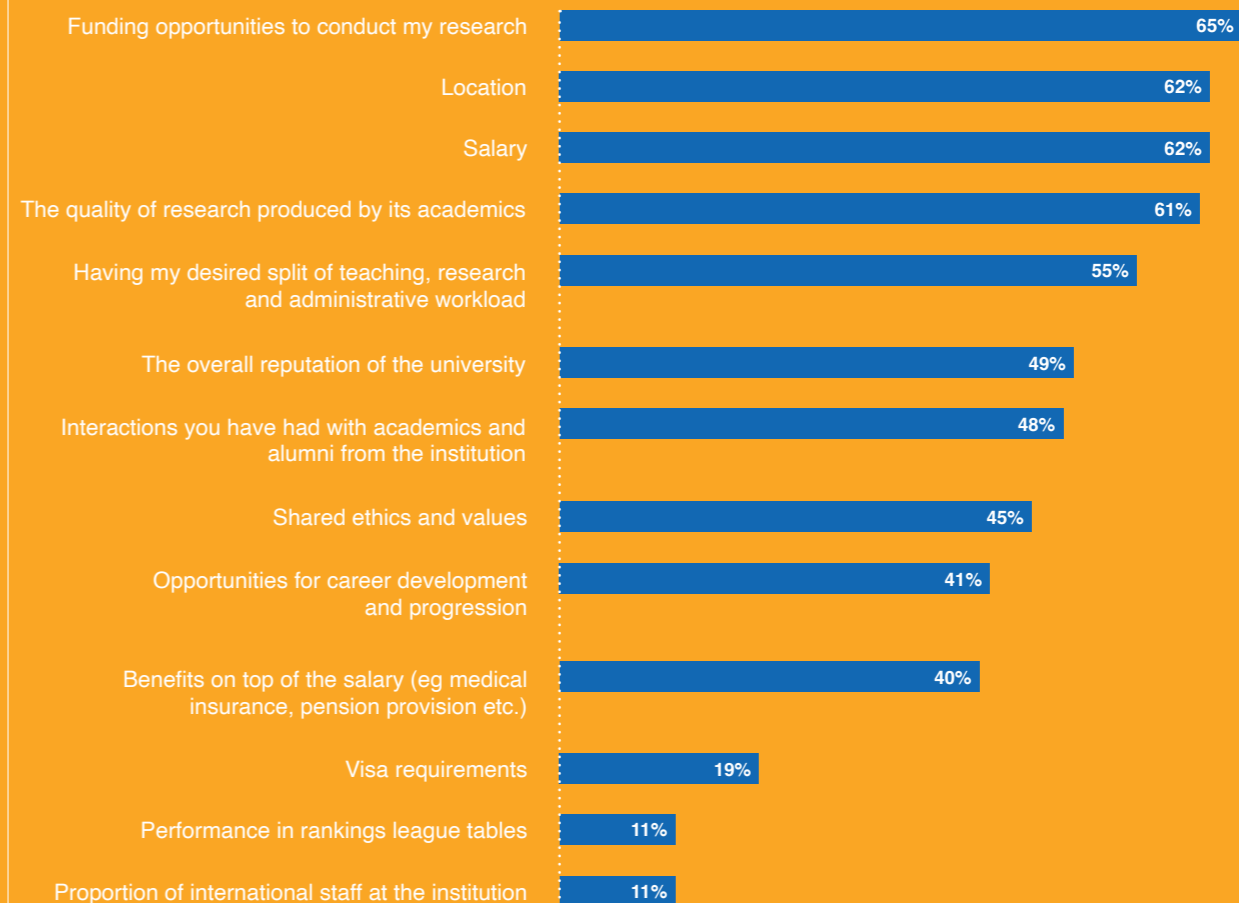


Figure 5

WHAT CAN UNIVERSITIES DO TO RECRUIT INTERNATIONAL FACULTY?

Whilst research among jobseekers in general is widely available, research specifically among academics is less common. To address this gap, in July 2023 Times Higher Education conducted a survey of 1,403 academics who have registered as a jobseeker with THE Unijobs in recent years. (THE Unijobs is a leading source of international university and academic jobs attracting thousands of job-seeking academics every year).

With a focus on providing actionable insight for universities looking to attract international talent, the survey included asking academics what support they would want to see from a university hiring from overseas. As shown in Figure 6, there were five types of support desired by at least two-fifths of the surveyed academics:

- Support with visa applications, including for family members (79%)
- Assistance in finding housing / other accommodation (63%)
- Financial assistance with the costs of moving abroad (49%)
- Support with settling into a new country/culture (43%)
- Support with accessing healthcare (40%)

As with the factors looked for in jobs, there were some differences in the types of support desired depending on geographic location of the responding academics. The proportion desiring support with visa applications was higher among academics based in Africa and Asia (83% and 84% respectively) than it was among academics in Europe, North America and Oceania (ranging from 61% to 77%). On the flip side, support related to housing and accommodation was higher among academics in Europe, North America and Oceania (ranging from 67% to 68%) than it was among academics in Africa and Asia (53% and 59% respectively).

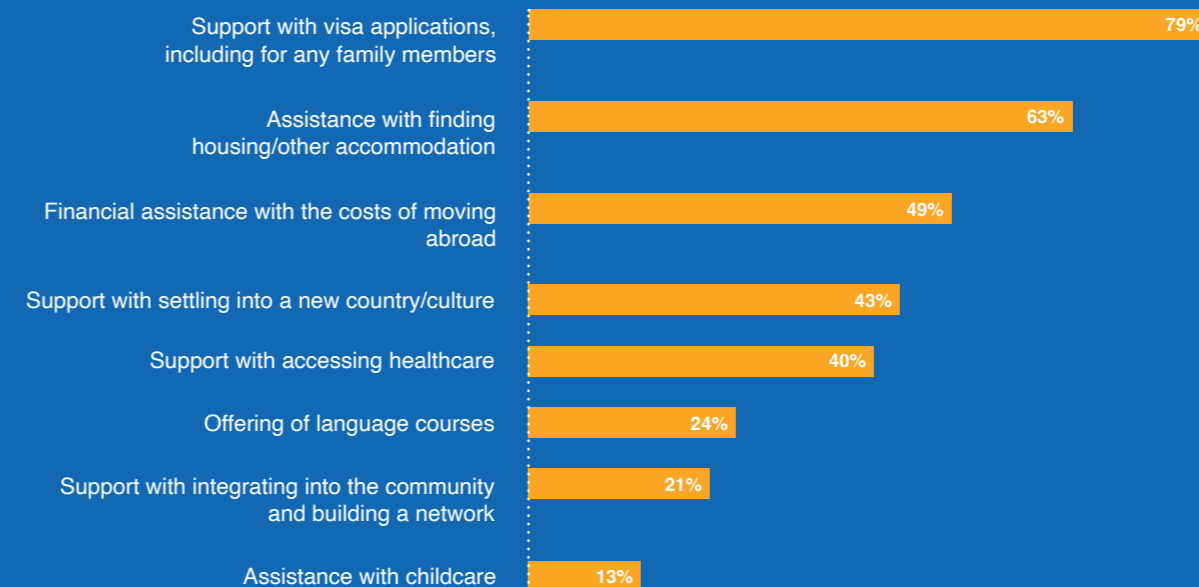
In terms of where job-seeking academics look for new job opportunities, as shown in Figure 7 the most common approach was to search via higher education specific jobs boards (55%). This was followed by around two-fifths utilising their own network (43%), using LinkedIn (43%), turning on alerts from jobs boards (42%) and searching general (non-higher education specific) jobs boards (36%).

The propensity to use these different channels did not differ significantly depending on the geographic location of the responding academics.



WHERE DO ACADEMICS LOOK FOR NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES?

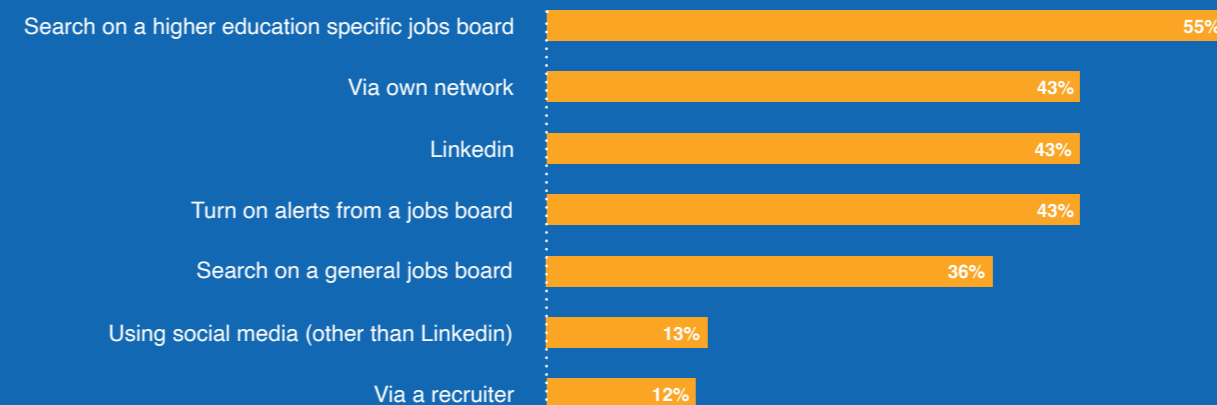
SUPPORT EXPECTED OF UNIVERSITIES WHEN HIRING INTERNATIONAL FACULTY



Source: THE survey of jobseeking academics 2023 (base: 1,403)

Figure 6

WHERE ACADEMICS LOOK FOR NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES



Source: THE survey of jobseeking academics 2023 (base: 1,403)

Figure 7

THE HIRING SOLUTIONS CASE STUDIES

As discussed in the previous chapter, higher education specific jobs boards are a common way for academics to learn about new job opportunities. Times Higher Education's hiring solutions – including jobs listed on THE Unijobs – helps match universities to the right people, with the right skills across academia, leadership and administration. Presented here are two case examples.

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

THE and King's College London (KCL) have held a close working relationship for decades, but it wasn't until January 2018 that a formal partnership was developed in order to meet the institution's growing recruitment needs. KCL was looking for a solution to set them apart from the competition and to drive up their application and appointment rates, while reducing their spend per hire. By creating a unified approach across digital and physical marketing for their annual recruitment drive and allowing them to post ad-hoc and unforeseen vacancies throughout the year, THE were able to help KCL achieve their goals.

Over the next three years this collaboration provided...

- 2000% increase in jobs posted on the THEunijobs platform
- 96% reduction in cost per listing posted on THEunijobs
- 88% increase in application clicks per role leading to a significantly improved appointment rate

Feedback from KCL has been positive: *Since engaging with THE as a subscription partner we have seen an increase in quality candidates coming through our THE advertising campaigns. They have worked closely with us to provide the best package to suit our needs and evolved with us each year we have worked with them. THE have been extremely supportive. They are always on hand to provide quick advice and answer any queries we may have. This includes regular catch ups during the subscription period and statistics on how our subscription is going throughout the year.*

THE's team provide excellent ongoing advice and guidance that has helped us to create not just more cost effective campaigns, but also to build our online presence and reach a wider candidate pool.



HOLLIE JONES
recruitment specialist
King's College London

KING ABDULLAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (KAUST)

THE partner with KAUST across a variety of projects to empower and advance the institution, including data & strategy development, events, global branding and faculty recruitment. Working across such a diverse range of activities has forged a deep understanding and synergised relationship between the two organisations.

One area where this is most prevalent is in academic and post-graduate recruitment. Since first engaging in November 2019 THE have supported KAUST to further diversify their international talent base through active promotion of their roles to THE's global jobseeker community. In the last two years alone KAUST have advertised over 650 roles on THE's recruitment platform THEunijobs

THE and KAUST have enhanced this annual recruitment campaign by developing rich employer content via THE's special projects team and delivering this via digital, social and print media. Over the past two years, this campaign has generated over 150,000 views and 20,000+ applications from applicants in 125 countries.

Located in Saudi Arabia, KAUST is leading institution for scientific and technological education and research. By inspiring discoveries to address global challenges, KAUST strive to serve as a beacon of knowledge that bridges people and cultures for the betterment of humanity.



650 ROLES

KAUST have advertised over **650 roles** on THE's recruitment platform THEunijobs

KAUST's recruitment activity has been amplified by a complimentary adjacent global branding campaign, 'Faculty in Focus'. The KAUST-created campaign has run for four seasons with THE as the ongoing brand partner for each, leveraging a wide range of our comms touchpoints (web, email, social, print) to deliver their bespoke brand assets to highly relevant audiences. KAUST's Faculty in Focus campaign, is a project designed to promote the KAUST brand globally, celebrate their faculty, showcase their work on a global stage, develop an increased sense of community among KAUST academics and attract top national and international students and staff to KAUST..

The Faculty in Focus Spring 2022 Campaign was recognized on a global level as it was awarded a Platinum award for 'Best Online Advertising and Marketing' and a Gold award for 'Best Integrated Marketing and Communications Campaign' at the 'Global Excellence – Marketing and Communications Awards 2022'. The campaign continues to be recognised winning a Bronze CASE Circle of Excellence Award in 2023 in the 'Communications Initiative' category.

-  **Platinum Award | 2022**
Best Online Advertising and Marketing
-  **Gold Award | 2022**
Best Integrated Marketing and Communications Campaign
-  **Bronze Award | 2023**
CASE Circle of Excellence Award

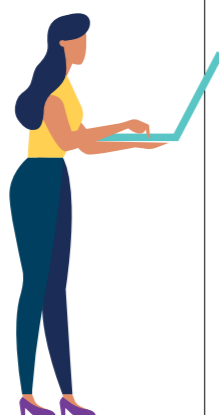
KAUST's submission to these awards noted: "In addition to the phenomenally successful paid and organic social media campaign, a bespoke brand partnership campaign was created with the world's leading Higher Education brand Times Higher Education to further market and advertise KAUST online, through the Faculty in Focus series."



CONCLUSION

The recruitment of international academics often plays a pivotal role in the success and growth of universities worldwide. Recruitment of international faculty helps bring a diverse range of perspectives and expertise to academic institutions, creating a melting pot of unique cultural backgrounds, experiences, and research interests, enriching the academic environment and fostering cross-cultural understanding. This diversity can often help enhance the quality of research, teaching, and collaboration within universities, creating a more vibrant and inclusive intellectual community.

Another benefit of international recruitment is that it can help counter some of the main barriers to international collaboration, namely a lack of opportunity to build interpersonal relationships and lack of existing contacts and networks. Establishing and building a global footprint of deep and meaningful research collaborations can be a building block towards developing and enhancing institutional reputation, fuelling success in international rankings systems such as the THE World University Rankings.



If you would like to learn more about the ways in which THE can help your institution meet its international recruitment needs please contact hiring@timeshighereducation.com



THE Consultancy provides strategic, data-driven guidance to universities, governments and organisations working with the higher education sector globally. Building on our vast sector expertise and long history, we support our partners to build effective and sustainable strategies aligned to their unique mission.

Understanding that all organisations are unique, we combine proprietary and primary data to design customised solutions. Our consultancy practice harnesses *THE*'s strong network in the sector, combining engagement of global stakeholders within our analyses.

Elizabeth Shepherd,
Managing Director, *THE* Consultancy services

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to discuss your recruitment needs.

