

# NCUK Annual Report & Strategic Update 2024/25





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# Forewords

## Letter from the Chair of the Board of Directors

Dear stakeholders,

It is with immense pride that I present NCUK’s impact for the past year, a year that has truly exemplified our commitment to maintaining our global excellence in education and our trajectory of upward strategic growth.

The past year has been transformative for NCUK. In the face of an ever-evolving global education landscape, we have not merely adapted – we have flourished. Our growth in student numbers over the past three years stands as testament to the resilience and relevance of the NCUK educational model. We have strategically expanded our geographical footprint into markets such as Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia and Singapore, bringing our total presence to over 40 countries worldwide.

We are proud that we continue to be a profit-making organisation during challenging times for all in the sector, and we are working hard to ensure we continue to build on our success. Our Board of Directors has worked with the NCUK senior leadership team to ensure that NCUK’s governance and strategic direction remain robust and forward-thinking.

As we look to the future, the Board remains focused on supporting sustainable growth, enhancing our digital capabilities and expanding our academic portfolio. We are confident that our strategic priorities will continue to create value for all our stakeholders – students, study centres, university partners and staff.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to NCUK’s achievements this year: our dedicated staff, our committed study centres, our prestigious university partners, and, most importantly, our ambitious students who trust us with their educational journeys.

We enter the next year with optimism and determination, ready to build upon our successes and embrace new opportunities in international education.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Carl Stychin,**  
Chair of NCUK’s Board of Directors





# Forewords

## Letter from the CEO

Dear friends and partners,

As I reflect on the 2024/25 academic year, I feel a sense of accomplishment on behalf of the whole of NCUK and excitement for what lies ahead. This has been a landmark year for NCUK – one characterised by strategic expansion, innovative thinking and exceptional results, none of which could have been achieved without all of you.

What makes these achievements particularly noteworthy is that they align perfectly with our five-year strategic vision. As we reach the midpoint of this plan, I am pleased that we are not only on track but exceeding many of our ambitious targets. The growth of our university partnerships to over 70 institutions – including 10 ranked in the QS World Top 100 and 21 in the QS World Top 200 in the 2026 QS Rankings – reinforces our position as a top pathway provider for international students seeking world-class higher education. This marks a clear upward trend from the 2025 QS Rankings,

which featured nine partners in the Top 100 and 19 in the Top 200.

The numbers speak volumes: a 23% increase in student enrolments over three years, expansion into significant new markets and growth of our study centre network to over 135 partners worldwide, with more in the pipeline. Over the same period, NCUK's revenue has grown year-on-year, as the company goes from strength to strength. Behind these statistics are countless individual success stories – students embarking on transformative educational journeys, our study centres enhancing their international education offerings, and university partners welcoming students from across the world.

Our organisational transformation has been equally significant. The implementation of our regional hub-and-spoke model, including the establishment of a new staff hub in South Africa, has strengthened our ability to operate efficiently and respond to regional needs. Our successful rebrand has driven over

a 200% year-on-year increase in global brand awareness, not only increasing our visibility but also more accurately reflecting who we are today: a dynamic, forward-thinking organisation. At the same time, we're preparing to launch key digital platforms such as Salesforce and Canvas, which will further modernise how we work, collaborate and deliver value across our global network.

I am also proud of our thought leadership contributions this year. The launch of our sector insights reports – 'The Power of Pathways' and 'Transforming Student Futures' – has positioned NCUK as not just a provider of educational services but as a knowledge leader in our field. These publications sparked important conversations about the future of international education and the critical role of pathway programmes in enhancing global student mobility.

As we look ahead, we are focused on four key strategic priorities: advancing our digital transformation, expanding

our programme offerings, diversifying our revenue streams and continuing our strategic global growth. Each of these initiatives is designed to enhance the value we deliver to our stakeholders while ensuring NCUK's long-term sustainability and impact.

None of these achievements would be possible without the extraordinary efforts of our staff, the trust of our study centres and university partners and the ambition of our students. It is this collaborative ecosystem that makes NCUK not just successful but truly special.

Thank you for your continued support of NCUK.

**Stuart Smith,**  
Chief Executive  
Officer at NCUK





# Who we are

NCUK is a leading global pathway provider. Our university pathway programmes are developed in collaboration with top universities to ensure the highest-quality educational experience. We partner with schools, colleges, universities, governments and investors globally to create successful pathways for students both locally and internationally.

Each year, we welcome students from over 120 nationalities, enabling seamless progression to our network of university partners worldwide.

At NCUK, our students are at the heart of everything we do. Our pathway programmes are meticulously crafted to prepare students for success at university and beyond, transforming their futures.

We are proud to share that over 70% of NCUK International Foundation Year (IFY) students and 89% of International Year One (IYOne) students achieve a 2:1 or higher at university, demonstrating the strength of our academic preparation and the transformative impact we have on their futures.

To date, we have successfully guided more than 50,000 students to university, and our programmes are currently delivered through our Study Centre partners in 135+ locations across 40+ countries. This extensive network supports students on their educational journeys to more than 70 top-ranked university partners, including 10 institutions in the QS World Top 100, across some of the world's most popular study destinations.

## Strategic goals and five-year objectives

As we reach the midpoint of our five-year strategic plan, we are proud to report significant progress across our key objectives:

### What we've achieved:

- ✓ Expansion to over 40 countries with a diverse Study Centre network.
- ✓ Growth of university partnerships to more than 70 institutions.
- ✓ Record-breaking student enrolment, with 23% growth over three years.
- ✓ Enhanced brand recognition following our successful rebrand last November.
- ✓ An established thought leadership position through industry reports and insights.

### Our plans moving forward:

- ✓ Continue our digital transformation journey to enhance service delivery.
- ✓ Expand our academic portfolio with new programme offerings.
- ✓ Diversify revenue streams through innovative services.
- ✓ Drive strategic growth in both established and emerging markets.
- ✓ Further strengthen our global network to enhance international student mobility.





# Key achievements

This year has marked a period of exceptional growth and strategic accomplishment for NCUK. We have experienced:

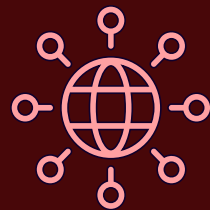


## Student number growth:

We've experienced a 23% increase in student numbers across our pathway programmes worldwide over the past three years.

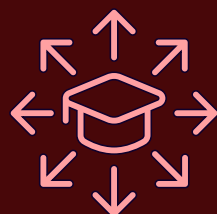
## Study centre network expansion:

Our study centre network has expanded to over 40 countries, with successful new market launches in four countries this year.



## Increase in university partnerships:

Our university partner network has grown to over 70 institutions, including 10 ranked in the QS World Top 100 and 21 in the QS World Top 200 (QS World University Rankings 2026).



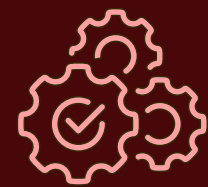
## Brand transformation:

The successful relaunch of our brand has resulted in more than a 200% year-on-year increase in global brand awareness.



## Launch of new services:

We've developed new services for our university partners, including marketing services, our NCUK+ offer and staffing support overseas.

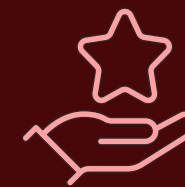


## Organisational structure change:

Implementation of a new organisational structure with investment in core roles across our regional hub-and-spoke model, including the establishment of a new staff hub in South Africa.

## Greater stakeholder satisfaction:

A year-on-year increase in key performance metrics for satisfaction across all stakeholder groups – students, study centres and university partners.





# NCUK university partners

## Partner network

NCUK collaborates with over **70** prestigious university partners worldwide.

QS World Top 100

























View more information



We are pleased to welcome the following higher education institutions to our partner network in 2024/25:

- Brock University
  - Toronto Metropolitan University
  - Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia
  - University of Ottawa
  - University of Leicester
- University of Regina
  - University of Sussex
  - Newcastle University
  - Swansea University
  - International College of Liberal Arts at Yamanashi Gakuin University

As a leading provider of university pathway programmes, NCUK offers substantial value to our university partners through:



Access to a diverse pool of well-prepared international students



Comprehensive academic preparation aligned with university standards



A centralised contact point and direct, verified results to streamline admissions



Global visibility through our extensive marketing and recruitment networks



TNE solutions for international campuses where appropriate

Our partnerships are built on mutual benefit, ensuring that both universities and students achieve their goals.

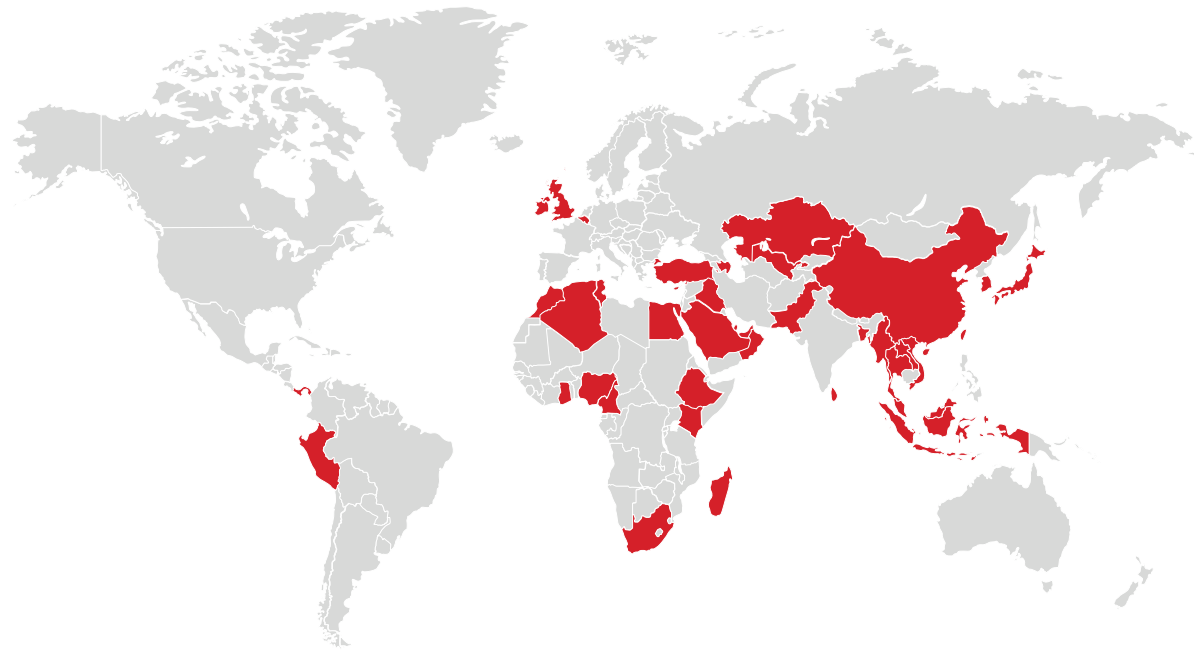




# NCUK study centres

## Global network

NCUK operates through a network of accredited study centres spanning over **40** countries across multiple continents.



## New study centres

In 2024/25, we welcomed the following new study centres to our network:


- Africa:**  
Six new centres, including in Algeria, Cameroon, Kenya and Nigeria.
- Central Asia:**  
Two centres in Kazakhstan.
- East Asia:**  
22 centres in China and one in Taiwan, marking significant growth in the region.
- Middle East:**  
Two centres in Iraq.
- South Asia:**  
One centre in Pakistan and one in Sri Lanka.
- South East Asia:**  
Six centres across Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.
- The Americas:**  
One centre in Panama.
- UK & Europe:**  
Six centres, including new partners in Malta, Turkey and the UK.


For a full list of all our study centre partners across the world visit our website



# Student outcomes and achievements

Our commitment to student success is reflected in the fact that:

  
**89%\***  
of NCUK students who progress to university achieve a 2:1 or higher in their degree

  
**50,000+**  
students have successfully progressed to university through NCUK pathways.



Globally, **94%** of students express confidence in studying an NCUK pathway programme and its ability to enhance their career prospects, representing a 5% increase from last year.

\*Data taken from 2020/21 cohort who studied the International Foundation Year and International Year One and progressed to NCUK University Partners.



# Looking to the future

## Strategic priorities

As we look to the coming year, NCUK will focus on four key strategic priorities:

### 1. Advancing digital transformation

Technology is a critical enabler of NCUK's mission and strategic priorities. Over the past year, we have strengthened our digital ecosystem and laid the foundations for a cloud-first approach that will enhance how we operate, support our partners and deliver value to students worldwide.

Our core suite now includes systems for people management, finance and commercial operations, contract lifecycle management and collaboration with secure communications. Together, these tools provide a strong platform for our operations.

Looking ahead, we are advancing our digital transformation through:

- ✓ **NCUK Connect (Salesforce Education Cloud):**  
Enabling improved engagement and visibility across our global network
- ✓ **NCUK Learn (Canvas VLE):**  
Delivering a modern, cloud-based learning environment for students worldwide
- ✓ **Data and Business Intelligence:**  
Establishing a centralised analytics platform to support evidence-based decision-making
- ✓ **AI-enabled services:**  
The development of an AI strategy, led by the CIO and supported by external expertise. This will focus on streamlining operations and creating efficiencies from 2026/27 onwards, with a measured and pragmatic approach.

Alongside these initiatives, we remain focused on resilience and assurance. In 2025, NCUK achieved Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation, demonstrating our commitment to robust cyber security. We will continue to evolve our security and compliance capabilities to safeguard our data, systems and stakeholders.

Together, these initiatives underpin our commitment to being a cloud-first, secure and digitally innovative organisation, well positioned to support our global community into the future.

### 2. Expanding programme offerings

- ✓ Continuing development of new pathway programmes
- ✓ Reviewing existing qualifications to ensure ongoing relevance and quality
- ✓ Aligning academic offerings with emerging industry trends and university requirements

### 3. Diversifying revenue streams

- ✓ Launching targeted marketing services to connect universities with qualified students
- ✓ Developing our NCUK+ offer for university partners
- ✓ Rolling out NCUK's global staffing service to support universities with international recruitment

### 4. Strategic global growth

- ✓ Targeted expansion across Africa, Europe and Asia
- ✓ Strengthening our presence in established markets
- ✓ Exploring opportunities in emerging markets such as Brunei, the Philippines, Nepal, India, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Rwanda and Brazil



# Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Northern Consortium and its member universities.







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