



Press release
20 July 2011

English Language sector worth more than previously thought

Teaching English to international students earned almost £2bn for the UK in 2008-09, according to new research commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

This research excluded state sector colleges and universities which teach English to overseas students and so the real figure for that year is likely to be considerably higher.

The report says that one reason these figures are significantly higher than previous estimates is the "large and increasing number of students in more recent years" and also "differences in the duration of stay". It estimates a total value of UK education exports at just over £14bn.

"This is a higher figure than we have previously dared to use, and it underpins the vital importance of this sector to the UK's balance of payments," said Tony Millns, Chief Executive of English UK, which represents more than 450 fully-accredited language schools.

He added: "This demonstrates yet again that the Government needs to act with real caution in its desire to cut the number of overseas students coming in to the UK. Attacking those coming to study English risks not only the income and international reputation benefits to this sector, but also the much larger market for international students in our universities which is fed by language students."

The report, written by Dr Gavan Conlon, Annabel Litchfield and Greg Sadlier of London Economics for BIS, estimates the total value of ELT education exports for 2008/9 at £1,996.2 million, part of a total UK education total of £14.1 billion. This is made up of £879.5m in tuition fees and £1,116m on living expenses, travel and entertainment.

The report, called, Estimating the Value to the UK of Education Exports, was commissioned by BIS to help it understand the UK's global share of education-related activities and growth potential over the next ten years and beyond in order to formulate a "supportive policy framework to allow Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) and associated business sectors to increase their income from overseas and attract more foreign direct investment, contributing to the economic growth of the United Kingdom economy."

It suggests that the overall market will grow consistently to 2025. "The analysis suggests that from the current baseline of £14.1 billion, the value of the education-related export market might be approximately £21.5 billion in 2020 and £26.6 billion in 2025 (both in 2008/09 prices). This represents an annual growth rate of approximately 4.0% per annum in real terms."

However, the report assumes a lower growth rate of 3.2 per cent per annum for the EL sector, creating a market worth £1,456m in fees and £1,849 in other spending in 2025, a total of £3,304m.

Language schools responding to a survey said visa issues were the main threat to the sector, and an analysis of prospects in the report notes among potential weaknesses that: "HM Government policy could be more friendly to overseas students."

Notes to Editors

1. English UK is the world's leading language teaching association, with more than 450 accredited centres in membership. It covers university and further education college language departments, international study centres in independent schools, educational trusts and charities, and private sector colleges. English UK is a UK registered charity (www.englishuk.com).
2. For further comment please contact Tony Millns at English UK on 07976511439 or email tony@englishuk.com .