

Journeys to Internationalisation in Higher Education

Insights for collaboration
between the United Kingdom
and Brazil

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We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications.

DOI code: Krause, M., Crispi, P., Gobo, M., & Santos, P. (2025). *Journeys to Internationalisation in Higher Education. Insights for collaboration between the United Kingdom and Brazil*. British Council. <https://doi.org/10.57884/XJKD-7T58>

Contents

Editorial message A journey that is worth every step	4
	Introduction Fostering internationalisation of higher education in Brazil
Section 1 International education	9
	Timeline Internationalisation initiatives of the British Council in Brazil
Section 2 Research collaboration	34
	Section 3 Gender equality in higher education
Section 4 The UK-BR Mission in October 2024	60



A journey that is worth every step

With a vision of contributing to more connected and inclusive education systems, the British Council is committed to supporting the internationalisation of HE institutions, engaging in a multilevel dialogue across the sector and bridging institutional and policy partnerships with the UK. Our current Going Global Partnerships programme backs this vision and amplifies joint efforts in the country, grounded on the notions of internationalisation, partnerships and system strengthening. The CAPES-PrInt programme was an initial milestone for our wide engagement in internationalisation processes in Brazil and since then, we've been able to support, discuss and co-develop relevant capacities and partnerships for this aim.

All Brazilian universities participating in our Universities for the World programme (2017-2021) were considered in the CAPES-PrInt scheme and over 13 UK-Brazil partnerships, including trilateral and consortia arrangements, have emerged or developed because of the programme. By reinforcing research collaboration, we have been able to advance on different fronts across STEM areas, gender equality, English proficiency and its implications for internationalisation at home, beyond traditional forms of mobility. We have also engaged with priorities and evolving processes and are excited to continue contributing to current internationalisation visions, opportunities and alignments under the upcoming CAPES Global.

Our flagship Women in STEM programme is also a testament of shared vision and learnings applied to institutional and system partnerships. Using a life cycle approach and evidence-based insights to support women across the pillars of Inspiration, Performance, Recognition and Influence, we are now celebrating some glimpses of success. As a result of joint work involving over 50 Brazil and UK HEIs (Gender Equality Partnerships 2021–22) Brazil has now its first Gender Equality Framework (GEF). This tool, inspired by the UK's Athena Swan Charter is a catalyst for capacity building contributing to a more diverse HE and Science ecosystem.

At the system level, as a channel to streamline the GEF and join up measures to support diversity across the sector, we've also influenced the creation of a national Working Group for Gender Equality and Diversity in HE and Science launched in 2024. The WG is comprised by the British Council, CAPES, CNPq, CONFAP and MEC with expressed interest of federal sector associations in joining as members. The British Council holds the secretariat while CNPq is presiding it for the first year. Both HEI's partnerships and this system level WG reflect key steps in institutional commitments to recognise the contributions of women in STEM, promote career progression and scientific advancement within all its richness, power and diversity.



Also in 2024, we hosted an academic and intergovernmental mission from the UK in Brazil. The delegation which consisted of government representatives (Department for Education - DfE, Department for Business and Trade - DBT, The Science and Innovation Network - SIN, UK's international Education Champion), and Pro Vice-Chancellors and Directors from six UK universities, confirmed the UK's commitment to advance on purposeful, strategic and sustainable partnerships with Brazil.

The aforementioned programmes and processes are examples of some steps in these journeys to internationalisation. These and other initiatives are shared in this report and organised in three areas, which can also be read as our main strategic pillars around thematic challenges: (1) internationalisation of higher education (combining initiatives

around mobility, internationalisation at home and transnational education - TNE), (2) research collaboration, and gender equality, diversity and inclusion. The final section of the report compiles some of the exchanges, key messages and recommendations from the week of the mission, a rich programme covering all three areas outlined above.

Connecting UK and Brazilian HEIs and systems to forge impacts on strategic partnerships, research collaboration and internationalisation processes is an enriching and gratifying journey. We invite you to join us and learn more about local contexts and opportunities between Brazil and the UK and the road to unlocking, growing and celebrating the potential and outcomes of this collaboration and meaningful partnership.

Diana Daste,
Cultural Engagement Lead
for the British Council in Brazil



Introduction



Fostering internationalisation of higher education in Brazil

Universities are the birthplace of qualified discussions, concepts and innovations which pave the way to knowledge and new possibilities. Increasing quality in higher education leads to economic growth and supports the incubation of processes, products and leadership to address global challenges and help to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Internationalising and raising the quality of higher education is a shared endeavour between universities, governments and institutes across the sector, and the British Council plays a key role in it.

We contribute to opening paths for students and academics abroad by increasing mobility and enabling partnerships and regulatory environments, thus generating relevant knowledge on internationalisation to advance on impactful collaboration and international life-changing experiences.

We open dialogues to identify commonalities, discussing challenges and opportunities for a more inclusive and internationally connected tertiary education and research systems. The ever-changing scenario and the exchange of knowledge around the world also demand new and innovative ideas and ways to remove barriers and increase a country's ability to grow within priorities and its capacities.

The British Council is supporting an environment for international education in Brazil, working on internationalisation strategies, growing research collaboration, supporting transnational education (TNE), connecting institutions on joint action plans and opening the discussions about gender equality and diversity in the sector. This focus on internationalisation embraces new models, relying on qualified research to map and understand where different institutions might act regarding internationalisation, gathering data, reflecting and understanding key issues and opportunities to influence beneficial outcomes.



Representatives of six UK universities and the British government started the UK-BR Mission in Sao Paulo, at the Brazilian British Centre. @ Rodolfo Rizzo



Globally, the British Council envisions the future of higher education and internationalisation more broadly, as a space where institutions respond to the opportunities of the local and global contexts, being that policy, industry, or academia itself. In Brazil, our strategy is constructed around three thematic pillars:



Internationalisation of higher education

as a long-standing commitment in the country, understanding the internationalisation at home goals and connecting processes and opportunities with UK priorities, including transnational education (TNE), mobility and governance.



Research collaborations,

understanding and supporting key links and collaborations to make academic and scientific links stronger and more impactful for the UK and Brazil. This includes outlining and understanding common strategic priorities and bridging resources into these.



Gender equality and diversity

as a cross-cutting element in terms of values and practices in higher education. Partnerships, research and collaborations grounded on diversity and inclusion are richer in their contributions and impact. There is also strong potential to grow links between like-minded institutions to share learnings, embed best practices and leverage resources.

Higher education institutions can and should be connected globally in ways that are impactful for their socioeconomic context, but that are also inclusive and responsive to their own institutional needs.

Diana Daste, Cultural Engagement Lead, British Council Brazil



Section 1

International Education





Benefits of internationalisation of higher education and the pursuit of quality

There is widespread awareness of the need to democratise internationalisation and make it more inclusive. A recent study commissioned by the British Council about transnational education (TNE) in Brazil obtained insights from focus groups and interviews and observed this awareness amongst both public and private HEIs. A shared priority is therefore ‘to reinforce internationalisation at home’, so as ‘to provide opportunities for those students who are not yet able to travel or engage in mobility’, widening exposure to an international education to ‘socially vulnerable students’.

In broad terms there are several ways in which internationalisation happens, namely: internationalisation at home and internationalisation abroad.

Internationalisation at home (IaH) internationalises student experience through increased international student recruitment or introducing an international dimension in the curriculum. In the opinion of representatives of Brazilian HEIs, it also includes supporting the education and development of graduates with global competencies and skills, ensuring that ‘students graduate with a global education’.

Providers have also been looking at pursuing **internationalisation abroad**. One of the mechanisms for this is via **transnational education (TNE): education delivered in a**

country other than the country in which the awarding institution is based, e.g. students based in country Y study at an institution in country Y for a degree from a university that is originally from country Z. The United Kingdom higher education TNE is delivered through (a) online/distance learning, (b) local delivery partnerships (franchise, joint and dual degrees, twinning arrangements, validation and quality arrangements) or (c) a UK institution’s physical presence in another country (branch campus, study centre or through flying faculty)¹.

Both forms of internationalisation, ‘at home’ and ‘abroad’, can bring significant benefits. Internationalisation at home can, for example, help education providers ensure their students are equipped with the understanding, competencies, knowledge, and skills required to contribute and thrive in our increasingly interconnected global knowledge societies. Internationalisation abroad, on the other hand, can support HEIs in widening access to quality international education to learners who might be unwilling or unable to travel long distances or for long periods of time. This, in turn, helps to meet the education and training needs of different communities whilst limiting brain drain and contributing to the internationalisation of national and regional education systems².

1 [What is UK higher education transnational education?](#), Universities UK, 2024.

2 The Future of Internationalization of Higher Education in Europe, in *International Higher Education*, Issue 83, H. De Wit & F. Hunter, 2015.



Potential benefits of internationalisation include³:

- expanded student admissions
- enhanced institutional visibility
- improved teaching and research quality
- increased funding opportunities
- broader international cooperation networks and partnership access to cutting-edge information and research networks
- heightened visibility for researchers and projects
- entry into new educational markets
- bolstered institutional image
- assistance in national and international rankings
- enhancement of institutional evaluation indicators

International student mobility

Over the past two decades, Latin America accounted for approximately 1 per cent of the internationally mobile students in the UK. The peak in mobility from Brazil in 2015 was driven by the country's Science without Borders programme. In that year 1,495 new Brazilian students came to the UK⁴.

Internationalisation at home and TNE in Brazil



Courses delivered through
**English as a medium of
instruction (EMI)**

1,000+ courses
in 2018 (first semester)



TNE provided by UK
HEIs in 2021-22 reached

750 students

3 Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. Journal of Studies & International Education, Volume 8, 5–31, J. Knight, 2004.

4 [The state of the relationship: mapping UK Higher Education engagement with Brazil](#), Universities UK International, 2019.



challenges faced by Brazilian HEIs

Internationalisation leverages the exchange of knowledge, strengthens research networks and institutional collaboration, and leads to a cultural exchange that promotes the prosperity of the nations involved. In Brazil, there are important challenges to the fuller realisation and acceptance of this potential. The challenges relate to different dimensions, benefits, and opportunities associated with internationalisation in its different forms.

In Brazil, one of the greatest barriers of internationalisation is the extremely lengthy process of recognition of qualifications when students return to the country. This impacts students with higher education qualifications from non-Brazilian institutions. There is a gap in recognising different education systems or different learning modalities (such as online learning or TNE collaborative partnerships), as well as a lack of capacity to engage with different internationalisation activities. This limits the growth and progressive impacts of internationalisation⁵. To address this, conversations to identify partnership models that manage these gaps have been developing. Some avenues include TNE partnerships with double degrees and a stronger focus on strategic internationalisation plans.

Given the market trends, post-pandemic context and low prioritisation on funding streams, TNE is in a relatively early stage of development in Brazil. The British Council is supporting this agenda by channelling

knowledge, resources, and connections to grow TNE collaboration. 'In 2023 we launched the HE Connects Call, alongside the British Council Mexico and currently operate the Global TNE call, connecting institutions on joint action plans and supporting the growth of existing relationships into TNE offer. The 2023 call acknowledged that we must plant these seeds for them to stem into forms of TNE, and by analysing the results we are excited to understand and confirm strategies to advance these models', explains Diana Daste, Cultural Engagement Lead at the British Council in Brazil.

Focus groups and interviews underpinning the TNE commissioned study have shed light on key themes through which Brazilian HEIs and policy makers understand and prioritise international collaboration. Regarding barriers, the analysis of the conversations held with public and private HEIs highlighted five focus areas:

- English language competence
- Funding for outward mobility and TNE partnerships
- Qualification recognition practice
- Regulation about TNE
- Capacity for online learning

5 The Future of Internationalization of Higher Education in Europe, in International Higher Education, Issue 83, H. De Wit & F. Hunter, 2015.



Internationalisation at home and digital learning in focus

‘Brazil has been aiming to prioritise internationalisation at home. That would mean bringing foreign students and professors to Brazil, thinking about that as a more cost-effective way than sending a high number of students abroad, and also as a way to provide a cultural exchange and a lot of different experiences to our students. And this is all related to an idea of strengthening and promoting the capacities of our national universities.’

The observation above was made by an expert involved in one of the focus groups to gain insights into transnational education (TNE) and internationalisation within Brazil’s higher education landscape. Findings also show that a widely shared priority among HEI representatives is ‘to improve the English fluency of students and professors’, to support the development of academic partnerships with international universities and facilitate international student mobility, both inward and outward. Conversations with policy makers pointed out similar priorities:

- Strengthening the internationalisation of postgraduate studies and Brazilian research
- Increasing outward mobility for Brazilian undergraduates
- Increasing the number of international students coming to Brazil
- Facilitating internationalisation at home

The language barrier remains a challenge in the country. In 2018-2019, the British Council launched an English Collaboration Call supporting partnerships aimed at understanding and improving language policies in Brazilian HEIs. Work was delivered along the lines of: 1) English language policies at the institutional level as a main component of the internationalisation process, and 2) Improving English language teaching and learning in the public school system at lower and upper secondary levels. The collaboration linked language specialists and researchers from important universities in Brazil with renowned UK HEIs; the results are presented on the report [Framing English language applied research](#) (2020).

EMI and Internationalisation at home

The growing offer of courses in English by universities to domestic as well as international students motivated the [2016 Guide to English as a Medium of Instruction](#) (EMI) in Brazilian Higher Education Institutions, published by the British Council in partnership with FAUBAI. This map was updated with [a second edition in 2019](#), presenting the structures and trends in EMI across Brazil. The numbers show the increasing importance of the internationalisation at home agenda: courses jumped from 671 in 2016 to over 1,000 in the first semester of 2018.

Mastering the English language is also key in this era of accelerated digital transformation, where technology plays an increasingly critical role across the HE landscape and where traditional modes of internationalisation based on student mobility have evolved. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly leveraging online platforms and digital technology to support ‘internationalisation at home’ strategies capable of offering a broader range of students an international experience without geographical constraints. Similarly, ‘internationalisation abroad’ activities are increasingly embedding digital learning and hybrid modes of delivery to support and complement more traditional, in-person forms of TNE operations. These include international branch campuses and academic partnerships, which open new frontiers for international collaboration⁶.



6 The Future of Internationalization of Higher Education in Europe, in International Higher Education, Issue 83, H. De Wit & F. Hunter, 2015.



Transnational education: a global strategy

As stated before, transnational education (TNE) is defined⁷ as education delivered in a country other than the one in which the awarding institution is based – i.e., students from country Y study at an institution in country Y for a degree from a university that is originally from country Z. The UK higher education sector has been at the forefront of global growth in TNE (see *data on next page*). Most UK universities are involved in overseas delivery. The type of TNE activities pursued is determined by their strategic global engagement priorities, but also by the operating and regulatory context in the partner countries. Most UK universities work with local partners (usually a university or college) to deliver their programmes.

The Transnational Education Strategy defined by the British Council for 2023–25 serves as a tool to guide knowledge sharing and engagement between key stakeholders.

There are four key actions outlined in the strategy:

Action

1

Contribute to better data and insight on UK TNE.

Action

3

Contribute to a better understanding of the local context and facilitate a regulatory and operational environment to best support TNE partnerships.

Action

2

Create an enabling environment for TNE in other countries and promote the quality of UK TNE internationally.

Action

4

Support TNE, to contribute to the transformation of local education systems and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

7 [What is UK higher education transnational education?](#), Universities UK, 2024.



UK TNE at the forefront



228
countries and
territories

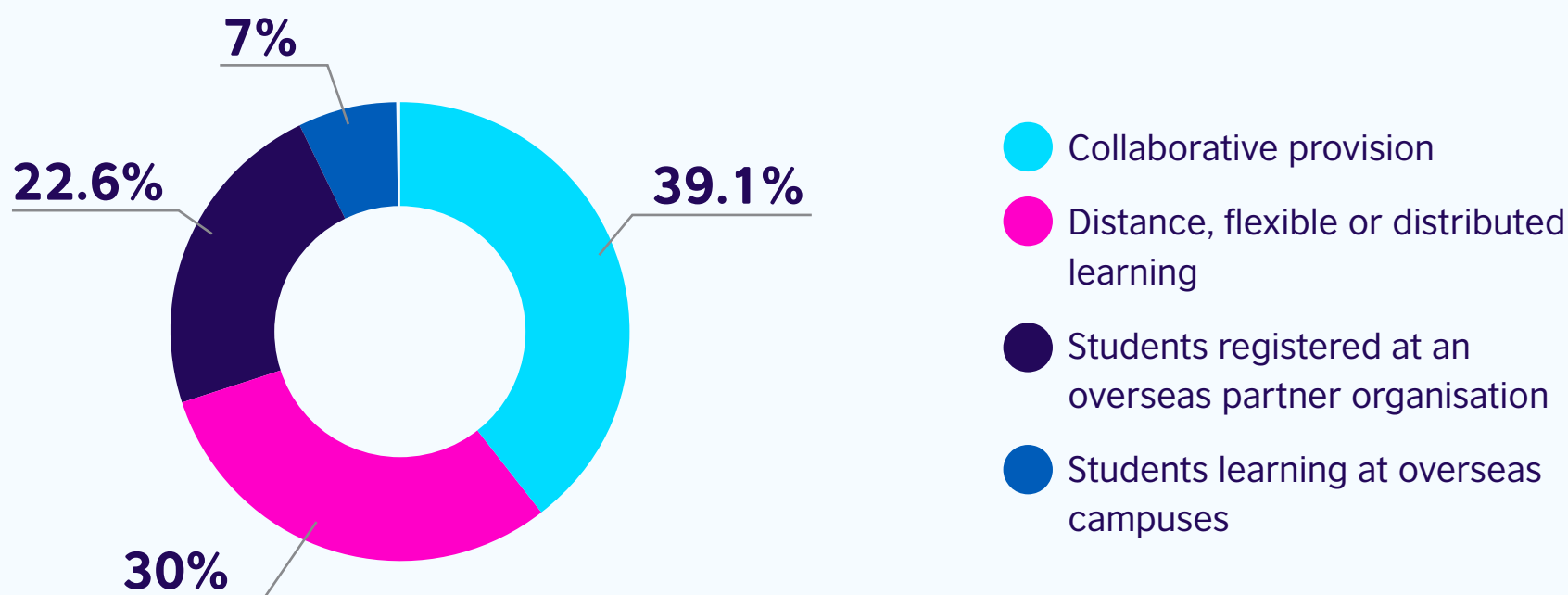


510,835
TNE students



12.7%
increase,
record growth in
2020-2021,
compared to
2019-2020

Study models



Source: [The scale of UK higher education transnational education 2020-21](#), Universities UK International (UUKi) and the British Council.

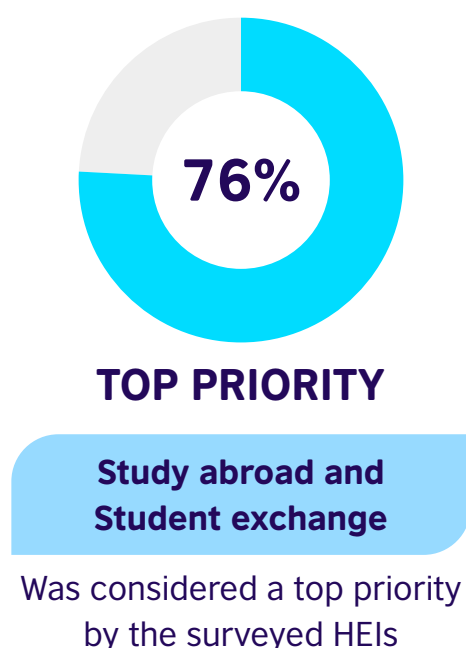
Opportunities for TNE in Brazil

Considering the three main components of internationalisation of higher education (IHE) – international student mobility, research collaboration and transnational education partnerships, the study suggests that the first two are already listed as priorities by Brazilian HEIs (see *box on this page*), while TNE is still on its initial steps. Compared with the rest of the world, TNE partnerships between the UK and Latin America remain limited, with only 0.6 per cent of UK TNE students active in South America. Across the region, Mexico is the most active country, with almost 900 TNE students⁸ in 2021–22; Brazil was home to 750 TNE students in the same academic year. The dominant TNE delivery mechanisms are distance learning and online education⁹. These accounted for 84 per cent of TNE in

Brazil. The main forms of qualifications are via dual degrees and TNE is most frequent at postgraduate level.

As stated in the Latin America report¹⁰, national stakeholders perceive TNE as a vehicle to achieve greater internationalisation of higher education. Additional benefits include the development of regions and local communities. TNE made a valuable contribution to provide courses that did not exist in some regions, strengthened links and capacity building for the local market, and helped retain talent and prevent brain drain (because students settled where they graduated). In addition to this, HEIs can access funding resources for projects that benefit society, since the national government prioritises socioeconomic development.

Priorities for HEIs in Brazil



Source: [Brief report - Globalising Higher Education: TNE Models and Regulatory Insights in Latin America](#), British Council, 2024.

8 [Brief report - Globalising Higher Education: TNE Models and Regulatory Insights in Latin America](#), British Council, 2024.

9 UK Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA's) Aggregate Offshore Record.

10 The landscape of transnational education and mutual recognition of qualifications in Latin America, TNE Americas: Brazil, British Council, 2024.



TNE Models

Understanding the multiple ways to provide transnational education is key to plan the best strategy for partnerships between institutions that suit the higher education system, as well as the social and academic context of the country.

Model of transnational education		Characteristics	Risks	Benefits
Autonomous	Branch campus	A physical campus established in a foreign country by a foreign institution, offering programmes that lead to a degree or qualification from the home institution	High costs, regulatory compliance, cultural differences and potential for exploitation	Access to high-quality education, exposure to different cultures, and increased institutional reputation
	Distance learning and online provision	Programmes delivered online or through other remote learning forms allow students to study from anywhere in the world without physically attending classes	Limited face-to-face interaction, potential for cheating, lack of motivation	Flexible learning options, access to diverse academic resources, reduced costs
Locally supported	Franchise	A local institution in a foreign country licences the name and academic programmes of a foreign institution, delivering these programmes to students through the foreign institution’s branding	Lack of institutional control, quality assurance challenges, and potential for exploitation	Access to high-quality education, exposure to different cultures, and increased institutional reputation
	Blended learning	A foreign institution offering its programmes through a blended learning model supported by a local institution or institutions	Limited control over the quality of tutorial and teaching support, challenges in the coordination of the blended learning model	Improved student engagement and experience in comparison with stand alone distance learning or online provision

Model of transnational education		Characteristics	Risks	Benefits
Collaborative	Joint degree programme	Partnership between two or more institutions in different countries, where students earn a single degree that is awarded jointly by the participating institutions	Quality assurance challenges, compatibility of academic systems, resource constraints	Access to diverse academic resources, exposure to different cultures, increased employability
	Dual degree programme	A programme that allows students to earn two degrees from different institutions in different countries, often requiring them to spend time studying at both institutions	Resource constraints, compatibility of academic systems, quality assurance challenges	Exposure to diverse academic resources, increased employability, enhanced language skills

Source: Knight, J. and J. McNamara (2017), Transnational education: A classification framework and data collection guidelines for international programme and provider mobility. Report for the British Council & DAAD (2017) – Table 5. Summary of TNE Models – Latin America Report p. 25-26



TNE: current context and main challenges

There are many opportunities to foster TNE in Brazil, including: recruiting international students, developing academic partnerships, undertaking collaborative research projects, strengthening internationalisation at home, and improving English language skills. All of them aim to grow the global engagement and competitiveness of Brazilian HEIs.

Addressing barriers to fulfil these priorities is the main path to facilitate an inclusive and effective internationalisation process. The main challenges for TNE¹¹ in Brazil are, therefore:

English language proficiency

According to research published by the British Council in 2013, only 5 per cent of Brazilian adults stated that they ‘have some knowledge of the English language’, less than half of whom described their English level as ‘intermediate’ or ‘advanced / fluent’¹². Another survey carried out by the British Council, based on School Census data from 2017, showed that, among teachers from state public administrative units, ‘only 45% have higher education degrees in the area’¹³. Many teachers are not English specialists or even teach English alongside other subjects. This helps to explain the scenario of inequalities, that hits harder on students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Usually, students attend courses at English language institutes, as very few private schools prepare their pupils to finish high school with B2 proficiency or higher.



¹¹ The landscape of transnational education and mutual recognition of qualifications in Latin America; TNE Americas: Brazil, British Council, 2024.

¹² [Learning English in Brazil](#), British Council, 2014.

¹³ English language teacher education in Brazil. Recommendations for educational policies, Vander Viana and Telma Gimenez, British Council, 2022.



Qualification recognition and regulations

In Brazil, the lack of a National Qualification Framework contributes to making the qualification recognition practice challenging. Apart from the complexities of obtaining approvals from multiple regulatory bodies and the absence of specific legislation addressing TNE, the processes require each Brazilian HEI to seek (or be sought for) collaborative partnerships, exacerbating the challenge.

Creating an environment for international and transnational education

The British Council is connecting institutions on joint action plans on the **HE Connects call**. ‘Our aim is to expand existing collaborations and understand what modality is best for them to grow into a wider TNE offer’, explains Diana Daste, Cultural Engagement Lead of the British Council in Brazil. In a project called Game Changer, students from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), in collaboration with students and staff from Durham University, look for solutions towards sustainable development. ‘One of our goals was that every student should have an international experience while studying, and through collaborative online learning, that became a reality’, says Prof. Dr. Andrew Macrae, Professor of Microbial Biotechnology and Director of International Relations at UFRJ. According to him, the involvement of the British Council allows a possibility to have greater reach between the universities and the countries. ‘On our side, we contribute to sustainable development goals by building a stronger education offer. This drives opportunities and develops growth in an inclusive and equitable way’, concludes Diana.

Cost

Negotiating reciprocal agreements with HEIs so that neither institution charges tuition fees is usually not possible with UK HEIs. This sometimes discourages establishing joint and double degree programme. The high cost of living and accommodation can also be a problem for Brazilian students. However, the duration of the course (one year for full time master’s) is a benefit compared with longer programmes in other countries.

Institutional capacity and academic resistance

Stakeholders noted that TNE requires Brazilian HEIs to allocate additional staff and financial resources, and this can be a problem when budgets are tight. Beyond financial challenges, cultural and structural differences between the educational systems are another obstacle: practices, structures of graduate programmes and even the role of teaching and research in academic progression may vary. The academic resistance in Brazilian HEIs is due to multiple factors: lack of awareness about the possibilities of transnational collaboration, the bureaucratic paperwork to pursue internationalisation is tiring and state and federal universities sometimes do not see the need to engage in TNE programmes because they are already well evaluated by government agencies.

National internationalisation policy

Considering the lack of a national internationalisation policy, institutions struggle to prioritise transnational education programmes. Restrictions and budget cuts also impact the offer of TNE, highlighting the need for a systemic approach and strategic commitment to internationalisation at the national level. There are advances on this front with current Postgraduate Policies Plan (PPG-CAPES), defining internationalisation as a driver for inclusive growth and impact and framing key subjects to support international collaboration under this agenda.



@ Rodolfo Rizzo

Streamlined recognition: a local urgency

In Brazil, HEIs are legally responsible for the recognition of foreign degrees, since there is no uniform credit system at a national level. Amongst the 37 Brazilian HEIs surveyed in a recent research, 19 institutions agreed that recognition was a lengthy process, 14 said it was very expensive and 13 said it was very difficult.

The effectiveness of a government-to-government bilateral Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (MRQ) agreement depends on each country's legislative and regulatory framework. The education systems both in Brazil and the UK are decentralised and varied standards and practices employed by institutions make it difficult to guarantee a uniform level of quality.

In the Americas, in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, the bilateral MRQ agreements are one important tool for encouraging the growth of TNE. While a government bilateral agreement is unlikely to work in Brazil, stakeholders identified other routes for streamlining the recognition process:

- **Establish agreements with HEI-level associations**, such as the National Association of Directors of Federal Higher Education Institutions (Andifes) and the Brazilian Association of Rectors of Provincial and Municipal Universities (Abruem). If the agreement involves the Ministry of Education, this process will be more effective.
- Use Arcu-Sul as a model, for it **evaluates programmes offered by universities within Mercosur member-states** (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and associate nations (Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Suriname). There are financial costs involved in conducting the process, for example paying foreign evaluators, and these costs could be shared by HEIs interested in participating.
- For students, the safest route to credit recognition is to **go abroad already knowing which institution in Brazil will recognise the diploma**. The Carolina Bori Platform facilitates this research, and once a foreign diploma has been revalidated by a Brazilian institution, a fast track is used on the Carolina Bori Platform.
- In graduate studies, the University of Brasilia (UnB) adopted the policy of **automatically recognising doctoral qualifications taken abroad with Brazilian government funds**. This may also prove to be a good model for fast-track recognition.

Ways to increase TNE between UK and Brazilian HEIs

Fostering international collaboration with experienced HE providers is part of a strategic plan to facilitate transfers of knowledge and expertise worldwide. According to estimates from UNESCO, Brazil had the world's 10th largest amount of internationally mobile tertiary students in 2020, with over 89,000 students studying abroad¹⁴. Engagement with the country's diverse range of public and private higher education institutions offers huge opportunities. To facilitate and guide such engagement, policy makers, Brazilian HEIs and stakeholders from the UK HE sector need to consider specific moves and changes to advance the agenda of international education.

Snapshot of Brazilian higher education¹⁵

In Brazil, HEIs are broken down into Universities, University Centres, Faculties, and vocationally focused federal institutions (IFs and CEFETs). Public institutions (federal, state and municipal) account for 12 per cent of all HEIs. They do not charge tuition fees and recruit around 23 per cent of all HE students under a highly competitive entry process. These HEIs tend to be more prestigious than their private counterparts. The majority of students attend private HEIs.



2,595

institutions

70% of them in the private sector



+ 9,4 million

enrolled students
78% of them study in private HEIs



9,186

distance-learning graduation courses
+3 million students started courses in this modality in 2022

¹⁴ [UNESCO Institute for Statistics](#), UIS Database, accessed November 2022.

¹⁵ Market Intelligence Brief Brazil, British Council, 2023 and [Censo da Educação Superior de 2022](#), INEP.



The UK HE sector is well placed in the context to support the internationalisation of Brazilian HEIs. In line with supporting this role, the British Council recently commissioned two comprehensive insight studies¹⁶ investigating and analysing TNE practices in Brazil and in the context of the Americas. The Latin America Report revealed the international higher education landscape in Brazil, Mexico and Peru, studied the regulatory policies and the engagement between the UK and Latin America, as well as the benefits and challenges for TNE partnerships as perceived by higher education and government stakeholders. The report listed interesting recommendations for Brazil, summarised as follows:

Policy makers

Greater government-to-government cooperation creates incentives to attract transnational education projects between UK and Brazilian HEIs.

Recommendations:

- **Direct greater financial aid from national agencies** in the UK and Brazil to support TNE projects, following the example of programmes bilaterally funded by governments.
- **Include a fast-track option for creating courses** and graduate programmes as part of new integrated double degrees.
- **Build TNE partnerships from existing research networks**
- Improve collaboration between government agencies and HEIs to **develop guidelines for TNE**.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

As a strategy, international education develops well if it is institutionalised and receives the proper focus and support: from knowledge exchange and language proficiency to funding.

Recommendations:

- **Develop an institutional internationalisation strategy** which includes TNE as a component alongside research collaborations and student and staff mobility, designing measurable objectives, specific targets and providing incentives.
- **Improve awareness of TNE and its benefits**, for example, identifying faculty members with expertise and interest in international collaboration to act as ‘internationalisation ambassadors’ at their university.
- **Ensure institution-wide support for TNE**, reducing the workload on individual members of staff to manage long bureaucratic processes and engaging the faculty or school which is best positioned to establish an international partnership with UK universities.
- **Provide financial support** to TNE initiatives, which would encourage staff to engage in them.
- **Develop and share know-how**. Good practice and case studies of successful TNE models can be shared, inspiring best practices.
- **Develop language skills**. Provide English and other additional language support for staff and students as well as Portuguese language support for foreign students and staff.

¹⁶ The landscape of transnational education and mutual recognition of qualifications in Latin America, British Council, 2024; TNE Americas: Brazil, British Council, 2024.



UK stakeholders

Successful TNE and mobility programmes between Brazil and other countries are backed by government funded programmes, so the opportunities for building sustainable institutional partnerships in Latin America depend on government support.

Recommendations:

- **Establish government funded programmes.** Bilateral ones like PROBRAL (Brazil-Germany) and BRAFITEC (Brazil-France), are successful and good evidence of continuous partnership engagement at the institutional level.
- **Expand institution-to-institution relations** beyond research activities by including teaching partnerships. The collaboration between UKRI's Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council and FAPESP is a good example of joint research submissions between UK and Brazilian HEIs.
- Consider delivering **TNE in the local language**, for it can significantly widen access to international degrees and qualifications given the limited English language proficiency across Latin America.
- **Improving the language proficiency** of UK faculty engaged in TNE provisions to strengthen teaching partnerships between the UK and local HEIs.
- **Develop collaborative platforms** for virtual COIL projects. COIL stands for Collaborative Online International Learning and is a cost-effective way to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones.



Adding to the same discussion, the study on TNE in Brazil also provided recommendations for addressing key challenges and priorities identified in interviews and analysis:

1 Use of English in Brazilian HEI programmes

Design a strategic national plan aimed at enhancing the English language competencies of Brazilian students and teachers while supporting the growth of education programmes offered in English.

2 Internationalisation at home

Design a strategic plan aimed at enhancing the capacity of Brazilian HEIs to internationalise their education provision and the experience of the whole student body and support alignment with the standards of internationally recognised institutions.

3 Qualification Recognition

Review current qualification recognition practice, including the Carolina Bori platform, to improve efficiency and effectiveness and develop a National Qualification Framework to facilitate recognition processes.

4 Funding

Review the cost of internationalisation and how Brazilian HEIs can engage in financially viable and more inclusive models of internationalisation, such as establishing a new national outward mobility funding scheme and a public and/or private loan scheme to support students' international experiences.

5 Regulation for TNE

Review the regulatory framework for TNE, so that the benefits associated with different delivery models can be accessed.

6 Quality Assurance

Review the existing external quality assurance system to ensure that mechanisms are put in place and are capable of driving quality internationalisation.

7 International Education Strategy on a national level

Develop an International Education Strategy for Brazil, setting out key priorities, objectives and goals, and outlining strategic actions. Internationalisation strategies of countries such as the UK can be used as a model, while being adapted to the Brazilian context.



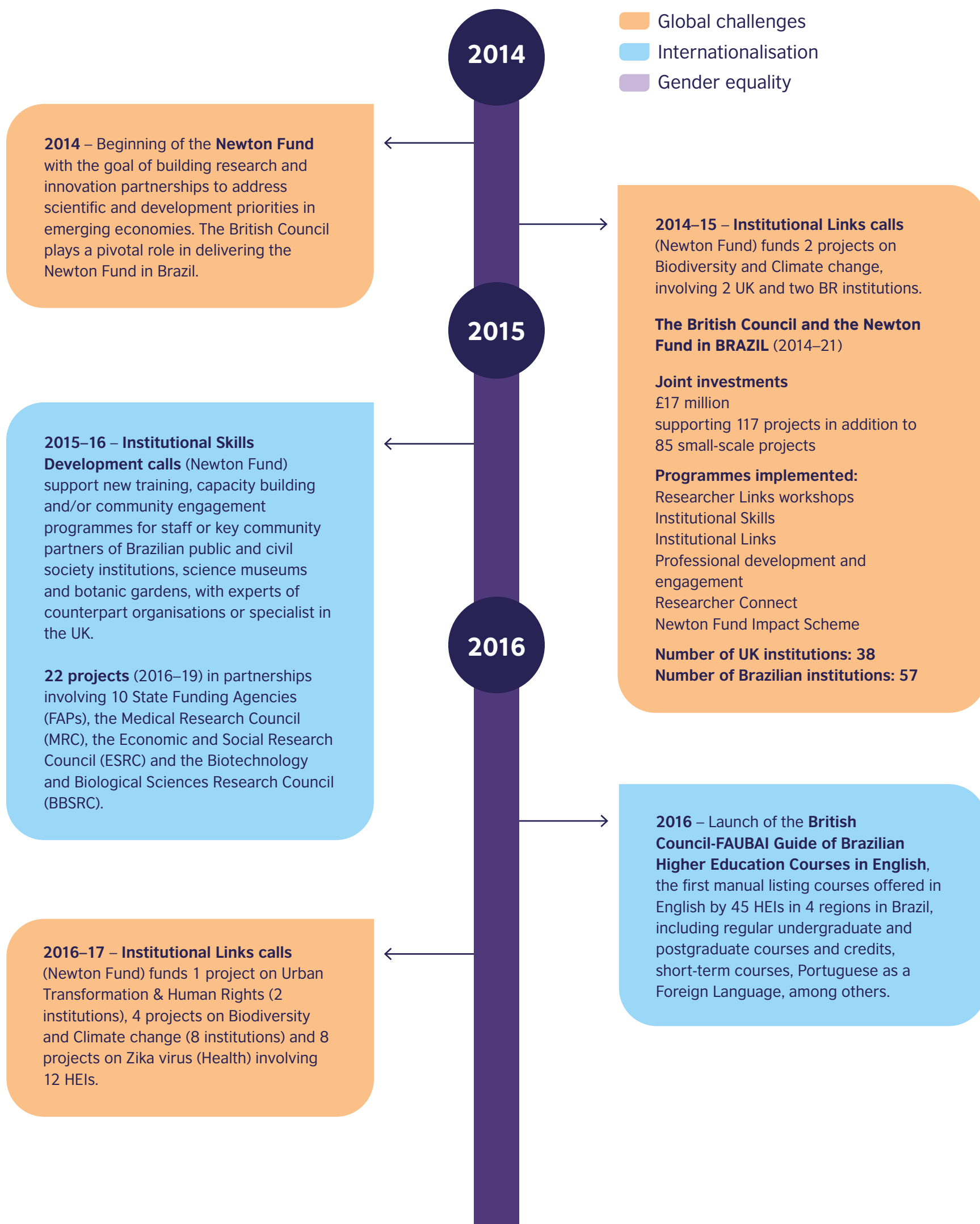
Timeline





Timeline

Internationalisation initiatives of the British Council in Brazil



2017

2017–18 – First edition of the Capacity Building & Internationalisation Call for HE - Universities for the World

Programme to support sustainable and implementable internationalisation strategies within Brazilian universities, building on UK HEIs' expertise and experience in the field.

8 UK-BR partnership projects, funded by the British Council.

2017 – Universities for the World

Seminars are held at university hubs in the south, southeast, central-west and north-east of Brazil, to discuss the recognition of diplomas, innovation and applied research in international partnerships, the steps necessary to internationalise access to the English language.

2017-18 – Institutional Links calls

(Newton Fund) funds 7 projects on Agriculture and Nexus (14 institutions) and 2 projects on Biodiversity and Climate change (4 HEIs).

2018

2018 – First issue of the publication Universities for the World showcases the need to encourage dialogue and the sustainability of a long-term internationalisation project for Brazil.



Universities for the World:
internationalisation challenges and
opportunities for Brazil

2018 – In London, the British Council holds the **UK-BR Seminar on Internationalisation in Higher Education** in which Brazilian and British universities discuss the main challenges and opportunities related to the CAPES-PrInt programme, partnerships, English as a Medium of Instruction, quality, rankings, and transnational education.

2018 – Launch of the Women in Science programme in Brazil, to increase gender and social inclusion in Higher Education.

2018–19 – Second edition of the Capacity Building & Internationalisation Call for HE - Universities for the World Programme, in partnership with ABRUEM and CONFAP.

4 UK-BR partnerships projects, British Council funding.

2018–19 – Second edition of a manual about courses taught in English in the country, now called the **Guide to English as a Medium of Instruction in Brazilian HEIs**, in partnership with FAUBAI and English language specialists.

2018–19 – **Institutional Links** calls (Newton Fund) funds 3 projects on Health and Neglected diseases, involving 5 HEIs.

2019 – Second edition of the **Universities for the World** publication discusses themes of the internationalisation agenda and its advance in Brazil and the UK. It also translates the result of the UK-BR seminar on internationalisation in Higher Education and its workshops attended by departments of international relations, research and English.



Universities for the World: strategies and advances on the path to internationalisation

2018–19 – UK-Brazil English Collaboration Call focuses on language policies in Brazilian HEIs.

8 projects
18 universities – 11 in Brazil and 7 in the United Kingdom



Special issue Framing English language applied research.

2019 – Newton Fund Impact Scheme supports projects in the environment, sustainability and social sphere.

6 proposals: 4 - British Council, 2 - UKRI
5 Brazilian states: Amazonas, Paraná, Maranhão, Minas Gerais, São Paulo

2019–20 – With funding by the Newton Fund in 2019, delivers scientific workshops in 2020.

13 proposals
6 Brazilian states: São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Paraná, Maranhão, Espírito Santo and Distrito Federal

2019 – In the **Gender and STEM Mission in London**, Brazilian delegates attend meetings with UK institutions.

2019

2019–20 – The fourth edition of the **Capacity Building & Internationalisation for HE - Universities for the World Programme** aims to strengthen the skills and capabilities for internationalisation within Brazilian universities and UK-BR partnerships through knowledge sharing.

2020

2019 – Women scientists training on innovation and entrepreneurship and launch of the first **Women in Science Magazine**.



#1 Women in Science magazine

2020 – The third edition of the **Universities for the World** publication brings together the results of workshops and seminars held in the United Kingdom on the topic of quality assurance processes in the internationalisation of universities.



Universities for the World: in search of quality in internationalisation

2020 – Launch of the second **Women in Science Magazine**.



#2 Women in Science magazine

2021 – Launch of the third **Women in Science Magazine**.



#3 Women in Science magazine

2021 – The **UK-Brazil Gender Equality Partnership Call** funds 9 partnership projects and focuses on building capacities and understanding Brazil's country-specific needs through UK-BR workshops. The result is the **Brazil Gender Equality Framework for Higher Education Institutions**, a tool to support the gender equality agenda in the country.

2022

2022 – The Brazil Gender Equality Framework for Higher Education Institutions, jointly designed by 35 UK and Brazil higher education institutions, is a charter of principles with tools for the development of gender equality policies in HEIs in Brazil, inspired by the Athena Swan Charter.



2021 – Podcast Women in Science, Series 1 and 2



2023

2023 – Workshop series to disseminate the Brazil Gender Equality Framework in 10 states across all five regions in Brazil.

2023 – The International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF) starts to support UK researchers and innovators to collaborate with international partners on multidisciplinary projects. The British Council launches/organizes:

- **Research collaborations**
- **Early-career researcher fellowships**
- **UK-Brazil partnerships** – as part of the Amazon+10 Initiative, an alliance of 25 state research foundations in Brazil, using science, technology and innovation to transition to a new sustainable development model for the Brazilian Amazon.
- **Grants to organise Brazil-UK research workshops**

2023–24 – HE Connects: UK – Americas Partnerships for TNE and Internationalisation call for Brazil and Mexico is launched under the Going Global Partnerships programme. It aims to build collaborations and long-term relationships to accelerate activities for the internationalisation of higher education, focusing on Mutual Recognition of Qualifications (MRQ) and transnational education (TNE).

2024

2024 – Launch of the Women and Science Award by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), with the Ministry of Women, the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF) and the British Council, supporter of the Institutional Merit category.

2024– Launch of the Inter-institutional Working Group for Gender Equality, presided by CNPq - National Council of Technological and Scientific Development for the first year and with the British Council responsible for the secretariat.



Section 2

Research collaboration





Research collaboration

The percentage of scientific production in Brazil resulting from international collaboration was 36 per cent between 2015 and 2019, according to a study conducted by Dalian University of Technology¹⁷, based on Clarivate data. Countries in the European Union, such as Austria, Belgium, Finland and France score in the range of 55 to 65 per cent ‘Brazil should invest more to support and strengthen international cooperation’, suggests Odir Dellagostin, President of the State Funding Agency of Rio Grande do Sul (FAPERGS) since 2017 and, since 2020, at the Presidency of the Brazilian National Council for States Funding Agencies (CONFAP). We observe an increase in the number of Brazilian articles written with international collaboration, as this has risen in recent years

(reaching 32.5 per cent in 2018, according to Elsevier’s Scopus platform, compared to 20 per cent of the global average). There is great potential for weighted citation as a means to grow partnerships and collaborations.

The United Kingdom is Brazil’s second largest research partner¹⁸, accounting for six per cent of Brazil’s total research collaboration outputs (*as described in the box below*). ‘Health Sciences being the topic with the largest number of joint research between Sao Paulo and the United Kingdom. We need to look at this reality and reinforce it, as it is easier to build on top of something that is already working. This means reaching the next level’, stated Marco Antonio Zago, president of FAPESP¹⁹.

	Publication volume (2021)	% of publications via international collaboration	Top co-author country (rank and % of total collaborative output)
Brazil	102,325	35.5	1. USA: 14% 2. UK: 6% 3. Spain: 4.7% 4. Germany: 4.7% 5. France: 4.4%

Source: Analysis of Scival/Scopus data, Elsevier, 2023.

17 FAPESP Magazine, [Issue # 293](#), 2020.
18 The United States of America being the first research partner in Brazil.
19 [Delegação britânica visita a FAPESP com o intuito de intensificar colaborações em pesquisa](#), Agência FAPESP, 2024.



There is great potential to enhance the research collaboration and the academic production between the UK and Brazil.

In 2023, Brazil published 156,800 articles, 75 per cent of them being for open access. This quantity sets the country in the 10th position according to OpenAlex²⁰.

Aware that collaboration between countries is imperative in an increasingly globalised and interconnected world, Brazil has more than 40 bilateral cooperation agreements in Science and Technology ²¹.

Focus areas

- Energy transition
- Health
- Environment
- Sustainability
- Artificial Intelligence

‘I think these are the five main areas that need to be strengthened through even more robust investments and ever-increasing international partnerships. Artificial intelligence is booming and a national programme was presented at the National Science, Technology and Innovation Conference, held at the end of July 2024, in Brasilia’, declares Odir Dellagostin, president of CONFAP and an active member of the Science and Technology Council.

In the past decades, Brazil has taken on a very relevant position in global scientific production. Thirty years ago, the number of doctoral researchers was very small. ‘When I returned from my doctorate, during the Nineties at my university, we had around 700 teachers and only 70 of them were doctors. That corresponds to ten per cent. Today, in state and federal universities, most teachers have doctoral degrees and many of them are engaged in research activities’, notes Dellagostin.

Research project partnerships result in scientific production and scientific articles, in co-authorship. But these partnerships generally happen when there are actions to incentivise connection, for example, collaborative workshops between Brazilian and British researchers. The British Council has promoted various events aiming to establish connections, start or strengthen partnerships and develop individual and institutional capacities to participate and engage in various collaborations. It also holds Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with institutional partners in academic and scientific research fields, such as CONFAP. A substantial partnership between the State Funding Agencies and the United Kingdom started ten years ago, with the Newton Fund, which offered different programmes (see *next page*). ‘Currently we are operating the International Science Partnerships Fund and connecting a wide range of local stakeholders in Brazil and in the UK to make research collaborations stronger and more impactful according to the local context’, explains Diana Daste, Cultural Engagement Lead at the British Council in Brazil.

²⁰ [Brasil publicou quase 157 mil artigos em 2023](#), CAPES, 2024.

²¹ [Cooperação em ciência, tecnologia e inovação](#), Consulado Geral do Brasil em Miami, site MRE, 2024.



Robust research and institutional links

Created in 2014, the Newton Fund had the central goal of building research and innovation partnerships to address scientific and development priorities in partner countries, as well as promoting their economic growth and social welfare. The fund initially had a budget of £375 million in Brazil (£75 million per year, throughout five years), which increased to a total amount of £735 million by 2021.

During the Newton Fund initiatives, a special emphasis was placed on the development of people and research translation. According to Diana Daste, Cultural Engagement Lead at the British Council in Brazil, the Researcher Links Programme was of great importance for the building of research capacities and resources, which is one of Brazil’s priorities. Programmes such as the Master’s Fellowship for Underrepresented Groups in Science and

Researcher Connect enabled the development of partnerships to attract groups that have been historically excluded by science (for instance, women) and strengthen academic writing in English. ‘Our experience with the Scholarships under Newton and as part of our wider global offer has also allowed us to bring the Women in STEM scholarships to Brazil, and grow this opportunity with funding agencies and other key stakeholders’, states Daste. Another important outcome of the work facilitated by the British Council includes the consolidation of Zika virus research groups and clinics related to violence in times of democracy. These efforts contributed to the fact that the United Kingdom emerged as Brazil’s second-largest partner in scientific publications, surpassed only by the United States of America²².

RESEARCHER LINKS

Funding for binational workshops and early-career researcher mobility between partner countries and the UK.

2019–20

Call with CONFAP/FAPESP

13 proposals selected for scientific workshops about sustainability and social inclusion

INSTITUTIONAL LINKS

Funding for the development of research and innovation between institutions in the UK and partner countries to promote the link of projects with the commercial sector and technology transfer.

2018–19

Zika Call delivered 4 projects related to arbovirus (Zika, Dengue, Chikungunya)

Social Innovation Call delivered 5 projects related to sustainability and social welfare

Call with FGV and Fiocruz delivered 3 projects related to Impact and Evidence-based Policies

Source: Science Portfolio_Newton Fund

22 The Newton Fund in Brazil 2014-2020, Mariana Veiga, Diego Arruda, Máira Brito and Thaissa Avena, 2020.



Narratives about an epidemic

A collaborative research project on the Zika virus was undertaken between Sérgio Arouca National School of Public Health in Rio de Janeiro (ENSP/**Fiocruz** by its acronym in Portuguese) and **Oxford University**. The research sought to map the scientific and political discourses regarding the uncertainties emerging from the Congenital Zika Syndrome (CZS) during the 2015–16 epidemic. Pregnant women infected with Zika run the risk of giving birth to babies with CZS, which is linked with microcephaly and other congenital conditions. With Newton Fund support through the Institutional Links Programme, the research aimed to explore the complex interplay between science and politics and shed light on the narratives that emerged during the Zika epidemic. The research identified three sensitive areas regarding the treatment of the epidemic: (1) diagnosis, i.e., the communication of information about the disease; (2) overall health, i.e., understanding the narratives referring to the disease within both the local and global context; (3) gender, i.e., the responsibility was often attributed to the group that was most affected by the disease: women.

Coastal biodiversity and public policies

Around the port of Santos, the largest in South America, a project integrated researchers, political stakeholders, and local communities to preserve coastal biodiversity. It aimed to develop a socially relevant and innovative public policy programme in the municipalities of Santos and Guarujá, located in the state of Sao Paulo. The collaboration lasted 36 months and was led by Professor Dr Ronaldo Christofolletti, from the **Federal University of Sao Paulo (UNIFESP)**, and Professor Stuart Jenkins, from the School of Ocean Sciences at **Bangor University in North Wales**. The results of the joint effort include the development of Maré de Ciência (A Tide of Science), a citizen science programme to monitor coastal biodiversity based on the experience of the British team in developing citizen science learning adapted to the local reality of its Brazilian counterparts. One significant outcome of this work was the UNESCO recognition of Santos as the first city in the world to enact a law promoting the inclusion of ocean culture in the school curriculum. In addition, the Brazil Blue Schools Network team encourages students to develop ocean sustainability projects, engaging 41 schools, 8,600 students, and 250 teachers. Finally, both the interface between science and public policies and the methodology to create participatory public policies were incorporated into Brazil's National Plan for the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–30).



Current opportunities fostering science collaboration

The **International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF)**²³ is designed to enable potential and foster prosperity. It puts research and innovation at the heart of our international relationships, supporting UK researchers and innovators to work with peers around the world on the major themes of our time: planet, health, tech, and talent. The £337m fund is managed by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and delivered by a consortium of the UK's leading research and innovation bodies, including: UK Research and Innovation (comprising the 7 research councils, Innovate UK and Research England), the UK Academies, the British Council, the Met Office, the National Physical Laboratory, the UK Atomic Energy Authority, and Universities UK International.

Under International Science Partnerships Fund the British Council offers:

- small scale seed funding for collaborations between the UK and the participating ISPF countries/territories
- opportunities for capacity strengthening based on the needs of the partner country or territory
- Fellowships for Early Career Researchers to nurture talent and drive inclusion in Research and Innovation.

All our programmes focus on the core themes of ISPF: Resilient Planet, Healthy People, Plants and Animals; Transformative Technology and Tomorrow's Talent.

In Brazil the British Council is delivering ISPF by supporting the Amazônia +10 Initiative, an alliance of 25 State Funding Agencies in Brazil, who are using science, technology and innovation to transition to a new sustainable development model for the Brazilian Amazon.

As part of the scheme we have funded²⁴:

Early-career researcher fellowships – funding for UK institutions to host early-career researchers from participating countries/territories while providing a foundation to launch their careers, creating lasting benefits to the fellows, their home universities, and the UK.

Grants to organise Brazil-UK research workshops – grants to researchers in the UK and Brazil to co-organise workshops focused on the Amazon region for early-career researchers from both countries.

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-science-partnerships-fund-ispf>

²⁴ [Grants for UK research partnerships](#)



Interview

Prolific links, high quality collaboration

President of the State Funding Agency of Rio Grande do Sul (FAPERGS) since 2017 and, since 2020, at the Presidency the Brazilian National Council for States Funding Agencies (CONFAP), Odir Dellagostin is also a professor at the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPeI) and a researcher, holding a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology from the University of Surrey, in England. Partnerships between CONFAP and the British Council have been growing stronger since 2014, when the first MOU was signed.

Can you recall the most relevant contributions of the partnerships between the UK and the Brazilian State Funding Agencies (FAPs)?

‘There were many, but mainly the ones funded by the Newton Fund and the FAPs are very important. In the Zika virus epidemic there was a joint effort by many FAPs in partnering with scientists from the UK to advance fast results in that emergency. It was essential to understand the dynamics of the virus, the ways of prevention, strategies on how to avoid its spread and inform the population. The Amazon+10 initiative, supported by the British Council in partnership with CONFAP, funds scientific expeditions and scientific workshops to support new research, projects and collaborations between Brazilian and British researchers.’



Odir Dellagostin

What events do you view as contributing to the global scenario of internationalisation and knowledge exchange?

‘I had the opportunity to participate in the Going Global Conference organised by the British Council, last year in Edinburgh. It was a fantastic experience, leaders from different countries helped us to reflect on present and future challenges of the internationalisation of higher education, and to learn from past experiences. I also delivered a prize at the Study UK Alumni Awards 2024 and other CONFAP members were part of the evaluation panels. It is very noble to award people who developed academic and research skills in the UK and returned to Brazil to dedicate their careers to the benefit of their home country.’

After more than a decade of collaboration between the British Council and CONFAP, has there been anything about the way of supporting research and internationalisation that inspired the FAPs actions?

‘Based on the first experiences with the Newton Fund, the FAPs managed to expand and create new instruments for international cooperation with the European community. Since a Brazilian researcher is not eligible to receive resources from the European Union, the model of co-financing has improved and allowed us to stimulate international partnerships. More recently, the Women in STEM Programme was an inspiration, because it made us reflect and several FAPS developed their gender equality programmes. FAPAM and FAPERJ for instance, have their own specific calls for women and underrepresented groups. These accounts demonstrate that the British Councils’ leadership is important because similar programmes were created and implemented locally.’





Section 3

Gender equality in HE



A journey to gender equality

Gender equality and diversity enhance the quality of higher education partnerships and overall, the internationalisation of higher education, TNE and research collaboration. Gender, diversity and inclusion are cross-cutting elements in terms of operating values and practices but also work as a key strategy to promote and grow like-minded relationships between institutions. Reflecting this underlying foundation, the first of the ten guiding principles of the **Brazil Gender Equality Framework for Higher Education Institutions** acknowledges that ‘academia cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of all’. This also means that the quality of science, research and knowledge produced with diverse perspectives is much better than single-minded productions.

The Brazil Gender Equality Framework results from a series of partnerships and dialogues between HEIs in Brazil and the UK, inspired by the Athena Swan Charter, which is used across the globe to support and transform gender equality within higher education (HE) and research²⁵. The main goal of the different dialogues, workshops and missions was to design and advance on a tool for HEIs to map, measure and monitor progress on their institutional commitments and specific advances supporting career progression of women in STEM. The output of this process is **Brazil’s first gender equality framework**. The tool considers context specific processes and priorities, as well as defining identities to view the landscape with the lens of intersectionality, providing greater emphasis on race, ethnicity, income, and age.

The Brazil Gender Equality Framework was developed as one of the British Council’s activities under the Women in Science Programme, which addresses barriers and opportunities for Women in Science across the pillars of inspiration, performance, recognition and influence.



²⁵ [The Athena Swan Charter](#), Advance HE.

The **WOMEN IN SCIENCE PROGRAMME** started in Brazil in 2018 and aims to increase the presence of women and girls in STEM careers, support researchers through capacity building and training, increase the network of researchers in collaboration with the UK, and develop national policies in Brazil to promote access and diversity in science.



100+ institutions engaged

throughout the programme



15 UK-BR partnership projects



60+ projects developed

across different initiatives



50 HEIs engaged

35 Brazilian and 15 British ones



11,630+ girls impacted

all over Brazil



The first Brazil Gender Equality Framework



1,000+ women trained

in leadership, science and innovation



Recognition of institutions under the
Women and Science Award



Gender equality partnerships



Interinstitutional Working Group for Gender Equality

Source: [Video presentation Women in Science Brazil](#), British Council, 2023.



Gender equality in focus

A framework which is used across the globe to support and transform gender equality within higher education (HE) and research – the **Athena Swan Charter** – was established in 2005 in the UK to encourage and recognise commitment to advancing the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM)²⁶. There is a global award linked to the charter and nowadays there are 993 award holders in the UK (including universities, departments and research institutes), all recognised for their gender equality efforts.

The Athena Swan Charter is a framework that:

- helps institutions achieve their gender equality objectives
- assists them to meet equality legislation provisions, as well as the requirements and expectations of some funders and research councils
- uses a targeted self-assessment framework to support applicants in identifying areas for positive action as well as recognising and sharing good practices
- supports the promotion of inclusive working practices that can increase the retention of valued academics, professionals and support staff, demonstrating an institution's commitment to an equitable working environment

Source: [Athena Swan website](#)

²⁶ [The Athena Swan Charter](#), Advance HE.



The Athena Swan charter aims to establish frameworks that are globally comparable and locally contextualised. The first expansion outside of the UK took place in 2015, with the launch of Athena Swan Ireland. The framework has since been adapted in Australia, the USA and Canada. In India, the British Council worked with the Department of Science and Technology in a pilot project called GATI (Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions).

In Brazil, we finalised a project to create a framework inspired by the Athena Swan, working with Advance HE on the delivery of a series of workshops with Brazilian HEIs. We also launched the UK-Brazil Gender Equality Partnerships Calls to connect UK and Brazil institutions on the design and operationalisation of the Gender Equality

Framework. The first call, in 2021, funded nine partnership projects and was focused on building capacities and understanding Brazil's country-specific needs through UK-BR workshops. It culminated in the creation of the **Brazil Gender Equality Framework for Higher Education Institutions**, a tool to support Brazilian HEIs in advancing the gender equality agenda.

The second call, launched in 2022, funding six partnership projects, expanded consortia from the first edition and added new ones. It aimed at supporting Brazilian HEIs through the Brazil Gender Equality Framework, including a self-assessment process. Overall, this initiative has engaged 50 UK-BR higher education, science and research institutions, collaborating to achieve greater gender equality.

UK-BR Gender Equality Partnership Calls



15

projects

9 in 2021 + 6 in 2022



50 HEIs

across the 2 calls

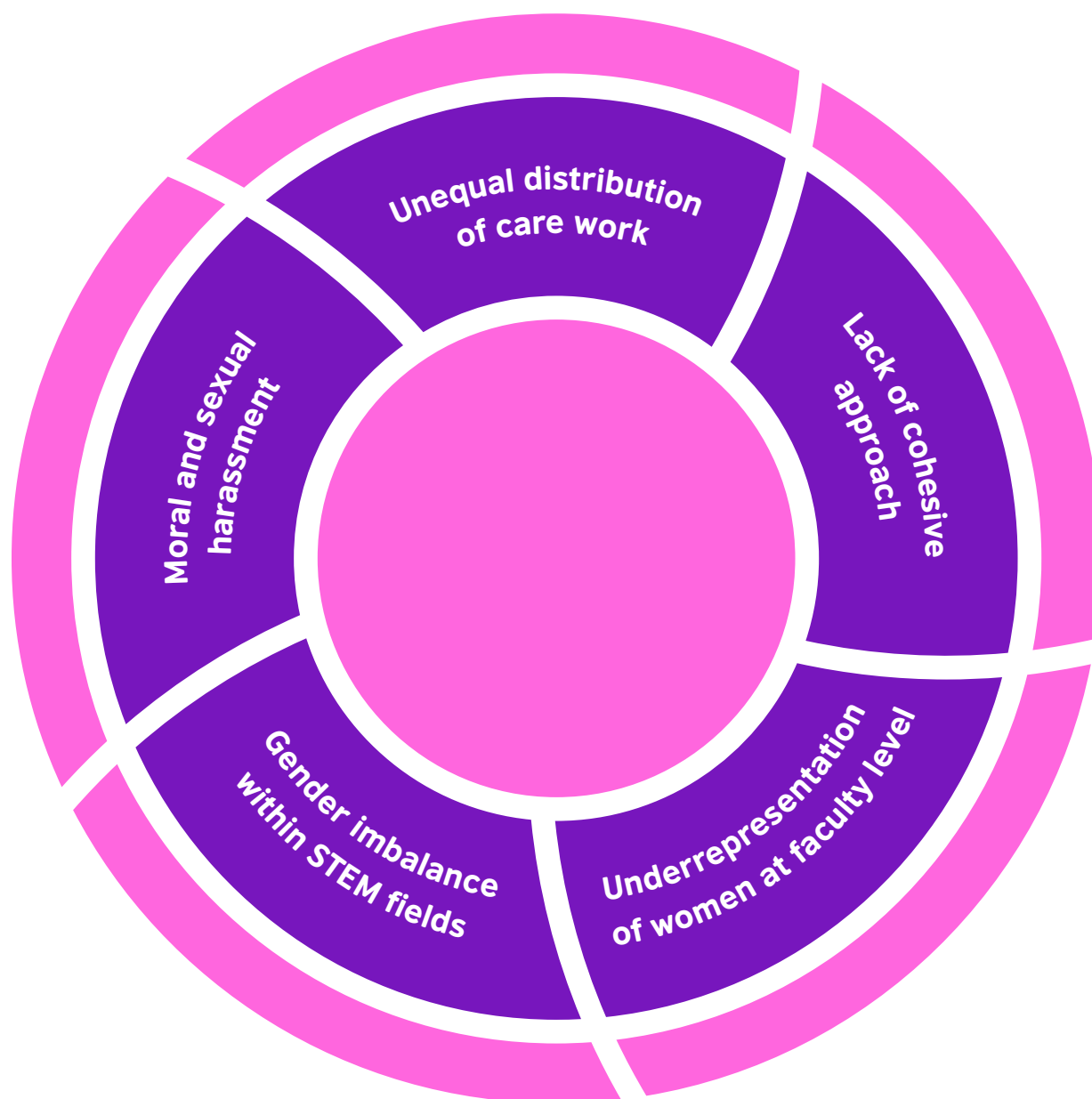
15 UK + 35 BR

Why is gender equality needed?

The Brazil Gender Equality Framework for Higher Education and Science Institutions and its self-assessment strategies allow the gathering and monitoring of information about universities and HE institutions, opening pathways to advance at a policy and individual level.

A look at the current scenario

Several challenges impact the progression of women in STEM and in HE, both on individual and institutional levels. This happens not only in Brazil, but in most education systems worldwide.



Source: Brazil Framework presentation, Advance HE and Cuidemos for the British Council, 2024.



Snapshot of women in STEM

They are:



Less published



Paid less



Less probable to reach leadership positions than male colleagues



Less likely to participate in science



Even though STEM professionals earn two-thirds more than in other fields, only 30 per cent of women choose science-related careers at graduation level (UNESCO).

Source: Women in STEM fundraising package, British Council, 2023.

Inequality in the academia

Being a “woman in STEM” means recognising social barriers imposed based on gender and recognising the unnecessary struggle they create... challenging the norms and prejudices that continue to determine people’s futures, advocating for equality, and working towards a society in which gender does not restrict anyone’s potential in any field.



Gisela Pires Foz de Barros, from Sao Paulo, earned a Women in STEM scholarship for her master’s in Public Health and Health Promotion in the UK (2021–22)

Even though women have an advantage in relation to men in terms of access to higher education, they face barriers in certain areas of knowledge, notably, those more closely linked to the STEM fields and the sphere of production: according to the 2022 Census of Higher Education, women account for only 15.3 per cent of students graduating in the area of Computing and Information Technology²⁷. Among students who enter HE, over 55 per cent are women and, according to the Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES), 54 per cent of those enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate studies in 2021 were female. They correspond to 58 per cent of scholarship recipients. These figures change, however, when we look beyond undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

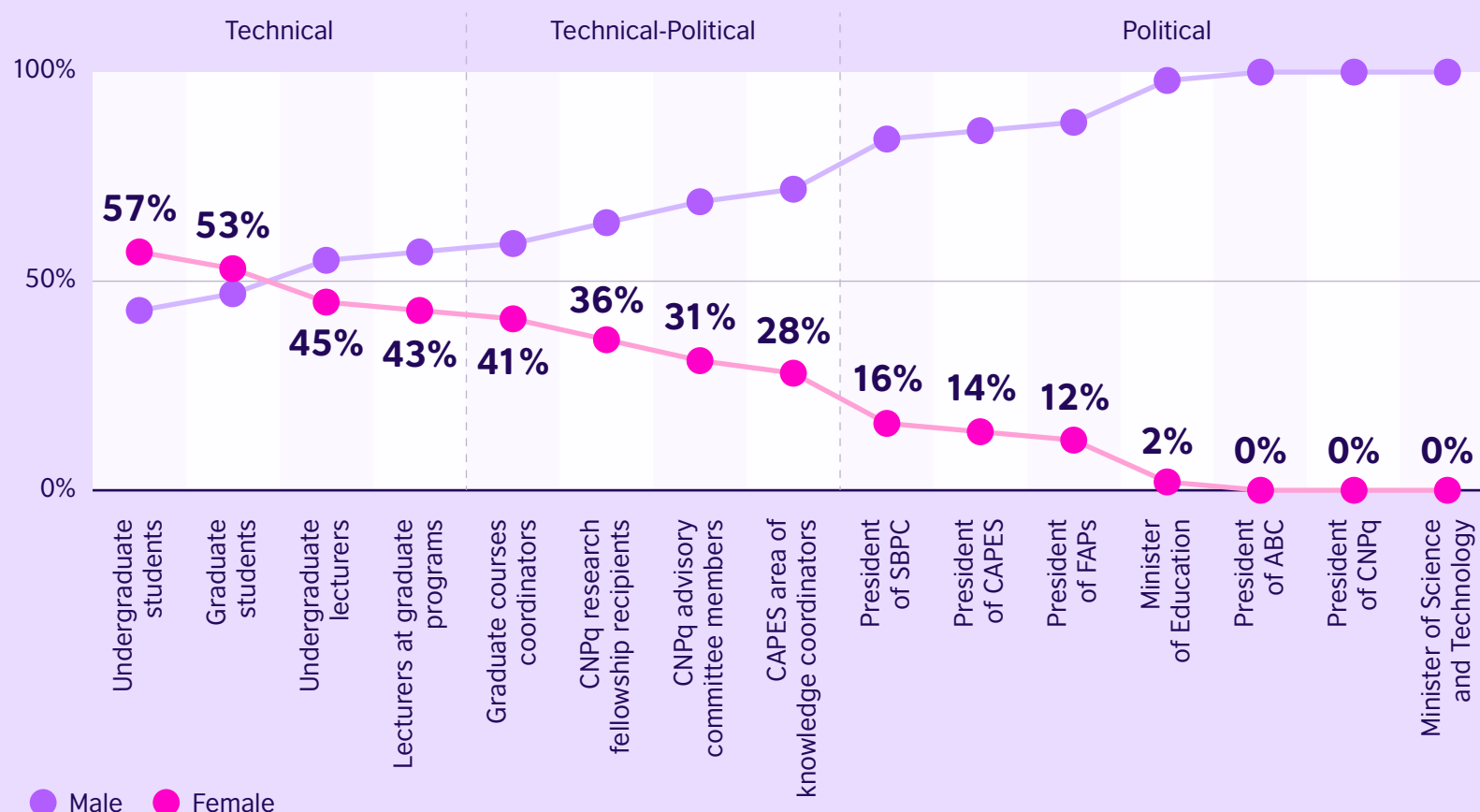
²⁷ Census of Higher Education 2022, Inep/MEC.

A comparison made by Unicamp's Higher Education Studies Laboratory (LEES) shows that, while 51 per cent of doctoral degrees between 1996 and 2014 were obtained by women, the number of women teaching at universities grew by just one per cent, from 44.5 to 45.5 per cent. This phenomenon, where the number of women becomes scarce as people advance in their careers, is being studied and has a name: *the scissors effect*. It was the central theme of discussions at the seminar "Women in Science and Technology: Rethinking Gender and Science", promoted in 2023 by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq)²⁸.

THE SCISSORS EFFECT

The graph below shows a scissor format, indicating that higher education alone is not enough for women to reach relevant and significant positions in the science field. The scissors reveal that the greater the responsibility and political influence of the position, the wider the gap in gender. Hence, these positions are more likely to be occupied by male academics or researchers – hereby pinpointed in lilac, at the left side of the scissor – and less likely by female professionals with the same educational background.

Brazil: Science and Technology System - Occupation of Positions by Sex



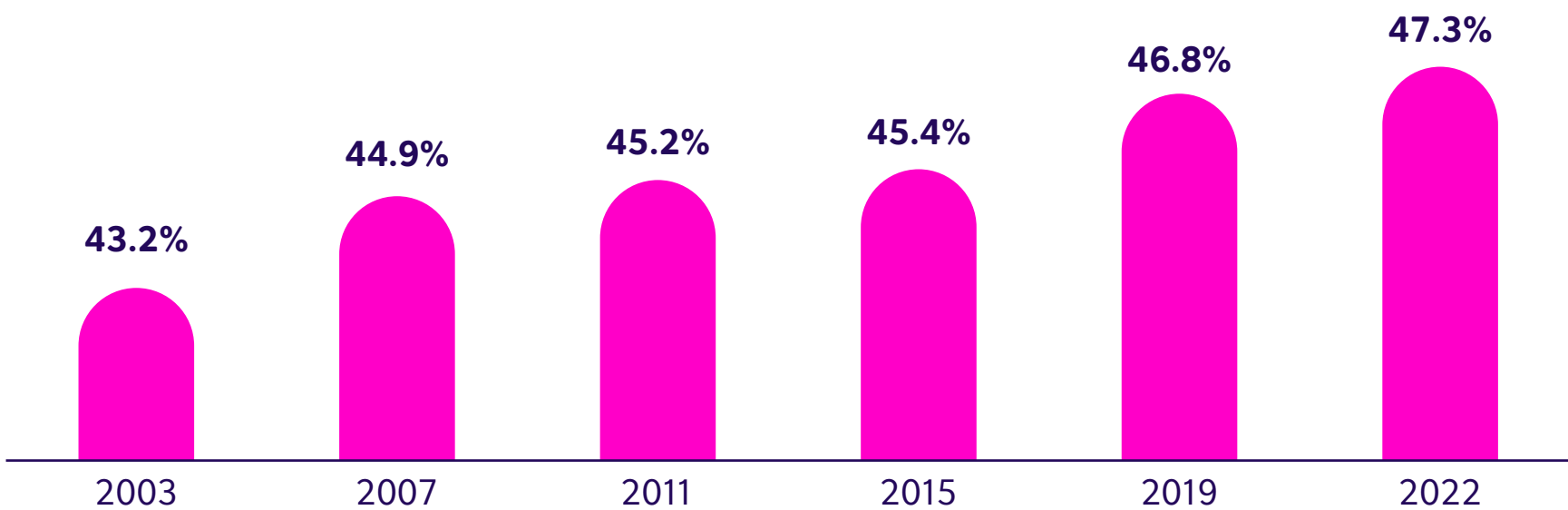
Source: [Gender and the Scissors Graph of Brazilian Science: From Equality to Invisibility](#). Areas, R., et al, 2020.

28 Article [Por que as mulheres são maioria na pós-graduação, mas ocupam menos da metade dos cargos de docência nas universidades?](#), Jornal da Unesp, 2023.

When looking specifically at teaching in higher education, men are at the forefront. In the last statistics, dated from 2022, they are 167,384 (52.98 per cent) of the total of 315,928 teachers at this stage²⁹. The numbers indicate that, in the short term, there is a need for improvement and development of equality, diversity and inclusion-focused policies in the HE sector.

Gender ratio of HE teaching fellows/lecturers (2003–22)

The graph shows the proportion of women



Source: Brazil Framework presentation, Advance HE and Cuidemos for the British Council, 2024.

²⁹ Census of Higher Education 2022, Inep/MEC.



Intersectionality marks the Brazilian context

The boundary lines of race, gender, class and nationality must be crossed, as they are inseparable. Intersectionality is a central element in the Brazil Gender Equality Framework for Higher Education Institutions.

Intersectionality, as defined in the Brazilian framework, means recognising that people's identities and social positions are shaped by multiple factors at the same time, which create unique experiences and perspectives. Elements of identity are dependent on one another and can impact lived experiences of discrimination in different ways. These factors include age, disability, gender identity and sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, disability status, religion and belief, geographical and environmental factors and conflict.

Intersectionality is a way of thinking and transforming identity experiences faced by oppressions of gender, race and class. The experience within STEMM and higher education may vary greatly for a black woman compared to a white woman. This is only one example that indicates how institutions should be mindful of how gender inequality intersects with other discrimination markers when exploring issues and developing solutions. While the Brazil Gender Equality Framework orients readers and institutions to approach change through the primary lens of gender, other factors that shape people's identity, and therefore their experience within institutions, should also be taken into consideration.

A wider approach, which includes equality, is EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion). The concept ensures fair treatment and opportunity for all. It aims to eradicate prejudice and discrimination. Diversity is about recognising,

valuing and taking account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and experiences. Inclusion is where these differences between people and groups are seen as a benefit, and where people feel comfortable to share their perspectives and differences, knowing that their opinions and ideas are valued³⁰.

The advantages of EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) practices in higher education and research include:

- Increased staff and student satisfaction across higher education and research
- Enhanced employee engagement, resilience, confidence and leadership skills
- Improved collective intelligence at an institutional level, creativity and problem-solving, quality of academic work, and complexity of research
- Research excellence, quality of decision-making and organisational performance
- An attractive working environment for job applicants and students
- Public recognition as an institution determined to support all members of its community through these tangible results of EDI work

³⁰ [What is EDI and why does it matter?](#), University of Oxford, 2024.

The Brazil Gender Equality Framework

The Brazil Gender Equality Framework was created to support Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Brazil to address the underrepresentation and inequalities faced by women and women of colour in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM). The material developed as a guiding tool to the framework assists HEIs to begin a process of self-assessment and reflection, enabling them to: collect and analyse data; identify inequalities, challenges and opportunities around the progression of women in STEMM in their organisation; develop targeted action plans in response to the self-assessment findings; and implement the actions successfully and appropriately.

In working with UK counterparts, more than the tools and the capacity building of local institutions to advance on the gender equality agenda, the first step to enhance inclusive internationalisation strategies is for them to be stemmed and central to the institutional strategy.

Diana Daste, Cultural Engagement Lead at the British Council in Brazil

The primary goal of the material developed in the partnership calls is to support organisations in Brazil in their journey towards promoting gender and race equality by providing equality principles to which all institutions can adhere; a framework to support the collection of comparable data; and guidelines for developing a participatory gender action plan. The framework should be seen as a support in the institution's journey towards designing a gender equality strategy that works in its context. All institutions are encouraged to engage critically with the framework, prioritising the issues that are important in their academic community and developing tools that support the community to reach their gender equality goals. The material includes a self-paced diagnosis that covers multiple grounds of discrimination in many areas of academic activity.



The Brazil Gender Equality Framework Principles

- 1 Academia cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of all
- 2 Committing to advancing gender and race equality in academia
- 3 Committing to addressing unequal gender and race representation across academic disciplines
- 4 Committing to tackling the gender and race pay gap
- 5 Committing to tackling bullying and harassment
- 6 Committing to removing the obstacles faced by women at major points of career development and progression
- 7 Committing to addressing the negative consequences of using short-term contracts for the retention and progression of staff in academia, particularly women
- 8 Committing to tackling the discriminatory treatment often experienced by gender nonconforming people, including trans, non-binary and gender-fluid people
- 9 Advancing equality demands commitment and action from all levels of the organisation and in particular active leadership
- 10 Committing to making and mainstreaming sustainable structural and cultural changes to advance equality

The Brazil Gender Equality Framework Sections

- Section 1: An introduction to the institution's gender equality work
- Section 2: An assessment of the institution's gender equality context and, where relevant, wider equality context
- Section 3: Future action plan

Changes are on the way: individual confidence and institutional capacity

Key aspects were analysed to assess and understand the contributions of embedding gender diversity across UK and Brazilian HEIs and their potential to foster internationalisation, partnerships and research outcomes between UK and Brazilian partners. An assessment exercise, based on surveys answered by participants of UK and Brazilian HEIs, concludes that ‘the aim to change the institutional landscape seems to have been achieved, while it remains, of course, a work in progress’.

The evaluation confirmed that not only did the representatives of HEIs see participants gain confidence and knowledge, but also, they themselves felt much more competent to implement processes and procedures that will help women to become more prominent in sciences in general and in STEM in particular. One of the most important findings is the perception that this initiative significantly increased the skills and willingness of women to choose the STEM field.

One short-term outcome had been set for this initiative: **Institutional capacities are developed, and learnings documented.** This outcome was checked by a large set of 10 items and, for 9 items, 100 per cent of the respondents considered their knowledge and understanding to be very good.

Source: Women in Science project evaluation report, British Council, 2023.

Tangible changes occur where effective collaboration between institutions takes place, with a focus on inclusive policies and procedures that help influence a culture for the better and support individuals to achieve and progress.

An example of concrete change was the revision from a gender perspective of the legislation that regulates the processes of hiring professors, with changes in the rules applied to the entire university to include actions aimed at female candidates with children (for example, the adoption of correction factors for CV scoring)³¹.

Testimony from Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) who were partnered with Oxford Brookes University for this scheme.

31 Women in Science project evaluation report, British Council, 2023.



After the 2022 workshops, the institutions also identified key success factors, challenges and risks in UK-BR partnerships tackling gender equality³²:

- **Key stakeholder engagement:** They saw a fundamental need for senior support for this work so that there is the opportunity for it to grow and be shared more widely.
- **Appropriate recognition and reward:** External recognition at, e.g. national level, would enable its broader reach and impact. Resources are seen to be required, and participation should be supported from both the Brazilian and UK sides and included in the grant funding.
- **Time commitment and general involvement:** a systematic change takes time and is intense. Also, there is the need to prioritise the engagement from men and other genders, since it is not only a question about women, but rather affects all society.

- **Social and cultural contextual difference:** One needs to recognise that standard approaches in the UK are not necessarily the same in Brazil (e.g. mentoring), and so additional time and support are required to implement equality, diversity and inclusion practices.

The report also sought to understand their take aways and learnings from their involvement. The benefits recognised included:

- Increased opportunities for students to study abroad
- Increased knowledge and experience around gender in STEM, leading to invitations to speak at events
- Increased networks leading to joint funding proposals and research projects
- Presenting work on the project at conferences
- Some links to teaching and leadership programmes – using global experiences as examples.

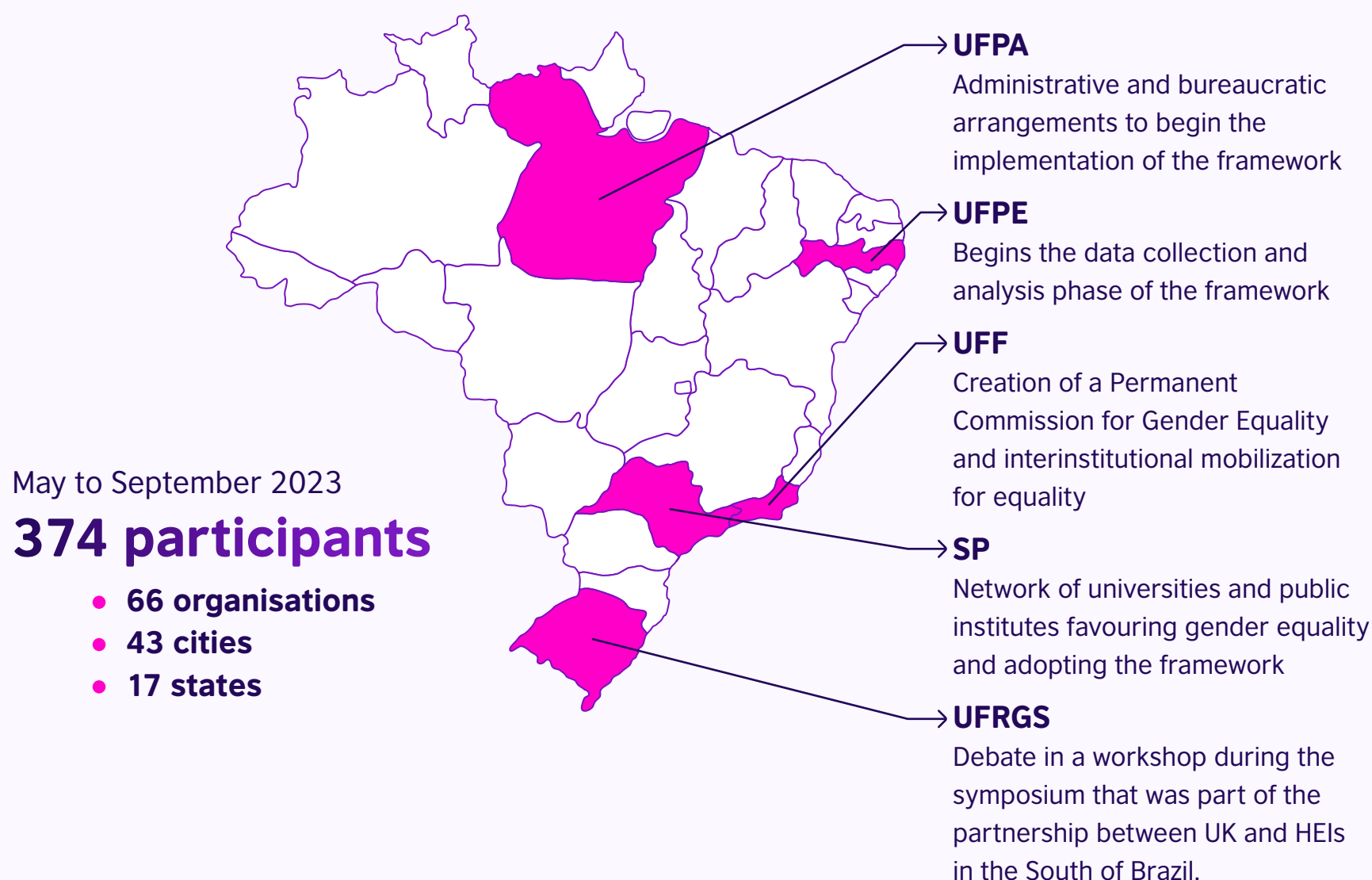
What are the most important systemic effects of the UK-Brazil Gender Equality Partnerships?

‘For the UK Institutions, I think the most important systemic effect is definitely that the collaborative element of the project meant that they had to consider how they frame and conduct their gender equality work considering the accessibility, inclusion and impact of the wider community. For the Brazilian Institutions, I am hoping that it will be the development of evidence-based, data-driven identification of challenges and opportunities that will lead to targeted action that effect change.’

Sarah Dickinson-Hyams, formerly Assistant Director, International Equality Charters at Advance HE, a member-led charity that works with partners across the globe to improve higher education for staff, students and the greater society.

32 Women in Science project evaluation report, British Council, 2023 and UK-Brazil Gender Equality Partnerships Call 2022 - Final report, British Council, 2024.

Series of 10 workshops to disseminate the Brazil Gender Equality Framework³³ for HEIs



During the same period that the Brazil Gender Equality Framework workshops were held in Brazil, the British Council commissioned a series of five publications linked to the Girls in STEM programme³⁴, all of them launched in April 2024. The series includes tips for educators, a quick guide for inclusive practice, an outlook on gender imbalance in the educational sector, and two volumes of inspiring stories presenting the 42 projects selected across the 2021 and 2022 editions of the programme. The quick guide and gender imbalance are available in Portuguese and English, while the other three are published exclusively in Portuguese.

³³ British Council, 2023.

³⁴ <https://www.britishcouncil.org.br/mulheres-na-ciencia/garotas-stem>

Next steps on the gender equality agenda

As stated in the final evaluation report of the 2022 call³⁵, the development of **assessment metrics** and an **awarding structure** for the Brazil Gender Equality Framework, aligned to the metrics and awards for the other global iterations of the Athena Swan Charter, would provide greater visibility for the institutions dedicated to analysing their own concepts and practices. It can also be an opportunity to reward and recognise the work to improve gender equality in STEM and encourage institutions to provide support for the work.

Another point towards the future would be the creation of **a global equalities network**, bringing together participants from projects on gender equality from around the world and providing a space for individuals and institutions to continue to network, support each other, and share knowledge and experiences.

Among HEIs members of the Athena Swan Charter **93 per cent believe that adopting the charter's principles has had a positive impact on gender equality policies at their universities**

Source: [Loughborough study on impact evaluation of Athena Swan](#), Advance HE, 2019.



³⁵ Final report UK-Brazil Gender Equality Partnership call 2022, British Council.

Why should the Gender Equality Framework be adopted by Brazilian HEIs?

As a tool for monitoring and implementation, the framework has the potential to work as:

- A structure to organise, give more relevance and unity to gender and diversity initiatives in the education and science ecosystem
- A catalyst for institutional change
- A platform for interaction between HEIs with funding agencies and institutions, nationally and internationally
- A report that enables transparency and alignment to data collection in HEIs
- An argument to promote a series of incentives for systemic transformation



The Brazil Gender Equality Framework serves as an important resource for those with the will and commitment to promote gender equality in science, but its real effects will depend on the implementation and adoption of the tool by Brazilian institutions.

Cuidemos Consultoria e Treinamento, one of the stakeholders of the UK-Brazil Gender Equality Partnerships





Section 4

Mission UK-BR





The UK-BR Mission in October 2024

An intergovernmental and academic mission organised by the British Council was held between 7 and 11 October 2024, aimed at strengthening ties between the UK and Brazil, fostering open conversations and aligning priorities on higher education, internationalisation and research. It was the first higher education mission of its kind to Brazil, with an intergovernmental approach and high-level representation of university delegates, following prioritisation of the country on the International Education Strategy. It happened at a significant moment: in 2024, Brazil reviewed its National Education Plan, that will cover its strategy for a decade, whilst also shaping a Post Graduation Plan up to 2028 that includes internationalisation.

The mission group consisted of representatives of the UK Department for Education (DfE), the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the Science and Innovation Network (SIN) and six universities (University of Leeds, University of Glasgow, University of Dundee, King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, University of Bath), led by

Representatives from six UK universities and the British government visited Sao Paulo and Brasília to learn about opportunities for internationalisation, research partnerships and gender equality in higher education.

Professor Sir Steve Smith, the UK Government's International Education Champion.

The visit started and developed links for international education and delved into potential collaborations across various sectors, including biodiversity, health, artificial intelligence, energy, and sustainability. It also promoted equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as cross-cutting elements. Read more on the mission events in the article [Strengthening UK-Brazil education connections](#).



Alumni

Experience, exchange and collaboration to face global challenges

The Alumni UK programme is the global network for people from around the world who have studied in the UK as an overseas student. The British Council wants to build the largest UK alumni community globally, connecting people who studied at any UK university and find out how Alumni UK can help them achieve their goals.

By joining Alumni UK, participants can grow their worldwide professional network, continue learning and share experience and expertise with others, and keep connected and up to date with UK culture and English language.

The alumni event in the UK-BR Mission was hosted by Brazilian Alumni UK Ambassadors and discussed three global challenges that demand action from society, academia, industry and research: gender equality, innovation and climate change. At the end of the three short talks, the participants gathered in round tables to discuss how collaborations between Brazil and the UK could tackle these critical issues.

Event: **UK-Brazil Connect: Knowledge Sharing for Global Challenges**

When: 7 October 2024

Where: Renaissance Hotel in Sao Paulo

Participants: Brazilian UK alumni; Professor Sir Steve Smith (International Education Champion), leaders of six UK universities (The University of Leeds, the University of Glasgow, the University of Dundee, King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, and the University of Bath), representatives of the UK government from the Departments for Education, Business and Trade, Science and Innovation Network; and the British Council.

What: Organised in groups, the participants reflected on how their UK experience and future UK-BR collaboration can help address global challenges, including climate actions and gender equality.



UK Alumni in Latin America

The Alumni UK Programme promotes opportunities to strengthen professional development

**80%**

reported personal and professional growth following their study experience

**39%**

experienced lack of opportunities after studying in the UK

**61%**

said that studying in the UK improved their professional confidence

**37%**

were able to build a global network of professional contacts

**51%**

were able to apply for much better jobs

Source: Student and Alumni Mapping across Latin America, British Council, 2023.

Gender Equality presented by Roberta Gregoli

‘What can you do to change the reality? How can you adjust your course of action to contribute to gender equality?’ With these questions, **Roberta Gregoli**, the Alumni UK Ambassador Americas in 2024 and University of Oxford graduate, ended her presentation on gender equality, which she described as the most challenging issue in human rights nowadays. She also stated that when a truly diverse group of people makes decisions, the outcomes can be very different.

She praised the initiative that created the [Brazil Gender Equality Framework for Higher Education Institutions](#) and reinforced that promoting gender equality is good for business

and for development. She exemplified showing a [short video](#) that points out how women are still a minority in high positions in various industries and in the political scene.

Roberta also noted that discussions or grants alone are not going to close the gender gap. She suggested that funding should be tied to fostering equality, for instance, accepting only funding requests from institutions that have at least a bronze accreditation from the Athena Swan Charter for Women in Science (see page 45). This choice can also be made when choosing academic partners, considering only the ones committed and recognised for their gender equality initiatives.

Innovation and climate change discussed by João Arthur Reis and Petrina Santos

Presenting an overview of the current state of Science, Technology, and Innovation in Brazil and prospects for bilateral cooperation between the UK and BR, **João Arthur Reis** looked back at the ‘lost decade’ (2013 to 2022) in Brazil, in terms of science funding and hopes that the area will slowly recover. ‘We are at a crucial moment to shape Brazilian science and innovation outputs for the next decades.’

University of Oxford alumnus, holding a master’s in public policy by the Blavatnik School of Government, Reis is currently the advisor to the FAPESP Presidency for the Amazon+10 Initiative. He has been working with public policy design and implementation over the last five years, focusing on innovation policy, economic development and international cooperation. ‘There are great initiatives already underway that must be continued and enhanced. There is a great opportunity in programmes that not only provide funding, but also capacity-building and skills development

for impact.’ The expert advised that more programmes that involve collaboration between UK and BR should be focused on mission-oriented innovation and research; informing public policy; scientific diplomacy; and science communication.

Reis describes the [Amazon+10 Initiative](#) as a model for collaborative impact-driven research, which has the UK as the main international partner, through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the British Council. With support of the International Science Partnerships Fund, it has already mobilised over £19,34 million. As an advisor in the area, the alumnus regarded that the climate crisis needs a transversal and cross-sectional approach and Brazil has examples on how to work with affected communities.

Petrina Santos, Alumni UK Ambassador for Climate Action and London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) graduate is experienced in applied sustainability,



government, institutional relations, and social corporate responsibility. She started her presentation by saying that the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) agenda is not new – it has been a discussion since the [UN Global Compact](#) was established in the Leaders' Summit at the World Economic Forum in 2004. From a sustainability perspective, the world scores poorly nowadays, with eight million people living with hunger and governments failing to meet global climate goals. China's total CO₂ emissions, for instance, exceeded those of the advanced economies combined in 2020, and was 15 per cent higher in 2023³⁶.

In the face of challenges and threats, Petrina defended cross-sectoral collaboration to address sustainability and points out that this is a call to action that should be adopted by all kinds of initiatives, whether they are in business, industry, academia or government, including:

- Risk assessment regarding ESG issues
- Peers/stakeholders engagement and ESG governance
- Sustainability indicators monitoring process
- Alignment with the main regulations, agreements and market policies
- Annual report disclosing ESG and sustainability performance integrated to business
- CO₂ footprint, decarbonization plan and climate strategy development
- Green finance implementation
- Employee engagement and sustainability culture development
- Volunteering and social investment projects

According to Petrina, the main points to face are decarbonisation and risk management. Universities are key to developing skills such as resilience and political approach to challenges; global vision and thinking globally; and entrepreneurship, which is the mindset needed to act towards change. 'Even the planet is an entity with its rights, so it should be regarded as a stakeholder in every important decision we make.' The Ambassador for Climate Action also defended that ESG must permeate every area of the curriculum and be incentivised in final papers that lead to the conclusion of the course. There are ways to establish collaboration between universities and the private sector. For instance, the exchange of theoretical and practical information between students and companies to create solutions for climate change.

36 [The changing landscape of global emissions](#), IEA Report, 2023.

Exchange of ideas and recommendations for HEIs

Sitting in round tables, the alumni and other participants of the event were invited to discuss problems that involved one or more of the three main topics presented – climate, gender and science – and to come up with possible solutions or recommendations. The group conversations addressed the following topics and summarised conclusions:

Area	Problem	Description	Solution or Recommendation
Gender	Limited access from certain minority groups to HEIs	Underprivileged and the queer community are scarce in universities in BR and the UK.	Increase investments in public education (K-12) in Brazil, forming a robust basis to pursue studies in HE. Foster gender equality, focusing on the queer community and transgender people, with initiatives to include them in university environments. Design programmes that give opportunities for underprivileged students to continue HE in the UK.
Gender	Lack of support for minority groups and language barrier	Minorities lack support during their school and academic life and only 5 per cent of Brazilians report having knowledge of the English language, according to British Council research.	Provide scholarships for minorities (women, transgender and queer people) and establish an academic mentoring programme to guide students and focus on developing language skills.
Climate	Insufficient incentives to raise awareness about the climate change agenda	More can be done to organise activities for students and faculty to embrace climate change and sustainability issues.	Universities in the UK could take students from various areas to the COP30 in Belém, BR, to do a media coverage (in November 2025). HEIs could promote programmes to build start-ups that tackle climate issues and link exchanges of professors between both countries to the sustainability agenda.

Area	Problem	Description	Solution or Recommendation
Science (Mining)	Dam accidents in Minas Gerais	In November 2015, Brazil experienced its greatest environmental tragedy with the collapse of the dam in Mariana. In January 2019, a dam collapsed in Brumadinho, killing almost 300 people and leaving social and environmental impacts. ³⁷	Mining leads to big environmental problems globally, so the UK and Brazil can discuss engineering solutions and legislation to establish a global standard for procedures, methodology, principles and regulations in mining exploration.
Climate, Gender and Science	Lack of innovative thinking to address big problems	Big contemporary problems cannot be solved without new and innovative ways of thinking and collaborating.	Incentivise the creative economy to work in many fields and integrate them to help solve major problems. Provide funding to social impact projects, specifically those involving energy and technology.



Alumni panel event, 07 October UK-Brazil Connect: Knowledge Sharing for Global Challenges and Industrialisation Panel discussion with about 35 alumni, followed by an interactive Q&A. @ Rodolfo Rizzo

37 [As tragédias de Mariana e Brumadinho](#), Caderno de Geografia PUC-Minas, 2021.



Tom Birtwistle, Country Director for the British Council in Brazil, stated that the exercise done in the meeting room showed a tiny part of what can be done when people from diverse sectors come together to discuss wicked problems. He closed the meeting by commenting on the important positions that UK alumni occupy in social, political, academic and industrial scenarios and pointed out that two out of the 12 global finalists of last year's Study UK Alumni Awards were Brazilian.

Global finalist of the Social Action Award 2024, Amanda Sadalla attended University of Oxford and was a Chevening scholar. She was praised for her achievements as co-founder of Serenas, an NGO providing capacity-building for gender-based violence response services and implementing anti-sexist educational policies within educational departments across Brazil. Dr. Robson Tramontina, a graduate of the University of Manchester, was also a global finalist in 2024, in the Business and Innovation Award. Founder of NexVitro Biologics, he was recognised for his remarkable achievements in molecular diagnostics in South America.

Participants voices

Strengthening networks and combining cultures

'Throughout my studies in London, I was able to get in contact with professionals who I admire in different fields. As an alumna, being part of communities such as the British Council is something that one should consider for building a solid network, exchange knowledge and experiences. As for collaboration between countries, I truly believe that if we want to tackle some of the biggest global challenges, we need to work together.'

Marina Belintani leads the R&D of New Materials and Technologies at MABE Bio, a company she co-founded in Sao Paulo. She graduated in Fashion Design in Londrina, Parana, holds a specialisation in textiles from Central Saint Martins and a master's degree from the Royal College of Art.

'Both Brazil and the UK are good at diplomacy and connecting. They do bring in quite different approaches to policy making when dealing with change, and I think they are complementary. Brazilians are less formal, perhaps, but quite approachable. And then you have the British historical experience. With those things together, I think you can approach problems in a quite rounded way.'

Kai Enno Lehmann is an Associate Professor in International Relations at the University of Sao Paulo (USP) in a joint Doctoral Degree programme with King's College London (KCL).



Connections

Important conversations foster new connections

Both the UK and Brazil are committed to expanding international collaboration, engaging in fruitful discussions about future partnerships in key areas, challenges and exciting possibilities. The mission agenda featured strategic engagements with organisations like the Sao Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), the National Industry Confederation (CNI), the University of Sao Paulo (USP) and the Brazilian Company of Research and Industrial Innovation (EMBRAPPII). These interactions provided delegates with valuable insights into Brazil's priorities and future collaboration pathways.

Partnership in Focus was an engaging match-making session, where individual discussions facilitated connections between UK university representatives and ten Brazilian higher education institutions. The conversations explored areas for research collaboration, potential joint calls, joint degrees and other collaboration arrangements; local institutions internationalisation plans; and potential for match-funding initiatives.

Event: **Partnership in Focus Session**

When: 8 October 2024

Where: British Brazilian Centre, Sao Paulo

Participants: Professor Sir Steve Smith (International Education Champion), leaders of six UK universities (The University of Leeds, the University of Glasgow, the University of Dundee, King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, and the University of Bath), the British Council, UFMG – Federal University of Minas Gerais; Unifesp – Federal University of Sao Paulo; Unesp – State University of Sao Paulo; Mackenzie University, FACAMP – Faculdades de Campinas; FGV – Getulio Vargas Foundation; Insper; FAPESC – State of Santa Catarina Funding Agency; FAPESPA – State of Para Research Funding Agency; FAPESQ – State of Paraíba Research Funding Agency; FAPERJ – The State Funding Agency of Rio de Janeiro.

What: After a brief reflection on relevance of international partnerships and the various forms to make them work, roundtables enabled one-to-one meetings between representatives from both UK and Brazilian institutions. They explored collaboration in research and strategic partnerships in higher education, enhancing existing partnerships and allowing for new ones.



One-to-one conversations between the UK and Brazilian institutions intended to advance on potential collaboration in research, mobility, TNE and other partnerships. A mix of public and private institutions from Brazil joined the session. Public HEIs are very strong in research cooperation and joint academic production. Private institutions are more flexible on TNE arrangements because they also have tuition fees, having conducted joint MBAs with UK universities. As for the funding agencies present, from the states of Para (FAPESPA), Paraiba (FAPESQ) and Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ), each of them has a specific focus (legal Amazon, sustainable and local development; Women in STEM; health and gender and diversity).

Professor Sir Steve Smith, in his first visit to Brazil as the International Education Champion, has the role of spearheading overseas activity, opening international opportunities for UK education providers. He led the delegation of UK HEIs: the University of Leeds, the University of Glasgow, the University of Dundee, King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, and the University of Bath. 'All six of them were keen to explore further connections with Brazil, which we hope will result in long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships. The countries' ambitions in industry and education provide an excellent basis for partnerships of cohesion and equality with the UK', he commented.

The desire for more collaboration between Brazil and the UK was reinforced by Tom Birtwistle, Country Director for the British Council in Brazil. He noted that both nations are already collaborating in STEM, Health and Climate Science, but there is still space to embrace new areas and find out how universities and the research that is done can connect to the private sector. 'There is a sense

of optimism which is powerful for partnership building and it really makes a difference to connect face to face and discuss what matters.' He invited the participants to meet, share and consider the possibilities ahead, opening the floor for delegates and institutions' interactions.

In an introductory presentation to the match-making session, Dr. Suzanna Tomassi, HE Specialist from the Department for Business and Trade (DBT UK Government), highlighted the importance of UK qualifications being delivered overseas: 'TNE partnerships and collaborations are important across national and local governments, students and institutions, and it is essential that they are developed in a sustainable and strategic way'. Dr. Tomassi also explained the different variations and models of TNE: joint programmes, dual courses, overseas campi, focus on research and sometimes taught programmes, each different according to the provider, its students, staff, region, country and economy. As a professional who used to manage TNE partnerships, she recognises TNE as a brilliant tool to reduce brain drain and finds it reassuring that stakeholders have confirmed this in recent years. Although English language proficiency might be a barrier, Dr. Tomassi affirms that qualifications in TNE help students progress. Initial research also shows that they are far more employable having been in contact with global mindsets and different cultures. She concluded her presentation saying that TNE is also an excellent way to upskill faculty staff.

Diana Daste, Cultural Engagement Lead at the British Council, gave a brief overview of the main incentives for internationalisation in Brazil and showed that government funding and support play a critical role, as UK-BR relations blossom when they are supported by government-backed initiatives.



She also shared some of the priorities raised by local stakeholders to foster connections between UK and BR HEIs, as identified by the British Council's research and insights work:

- Developing academic partnerships
- Undertaking collaborative research projects
- Strengthen internationalisation at home and postgraduate studies and Brazilian research
- Improving English language skills
- Expanding, measuring and leveraging the impact of international partnerships and research (social, economic and environmental impact)

Paving ways to solid partnerships

In the last ten years, top Brazilian universities have established active international offices and ambitious internationalisation goals. There are frameworks and pathways supporting not just outgoing student exchange, but also hosting of international students, courses and disciplines in English, summer/winter schools, access to funds for joint research and joint degrees – some of those supported by state and/or federal agencies. This is the perception of Jaqueline Wilkins, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Global Engagement, King's College London. 'Additionally, it seems to me that through these years, UK universities in general have become more knowledgeable of the quality and deep engagement of Brazilian students, the excellent research that is produced in and with Brazil and the ground-breaking opportunities in joint research around themes of global relevance', she noted.

Most collaborations are driven by people, and this is true for both research and teaching initiatives. Much of the joint research going forward in Brazil will have come from people being aware of each other's work via the literature or meeting at conferences. Once a collaboration starts, institutions learn more about what is happening in the two centres and other connections can arise. 'There is a very organic component to research collaborations. The critical element for sustaining them is, of course, research grants. There have been success stories with the UK and Brazilian funders working together to sustain productive partnership in recent times', observes Professor William Cushley, Assistant Vice-Principal International and Professor of Molecular Immunology at the University of Glasgow.

Strong partnerships are built with time and depend on a combination of different factors that are specific to each connection. In general, they rely on strong academic connections maintained by individuals or research groups through time, paired with an institutional strategy of mapping opportunities, synergies and complementarity, in a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches. 'To us at King's, it is also essential to understand from our institutional partner what they wish from the partnership up-front and agree together on what it will look like in the future. So, although I don't believe there is a "one size fits all" approach to developing long-term partnerships, we can say there are some guiding principles that can support them: academic relevance and engagement, institutional intentionality, and reciprocity', lists Wilkins.



One-to-one meetings, each of them 15 minutes long, allowed the participants to get to know each other and Brazilian HEIs, to showcase their intentions in partnering with the six UK institutions present. Some interesting possibilities were drawn during the session³⁸:

- Institutions in the UK are happy to welcome Brazilian postgraduate scholars for short periods of time as part of their studies, especially if these are collaborative programmes.
- Many institutions offer a no-fee involvement for short visits, but the duration of fee-free time differs by institution (and sometimes by subject).
- Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) offers an opportunity for students at all levels to experience interactions with faculty in the two countries, and to work together. This kind of arrangement addresses the Brazilian wish to develop internationalisation at home opportunities for young people who cannot easily travel abroad.
- Match-making for TNE is easier when the study areas are similar between HEIs (e.g. public policies, administration and public management, social and economic studies).
- Joint initiatives can work best when the student profile of the HEI in Brazil meets research demands of the UK HEI.
- There are three important phases to advance in a conversation between HEIs (for TNE or other kinds of collaboration): 1. Design a schedule of activities (SOA); 2. Elaborate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); 3. Sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).
- An important element to advance partnerships is finding out which themes in common can also be eligible for funding, e.g. find out about external or accelerator funds.
- Designing short programmes in the UK or overseas (e.g. up to eight weeks) can be a solution for students who work full time in Brazil.
- Initiating long-term partnerships in research depends mainly on the possible cooperation between subjects (e.g. engineering, computer science, environmental sciences, to study degradation through mining and possible solutions).
- Public HEIs in Brazil are trying to institutionalise research connections providing seed money and selecting professors to lead the research collaborations.
- Universities in the UK seek to provide real-world experiences and get their students work-ready. They also value teaching informed by world-class research.
- Universities holding programmes on climate change in the UK and in Brazil could plan collaboration or double degrees.

³⁸ Observations collected during the short meetings and focus interviews are only a sample, they do not apply to all HEIs involved but rather to dialogues conducted in each table.

We have activities in Sao Paulo, with USP, UNESP and FGV, we are also working with institutions in Salvador and Manaus. They resonate strongly with the Brazilian government, funders and industry aspirations in strengthening activity with institutions not located in the major urban centres.

Professor William Cushley, University of Glasgow³⁹



³⁹ The University of Glasgow has well-developed research connections with Brazilian institutions. These cover a range of different topics, with considerable effort in parasitology, an impressive output of high-quality papers, and strong work in the social sciences.



Working Group for Gender Equality

Joining forces to support gender equality

The British Council worldwide embraces a strong focus on gender equality in response to persistent inequalities, and this is not different in Brazil. Working with CNPq and other local organisation members, we launched the **Inter-institutional Working Group for Gender Equality in Higher Education and Science**, featured as part of the first day of the UK-BR Mission in Brasília (9 October). The CNPq headquarters hosted the opening meeting, that presented an opportunity for exchange of good practices between the UK universities, government departments and associations, such as CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel), CONFAP (National Council of State Research Funding Agencies), Andifes (National Association of Directors of Federal Higher Education Institutions), and the Ministry of Education.

Event: **Inter-institutional Working Group for Gender Equality in Higher Education and Science meeting**

When: 9 October 2024

Where: CNPq (National Council of Technological and Scientific Development), Brasília

Participants: leaders and representatives of CNPq, CONFAP (National Council of State Research Funding Agencies), UK-BR Network, CAPES, Ministry of Education (MEC), FINEP (Funder of Studies and Projects), leaders of five UK universities (The University of Leeds, the University of Glasgow, King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, and the University of Bath), representatives of the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the Science and Innovation Network (SIN) and the British Council.

What: Launch of the Inter-institutional Working Group for Gender Equality in Higher Education and Science

The British Council organised this working group building upon its initiatives on gender equality and the Women in Science portfolio, aiming to promote partnerships that contribute to stronger, more inclusive and globally connected higher education and science systems. The activities developed under three different calls have culminated in the **Brazil Gender Equality Framework for Higher Education Institutions**, jointly designed by 27 UK and Brazil higher education institutions. The result was a charter of principles with a series of tools for the development of gender equality policies in HEIs in Brazil, inspired by the Athena Swan Charter: a contribution the British Council can bring to the Inter-Institutional Working Group as a tool to support institutional changes.

During the meeting, UK universities representatives pointed out how some of their institutions incorporated the Athena Swan charter and how that contributed to advance on gender equality within the organisations. They also gave examples of EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) policies in higher education.

Accomplished objectives of the meeting:

- Sharing of good practices within the areas that the Inter-Institutional Working Group will work on, which include gender, inclusion and diversity processes and policies.
- Establishing the role of international HE collaboration to support gender equality agendas in both countries.
- Official launch of the Inter-institutional Working Group for Gender Equality in Higher Education and Science, presided by CNPq, with the British Council holding the secretariat for its first year.
- Agreement on terms of reference with participating institutions, formalising their membership in the Working Group.



CNPq and British Council sign agreement for the Inter-institutional Working Group for Gender Equality in Higher Education and Science at CNPq headquarters. (@ Marcelo Gondim / CNPq)



Inter-institutional Working Group for Gender Equality

The Inter-institutional Working Group for Gender Equality in Higher Education and Science aims to contribute to more inclusive and diverse institutional and national policies in higher education and science ecosystems. This supports the development of local structures and policies based on shared EDI practice and identifies opportunities to advance on partnerships with like-minded institutions.

Diana Daste, Cultural Engagement Lead from the British Council, said the main objective of the WG is to bring different institutions to think together, use common tools and instruments and thus optimise and gain efficiency in the resources invested in this agenda. 'Moreover, we want to amplify the impact and scale of existing initiatives, whether projects, programmes or policies, and develop institutional capabilities', she explained. The British Council has a structuring role bringing together the different institutions and, in operational terms, is responsible for the secretariat, which involves recording the different meetings, identifying common agendas and interests, managing information and taking care of documents and of the experience sharing component.

The presidency of the WG is annual and rotative: the first year the CNPq was chosen in common agreement by the members. The responsibilities of the presidency include facilitating meetings and listing strategic points for group discussion.

'In the last two decades, we have started to carry out research in a more collective way, because agencies started to demand that we form national and international research groups and research networks. This contributed to a change in culture, from competitive individualism to much more cooperative and collaborative working relationships, and I hope that we can do something very similar with this group', noted Dalila Andrade Oliveira, Director of Institutional, International Cooperation and Innovation at CNPq.

The initiatives of the WG have the power to promote greater gender equality in the sector. This is especially true because the participants are institutions that contribute to the regulation of the national system of science and technology and higher education, and provide funding to research projects. One example: set a joint notice or programme that links funding for research or education projects with gender equality initiatives. WG meetings take place every three months, aiming to update on activities and strategic alignments of the group and are conducted preferably in virtual mode. New memberships depend on agreeing with the WG's terms of reference and is signed virtually.

Participants in the WG

- The British Council (holding secretariat)
- CNPq - National Council of Technological and Scientific Development (holding presidency on year one)
- CAPES - Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel
- MEC - Ministry of Education
- CONFAP - National Council of State Research Funding Agencies
- UK-BR Gender Equality Partnerships network (former participants of British Council calls that developed the Gender Framework for Gender Equality in HEIs in Brazil)

‘The WG has an institutional impact, it demonstrates an applied commitment from different parties to develop tools that build capabilities and thus impact women at the forefront and in career progression’, explained Daste. ‘We can learn from good models and replicate them in more vulnerable institutions. Ultimately, we need to know the strongest and most vulnerable aspects of the situation, looking at the whole system’, remarked Oliveira.

The group embraces three lines of work to support the agenda: 1) Develop tools for assessment systems, indicators and action plans for gender equality and diversity; 2) Align data and information to document gender equality processes; 3) Strengthen institutional capacities and communities of practice.

Some of the next steps include organising webinars to disseminate the Brazil Gender Equality Framework for Higher Education Institutions and publishing an article about the WG on the fourth edition of WIS Magazine.

Expected outcomes

for the Inter-institutional Working Group for Gender Equality

In the short term (1 to 3 years):

- Consolidated Inter-Institutional WG
- Framework for Gender Equality in Brazilian IEs is used as a central tool for evaluation
- Common notices designed, funded and released by WG members
- Communities of practice to expand exchanges and experiences stimulated and strengthened between Brazil and the United Kingdom

In the long term (3 to 5 years):

- Tools developed or shared by the WG applied in the evaluation systems of participating institutions (programmes, notices, among others)
- Gender and diversity committees from various member institutions participate as representatives in the WG

Women and Science Award

The first delivery within the scope of the Inter-Institutional Working Group for Gender Equality was the Women and Science Award, created in October 2024 to honour researchers who stand out for their scientific collaboration. The initiative was launched by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), linked to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI), with the Ministry of Women, the British Council and the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF) as partners. The award's main objectives are to promote diversity, plurality and the participation of women in science, technology and innovation careers, in addition to strengthening gender equality and recognising the value of research conducted by women.

The purpose is to reward researchers from each of the three major areas of knowledge (Life Sciences; Exact Sciences and Engineering; Human and Social Sciences, Language and Arts) in two categories: Stimulus, for researchers up to 45 years of age; and Trajectory, for scientists aged 46 and over. In addition to these, the award will have the

Institutional Merit category, to honour up to three higher education institutions or research institutes with actions related to the induction of gender equality policies. Recognition includes not only cash prizes but also trips that enable participation in international congresses and the exchange of knowledge between female scientists from around the world.

'The British Council supports the category of institutional merit, precisely recognising universities and institutions aligned with the principles of the Brazil Gender Equality Framework. They will submit an action plan around transformations into more diverse institutions and we will finance the implementation of some of the actions described in the plans', explained Daste.

The recognition of HEIs is inductive, according to Oliveira, from CNPq. 'The institutions that don't win the award will understand that they need to improve their gender equality policies. And the seal that recognises the winning institution is a reinforcement for it to continue advancing on these practices. At the same time, it states that gender equality is a culture that needs to be valued.'



Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Luciana Santos; President of CNPq, Ricardo Galvão, Diana Daste, Cultural Engagement Lead, British Council; Minister of Women Affairs, Aparecida Gonçalves. (@Luana Baggi / MCTI)



Partners for the Future

Discussing internationalisation in the heart of Brazil

How does international collaboration contribute to Brazilian HEIs and society in general? How can the interests of the sector meet the purposes intended by the government for Higher Education? A strategic meeting at the British Embassy in Brasília outlined key areas to address these questions and provided a good discussion on opportunities for internationalisation, its main challenges and key avenues to advance on common ambition.

A series of dialogues throughout the day supported understanding of common priorities and areas of collaboration to guide UK-Brazil future partnerships in higher education and Science. The participants from the Brazilian Government and the sector, as well as representatives from the UK government and UK universities, discussed and agreed on government perspectives in the industry and reflected on how collaboration can be enhanced to contribute to growth and social impact. The British Council is taking forward these insights and proposed strategies to develop clear pathways, shared and co-created between UK and Brazil. The goal is to prepare a document to support the development of strategic partnership for UK-Brazil in higher education and science.

Event: Partners for the Future

When: 10 October 2024

Where: The British Embassy, Brasília

Participants: Professor Sir Steve Smith (International Education Champion), leaders of five UK universities (The University of Leeds, the University of Glasgow, King's College London, Queen Mary University of London, and the University of Bath), the British Council, Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida, Rector of UFMG and Vice-President of Andifes (National Association of Directors of Federal Higher Education Institutions), Lívia Leite, Executive Secretary at Andifes, Wylam Assis Jr, Advisor at Andifes, Simone Benck, Rector of University of Distrito Federal and representative of Abruem (Brazilian Association of Rectors of State and Municipal Universities), Andrei Candiota da Silva, Executive Director of ABMES (Brazilian Association of Higher Education Providers -private HEIs), Waldenor Moraes, Vice-President FAUBAI (Brazilian Association for International Education)

What: Discussion on priority areas and formats for collaboration between the UK and Brazil on higher education and science, looking towards future opportunities and strengthening the bond through encouraging networks and strategic partnerships.

The development of a **strategic partnership for UK-Brazil in higher education and science** enables stronger, more strategic and equitable UK and Brazil collaborations. A joint commitment on the development of collaborations and relationships supports the delivery of the priorities outlined in the UK International Education Strategy and Brazilian policies as the Post Graduation National Plan and the CAPES Global programme.

In the morning, Partners for the Future focused on the government perspective, while in the afternoon session, the focus was on sector associations, networks and Universities for the future of UK and Brazil collaborations. The initial sessions provided an opportunity to learn and exchange current Brazilian and UK government priorities and to identify possible ways to further develop ties between the UK-Brazil. Promoting social impact on the three bases of education – learning, research and community work – plays a truly crucial role in Brazilian universities. The discussions with representatives from the Ministry of Education, CONFAP, CAPES and CNPq, provided a vision on Brazilian international cooperation with the UK and other countries, and highlighted the

importance of strategic mechanisms to promote impactful collaboration and lasting partnerships. It also noted that funding is key to supporting collaboration. Another key factor, as pointed out by Martin Hope, Global Head of Higher Education and Science at the British Council, was to apply a strategic thematic approach to programme design, with particular attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and wider impact measurement frameworks. There was clear alignment across the table on this, including on the upcoming CAPES Global internationalisation scheme, which aims to support international collaboration and identify key strategic themes/areas of interest to structure proposals in line with national priorities, global trends and opportunities.



Members of the UK-BR Mission at the Partners for the Future meeting at the British Embassy in Brasilia. @ Rodolfo Rizzo



The afternoon dialogue

The sector institutions present at the British Embassy provided views about ways to strengthen UK-BR ties, on how to align priorities and exposed existing gaps on the relationship between the institutions. Representatives from Andifes (National Association of Directors of Federal Higher Education Institutions), Abruem (Brazilian Association of Rectors of State and Municipal Universities) and ABMES (Brazilian Association of Higher Education Providers - private HEIs) congregate a wide network of a variety of universities in Brazil, playing a vital role in the country's higher education landscape.

'My role is to develop deep and long-lasting relations with key countries, such as Brazil. It already has fantastic universities and students and aims to grow on internationalisation', emphasised Professor Sir Steve Smith, International Education Champion from the UK Government. He considered that the timing for this UK-BR Mission was just right, as the government continues fostering internationalisation from within the universities.

Professor Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida, Rector of University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and Vice-President of Andifes considered this kind of mission essential to get to know UK universities and see that they are interested in cooperation. 'It is important to promote this second phase of the CAPES internationalisation project and now, we will actually have the opportunity to think about the CAPES Global while aiming at partnerships with several institutions', noted Almeida.

One of the points discussed was the importance of finding **the purpose and the motivation for internationalisation** and UK-Brazil relationships in higher education. More than strengthening higher education and research and providing the growth of the system itself, a meaningful, relevant partnership

delivers impact for institutions, society, and for the countries involved. Professor Doctor Simone Pereira Costa Benck, Rector at University of Distrito Federal and an Abruem representative, explained that there are so many regional differences in Brazil and among HEIs, but the main objective of all of them is to offer teaching, research and extension. 'Universities inland give us the opportunity to reach vulnerable communities and parts of the country that were only tackled occasionally by federal institutions. It is challenging to reach out to them to diversify the research in Brazil', she remarked.

One way to include more universities in UK-Brazil collaboration is by **working through networks**. Several arrangements were suggested as beneficial and feasible, including: I. consortia (a group of the six UK universities that joined the delegation are creating a consortia to increase collaboration with Brazil), II. tripartite collaborations (three organisations included in the partnerships), III. through sector bodies networks (such as Andifes, Abruem, UUKI). 'We need projects that have the power to reduce these asymmetries between prestigious state universities and other state and municipal institutions, and international partnerships come into this equation', Benck defended. Professor Ian Wood, from the University of Leeds, said the institution is keen to make existing connections broader and deeper. 'The key is how to make the partnerships remain after the first researchers move on? Broad and deep connections will help build capacities', he explained. The University of Leeds has the policy that every student should have an international experience, which does not necessarily mean living abroad, but being in contact with international students, working on same projects.

As noted by Diana Daste, from the British Council, participants agreed that **a thematic framework is helpful** to point out the key priorities of both countries, guide researchers and institutions in their connections and enable ways to monitor the partnerships' impacts. Key themes outlined as of mutual interest are also targeted in the Sustainable Development Goals, such as green energy, sustainability, health and education. Jaqueline Wilkins, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Global Engagement, King's College London, summarised the guiding areas to collaboration: biodiversity, bioeconomy, food security; AI; health and diversity and inclusion. 'Something very important for Brazil is that universities are a place of social change. Even without a

primary intention, all its actions are aimed at solving problems, shortening paths. Everything we do is for social improvement, so it is easy to choose priority areas for strategic intervention, since universities already work to do that.'

Another common goal identified by the group was that **partnerships should be fostered and grow to institutional levels**, rather than being commitments by individuals. Support for this can be top-down (government investment of resources), bottom-up (identification of academic teachers and staff and their own engagement in the system) and sideways (creative ways of addressing challenges, being inclusive and understanding different realities).



Professor Sir Steve Smith makes a speech at the reception to celebrate the launch of the Institutional Working Group for Gender Equality and the collaboration between UK and Brazil. @ Rodolfo Rizzo



It is clear that long-term relations need institutional approach and not just money. Internationalisation becomes more natural and efficient if the focus is on culture and the actual structures provided by the HEIs and by the system. 'For institutional gains and the resolution of international problems, it is necessary to invest in postgraduate studies or joint PhD programmes, designed by the two institutions. It is imperative to have academics connected, otherwise this does not move forward, and it is also important to create tools for them to get to know each other. But to form long-term partnerships we cannot depend on individual connections, it is necessary to institutionalise them', explained Wilkins. Another problem in internationalisation is the language. 'Bringing researchers to Brazil is something difficult, because not so many people speak Portuguese. That is why we are also working on this through online courses in Portuguese as a second language', informed Sandra Almeida (UFMG).

It was also noted that a closer look at the earlier stages of connection (language, culture and people) must be followed by **finding ways to foster funding**. Lack of financial resources and fees charged by UK universities were the main barriers that emerged from the conversation. Almeida highlighted that universities will always be competing for funding. 'The effort of seeking for joint projects is very important, this is a trigger to find new partners. The more emphasis we give to promoting UK institutions to join CAPES Global, the better', she defended, explaining that another problem in Brazil-UK relations are tuition fees that Brazilian students cannot afford, and the government cannot pay. Fees are a problem, but it is possible to create alternatives. 'We designed a visiting researcher programme in which postgraduate students carry out research for up to six months at King's without fees', added Wilkins.

Suggestions for managing tuition fees between Brazil and UK

An approach to this challenge is to comprehend that the financial models supporting higher education and research are different. While UK universities rely on the charging of student fees, Brazil counts with high-level research and higher education provision that is publicly funded. This is not a reality that is changeable in short-term, so we can't expect entire reciprocity of financial models in our partnerships with Brazilian public institutions. Therefore, the suggestion is to find ways of working around this on a case-by-case basis. Some options can be hybrid delivery that would shorten the length of time the student needs to spend in the UK, such as joint and parallel/top-up degrees that can be delivered partially online; summer schools and short courses; accessing national and international funding; and industry and private sector funding.

Jaqueline Wilkins, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Global Engagement, King's College London

Coming up with innovative payment arrangements was suggested as a way around the issue. Modalities and mechanisms raised in the conversations, such as dual degrees and collaborative structures, are **ways to support formal partnerships**, fostering the internationalising culture. 'We can design other types of collaboration, not only in research and not dependable on money. In our university, we are searching for entrepreneurship and mobility. It doesn't need to be through a loan or prize, but by making our colleagues and students work together', exposed Professor Julian Chaudhuri, from the University of Bath. Part of this reciprocity includes co-creating undergraduate and postgraduate programmes with online classes, as noted by Professor William Cushley, of the University of Glasgow. 'We are promoting the learning of Portuguese and other languages to facilitate that. Our university also wants to work in researcher-to-researcher and in short-term summer programmes aimed at international students, as alternatives to the full-term programmes', he explained.

In his closing remarks, Professor Sir Steve Smith stated that internationalisation is as good to big institutions as it is to the smaller ones. 'How do we deal with the students who are sitting in smaller and less internationalised institutions and how do we, as the British Government, come up with strategies to incentivise their internationalisation'.



3 answers to 1 question

How do you envision the future of relations between the UK and BR in HE in 5 years' time?

'It has enormous potential because Brazil stands out on the international scene, so this prominence has placed UFMG, for instance, at the forefront of international cooperation. There needs to be a cooperation strategy on the part of British universities, but if there is in fact a programme that encourages cooperation, this potential to internationalisation and research cooperation at an institutional level grows. If institutions and public authorities can help develop and provide funding to partnerships, I think we can further develop the ones that already exist. There are cooperation models in Europe that have a major multiplication effect and those are the ones we should look for.'

Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida, Rector of University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and Vice-President of Andifes

'There is government-level enthusiasm for closer UK-Brazil collaboration. During the visit, I was struck by the consistency of priority areas for the Brazilian government, universities and industry and by the clear commitment to enhance opportunities in currently disadvantaged regions of Brazil. These align well with the capabilities of the six UK HEIs in the mission. I would like to see a platform where institutions can learn about funding opportunities to work together in priority areas and contact appropriate partners. Routes to developing jointly delivered programmes, offering opportunities for young people should be a priority. They will be the best ambassadors for UK-Brazil collaborations in the years ahead.'

Professor William Cushley, Assistant Vice-Principal International of the University of Glasgow

'I would envision UK and Brazil deepening existing connections through a continued dialogue and establishing common frameworks that can support UK-Brazil HE and joint research to generate positive impact to the societies, also globally. I feel there's momentum now to deepen collaboration in higher education through different ways of engagement – such as joint degrees – and in research around areas of common or complementary expertise, such as health, biodiversity, bioeconomy, ai and tackling social inequality. I would like to see more R&D with industry partners and a closer connection with policymaking around research informing policy and generating positive impact in societies.'

Jaqueline Wilkins, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Global Engagement, King's College London

