

Market Intelligence Brief

GHANA



INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION
SERVICES

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1. AT A GLANCE



Market background

- Ghana's economy has seen positive annual growth for close to two decades. Real GDP growth of 6.1 per cent in 2019 indicated a solid recovery from a fiscal crisis in 2015. Annual growth was expected to reach 6.3 per cent in 2020, but the government revised down their projection to 1.5 per cent to account for the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting global recession.
- Ghana successfully completed a three-year IMF stabilisation programme (2015-2019) on the back of strong performances in industry (including extractives) and services. These two sectors account for 34 and 47 per cent of GDP, respectively, and agriculture makes up 18.5 per cent.
- Due to a reliance on the exports of oil, gold and cocoa, Ghana's economy is vulnerable to external shocks such as commodity price fluctuations and adverse weather conditions. There is also a high level of public debt that is equivalent to 60.5 per cent of GDP.



Local education trends

- In 2017, the government introduced the Free Secondary High School policy, which granted all students access to secondary high school free of charge. Government figures show that 43 per cent more students are now enrolled in upper secondary schools than in 2016. In 2020, the policy will be extended to include TVET.
- There has been a surge in demand for higher education thanks to a booming youth population, a growing middle class and an increase of students completing senior high school. Tertiary enrolment stands at almost 16 per cent (445,000), one of the highest in the region and almost double the average for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.
- Ghana's public tertiary sector is reasonably established and well-respected but has been hindered by deteriorating standards and low morale. The sector struggles to deal with the rapidly increasing student intake in the context of reducing numbers of academic staff, poor infrastructure (including low quality student accommodation), ill equipped labs, a lack of learning materials and low levels of funding.
- Private providers of tertiary education have emerged in large numbers in recent years, growing to account for 50 per cent of the institutions and 20 per cent of students. These institutions are frequently accused of lowering academic standards, but the private sector serves to bridge some of the significant gaps in higher education provision.



International education

- Outbound student mobility is an established trend among the country's wealthiest families and demand for education abroad continues to grow as the economy and household wealth have developed and as entry to top Ghanaian universities has become increasingly competitive.
- UNESCO data shows 14,622 Ghanaians were enrolled in foreign higher education institutions in 2017 – an increase of 50 per cent since 2013. The top destinations are the US, UK, Ukraine, Senegal and Canada. This does not however reflect the whole picture as these figures do not include China, where over 6,500 Ghanaian students were studying in 2018.
- There were 1,885 Ghanaian students studying at UK institutions in 2018/19, a 14 per cent increase from the previous year. Of these students, 77 per cent were enrolled in postgraduate programmes. Business and administrative studies is by far the most popular subject area, followed by social studies, law, and engineering and technology.

2. INTRODUCTION

Ghana is a West African country bordering the Atlantic Ocean to the south and Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso to the east, west and north. Ghana is a relatively small country, with a similar geographical size to the UK. It gained independence from colonial rule in 1957, the first sub-Saharan African country to do so.

Ghana is classified as a lower-middle-income country and has a population of 31 million people. Like most African countries, it has a young population with an expanding and rapidly urbanising middle class that drives strong consumer growth. In 2019, its GDP per capita, in International Purchasing Power terms, was equivalent to US\$7,343. This is nearly 20 per cent higher than that of Nigeria, West Africa's regional powerhouse and the biggest economy on the African continent.¹ Its growing wealth has come from the exports of gold, cocoa and oil.

Education is a high priority for the Ghanaian government and the country has made striking progress in recent decades on a number of education indicators. The literacy rate among the population aged 15-24 rose from 70.1 per cent to 92.5 per cent between 2000 and 2018. Enrolment in education at all levels has also increased rapidly over the same time period, especially at the tertiary level where enrolments have tripled.

The current government, which entered office in 2016, quickly followed through on its central electoral promise to introduce universal free senior high school education. In two years, secondary school enrolment has increased by 43 per cent and an estimated 1.27 million students will benefit from this expansion by 2020, engendering increased demand and markets for higher education.² The government plans to extend the free education policy to secondary TVET programmes from 2020.

Middle class Ghanaians have an established history of studying overseas for higher education. A combination of factors in recent years including visa restrictions, scholarship availability and stronger economic ties with emerging countries has resulted in a shift away from the traditional destinations of the UK and US and towards Canada, the Gulf countries and, of particular note, China. Given the development of significant trade relations between the two countries, this number is likely to increase. The UK is primarily a postgraduate destination, and in 2018/19 the number of postgraduates increased by 19 per cent while the number of undergraduates did not change.

Ghana is one of the major providers of international education in sub-Saharan Africa and hosts the third most international students in the region after South Africa and Senegal. Its universities have a good reputation regionally for providing quality education. However, only one Ghanaian university, the University of Ghana, appears in the 2020 THE rankings.

¹ [World Economic Outlook Database](#), IMF, 2019.

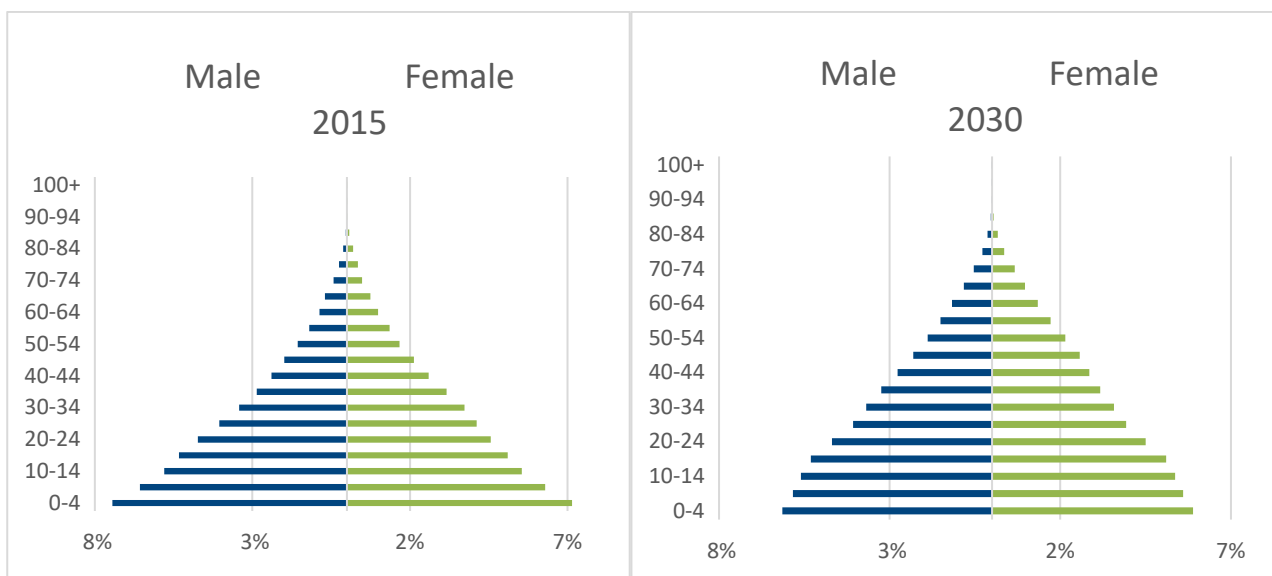
² [The Budget Statement and Economic Policy for 2020](#), Government of Ghana, 2019.

3. DEMOGRAPHICS

Ghana’s population has more than doubled in the last three decades from 14.7 million in 1990 to 31 million in 2020. With a current population growth rate of 2.2 per cent, this figure is set to surpass 50 million by 2050.³ Annual population growth in Ghana is lower than the average of 2.5 per cent for Africa, but much higher than the 1.4 per cent average for lower-middle-income countries.

Ghana’s population growth is fuelled by a high but slowing birth rate of four children per woman in 2017, compared to 5.6 in 1990, as well as a general improvement in infant mortality rates. Life expectancy increased from 57 in 2000 to 65 in 2018. While there has been a decline in AIDS-related mortality, the impact still results in a lower life expectancy and a higher death rate than might be expected for a country at this level of development.⁴

Figure 1: Ghana’s population pyramid, 2015 and 2030



Source: UN Population Division

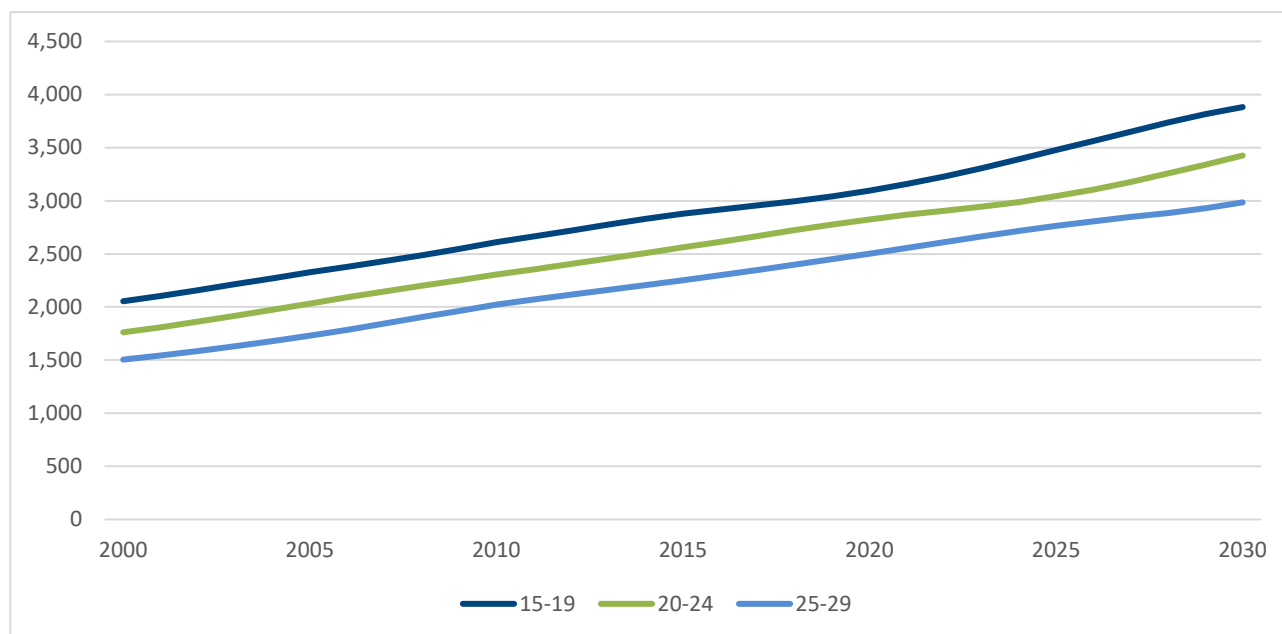
Thanks to high fertility, Ghana has a booming youth population. The median age of the population is 21.2 and over 57 per cent of the population is younger than 25 and 37 per cent is aged 14 or younger. As the birth rate slows and life expectancy increases, a higher proportion of the total population is at working age. The age dependency ratio, which measures the population under 15 and over 64 against the working population, has declined from 76 per 100 in 2010 to 68 per 100 in 2018.⁵

³ [Population, total - Ghana](#), The World Bank, accessed May 2020; [Population growth – Ghana](#), The World Bank, accessed June 2020.

⁴ [The World Bank in Ghana](#), The World Bank, accessed May 2020; [UN World Population Prospects 2019](#), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, accessed March 2020.

⁵ [Age Dependency Ratio – Ghana](#), World Bank Data, 2019. The ratio was 90 dependents per 100 employed in the 1960s.

Figure 2: Ghana's student-age population (thousands)



Source: UN Population Division

Ghana's student age population is expanding and is expected to continue to grow steadily over the next 10 years. In conjunction with the increasing size of the Ghanaian middle class, this growth will increase potential outbound international student numbers.

Ghana's urban population has more than tripled over the last 30 years to account for around 60.5 per cent of the population in 2018. The rate of urbanisation is projected to reach 73 per cent by 2050.⁶ The capital, Accra, has expanded rapidly over the last 50 years, with the population increasing from just over 630,000 in 1970 to nearly 2.5 million inhabitants today, almost 45 per cent of whom are classed as immigrants originally from another African country. Continued growth is likely, and projections suggest the capital's population will reach 3.2 million by 2030.⁷ The more negative impacts of rapid urbanisation include congestion, unregulated urban expansion, limited access to services (including classroom facilities and trained teachers) affordable quality housing, and institutions unable to cope with the rapid transition. Further issues of concern include poor waste disposal systems, air and water pollution, crime, land degradation, flooding and forest and wildlife depletion.⁸

According to the 2010 census, there three main ethnic groups are the Akan (47.5 per cent of the population), the Mole-Dagbon (16.6 per cent), and the Ewe (13.9 per cent), but there are many others. English is the official languages but there are many local languages spoken. About 71 per cent of Ghanaians identify as Christian, 17.6 per cent are Muslim, and 5.2 per cent follow traditional religions.⁹

⁶ In addition to Ghana the West Africa region includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria.

⁷ [Accra Population](#), *World Population Review*, accessed March 2020.

⁸ [Rising through Cities in Ghana: The time for action is now to fully benefit from the gains of urbanization](#), *The World Bank*, 2015.

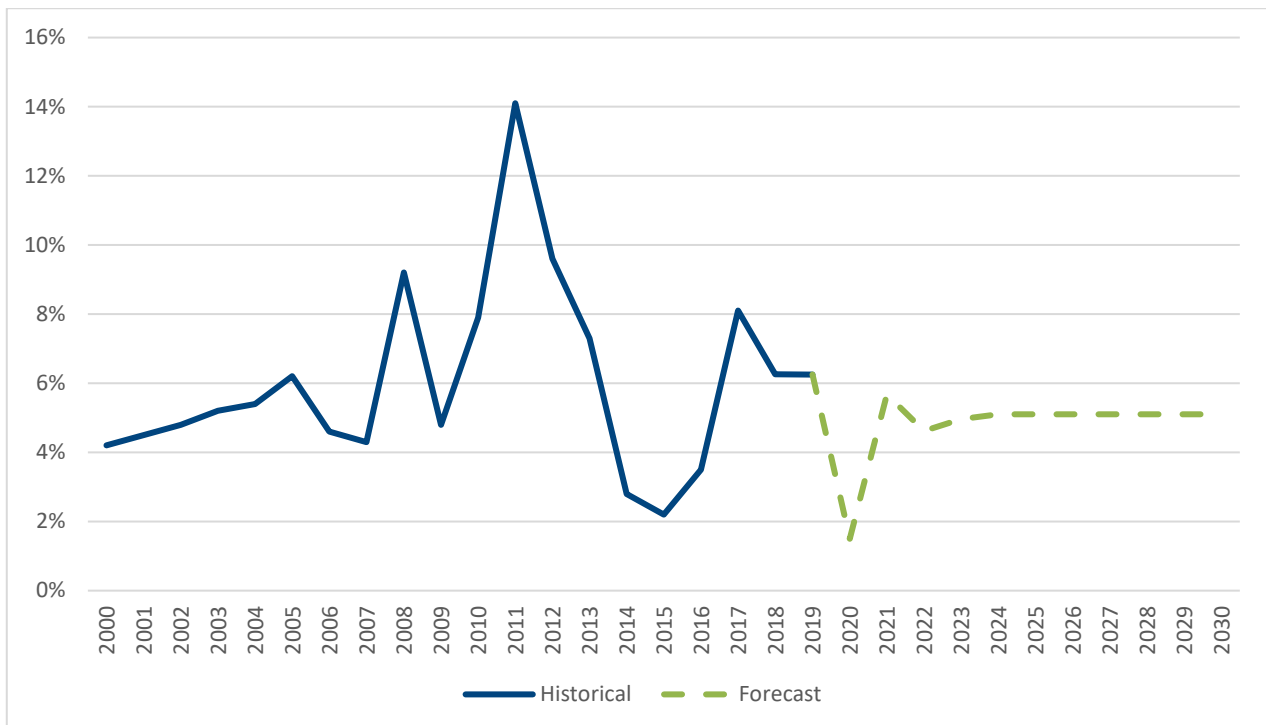
⁹ [Ghana](#), *CIA World Factbook*, accessed June 2020.

4. ECONOMICS

Ghana has experienced positive real growth for close to two decades. In 2011, it became the second-largest economy in West Africa and the World Bank classified it as a lower-middle-income country. The acceleration in annual GDP growth after 2005 was in part due to higher prices for Ghana’s main commodity exports, notably gold and cocoa, and the start of commercial oil production in 2011.¹⁰

After a major fiscal crisis in 2015 that caused annual GDP growth to drop to 2.2 per cent, growth recovered to 6.1 per cent in 2019 with the support of a three-year crisis management programme with the IMF. The government originally projected 6.3 per cent growth for 2020 but revised down this projection in March 2020 to 1.5 per cent to account for the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting global recession.¹¹

Figure 3: Annual GDP Growth



Source: Euromonitor, IMF

Ghana is the world’s second-largest producer of cocoa and Africa’s second-largest producer of gold. The exports of oil, gold, and agricultural products are the major drivers of Ghana’s economic growth, thus leaving the economy vulnerable to adverse weather and volatility in commodity prices. GDP per capita at current prices rose to US\$2,130 in 2018, an increase of 20 per cent from 2015, and is currently the sixth highest in Africa.¹²

¹⁰ [Ghana Systematic Country Diagnostic](#) World Bank, 2018.

¹¹ [Ghana slashes GDP forecast over coronavirus shock](#), Reuters, 31 March 2020.

¹² [Ghana Country Profile](#) World Bank Data, 2018.

The services sector is the dominant sector in Ghana's economy, accounting for 47.2 per cent of GDP in 2019. Industry accounted for 34.2 per cent of GDP in 2019 and agriculture accounted for 18.5 per cent, its lowest share since 2013.¹³

The 2020 budget deficit was projected to be equivalent to 4.7 per cent at the end of 2020, although it is unknown how the Covid-19 pandemic will impact this. To prioritise fiscal consolidation at all costs, a fiscal responsibility law capping future budget deficits at a maximum of 5 per cent of GDP was enacted in 2018.¹⁴ However, Ghana has rising public debt that as of September 2019 was 60.5 per cent of GDP. External and domestic borrowing costs now take about one-quarter of total expenditure and about 45 per cent of tax revenue.¹⁵

In 2019, the World Bank committed US\$200 million in financing for the Ghana Economic Transformation Project. The project focuses on developing the private sector and the finance of the country by creating a business-enabling environment, increased private sector investments, increasing jobs, and through providing financing small and medium enterprises.¹⁶

While the project aims to improve Ghana's score on the World Bank Ease of Doing Business report, Ghana fell to 118th in 2020, four places below its 2019 finish. It ranked 13th among sub-Saharan African countries and behind Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa and Cote d'Ivoire.¹⁷ Ghana also fell in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index from 106th in 2018 to 111th in 2019.¹⁸

Ghana's economic blueprint for 2017-2024 is laid out in the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies. The programme aims to "create opportunities for all Ghanaians" through job creation, access to education, access to healthcare, and strengthening social protections; "safeguard the natural environment" through conservation measures, disaster risk prevention, and upgrade inner cities and slums; deepen democratic governance and public accountability; and building a strong and resilient economy.¹⁹

Unemployment was estimated at 4.3 per cent in 2019, only 0.2 per cent higher than the lowest rate in the last 20 years. The unemployment rate dropped by 2.5 per cent between 2015 and 2017 and has remained at a steady level since. Since 2016, Ghana's unemployment has been lower than the sub-Saharan Africa average, which was 6.2 per cent in 2019.²⁰

¹³ [4th Ghana Economic Update](#), World Bank, June 2019; [National GDP Accounts](#), Ghana Statistical Service, accessed June 2020.

¹⁴ [2020 Budget Highlights](#), PwC, December 2019.

¹⁵ Ibid.

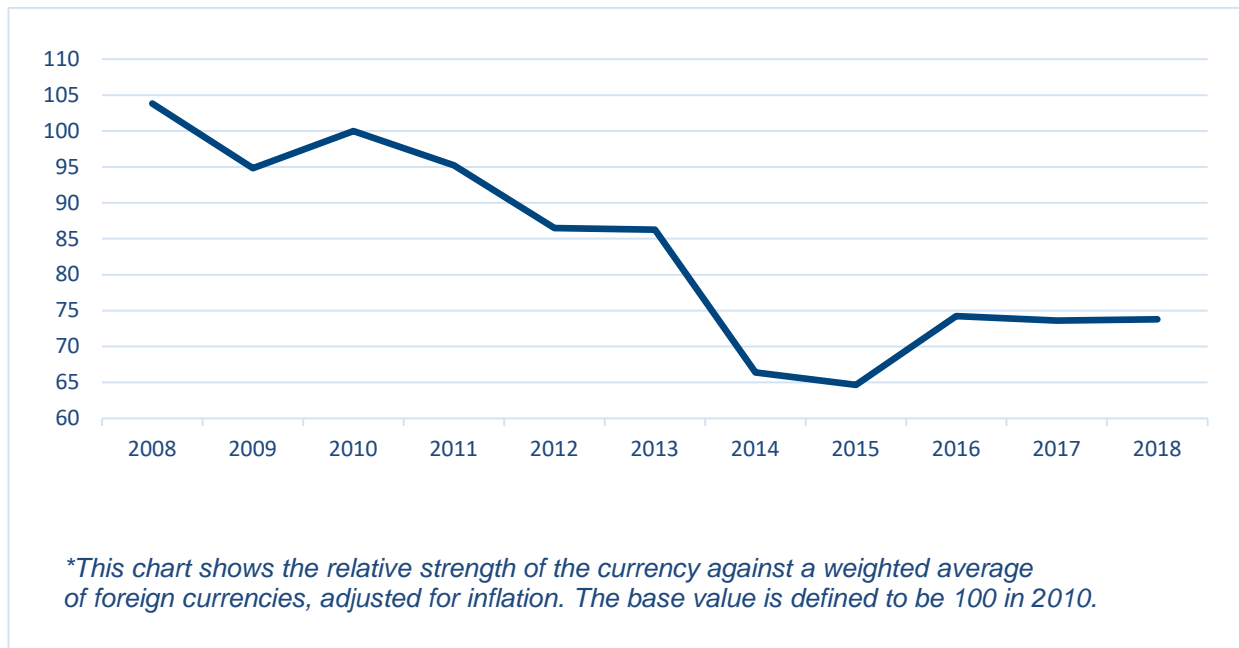
¹⁶ [Ghana Economic Transformation Project](#), World Bank, accessed June 2020.

¹⁷ [Doing Business 2020: Sub-Saharan Africa](#), World Bank, 24 October 2019.

¹⁸ [Global Competitiveness Report 2019](#), World Economic Forum, 2019.

¹⁹ [The Coordinated Programme for Economic and Social Development Policies \(2014 to 2020\)](#), Government of Ghana, accessed June 2020.

²⁰ [Unemployment, total, Ghana, Sub-Saharan Africa](#), World Bank, March 2020.

Figure 4: Real Effective Exchange Rate

Currency devaluation is the ultimate tool for price competition in export markets. The pressures on the exchange rate are visible in the highly unstable performance of the national currency, the Ghana cedi, which is pegged to the US dollar. Between 2012 and 2014, the cedi was one of the world's worst performing currencies, losing 40 per cent of its value against the US dollar. In 2019, the Ghana cedi was however the world's best performing currency against the US dollar, according to Bloomberg.²¹ Improvement in hard currency earnings from natural resource exports are offset by weak productivity and trade deficits. The volatility in the currency also undermines savings, investment and demand.

²¹ [The Mighty Fallen](#), *The Economist*, 2015; [Ghana's Cedi Is the Year's Biggest Winner Against the U.S. Dollar](#), *Bloomberg*, February 2020.

5. POLITICS & POLICY MAKING

Ghana is considered to be one of the most democratic countries in West Africa. It declared independence from the United Kingdom in 1957 and the current system was set up under the 1992 Constitution. It is a constitutional republic with an executive presidency and a multiparty political system.

Presidents are elected by popular vote and can serve a maximum of two four-year terms, with the next presidential elections set to be held on 7 December 2020. Each of Ghana's 16 regions is managed by a regional minister, all of whom are appointed by the president. The legislative branch of government is a unicameral parliament with 275 elected members.

Ghana's current president is Nana Akufo-Addo of the New Patriotic Party. He has been strongly involved in politics since the late 1970s when he was part of a movement to end military governance and restore a multi-party system to Ghana. He is related to three of the six political figures considered central to Ghana's independence movement in the 1940s.²²

A significant factor contributing to the election victory of President Akufo-Addo and the New Patriotic Party in the 2016 elections was the promise of providing free secondary high school education. The government has since successfully introduced the policy and intends to extend it to TVET in 2020.

In many African states, ethnic and tribal affiliations strongly influence voting demographics, but they play much less of a role in Ghanaian politics. Quite unusually, party support is not drawn along socio-economic factors as they often are in other countries. Location has some effect on voting patterns and the north and Volta regions widely votes for the NDC while Ashanti in the middle of the country is an NPP stronghold.²³

President Akufo-Addo's major policy vision is the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development 2017-2024: An Agenda for Jobs, Creating Prosperity and Equality for All. Along with granting free access to secondary high school education and TVET, the policy aims to revitalise the Ghanaian economy and business environment, labour force, agriculture sector, and much more.²⁴

²² [The President](#), *Presidency Republic of Ghana*, February 2018; [The Big Six of Ghana and their rich history](#), *GhanaWeb*, October 2019.

²³ [The Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies 2017-2024. An Agenda for Jobs, Creating Prosperity and Equality for All. Government of Ghana](#), *President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo*, 2017; [Politics, policy and implementation, the Ghanaian Paradox](#), *Brookings Institution*, 2018.

²⁴ [The Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies 2017-2024. An Agenda for Jobs, Creating Prosperity and Equality for All. Government of Ghana](#), *President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo*, 2017.

6. EDUCATION

The Ghana Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible for all education policies in Ghana, including those concerning apprenticeships and skills acquisition. There are 22 subsidiary agencies under the MoE, including specific agencies for: tertiary education, accreditation of institutions, student loans, and regulating libraries.²⁵

Under the National Literacy Acceleration Programme, the government implemented a language policy which changed the medium of instruction at kindergarten and primary levels one to three to Ghanaian languages, with English language taught as a subject. Students may study in any of eleven local languages for much of the first three years, after which English becomes the medium. This is a much-debated issue in Ghana and there have been several policy changes over the years.²⁶

Literacy is high at 92.5 per cent among the 15-24 age group, compared with 58.4 per cent in Cote d'Ivoire and 75.3 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa overall (excluding high-income countries). The rate has improved considerably since 2010, when the literacy rate for the same age group was 85.7 per cent, an increase of 8 per cent in as many years.²⁷

Pre-tertiary education

Education in Ghana is free and compulsory for 11 years from ages four to age 15 and includes two years of pre-primary education. In 2019 the net enrolment rate in pre-primary education was 73.5 per cent, significantly higher than in most sub-Saharan African countries.²⁸ For example, in neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire, only 8.2 per cent of children receive pre-primary education.

The pre-tertiary system is divided into six years of elementary education, three years of junior secondary education, and culminating by three years of senior secondary education. Basic education is compulsory and ends after grade eight. At the end of junior secondary education (after grade nine), students sit the Basic Education Certificate Exam, which is graded on a scale of one (best) to nine (worst) and determines eligibility for admission into senior secondary school. At the end of senior secondary school, students sit the pan-regional West African Senior School Certificate Examination.²⁹

Primary schooling is almost universal with a net enrolment rate of 86 per cent in 2019 and a completion rate of 94 per cent in 2018.³⁰ The pupil-teacher ratio at primary level has fluctuated over recent years but is on a downward trajectory at 27 pupils per teacher (2019), compared with a sub-Saharan average of 37.5 (2017). Class size varies widely across the country with classes in many schools often exceeding 50 pupils, sometimes growing to more than 100.³¹ In primary and secondary schools, enrolment is at parity for girls and boys.³²

²⁵ [About us](#), Ghana Ministry of Education, accessed June 2020.

²⁶ [National Accelerated Literacy Project \(NACAP\)](#), Education and Research Centre (EARC), Ghana. 2020; [Ghana – improved quality and access to education](#). Centre for Applied Linguistics, 2018.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ [Ghana profile](#), UNESCO UIS, accessed June 2020.

²⁹ [Education in Ghana](#), WENR, April 2019.

³⁰ [School enrollment, primary \(% net\), Ghana](#), World Bank Indicators, accessed June 2020; [Primary completion rate, total \(% of relevant age group\)](#), World Bank Indicators, accessed June 2020.

³¹ [Pupil-teacher ratio, primary](#), World Bank Indicators, accessed June 2020.

³² [School enrollment, primary and secondary \(gross\), gender parity index](#), World Bank Indicators, accessed June 2020.

In 2017, the government of Ghana introduced the Free Secondary High School policy, which granted all students access to secondary high school free of charge. The policy, while deemed successful and broadly welcomed, has been fraught with challenges in implementation, most notably in terms of teacher numbers and training, infrastructural issues and accommodating the increasing numbers of students attracted by the programme. The 2019 budget allocation for education amounted to over 12 billion Ghanaian cedi, an increase of 39 per cent on the previous year, primarily to remedy issues brought on by increased school attendance.³³ In October 2018 a double track system was introduced with the aim of addressing congestion within secondary high schools, allowing for a staggered commencement, with the first batch of students starting school in September and the second track commencing in November. Under the double-tracking system each candidate will spend 162 days in the classroom instead of the standard 180 days. The double-track system is expected to end in 2021.³⁴ Government figures show that 43 per cent more students are now enrolled in upper secondary schools than in 2016.

Measures of education quality in Ghana are limited. The biennial National Education Assessment (NEA) measures pupil competency in mathematics and English in primary classes four and six. Even though the NEA acknowledges that proficiency cut-off levels (scoring 55 per cent or more in tests) are lower than international norms (70 per cent or more), the latest assessment available (2016) found that less than 25 per cent of pupils across the board achieved proficiency in mathematics, and less than 40 per cent achieved proficiency in English. There were substantial disparities in learning outcomes based on the location of the school (urban versus rural) and the type of school (public versus private).³⁵

Technical and vocational education (TVET) provides an alternative education and training route after junior secondary school and is offered by both public and private institutions. TVET is managed by the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET), which formulates policies on skills training and education and ensures quality in the sector. There are 348 accredited TVET institutions in Ghana and approval for 32 new institutions was granted at the end of 2019.³⁶ The TVET sector developed rapidly between 2008-2011 and then declined sharply, driven largely by falling enrolments in the private sector and among girls. It has since performed unevenly and suffers from poor public perception.³⁷ Access to free senior high school under the free education policy did not originally apply to TVET, resulting in some students enrolling in senior high school despite preferring vocational study options. To remedy this, the government announced that the free education policy would be extended to TVET in 2020.³⁸

Higher education

The increasing number of students completing secondary education in Ghana has led to a surge in demand for higher education over the last decade. At present there 241 accredited higher education institutions including ten public universities and 91 private tertiary institutions offering degree

³³ [2019 Budget Highlights](#), PWC, November 2018.

³⁴ [Free SHS](#), Government of Ghana, accessed June 2020. [Double-Track System: First Batch for Attend classes for 41 Days](#), GhanaWeb, 2018.

³⁵ [Ghana 2016 National Education Assessment](#), Ministry of Education Ghana, 2016.

³⁶ [Accredited Institutions](#), COTVET, April 2020; [Ghana: Govt to Construct 32 TVET Institutions](#), AllAfrica, December 2019

³⁷ [World TVET database Ghana \(2016\): UNESCO-UNEVOC Compiled by: UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training](#), 2016.

³⁸ [Government to extend Free Education policy to TVET in 2020](#), GhanaWeb, December 2019.

programmes. There are also 49 institutions offering unaccredited awards and eight conferring unrecognised doctoral degrees.³⁹

The latest available data suggests that Ghana's overall tertiary enrolment rate stands at 15.7 per cent, an increase of 7.1 per cent since 2008, totalling around 445,000 students. Ghana strongly outperforms the average enrolment rate for the sub-Saharan African region of nine per cent, but pales compared to the 2018 world average of 38 per cent.⁴⁰

For admission into tertiary programmes, students must obtain a minimum grade of six (on a scale of one to eight, where eight is the lowest score) in at least three core and three elective West African Senior School Certificate Examination subjects. However, surging demand has increased competition in admissions, particularly at the top public universities, so some universities have additional entrance examinations.⁴¹

Demand continues to significantly outpace supply and only about 25 per cent of female and 29 percent of male applicants gain entry to tertiary institutions. Fewer female than male students continue onto tertiary education: only 13.6 per cent of potential female students enrol compared to 17.7 per cent of males. The disparity is even greater at public universities and polytechnics, where female enrolments only account for 37 per cent and 35 per cent respectively.⁴² There is substantial growth potential for the Ghana's higher education market, particularly with the establishment of free senior high school, and as higher education enrolment rates improve for girls.⁴³

While Ghana's higher education sector is well-developed by regional standards, the latest government strategy acknowledges that programme offerings are not sufficiently diversified and often mis-matched against the demands of the job market – an issue regularly cited to explain high graduate unemployment.⁴⁴

Although uneven in quality, the private sector serves to bridge some of the significant gaps in higher education which have arisen due to increased demand. While regulation could be stronger, Ghana is one of the few countries in the region which has had a quality assurance agency in place since the early 1990s and provides an element of private sector regulation, and quality control.⁴⁵

Although accounting for 50 per cent of higher education institutions, just under 20 per cent of students are enrolled in private institutions. Private providers have been accused of lowering entrance requirements, placing profits before quality, employing underqualified or unqualified staff, encouraging industry-irrelevant qualifications and reducing standards. One result of this has been the introduction of restrictions on the development of private universities. In the interest of diversifying and strengthening the economy, only private institutions which prioritise STEM fields will be permitted to commence operations in the future. Additionally, a significant tax rate increase for private universities was introduced in 2016.⁴⁶

Fees and standards vary by institution, although fees are generally higher at private institutions, while public institutions are largely seen as offering better quality. Overall, fees are high for the region, and

³⁹ [Private tertiary institutions offering degree programmes](#), Ghana National Accreditation Board, 2020.

⁴⁰ [Data Bank](#), The World Bank, accessed March 2020.

⁴¹ [Education in Ghana](#), WENR, April 2019.

⁴² [Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan \(2018-2021\)](#), Government of Ghana, 2019.

⁴³ [School enrollment, tertiary, GPI Ghana](#), World Bank, accessed June 2020.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ [History](#), National Ghana National Accreditation Board, accessed June 2020.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

while there is a well-developed student loan system, higher education remains out of the reach of many families. Successful students prefer top institutions, such as the University of Ghana, and top programmes such as medicine, engineering, law, business, mining and pharmacy.

The University of Ghana is ranked in the 801-1,000 bracket by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2020 and is also ranked 301+ in the University Impact Rankings. Both Ashesi University and the University of Professional Studies Accra are ranked 301+ in the University Impact Rankings.⁴⁷

Ghana ranks 79th in the world for research output (just behind Ethiopia and Iceland and ahead of Luxembourg) with over 18,000 citable documents published between 1996 and 2018. This compares favourably with other countries in the region: for example, Burkina Faso ranks 108th producing just over 6,400 citable documents in the same time period and Togo ranks 143rd with 2,000 citable documents.⁴⁸

Key policies related to education

Ghana's Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible for education policy at all levels including apprenticeships and wider skills acquisition. The Ghana Education Service is an agency under the MoE that is responsible for the implementation of pre-tertiary education policies. The 12-year education strategy (2018-2030) published in 2019 provides a roadmap for Ghana's education sector in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and has been divided into medium and long-term strategic plans.⁴⁹

Government spending on education is high, but considerably lower than at its peak. In 2018, the government spent an equivalent 4 per cent of GDP on education compared with 8 per cent in 2011.⁵⁰ This is also lower than the 2018 sub-Saharan average of 4.6 per cent of GDP. The 2020 national budget allocation to the MoE increased by 4 per cent year-on-year, continuing on a 36 per cent increase in 2019, largely to fund construction to accommodate the growing enrolment due to free SHS and the construction of 20 STEM centres around the country.⁵¹

As an important pillar for development under the Ghana Beyond Aid strategy, TVET has received more attention and in 2018 a five-year strategic plan for the sector was unveiled. The strategy aims to realign all public TVET institutions under the MoE (instead of the 19 different ministries which currently have some involvement in the sector) and envisages the establishment of a Technical and Vocational Education Service. The new strategy will also seek to incorporate non-formal training and apprenticeships within TVET and address the multiplicity of testing, certification and standards which currently exist.⁵² In early 2020, the government launched a three-phase project to upgrade and modernise the TVET system estimated to cost US\$132 million.⁵³

⁴⁷ [Times Higher Education, World University Rankings 2020](#). Accessed March 2020.

⁴⁸ [Scimago Journal and Country Rank](#). Accessed March 2020.

⁴⁹ [Technical vocational and skill training](#), Ghana Ministry of Education; [Education Strategic Plan 2018-2030](#), Ministry of Education Ghana, May 2019.

⁵⁰ [Government expenditure on education, total \(% of GDP\)](#), World Bank Indicators, accessed June 2020. It is important to note that education spending in Ghana has increased significantly since 2018, but more recent figures from the World Bank on this indicator are not yet available.

⁵¹ [2020 Budget Highlights](#), PwC, 1 December 2019.

⁵² [About us](#), Ghana Ministry of Education, Government of Ghana, 2018; [Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan \(2018-2021\)](#), Government of Ghana, 2019.

⁵³ [Ghana commence upgrade of TVET infrastructure](#), Construction Review Online, 21 January 2020.

The Ghana Skills Development Initiative (GSDI) is a project in partnership with the German government that aims to improve the framework conditions and support for TVET, increase participation of local business actors in TVET, and expand and implement competency-based approaches in TVET courses.⁵⁴

Tertiary education has developed rapidly in Ghana over the last twenty years in the absence of a clear regulating policy, although various guidelines are in place. In 2019, the government in partnership with the National Council for Tertiary Education released a new Tertiary Education Reform Policy focussed on improving the following: institutional governance; equity and access; quality and relevance; admissions; entry requirements; academic programme development; partnership with industry; internationalisation; staff-student ratio; financing tertiary education, and gender equality. The policy also aims to harmonise the activities of the various bodies operational within the sector.⁵⁵

International student recruitment

Overall inbound trend

According to UNESCO figures, Ghana hosts the third largest number of inbound international students in sub-Saharan Africa, after South Africa and Senegal. In 2018, nearly 10,000 international students studied in Ghana, a figure which has fallen by 44 per cent from its peak in 2015, when incoming students amounted to nearly 18,000.⁵⁶ Incoming students predominantly originate from neighbouring countries. Nigeria accounts for 65 per cent (6,506) of all international students, dominating the sector. Next in importance is Congo (515), Gabon (369), Cote d'Ivoire (288) and the US (240). The US numbers are largely connected to a long-established summer programme run by New York University in Accra.

There have been considerable fluctuations in inbound mobility over the last 15 years. The number of international students increased by over 800 per cent in the decade to 2015 to almost 18,000 students, at least 70 per cent of whom were Nigerian. Economic recession from 2015 and concerns about the quality of Ghanaian higher education institutions led to a sharp decline in the number of Nigerians studying in the country. While standards at Ghanaian public universities are acknowledged to be reasonably high, many Nigerian students reportedly chose low-quality private providers that charged high fees for non-accredited or sub-standard programmes. In some of these institutions, it is believed that Nigerian students accounted for 90 per cent of the student body.⁵⁷

The higher education company Worldview launched a new national 'Study in Ghana' initiative in late 2019. Supported by the government and several universities and colleges, it is one of the first in the region and aims to attract full degree students from Africa and study abroad students from the US, Europe and Asia.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ [About us](#), *Ghana Skills Development Initiative*, accessed June 2020.

⁵⁵ [Education Strategic Plan 2018-2030](#), *Government of Ghana*, 2018; [Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan \(2018-2021\)](#), *Government of Ghana*, 2019.

⁵⁶ [UIS Data](#), *UNESCO*, accessed June 2020.

⁵⁷ [Education in Ghana](#), *World Education and News*, 2019.

⁵⁸ [Worldview launches Study in Ghana](#), *News Ghana*, 2020.

Overall Outbound Trend

UNESCO figures show that 14,622 Ghanaians were enrolled in foreign higher education institutions in 2017, an increase of over 50 per cent since 2013. The US (3,023), UK (1,526), Ukraine (1,246), Senegal (1,126) and Canada (996) were the top five destinations. Although the number of Ghanaians studying abroad is small compared to neighbouring Nigeria, which has about 85,000 internationally mobile students, it is reasonably large in relation to the number of university graduates that Ghana currently produces each year.

This does not however reflect the whole picture as UNESCO data does not capture Ghanaians studying in China. According to the Chinese Embassy in Ghana, over 6,500 Ghanaian students were studying in China in 2018, over 1,000 of whom recipients of Chinese government scholarships. Ghana has ranked as the top African country of origin for international students in China for the last four consecutive years. This is a trend which is likely to continue to affect mobility patterns over the next decade, as China's relationship with Ghana grows – Ghana imports more goods from China than from any other country, and China continues to invest significantly in Ghana.⁵⁹

Outbound student mobility is an established trend among the country's wealthiest families and demand for education abroad has grown as the economy and household wealth have developed. Additionally, Ghanaians may consider study abroad if they are unable to access public university places due to competition or if they seek a high-quality programme that is not available in Ghana, particularly at postgraduate level.

Scholarships are available to Ghanaian students from a wide range of international governments and institutions. The government of Ghana has bilateral scholarship arrangements (which include counterpart funding) with Algeria, China, Germany, Hungary, Morocco and Russia. The Ghana Scholarship Secretariat administers these scholarships as well as those offered through Australian, Japanese, Korean, Mauritian, Turkish and Ukrainian governments.⁶⁰ The Commonwealth Secretariat awards about 75 scholarships per year to Ghanaian students at master's and PhD levels in five specific areas aimed at building capacity in science, technology, health and global peace and prosperity. The growing importance of the petrochemical industry has also increased specific scholarships in these areas.

The fate of the Ghanaian cedi has shifted dramatically over the last year: after several years of depreciation the currency emerged as one of the world's best performing currencies in 2019. This is likely to further encourage middle-class students to study abroad and may account for the increase in mobility over the last year.⁶¹

⁵⁹ [The Chinese Embassy in Ghana holds the award ceremony for the Chinese government scholarship 2018](#) *The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Ghana*, 2018; [China's \\$2 billion Ghana deal: fears over debt, influence and the environment](#). *CNBC*, 2019.

⁶⁰ [Foreign tertiary scholarships](#), *Ghana Scholarships Secretariat*, 2019; The relationship between Ghana and the Ukraine commenced at Ghana's independence in 1957 when the Soviet Union issued a large number of scholarships to the country (and over time, to many other newly independent African countries). The relationship with institutions in the Ukraine and the Russian Federation endured – especially across medical fields - with low fees and a range of scholarships providing the draw today. [Africans find unlikely education at Ukraine universities](#), *TheGrio*, 2009.

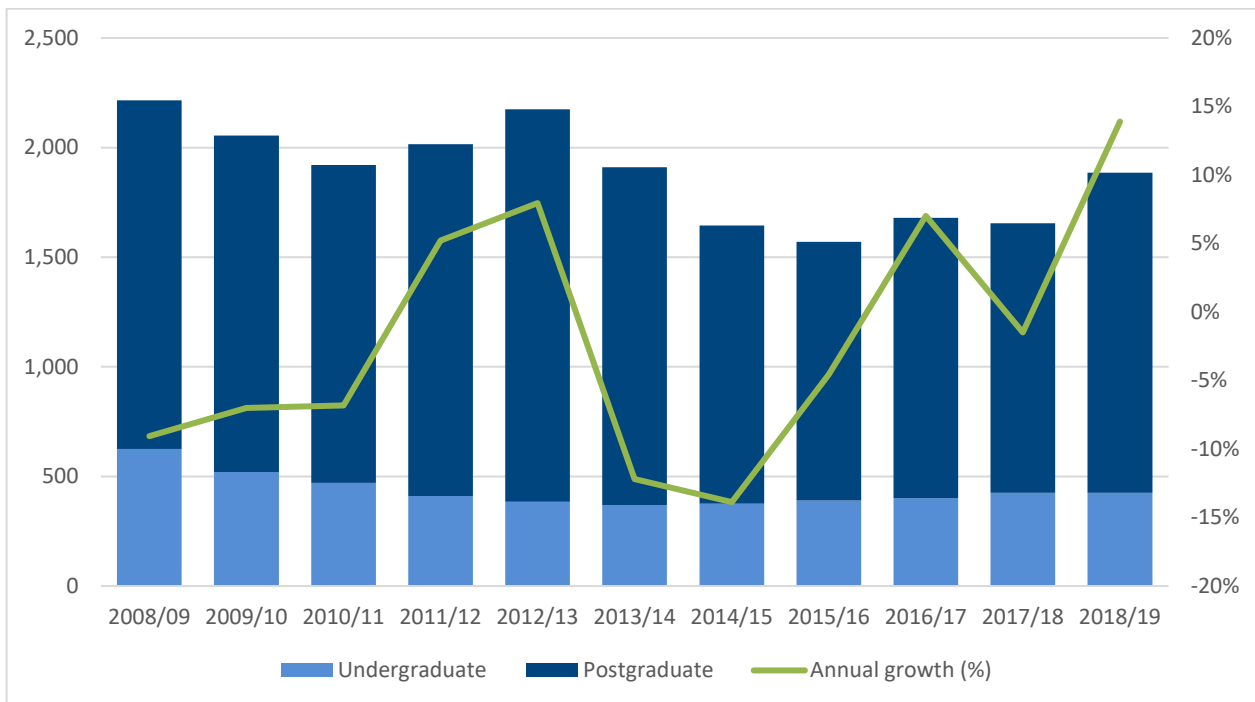
⁶¹ [Ghana's Cedi is the year's biggest winner against the US dollar](#). *Bloomberg*, 2020.

UK recruitment

The number of Ghanaian tertiary students studying in the UK has fluctuated over the last decade and reached a peak of 2,175 students in 2012/13, as seen in Figure 5. After that year, the number of Ghanaian students dropped significantly to a decade low of 1,570 students in 2015/16. This drop was likely caused by a combination of factors such as a fiscal crisis in the Ghana economy and the change in the UK post-study work visas.

However, thanks to a solid economic recovery in Ghana from 2015, internationally mobile Ghanaian students have been increasingly choosing to come to the UK. In 2018/19, there were 1,885 Ghanaian students at UK HEIs, a 14 per cent increase from the previous year. The reintroduction of the post-study Graduate Immigration Route (GIR) from summer 2021 is likely to boost the number of Ghanaian students coming to the UK for university studies.

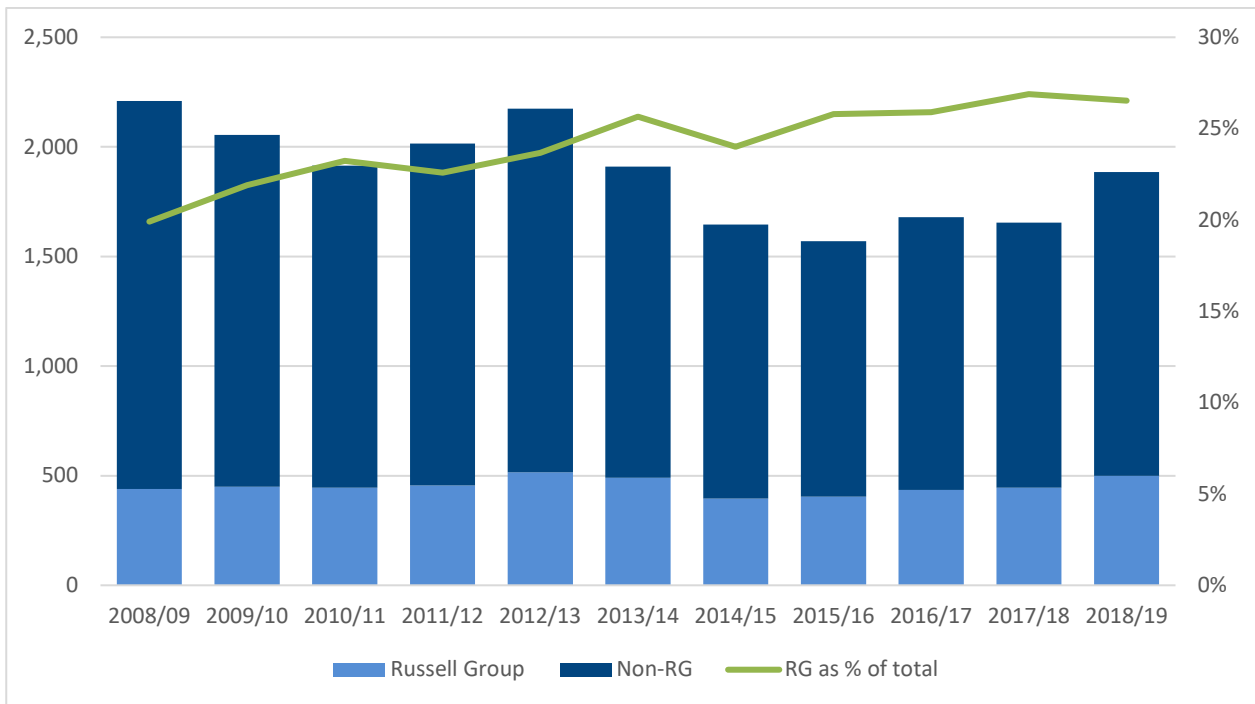
Figure 5: Students in the UK, PG and UG split



Source: HESA

As seen in Figure 5, more than three-quarters of Ghanaian students in the UK are postgraduates. This proportion has increased from 72 per cent in 2008/09 (1,590 postgraduates and 625 undergraduates) to 77 per cent in 2018/19 (1,460 postgraduates and 425 undergraduates).

Figure 6: Ghanaian Students in Russell Group Institutions



Source: HESA

Though the number of students at Russell Group institutions is below its peak in 2012/13 (515 students), the proportion of students at Russell Group institutions is at its highest in 2018/19. Russell Group institutions have attracted an increasing number of Ghanaian students, rising from just 20 per cent in 2008/09 to 27 per cent in 2018/19.

Subject areas

Figure 7: New UK enrolments according to subject area, YoY change

	Total new UK enrolments in 2018/19	Undergraduate			Postgraduate		
		New UK enrolments in 2018/19	Change from previous year	5-year trend	New UK enrolments in 2018/19	Change from previous year	5-year trend
Business & administrative studies	585	95	5.6%		490	27.3%	
Social studies	230	40	-33.3%		190	31.0%	
Law	195	95	18.8%		100	11.1%	
Engineering & technology	175	55	10.0%		120	4.3%	
Subjects allied to medicine	145	30	-14.3%		115	15.0%	
Computer science	100	25	25.0%		75	66.7%	
Biological sciences	75	20	0.0%		55	-15.4%	
Education	75	5	0.0%		70	-12.5%	
Architecture, building & planning	60	10	0.0%		50	11.1%	
Medicine & dentistry	55	10	0.0%		45	50.0%	
Physical sciences	55	0	0.0%		55	22.2%	
Mass communications and documentation	25	5	0.0%		20	0.0%	
Languages	25	10	-33.3%		15	50.0%	
Historical and philosophical studies	25	5	0.0%		20	0.0%	
Agriculture & related subjects	20	0	0.0%		20	0.0%	
Mathematical sciences	20	5	0.0%		15	0.0%	
Creative arts & design	15	10	100.0%		5	0.0%	
Combined	5	5	-50.0%		0	0.0%	
Veterinary science	0	0	0.0%		0	0.0%	

Source: HESA

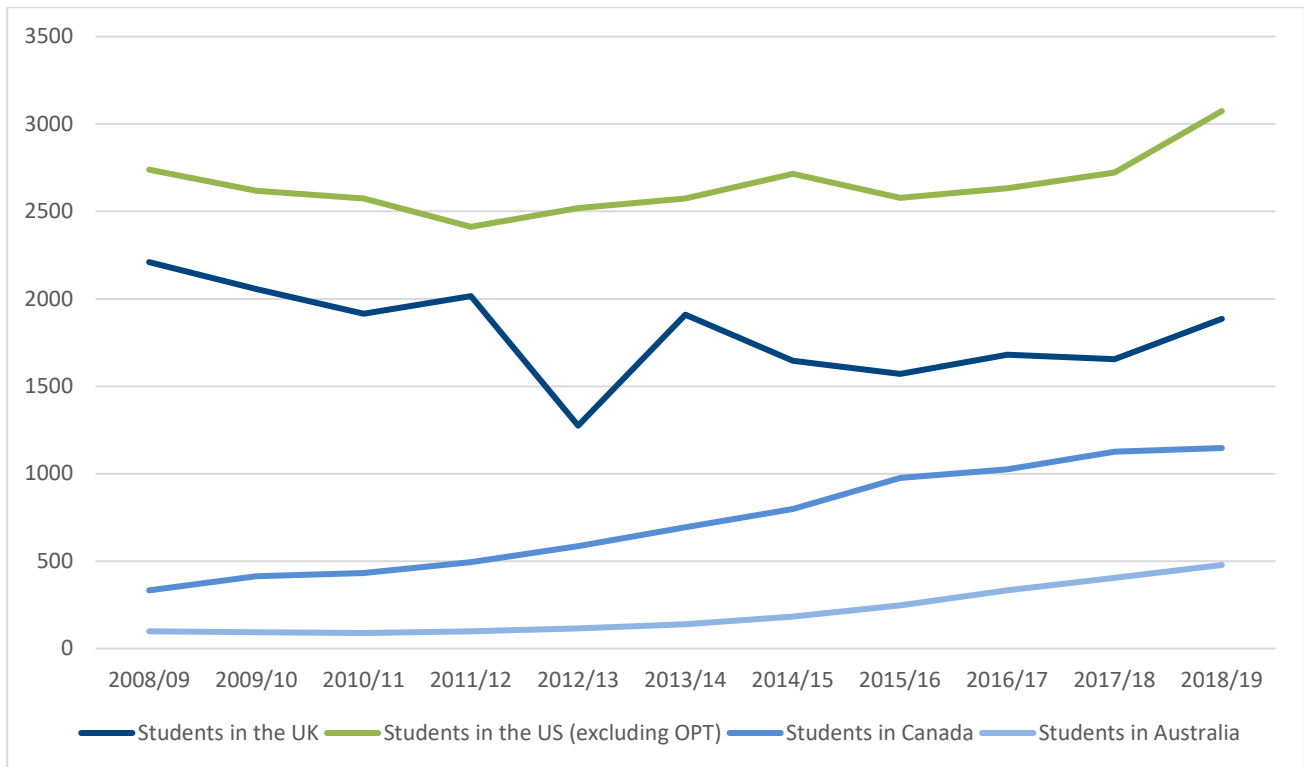
There were 425 new Ghanaian undergraduate enrolments in the UK in 2018/19, the same as the previous year. Postgraduate enrolments meanwhile increased by 18.7 per cent from 1,230 in 2017/18 to 1,460 in 2018/19.

Business and administrative studies is overall the most popular study area. At the undergraduate level, law matches business for enrolment numbers, but postgraduate business enrolments far outstrip all over subject areas. The overall second most popular study area is social studies. The majority of enrolments in this subject area are postgraduate students and was one of the fastest growing subject areas in 2018/19. In contrast, social studies is not particularly popular among Ghanaian undergraduates and enrolments fell by 33 per cent in 2018/19.

Postgraduate enrolments fell only in biological sciences and education, whereas there was a decline in enrolments for four subject areas at the undergraduate level. However, as undergraduate enrolments overall did not change on the previous year, this indicates a redistribution of subject areas attractive to students and not declining interest in the UK as a study destination. The most popular subject areas are all still growing, although it is worth noting that undergraduate business and administrative studies is a recovering subject area after it suffered a considerable decline in 2017/18.

Competitor activity

Figure 8: Enrolments in Competitor Markets



Source: HESA, IIE StatCan, AusTrade

The UK and the US have historically been the top destinations for Ghanaians overseas, owing to their strong reputations in higher education.

The latest figures from the US show that Ghana is now the second most important sub-Saharan African country of origin for the US and the 24th most important country for postgraduate students overall. Postgraduate numbers jumped by 21 per cent between 2017/18 and 2018/19, while overall numbers increased by 14 per cent.⁶²

UNESCO figures suggest shifts within Ghanaian student mobility to more regional destinations such as Senegal (1,126). The most significant shift however is towards China as noted above. Students choosing Canada, Italy, South Africa and the Russian Federation have also significantly increased in the past five years.

Recent studies have found that 72 per cent of Ghanaian students have concerns about safety abroad. This factor combined with increasing scholarship opportunities in new locations, uncertainty around more established markets such as the UK and the US and targeted marketing campaigns have contributed to the increasing attraction of other English-speaking destinations. This is especially true for Canada, where strong growth rates have seen the country emerge as the fifth most appealing destination for Ghanaian graduate students. Growth is also significant for South Africa, Australia and Ireland as institutions begin to turn their attention to the West African market.⁶³

⁶² [Places of Origin](#), IIE, 2019.

⁶³ Report on International Education Exchange, IIE *Open Doors*, 2019; [Emerging markets report](#), QS, 2016.

Transnational education

Excluding the three main UK providers of transnational education,⁶⁴ in 2017/18 Ghana was the fourth largest TNE market for the UK in Africa after Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa.⁶⁵ According to the latest HESA data, there were 3,310 Ghanaian students on UK TNE programmes in 2018/19 (excluding the three main providers), a decrease of 20 students from the year before.⁶⁶

The development of the private education sector has led to the establishment of a number of foreign higher education institutions in Ghana. The National Accreditation Board notes only seven recognised foreign institutions, five of which are from the UK. One Chinese and one Costa Rican campus are also accredited. Heriot Watt University was a further accredited UK institution, but their accreditation has now expired.⁶⁷

Ghana lacks a national strategy on transnational education, meaning that partnerships largely remain the result of collaboration between individual departments and institutions. Institutions intending to establish in Ghana must be approved by the Ministry of Education and may need to be affiliated with a local institution. In 2015 TNE Ghana Limited became the first international HEI to be accredited by the British Accreditation Council in sub-Saharan Africa; its programmes include a foundation programme to facilitate direct student entry for African students into UK degree programmes.⁶⁸

The Ghanaian government is supportive of external investment in most sectors, including education. There is an enabling, if bureaucratic, environment, and funds can be repatriated in foreign currency after the appropriate withholding taxes have been paid and supporting documentation presented. However, education institutions considering Ghana will be affected by low levels of qualified faculty and skilled staff, especially at senior levels. Many top academic staff have emigrated elsewhere as a result of a recruitment embargo across public universities.

⁶⁴ To analyse TNE trends, UUKi excludes the three main TNE providers (Oxford Brookes University, the Open University, and the University of London) because these three providers make up over half of the data. Relatively small variations in one of them can have an impact on the understanding of the performance and spread of TNE more generally amongst UK universities.

⁶⁵ [International Facts and Figures 2019](#), *Universities UK International*, 2019.

⁶⁶ [Where do HE students come from?](#) HESA, 2020.

⁶⁷ [Accredited institutions](#), *National Accreditation Board Ghana*, 2020.

⁶⁸ [TNE Ghana Limited receives British Accreditation Council accreditation](#), *Lancaster University Ghana*, August 2015.