

# Market Intelligence Brief

# Malaysia

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# 1 Executive Summary

Malaysia's location has long made it an important cultural, economic, historical, social, and trade link between the islands of Southeast Asia and mainland Asia. Its mix of Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnicities provide links to the major economies in the region, while strong English language skills and Commonwealth membership provide easy interface with Western countries. Further, with a majority Muslim population, it also enjoys close ties across the Islamic world.

Malaysia's population currently stands at around 33m, but with its fertility rate now marginally below the replacement rate, the Malaysian population will continue to grow, albeit at a decreasing rate over the coming decades. By 2030, total population is expected to reach just over 36m. However, the population age-bands of interest to UK higher education institutions (HEIs) have been in decline over recent years and this trend is generally expected to continue in the years ahead as the Malaysian population begins to age.

From an economic perspective, Malaysia has undergone significant transformation over recent decades. Over the past 50 years, it has successfully reduced extreme poverty and promoted shared prosperity. A robust pace of economic growth is expected over the next decade, but according to the World Bank, in order to fulfil its aspiration of achieving high-income and developed country status, Malaysia will need to advance further in education, health and nutrition, and social protection outcomes. Key priority areas include enhancing the quality of schooling to improve learning outcomes, rethinking nutritional interventions to reduce childhood stunting, and providing adequate social welfare protection for households.

Enhancing the quality of the domestic higher education system has long been a priority of the Malaysian government and it has been proactive in prioritising education expenditure within its budget. Over the last decade, it spent an average of 5 per cent of GDP on education, which was well above the global average of around 4.2 per cent over the same period. Meanwhile, government expenditure on education in Malaysia as a share of total government expenditure averaged just below 20 per cent between 2010 and 2020, which is comfortably within UNESCO's recommended range of 15-20 per cent as set out in its Education 2030 Framework for Action. Further, the government's Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-25) has set out ambitious plans for the education sector over the coming years, including upgrading the infrastructure of education institutions, revamping the TVET system and creating a more flexible higher education system.

According to estimates from UNESCO, around 59,000 Malaysian students travelled abroad to study at the higher education level in 2019, making it one of the world's top 20 outbound international student markets. However, after peaking at just over 65,000 in 2016, the volume of outbound students declined for three consecutive years between 2017 and 2019, linked to the decline in the availability of scholarships and loans for students going abroad as the Malaysian government increases emphasis on domestic provision as opposed to international mobility.

The UK's experience in the Malaysian market is consistent with the wider general decline in total Malaysian outbound students over recent years, with sharp declines seen in UK recruitment both in the undergraduate and postgraduate markets. That is, in the 2020/21 academic year, the number of Malaysian students in the UK was 11,745, with a decline of 35 per cent seen in the undergraduate market and a 42 per cent decline in the postgraduate market since 2015/16.

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As well as being an important source of international students, Malaysia is also a highly developed transnational education (TNE) market, hosting ten overseas branch campuses - five of which are from the UK. With 48,460 enrolments in the 2020/21 academic year, Malaysia was the UK's second largest TNE market, only behind China. However, while the volume of UK TNE enrolments in Malaysia remains substantial, there has been a sustained downward trajectory over recent years. Malaysian TNE student numbers peaked at just over 79,000 in 2014/15 but have declined every year since and were down by almost 40 per cent from peak by 2020/21.

Given that the volume of inbound international students from Malaysia and TNE enrolments in Malaysia have declined by similar magnitudes and over the same time period, it is unlikely that demand from one market is suppressing the demand in the other. Rather, it is more likely to be a reflection of reduced demand for international education as Malaysia's domestic education system improves, particularly in the private sector, and as the government prioritises domestic provision over international education. However, looking ahead, there is cause for optimism given that the fast-paced economic growth expected in Malaysia over the next decade is likely to increase participation rates in the higher education sector, which should in turn boost demand for international higher education.

Given the close linkages between the UK and Malaysia in the international higher education sector, high-level UK-Malaysia cooperation is also strong. One such example includes the UK-Malaysia University Consortium, launched in January 2022 under the British Council's Going Global Partnership Programme. The Consortium comprises of 16 UK universities and all 20 Malaysian public universities and is designed to be a flagship initiative that promotes strategic engagement and bilateral cooperation in higher education between its partner universities, with the aim of laying a foundation for long term collaborations, shared priorities and complementary expertise between the UK and Malaysian HEIs.

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## 2 Introduction

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This report was produced by the British Council's *Insight and Engagement* team, with external research support provided by Oxford Economics.<sup>1</sup> This report is designed to provide UK education institutions with unparalleled data, insight and analysis to support their international education strategies, recruitment activities and partnership development work. The report is also targeted at a UK and Malaysia policy maker audience, by highlighting opportunities and barriers to education and research cooperation that exist between the two countries.

Using the latest data from the most reliable sources, this Market Intelligence Brief represents a window onto Malaysia's education system and student population, as well as the economic and demographic factors, and policy priorities and developments that shape the country's international education outlook. The report examines various aspects related to the internationalisation of Malaysia's education system – including student mobility, transnational education programmes and research collaboration – and highlights national-level education projects and partnerships between the UK and Malaysia.

The information contained in this report is based primarily on desk-based research and data analysis, supplemented with insight and context provided by British Council colleagues on the ground in Malaysia.

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Comments, queries and suggestions in relation to this report are welcome and may be submitted to Jazreel Goh, Director Malaysia and East Asia Insights Hub Lead

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<sup>1</sup> [www.oxfordeconomics.com/](http://www.oxfordeconomics.com/)

# 3 Macro Environment

## 3.1 People

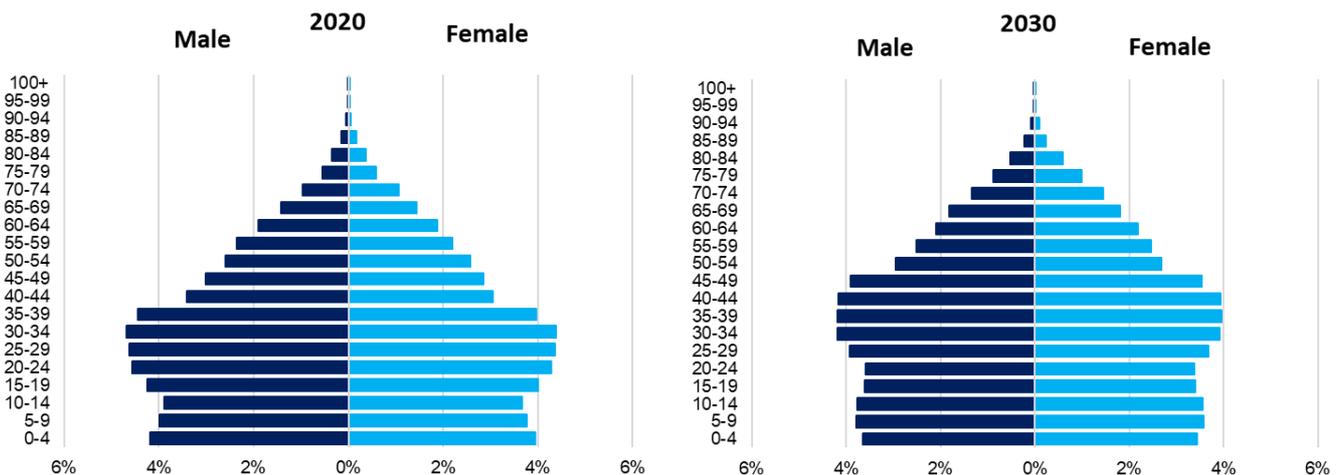
Malaysia is an ethnically diverse country, with a population of around 33m.<sup>2</sup> Its population consists of the bumiputera – Malays and other indigenous peoples – (70 per cent), ethnic Chinese (22 per cent), ethnic Indians (7 per cent) and other ethnicities (1 per cent).<sup>3</sup>

Over the last few decades, the country’s age structure has changed significantly, driven by declines in both the fertility rate and mortality rate. According to the UN, Malaysia’s total fertility rate stood at around 4.5 in the 1970s but by 2020 had fallen to approximately 2.0 due to increased educational attainment and labour force participation among women, later marriages and changes in family size preference related to urbanisation.<sup>4</sup>

With the fertility rate now marginally below the replacement rate (2.1), the Malaysian population will continue to grow, albeit at a decreasing rate over the coming decades. By 2030, the population is expected to reach just over 36m, representing annual average growth of 1.1 per cent on the decade. This compares to a rate of around 1.7 per cent between 2000 and 2020.

By 2030, the age profile of the Malaysian population is expected to have begun a gradual shift as the population begins to age. In 2020, the 0-14 age group accounted for 23 per cent of the population, which is expected to fall marginally to 22 per cent by 2030. Similarly, the working-age population share is expected to fall from 69 per cent to 68 per cent. By contrast, the share of the population aged 65+ is expected to rise from 7 per cent to 10 per cent over the same period.

**Figure 1: Malaysia’s population pyramid, 2020 and 2030**



Source: UN Population Division

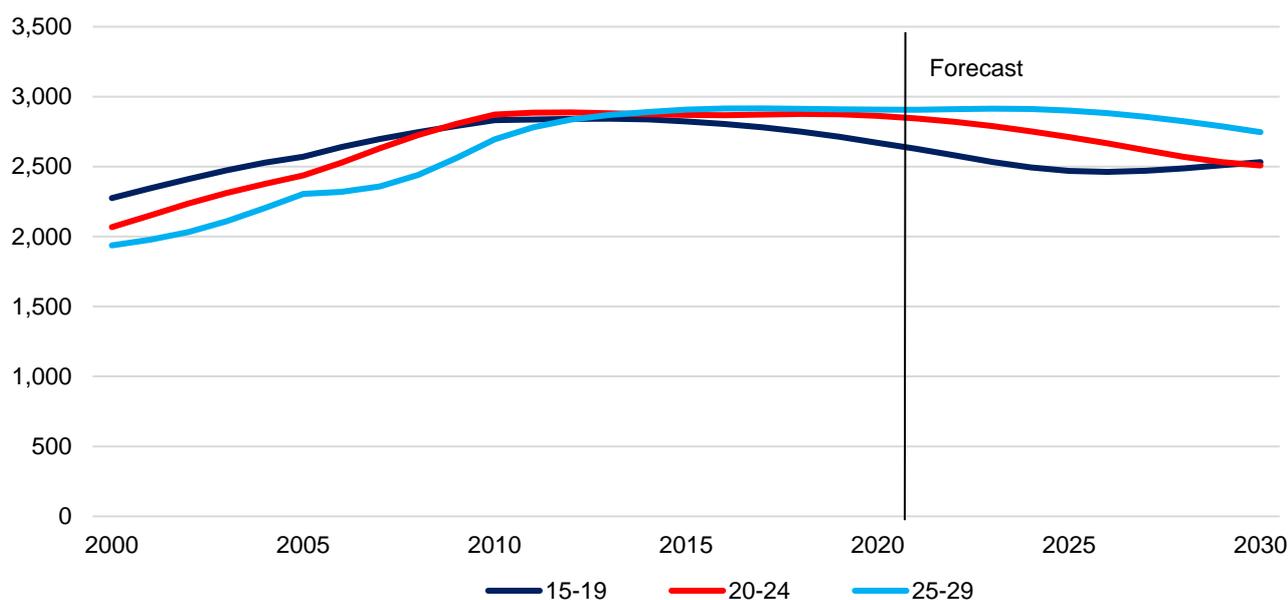
<sup>2</sup> World Population Prospects, United Nations Population Division, 2019, <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

<sup>3</sup> Current population estimates, Dept. of Statistics Malaysia, 2020, [www.dosm.gov.my](http://www.dosm.gov.my)

<sup>4</sup> Malaysia, CIA World Factbook, 2022, [www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/malaysia/](http://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/malaysia/)

Looking specifically at the population age bands of interest to UK HEIs, each of these have been in decline over the last few years. The population in the 15-19 age band stood at 2.7m in 2020 and is expected to shrink to just below 2.5m by 2026 before seeing a muted return to growth towards the end of the decade. The population aged 20-24 stood just below 2.9m in 2020 and is projected to decline consistently in the years ahead, reaching 2.5m in 2030. Meanwhile, the population in the 25-29 age band is expected to hold steady at around 2.9m over the next few years, before beginning to decline in the second half of the decade, to 2.75m by 2030.

**Figure 2: Malaysia’s student age population (000s)**



Source: UN Population Division

The official religion of Malaysia is Islam, which according to the 2020 Population and Housing Census was practiced by 64 per cent of the population. Other major religions include Buddhism (19 per cent), Christianity (9 per cent) and Hinduism (6 per cent). The country is also highly diverse in terms of languages. There are 134 living languages, including 112 indigenous languages. The official language is Bahasa Malaysia, but English, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin and Hokkien, among others) and Tamil are widely spoken. According to the English First English Proficiency Index, Malaysia had ‘high’ proficiency in 2021, up from ‘moderate’ in the previous year. In 2021, Malaysia ranked in third place among Asian countries, only behind Singapore and the Philippines and ahead of the likes of Hong Kong, India and China.<sup>5</sup>

In 2020, the UN estimated that just over 77 per cent of the Malaysian population lived in urban areas, which is significantly above the Southeast Asia average of 50 per cent. By 2030, the urbanisation rate is expected to increase to 82 per cent, and to 87 per cent by 2050. Kuala Lumpur is the capital city of Malaysia and is by far the most populous city in the country, with a population in excess of 1.8m. Kuala Lumpur is the only city with a population of more than 1m, but there are

<sup>5</sup> English Proficiency Index, *English First*, 2021, [www.ef.com/wwen/epi/regions/asia/malaysia/](http://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/regions/asia/malaysia/)

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several cities with populations between 500,000 and one million including Seberang Perai, George Town, Ipoh, Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, Iskandar Puteri, Seremban, and Johor Bahru.<sup>6</sup>

Almost 1.9m Malaysians lived abroad in 2020. Owing to affirmative action favouring the Malay population, the vast majority of emigrants are ethnic Chinese who have moved abroad in search of better education and employment opportunities. Hundreds of thousands of Malaysians also commute across the causeway to Singapore daily for work. Brain drain is an impediment to Malaysia's goal of becoming a high-income country. The situation is compounded by a migrant inflow that is composed almost entirely of low-skilled labourers who work mainly in manufacturing, agriculture, and construction. Officially, Malaysia had about 1.8 million legal foreign workers as of mid-year 2017 – largely from Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Bangladesh – but as many as 3-4m are estimated to be in the country illegally.

## 3.2 Economy

After gaining independence in 1957, the Malaysian economy has experienced significant transformation. Diversifying away from dependency on agriculture and commodities, the country has developed strong manufacturing and services sectors, with the country now a leading exporter of electrical appliances, parts and components. Indeed, international trade has been a key driver of Malaysia's economic transformation, with its exports to GDP ratio averaging 70 per cent over the last decade, making it one of the most open economies in the world.

In 2021, agriculture accounted for around 7 per cent of GDP, with the manufacturing sector accounting for 24 per cent. Services are responsible for the largest share of activity in total GDP, at 54 per cent. Malaysia also has a considerable mining sector, equal to around 7 per cent of GDP, with the country producing an average of around 600,000 barrels per day of crude oil and condensates over the past three years, making it one of the top 30 largest oil producers in the world. While proven oil reserves have been in decline, the country's production of natural gas has continued to climb rapidly, and proven reserves are still sizeable.

In common with most other countries around the world, the Covid-19 pandemic had a profound impact upon the Malaysian economy, with GDP declining sharply in the first half of 2020 after Movement Control Orders put in place by the government curtailed activity. The economy returned to growth in the second half of 2020, yet GDP still declined by 5.7 per cent for the year, which was the sharpest contraction since the 1998 financial crisis.

In 2021 and 2022 to date, the economic recovery has been patchy. After two successive quarters of positive growth in the second half of 2020, the Malaysian economy reentered technical recession in 2021 after a renewed surge in cases led to the reintroduction of lockdown measures across the country. Again, the country emerged from recession in the second half of the year with strong rebound growth, but with case numbers reaching new record levels in early 2022, the economy contracted again in the first quarter of the year.

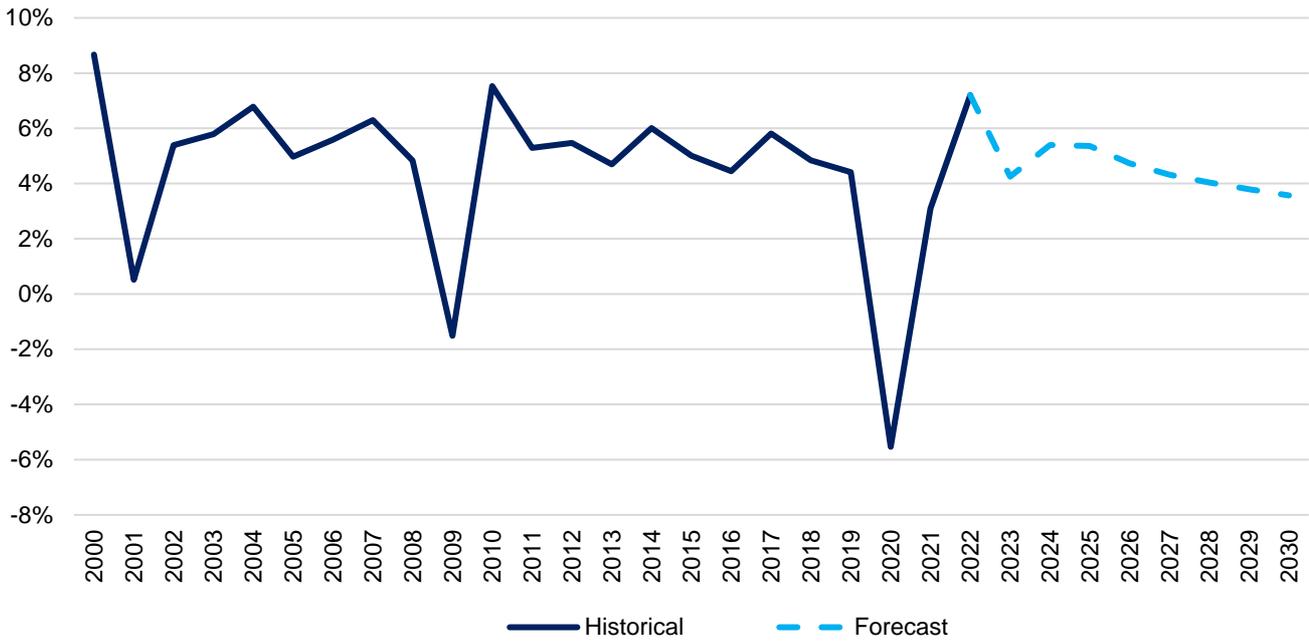
While entering its third technical recession in as many years remains a distinct possibility, the government recently announced that Malaysia is commencing its transition to the endemic phase

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<sup>6</sup> Malaysia population, *World Population Review*, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/malaysia-population>

of the pandemic with the lifting of more domestic restrictions and cross border travel reopening since 1 April 2022. This should provide renewed impetus to the economy, with 2022 full year growth of around 7.2 per cent expected by Oxford Economics, which should see output levels surpass pre-pandemic levels again by the end of the year. In the medium term, GDP growth is expected to settle in the 4-5 per cent range per year, with Malaysia expected to reach its goal of becoming a high-income country in the World Bank’s classification by the mid-2020s.

**Figure 3: Malaysia’s real GDP growth**



Source: Haver Analytics / Oxford Economics

The robust pace of economic growth expected in the coming years should see Malaysia’s GDP per capita (in nominal terms) reach around US\$22,500 by 2030, which would be more than double the US\$10,400 recorded in 2020. This will underpin a significant expansion of middle-income households within the country. In 2020, there were an estimated 1.1m households with an income of US\$35-70,000 in Malaysia, which is expected to more than double to 2.5m households by 2030, which should act as a driver of growth in outbound student mobility from the country over the next decade.

After periods of volatility historically, including a 20 per cent depreciation in 2015 owing to the global commodity price crash, the Central Bank of Malaysia (BNM) introduced measures in 2016 that have helped reduce exchange rate volatility, including a rule that 75 per cent of export proceeds must be converted to Malaysian ringgit. In early 2022, the ringgit was trading at around 4.19 per US\$, which was broadly in line with the pre-pandemic valuation. While modest depreciation is expected for 2022 overall, in the medium-term Oxford Economics expects the ringgit to appreciate against the US dollar, supported by the strong growth outlook and ongoing

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current account surpluses, which should positively impact upon the affordability of international study for students from Malaysia.

Prior to the pandemic, the unemployment rate in Malaysia was at the lowest level seen in several years, at 3.2 per cent. However, with economic activity severely hampered by restrictions, the rate rose to 5.1 per cent during the first half of 2020, which was the highest rate seen since the 1980s. The bumpy economic recovery after the pandemic has seen the unemployment rate remain at stubbornly high levels, sitting at 4.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2022, with Oxford Economics expecting that it will take until mid-2023 for the rate to return to 2019 levels.

Malaysia is seen as an attractive investment destination, with foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows totalling RM54.9 bn (US\$13.2 bn) in 2021. The country's investment attractiveness has received significant international recognition, with the country ranking as the top in Emerging Southeast Asia for foreign investment in Bloomberg's Global Opportunity Index and ranking as the third most innovative upper-middle income economy in the world according to the World Intellectual Property Organisation. Singapore, Thailand and China have historically been the leading FDI source markets, with the services and manufacturing sectors attracting the largest inflows, particularly in financial services and the electrical and transport equipment manufacturing sectors.

Looking into the longer term, although Malaysia has one of the highest levels of education among ASEAN countries, according to the World Bank, Malaysia lacks an education system capable of supporting a high-income economy. The government has allocated a large amount of funding to address this issue and education must remain a key policy priority in future if the Malaysian economy is to achieve its full potential.

### **3.3 Government and education policy**

Malaysia was formed and became a unified state in 1963 and is a federal constitutional elective monarchy. The federal Head of State is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, commonly referred to as the King of Malaysia. The Head of State is elected for a five-year term by the nine hereditary sultans of the Malay states. The other four states, which have titular governors, do not participate in the selection. The system of government in Malaysia is closely modelled on that of the Westminster parliamentary system – a legacy of British colonial rule. Politics are dominated by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) party, the main component of the multi-ethnic National Front coalition that has governed the country since 1957.

In the 2018 general election, the National Front coalition suffered a shock defeat at the hands of an opposition alliance, Pakatan Harapan (PH), led by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, which paved the way for the country's first transition of power since 1957. The National Front coalition, led by the UNWO, has since returned to power and scored a landslide win in two recent state legislative assembly elections. Ismail Sabri Yaakob, the vice-president of the UNMO, was sworn in as the country's ninth Prime Minister in August 2021. However, the current coalition's slim majority means political uncertainty is likely to remain high and the next election, originally scheduled for September 2023, could be brought forward to H2 2022 as a result.

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Over the last couple of decades, the governance structure of the education sector in Malaysia has changed several times. Most recently, in 2020, after the unexpected collapse of the PH coalition, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) were split, with the MOE now responsible for primary and secondary education and the MOHE responsible for the governance of the higher education system.

In September 2021, Prime Minister Yaakob launched the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-25). Part of the Plan sets out objectives for the further improvement of the national education system to address several key shortcomings under the current system, such as:

- Scores for Programme for International Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) were below the international average.
- Only one Malaysian university was ranked in the top 100 under the QS World University Rankings.
- Below universal enrolment (95 per cent) at secondary school level.
- Intake to TVET programmes was lower than the target of 225,000 students.

In general, the Twelfth Malaysia Plan seeks to address these issues by prioritising STEM subjects, upgrading the infrastructure of education institutions, revamping the TVET system and creating a more flexible higher education system. Some of the specific policies outlined in the Plan include:

- Extending compulsory education from 6 to 11 years thus making secondary education compulsory for all Malaysian citizens.
- Strengthening STEM education to prepare students for 4IR (the 4th Industrial Revolution).
- Introducing an advanced STEM curriculum that embraces digital technologies.
- Making enrolment across universities more flexible where students can pursue subjects at any HEIs during the course of their study.
- Emphasising new assessment elements such as emotional quotient, soft skills, personal attributes, problem-solving skills besides academic achievement.
- Promoting TVET as a preferred choice by leveraging successful TVET graduates in career, education and business.
- Enabling TVET graduates to acquire professional status by MBOT (Malaysia Board of Technologists), enabling them to pursue professional career pathways.

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## 4 Domestic Education Environment

### 4.1 Overview

Education has long been a priority for the Malaysian government, with the quality of education a key aspect of the country's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Given the education system's potential to drive individual and societal transformation, Malaysia's education-related SDGs are implemented into its education system via its two blueprints – Malaysian Education Blueprint (pre-School to secondary) and Malaysian Higher Education Blueprint (tertiary). Briefly, the Malaysian Education Blueprint, currently in the last of the three phases, aims to enhance the quality and equality of education. Meanwhile, the Malaysian Higher Education Blueprint promotes student excellence by addressing fundamental system performance challenges, including quality and efficiency.

To support the development of its education system and to work towards the achievement of its SDGs, the Malaysian government has prioritised education expenditure within its budget. Between 2010 and 2020, it spent an average of 5 per cent of GDP on education, which was well above the global average of around 4.2 per cent over the same period. Meanwhile, government expenditure on education in Malaysia as a share of total government expenditure averaged just below 20 per cent between 2010 and 2020, which is comfortably within UNESCO's recommended range of 15-20 per cent as set out in its Education 2030 Framework for Action.<sup>7</sup> However, after having been on a downward trend for several years, in 2020, Malaysia's education expenditure fell to its lowest level in more than a decade, both when measured as a share of GDP and as a share of total government expenditure, as fiscal priorities shifted in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although PISA scores in Malaysia have been improving over recent years and are second in the ASEAN region only to Singapore, scores remain below the OECD average levels in each of the areas assessed – reading, mathematics and science. Looking ahead, as outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, the country aims to rise above the OECD average and be in the top one-third of countries participating in the PISA survey in future.<sup>8</sup>

A significant challenge faced by the Malaysian education system is the issue of affirmative action, whereby policies often favour the majority Malay population over Chinese and Indian communities. For example, within the higher education system, acceptance to universities as well as scholarships are based on racial quotas rather than merit. Based on a survey conducted by Sekolah Semua, over 50 per cent of Malaysians say they have experienced perceived discrimination in education in a variety of different forms. Of those having experienced discrimination, 36 per cent experienced verbal discrimination, 21 per cent experienced harassment or bullying, and 18 per cent were denied access to opportunities because of their identities. Further, it was reported that non-Bumiputera students were more likely to be

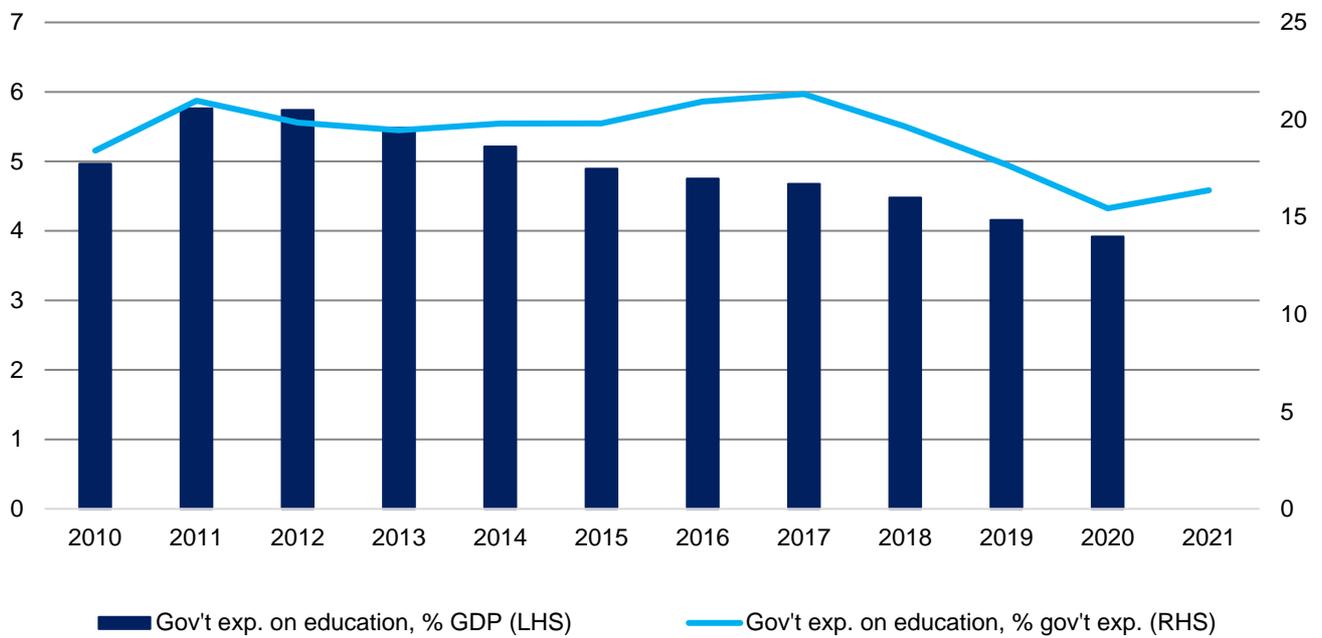
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<sup>7</sup> Education 2030 Framework for Action, UNESCO, 2016, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656>

<sup>8</sup> PISA Results 2018, OECD, 2018, [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018\\_CN\\_MYS.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_MYS.pdf)

discriminated against when compared to Bumiputera students, with 82 per cent of Chinese, 85 per cent of Indians saying they had experienced race-based exclusion in schools.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 4: Malaysia government expenditure on education**



Source: World Bank

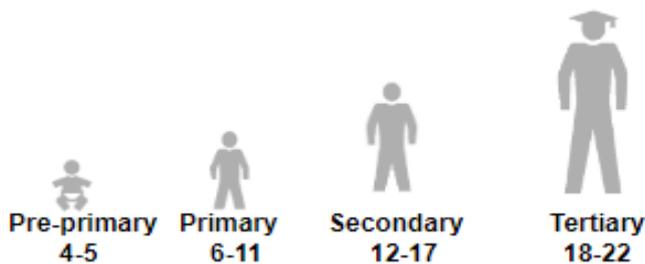
<sup>9</sup> Over 50% of Malaysians experienced Discrimination in schooling years, *Malaysia Trend*, 2021, [www.malaysiatrend.com/over-50-of-malaysians-experienced-discrimination-in-schooling-years/](http://www.malaysiatrend.com/over-50-of-malaysians-experienced-discrimination-in-schooling-years/)

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## 4.2 Early years, primary, secondary

In Malaysia, the government provides eleven years of free schooling, which includes six years of primary and five years of secondary education. While there are no tuition fees, there are expenses for sports, extracurricular activities, books, transport and uniforms. Pre-school education is available from the age of four but is not compulsory. However, take-up is common with a pre-primary gross enrolment rate of almost 97 per cent in 2020.

**Figure 5: Malaysian official school ages by level of education**



Source: UNESCO

Primary education in Malaysia starts at the age of six. According to UNESCO, there were just over 3m enrolments in the primary education sector in 2020 with a gross enrolment ratio of 104 per cent, indicating that participation is largely universal. Before progressing to secondary education, year six primary students used to sit the Primary School Achievement Test, which tested Malay comprehension, Malay writing, English comprehension, English writing, science and mathematics. However, in April 2021 the primary school leaving examination was abolished, with year six pupils now evaluated using school-based assessment, a system which has been in effect since 2011. The exam was abolished after a review process identified that preparation for the exam caused children to have limited time for other aspects of their education, with some children being sent for tuition classes as early as primary one.

Students can choose between government schools and government-aided vernacular schools for primary education. Government schools are taught in Malay and teach English as a foreign language, and vernacular schools instruct in either Mandarin (Chinese-type vernacular schools) or Tamil (Indian-type), although these schools are also legally required to teach Malay and English. In order to continue secondary school studies, students from these vernacular schools are tested and must show competency in these languages.

According to UNESCO, there were just over 2.5m enrolments in the secondary education sector in Malaysia in 2020 with a gross enrolment ratio of 82 per cent. Secondary education consists of three years of lower secondary (ages 12-15) and two years of upper secondary (15-17). Under the Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) curriculum, lower secondary students learn a diverse range of subjects, providing them with a breadth of knowledge and experience. In the past, student performance during secondary education was assessed through the PT3 middle-school exam. However, the PT3 exam has not been held for the past two years due to the

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pandemic, with the exam then being completely abolished as of June 2022. Instead of the PT3 exam, the ministry will implement summative assessments as well as classroom-based assessments.

In upper secondary school, students can select a science or arts stream. Academic requirements are more stringent in upper secondary as students prepare for the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination at the age of 17, which is the foundation qualification for future academic and career choices. Due to the pandemic, students aged 15-17 have been particularly impacted with exams being postponed and rescheduled due to the closure of schools. For the 2021 cohort, the SPM examinations typically held in November 2021 were moved to March 2022.

Between the age of 17-19, students may opt to take the Malaysia Higher School Certificate of Education (STPM – equivalent to A-levels). The STPM exam is recognised internationally but tends to be taken by those hoping to attend a Malaysian public HEI. Other private colleges teach A-levels or the international baccalaureate.

Spending on private tuition to supplement public school offerings is increasing in Malaysia, with many families considering sending their children to private schools which tend to have smaller class sizes and better facilities compared to public schools. International schools, Chinese independent schools, and Islamic schools are becoming increasingly popular. Most international schools follow internationally recognised curricula such as the International Baccalaureate and A-levels. In 2019, there were 151 international schools with 59,246 enrolled students.<sup>10</sup>

International schools have seen a huge student increase following the removal of a regulation which stipulated that Malaysians could only account for 40 per cent of international school enrolment.<sup>11</sup> Chinese independent schools follow their own robust curriculum and require students to pass the UEC test upon graduation. This test, while not recognised by Malaysian public universities, is generally recognised worldwide.

Among the challenges associated with pre-tertiary education in Malaysia is the geographic disparity in the quality of institutions and a persistent focus on rote learning, despite new education policies to promote creativity and encourage the adoption of modern assessment methods. As a result, many students face difficulties when adapting to foreign teaching methods that focus on the development of higher-order thinking skills. There is also a keen debate about provision of education in English, largely as a response to the country's colonial past. While Malay is the country's national language and is used in government, English language proficiency is required for the competitiveness of Malaysians in the global marketplace (particularly in its burgeoning service industry). This often leads to heated debate in public platforms.

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<sup>10</sup> Quick Facts 2020, *Ministry of Education*, 2020, [www.moe.gov.my/menumedia/media-cetak/penerbitan/quick-facts/3719-quick-facts-2020/file](http://www.moe.gov.my/menumedia/media-cetak/penerbitan/quick-facts/3719-quick-facts-2020/file)

<sup>11</sup> Malaysia education reforms result in more opportunities for private sector participation, *Oxford Business Group*, 2016, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/working-together-widespread-reforms-result-more-opportunities-private-sector-participation>

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## 4.3 Technical & vocational education and training

Vocational education in Malaysia is offered by educational institutions under the MOE which include PAV (Pendidikan Asas Vokasional), vocational colleges, community colleges, polytechnics and MTUN (technical universities) in the form of certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas and bachelor's degrees (vocational education).

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is offered from the lower secondary level in the form of basic vocational education. Afterwards, students can progress to an upper secondary technical and vocational programme in one of two streams: a two-year technical programme or a two-to-four-year vocational programme.

Malaysia continues to work to improve its TVET provision to increase skilled human capital that is responsive to labour market needs. The Twelfth Malaysia Plan has adopted several measures to strengthen TVET which include improving the system and enhancing courses through skill certificates, upgrading its quality, recognition and certification of international institutions.<sup>12</sup> The MOHE is aiming for at least 55 per cent of SPM holders to further their studies in the field of TVET by 2025, in line with initiatives stipulated under the Twelfth Plan.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the focus on improving the TVET system in the Plan, there remains major challenges moving forward that must be addressed. For example, as multiple ministries cover the provision of TVET there has been an overlap in governance that has resulted in duplicate programmes and problems regarding the division of responsibility. Additionally, there has been a traditional perception that TVET programmes are a less prestigious option for students than academic streams. However, under the Plan, changing perceptions around TVET is a key priority through enabling TVET graduates to acquire professional status by MBOT and enabling them to pursue professional career pathways. Increased government focus on TVET programmes moving forward should positively impact the volume of TVET enrolments in future, which is necessary to meet the high-tech skills required within the fast-growing Malaysian economy.

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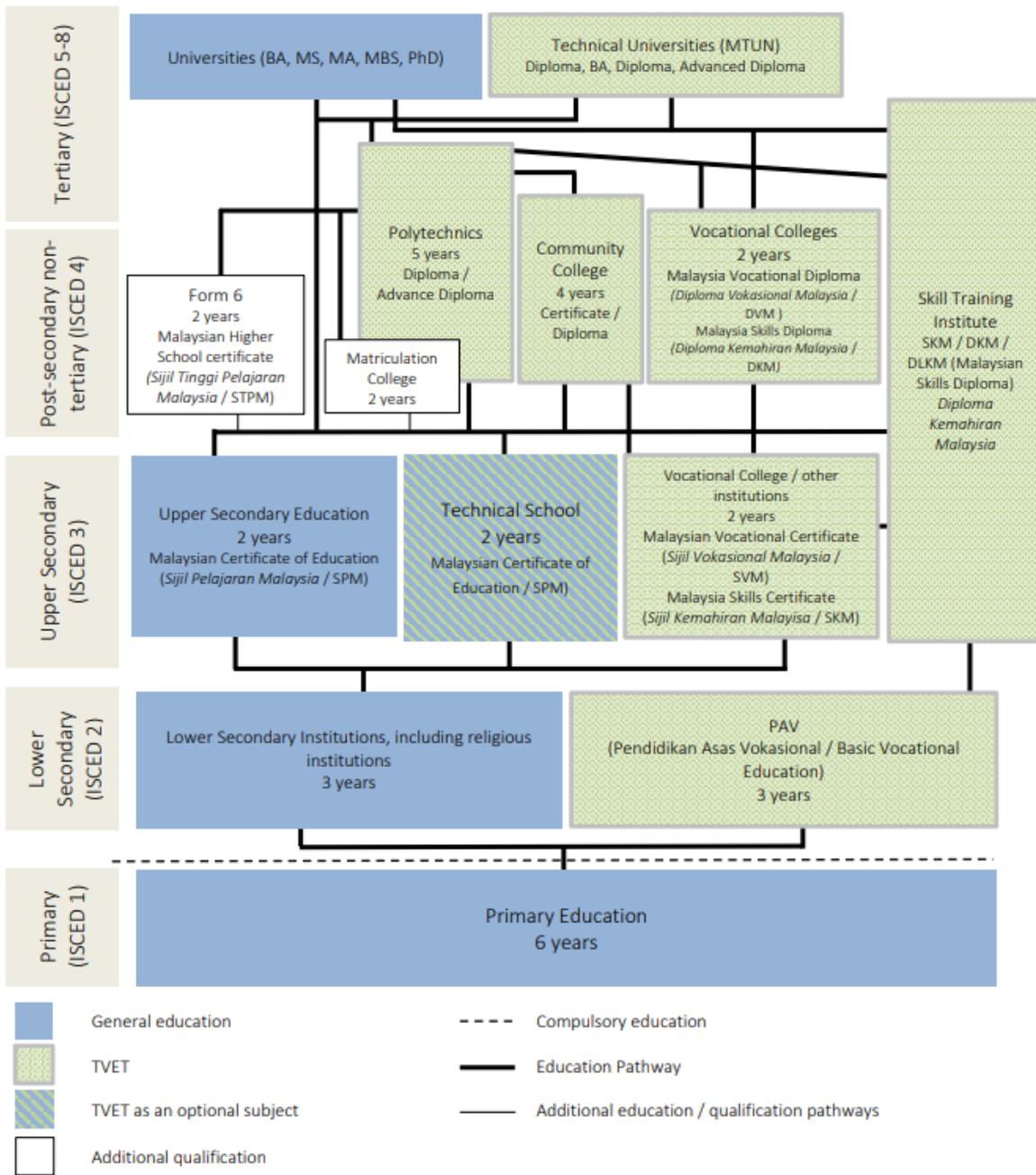
<sup>12</sup> 12th Malaysia Plan: Government looking to boost graduates' marketability, *Malay Mail*, 2021,

[www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/09/27/12th-malaysia-plan-govt-looking-to-boost-graduates-marketability-education/2008751](http://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/09/27/12th-malaysia-plan-govt-looking-to-boost-graduates-marketability-education/2008751)

<sup>13</sup> Higher Education Ministry targets at least 55pc of SPM holders to further studies in TVET by 2025, *Malay Mail*, 2022,

[www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/06/19/higher-education-ministry-targets-at-least-55pc-of-spm-holders-to-further-studies-in-tvet-by-2025-says-minister/13105](http://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/06/19/higher-education-ministry-targets-at-least-55pc-of-spm-holders-to-further-studies-in-tvet-by-2025-says-minister/13105)

**Figure 6: TVET in the Malaysian education system**



Source: UNESCO

## 4.4 Higher education

After secondary school, students in Malaysia have a wide range of options to continue to higher education. Most students opt to take the Malaysian Higher School Certificate (STPM), which is a basic entry requirement for a bachelor’s degree at HEIs and is also internationally recognised by many foreign universities. In addition, many international pre-degree certificates are offered in various HEIs within the country.

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Between 2010 and 2018, enrolments at Malaysian HEIs rose by 21 per cent. However, in 2019 and 2020, enrolment contracted by 5.2 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively, with total enrolments at just below 1.2m in 2020. Almost 585,000 students were enrolled at public universities in 2020 according to government statistics, comprising 61 per cent females and 39 per cent males. Of students enrolled in public universities in 2020, 84 per cent of the students were enrolled in undergraduate courses, while 16 per cent were studying postgraduate courses.<sup>14</sup>

Malaysia's unique, well-structured higher education system offers the opportunity to pursue a higher education qualification at a competitive rate. Students studying at public universities need to pay tuition fees. However, the fees are highly subsidised by the government. Students at private institutions pay full fees. With high standards of education coupled with affordable living costs, education in Malaysia is also an attractive option for international students. In 2018 and 2019 Kuala Lumpur was ranked second in the QS Top Universities "Most Affordable City for Students", with costs in Malaysia particularly favourable when compared to neighboring countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia.<sup>15</sup>

Malaysia is home to 20 public universities and 50 private universities.<sup>16</sup><sup>17</sup> Within private institutions, English is typically the most common medium of instruction. English instruction also plays an important role in public universities, particularly at the postgraduate level. The growing emphasis on English instruction reflects the Malaysian Higher Education Blueprint, which emphasises the need to strengthen English proficiency amongst students to enhance their international employability opportunities. Many HEIs in Malaysia provide a wide range of dual or franchised degree programmes from foreign branches of reputable universities from the US, UK, Australia and Ireland, reflecting Malaysia's vibrant TNE market. Foreign branch universities are offered either at their own overseas branch campus or in partnership with a Malaysian institution.<sup>18</sup>

Currently Malaysians possess relatively high levels of education attainment, with 32 per cent of the labour force possessing tertiary qualifications. This represents a more than threefold increase from 1990. The quality of education has also improved which is reflected by increased graduate employability and higher global rankings of local universities.<sup>19</sup> In the QS World University Rankings 2022, Universiti Malaya (UM) ranked 65<sup>th</sup> and was rated as the eighth best university in Asia. In addition, Malaysia had a further four universities in the top 200 globally.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Quick facts 2021, *Ministry of Education*, 2021, [www.moe.gov.my/en/penerbitan1/4589-quick-facts-2021/file](http://www.moe.gov.my/en/penerbitan1/4589-quick-facts-2021/file)

<sup>15</sup> Malaysia continues to be the preferred choice for international students, *The Edge Markets*, 2022, [/www.theedgemarkets.com/article/malaysia-continues-be-preferred-choice-international-students-says-noraini](http://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/malaysia-continues-be-preferred-choice-international-students-says-noraini)

<sup>16</sup> Harmonising public and private higher education, *New Straits Times*, 2019,

[www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2019/05/488452/harmonising-public-and-private-higher-education](http://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2019/05/488452/harmonising-public-and-private-higher-education)

<sup>17</sup> List of Universities in Malaysia, *Study Malaysia*, 2022, <https://www.studymalaysia.com/education/top-stories/list-of-universities-in-malaysia>

<sup>18</sup> Malaysia Higher Education in Brief, *Education Malaysia*, 2022, <https://educationmalaysia.gov.my/malaysia-higher-education-in-brief/>

<sup>19</sup> Twelfth Malaysia Plan, *Malaysia Government*, 2021, [https://pulse.icdm.com.my/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Twelfth-Plan-Document\\_compressed-1.pdf](https://pulse.icdm.com.my/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Twelfth-Plan-Document_compressed-1.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Malaysia, *QS World University Rankings*, 2022, [www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2022](http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2022)

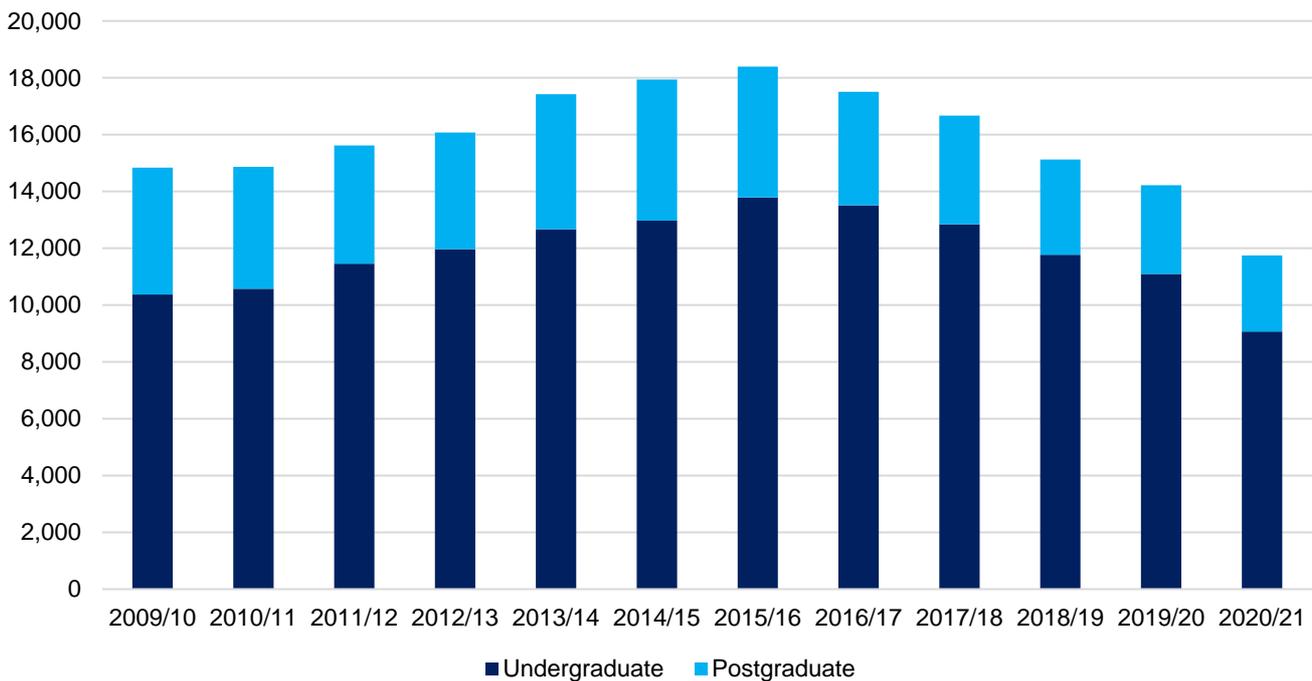
# 5 International Education

## 5.1 Student mobility

According to estimates from UNESCO, around 59,000 Malaysian students travelled abroad to study at the higher education level in 2019, making it one of the world’s top 20 outbound international student markets.<sup>21</sup> However, after peaking at just over 65,000 in 2016, the volume of outbound students declined for three consecutive years between 2017 and 2019, linked to the decline in the availability of scholarships and loans for students going abroad as the Malaysian government increases emphasis on domestic provision as opposed to international mobility.<sup>22</sup>

Traditionally, Malaysian students have shown a preference for English-speaking destinations with high quality education systems, with the UK, Australia and the US accounting for a large proportion of Malaysian outbound students over recent years. Smaller numbers of Malaysian students also study in other Asia Pacific markets such as Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand and India. China has also become an increasingly popular choice due to attractive scholarships.

**Figure 7: Malaysian students in HE programmes in the UK**



Source: HESA

Looking at the UK’s recruitment of Malaysian international students over the last decade, Malaysia has primarily been an undergraduate market for UK HEIs, with an average of 75 per cent of enrolments being at the undergraduate level.

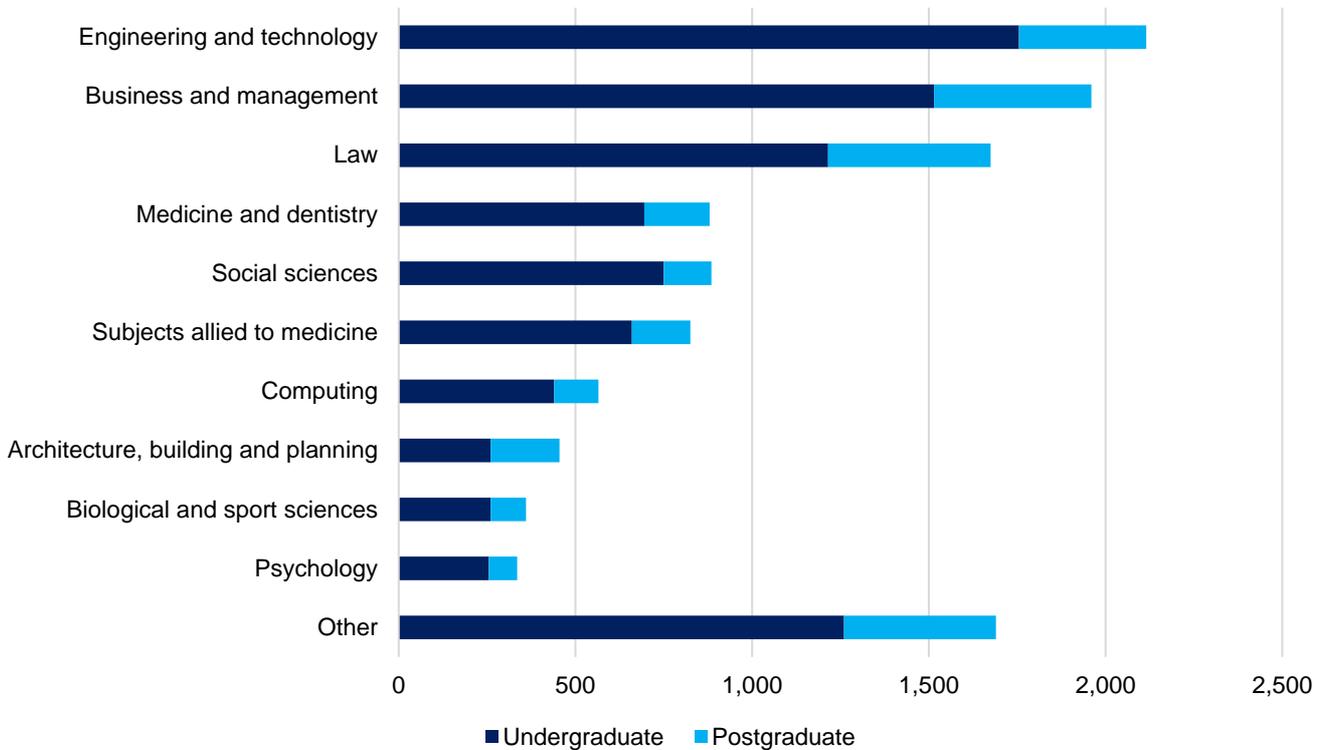
<sup>21</sup> UIS Database, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022, <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

<sup>22</sup> Malaysian government cools on study abroad but outbound still growing, ICEF Monitor, 2017, <https://monitor.icef.com/2017/04/malaysian-government-cools-study-abroad-but-outbound-still-growing/>



In terms of the total number of students, after growing steadily for several consecutive years and peaking at 18,395 in the 2015/16 academic year, the number of Malaysian students studying in the UK has been in decline ever since. The UK's experience in the Malaysian market is consistent with the wider general decline in total Malaysian outbound students over recent years, with sharp declines seen in both the undergraduate and postgraduate markets. In the 2020/21 academic year, the number of Malaysian students in the UK was 11,745, with a decline of 35 per cent seen in the undergraduate market and a 42 per cent decline in the postgraduate market since 2015/16. For several years the UK has been the leading destination for Malaysian students given the strong historical links between the countries, but the gap to the second placed destination market, Australia, has closed considerably over recent years as the UK's leading role has faded.

**Figure 8: Subjects studied by Malaysia HE students in the UK, 2020/21**



Source: HESA

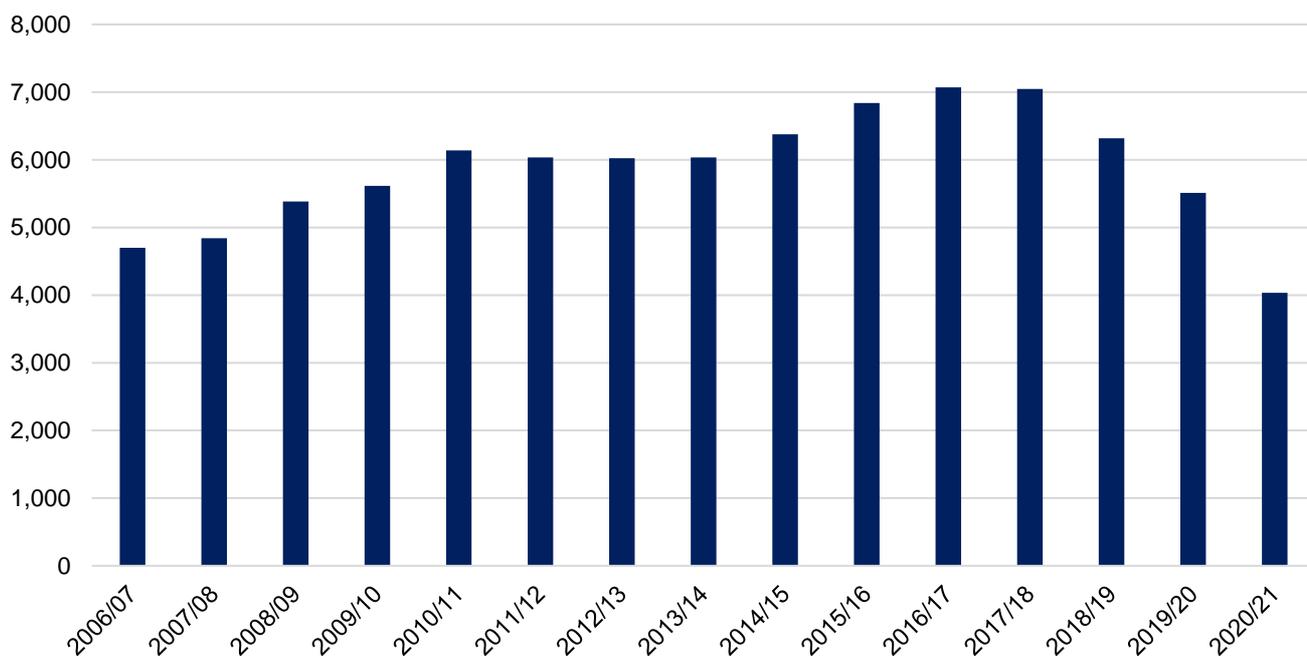
In terms of subject areas, engineering and technology was the most popular broad subject area with undergraduates, with 1,755 enrolments in 2020/21. Next came business and management (1,515), law (1,215), social sciences (750) and medicine and dentistry (695). Each of the top five undergraduate subject choices were included in the top five postgraduate choices, with the exception of social sciences, which was replaced by architecture, building and planning in the top five at the postgraduate level. Law (460) was the most popular postgraduate subject choice, followed by business and management (445), engineering and technology (360), architecture, building and planning (195) and medicine and dentistry (185). Looking back over the last five years, there has been little change in the leading subject choices by Malaysian students studying

in the UK, with the top three subject choices at both undergraduate and postgraduate level remaining the same in 2020/21 as compared to 2015/16.

Over the last few years, Russell Group institutions have accounted for over half of Malaysian enrolments in the UK. After some years of stability with the Russell Group share of total enrolments in the 52-54 per cent range, the share rose to 59 per cent in the 2020/21 academic year. This was the highest share seen since HESA records began, and well up from a share of 45 per cent a decade earlier in 2010/11.

Over the last decade, London has been the most popular study region within the UK for Malaysian students, with around one quarter of students studying in the capital in 2020/21. This was more than twice the share of the next most popular regions, which included Scotland, the South East and the North West which each hosted about 10 per cent of total Malaysian students enrolled in the UK. At institution level, the University of Manchester (695 enrollments) was the most popular choice in 2020/21, closely followed by University College London (625) and Imperial College London (490).

**Figure 9: Malaysian HE enrolments in the US**



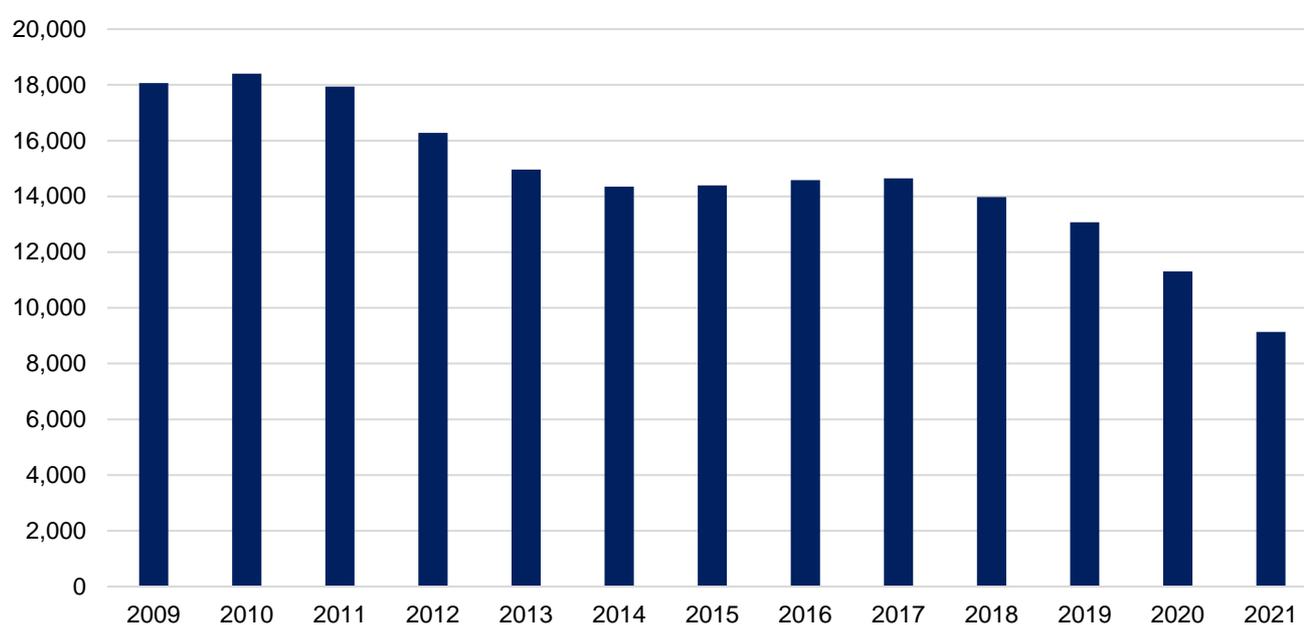
Source: IIE (Note: OPT students excluded)

Although well behind the UK and Australia, the US is also a popular study destination for Malaysian students, hosting several thousand students each year. The number of Malaysian students enrolled in the US peaked at just over 7,000 in the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years. Since then, the number of students has declined sharply, down by 10 per cent in 2018/19 and a further 13 per cent in 2019/20 as anti-immigration rhetoric under the Trump administration and

tightened measures on staying in the US after graduation weighed on student sentiment.<sup>23</sup> Malaysian student numbers in the US declined by a further 27 per cent in the 2020/21 academic year as international travel restrictions aimed at curbing the spread of the Covid-19 virus came into force across the world. Student numbers fell to around 4,000, the lowest level in more than a decade.

Looking ahead, however, the Biden administration has sought to provide a more accommodative environment for international students, including the cancellation of a proposal to limit international student visa to four years, which may lead to a resurgence in the growth of international students flows from Malaysia to the US in future.<sup>24</sup>

**Figure 10: Malaysian HE enrolments in Australia**



Source: AusTrade

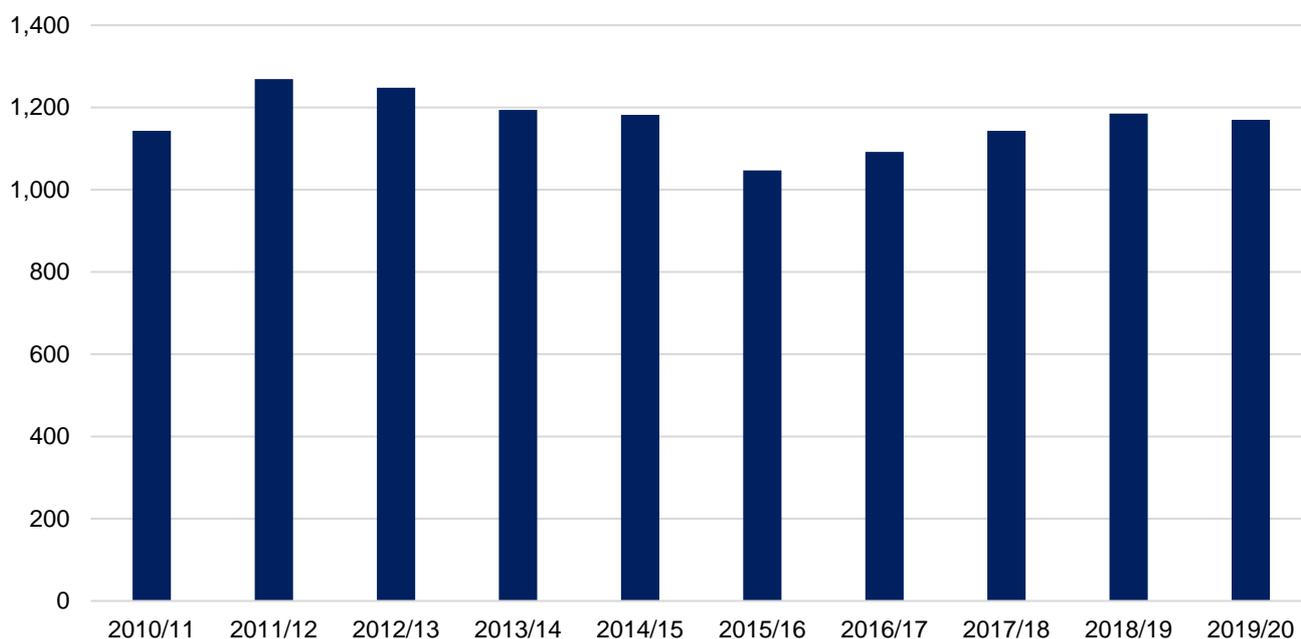
Alongside the UK, Australia has traditionally been a leading destination choice for international students from Malaysia. In 2010, Malaysian enrolments in Australia peaked at around 18,400 and at this point Australia was ahead of the UK as the largest host market for Malaysian students. However, after the 2010 peak, the number of Malaysian students declined for several consecutive years to just over 14,000 by 2014, representing a 22 per cent contraction. During this period, the UK gained market share at Australia's expense and became the leading host market for Malaysian students. Between 2014 and 2017, the number of Malaysian enrolments in Australia remained relatively stable at around the 14,000 mark, before another period of decline commenced from 2018, coinciding with the wider general trend of reduced overall outbound student flows from Malaysia since 2017.

<sup>23</sup> New international student enrolment in US has fallen 10% since 2015, *Forbes*, 2019, [www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2019/11/19/new-international-student-enrollment-in-us-has-fallen-10-since-2015/](https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2019/11/19/new-international-student-enrollment-in-us-has-fallen-10-since-2015/)

<sup>24</sup> Four-year international student visa limit reversed, *Study Group*, 2021, <https://blog.studygroup.com/four-year-international-student-visa-limit-reversed-by-biden>

After the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Australian government imposed highly restrictive border controls, with borders closed from March 2020 to December 2021. Given that the Australian academic year commences in February, international student inflows were largely shielded from the impact of the pandemic in 2020, with the pandemic impact seen more clearly in 2021, with Malaysian enrolments falling to just over 9,100 which is less than half the number of students hosted in the 2010 peak. However, in late 2021, the government temporarily extended work rights for international students and is offering other incentives such as visa application fee refunds to entice international students back, which could help facilitate a partial recovery of student flows from Malaysia to Australia in the years ahead.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 11: Malaysian HE enrolments in Canada**



Source: StatCan

Compared to the UK, Australia and the US, Canada holds a relatively small share of the Malaysian international student market. The number of Malaysian enrolments in Canada peaked at 1,270 in 2011/12 but following a period of sustained decline, fell to 1,050 by 2015/16. Since then, Canada has made a concerted effort to attract more international higher education students from across the world and has committed significant funds each year to aid its branding and marketing efforts. This has contributed to a recovery in international student flows from Malaysia, with just under 1,200 enrolled in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 academic years.

From an inbound perspective, Malaysia is currently home to around 131,000 international students and has become a regional international education hub over recent years.<sup>26</sup> Under its

<sup>25</sup> Australia: International enrolments down 17% in 2021, *ICEF monitor*, 2022, <https://monitor.icef.com/2022/03/australia-international-enrolments-down-17-in-2021-but-visa-applications-now-trending-up/>

<sup>26</sup> Malaysia attracts international students with offshore programmes, *The Malaysia Reserve*, 2022, <https://themalaysianreserve.com/2022/06/21/malaysia-attracts-international-students-with-offshore-programmes/>

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National Education Blueprint, the country had set the goal of attracting 250,000 students by 2025. While this ambitious target is unlikely to be achieved, the country continues to be a popular choice for students from major Asian source markets including China, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan, as well as other markets including Nigeria, Yemen and Egypt. Of particular note, over the last couple of years there has been growing interest from international students in PhD study in Malaysia. According to Education Malaysia Services (EMGS), 2021 saw a total of 11,161 international applicants for PhD programmes in public and private institutions, which was more than double the number from 2020 and primarily driven by an uptick in applications for Chinese students.<sup>27</sup> The sharp increase in postgraduate applications is a strong indicator of Malaysia's growing reputation in the international education sector, with lower tuition fees and living costs compared to Western destinations as well as the fact that English is widely spoken as a second language being key drivers of the country's rise to prominence of late.

## 5.2 Transnational education and distance learning

Malaysia is a highly developed TNE market, hosting ten overseas branch campuses approved by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education.<sup>28</sup> With 48,460 enrolments in the 2020/21 academic year, it was the UK's second largest TNE market, only behind China (61,495) where the population is more than forty times larger.

The UK currently maintains five branch campuses in Malaysia, more than any other country. The UK universities with branch campuses in Malaysia are University of Nottingham, Heriot Watt University, Newcastle University, University of Southampton and University of Reading. Indeed, Malaysia is home to more UK branch campuses than any other country outside of China and the United Arab Emirates, due in no small part to Malaysia's role as a regional hub for international enrolments from a number of strategically important countries, including China, Indonesia, Nigeria, India and Saudi Arabia.

An April 2020 report from the UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in partnership with the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) found that UK TNE programmes in Malaysia are well-developed with standards and quality equivalent to provision developed in the UK.<sup>29</sup> UK degree-awarding bodies are the main providers of TNE in Malaysia, and more than half of all non-local programmes in Malaysia lead to a UK degree.

TNE in Malaysia is primarily an undergraduate market for UK HEIs, with more than 80 per cent of provision taking place at bachelor's level over recent years. Meanwhile, in terms of mode of provision, face-to-face provision dominates, with distance learning accounting for just 9 per cent of total enrolments in 2020/21. This is a similar breakdown to that seen in other major UK TNE markets including China, Egypt and Sri Lanka, but is in contrast to the likes of Hong Kong and Singapore where distance learning plays a much more important role. Within the Malaysian TNE market, 'twinning' is a common format, where students study for the first part of their course in

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<sup>27</sup> Malaysian universities see uptick in int'l student applications for PhD: report, *Study International*, 2022, [www.studyinternational.com/news/phd-in-malaysian-universities/](http://www.studyinternational.com/news/phd-in-malaysian-universities/)

<sup>28</sup> Education Malaysia <https://educationmalaysia.gov.my/malaysia-higher-education-in-brief/>

<sup>29</sup> UK Transnational Education in Malaysia, QAA, 2020, [www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/international/tne-overview-report-malaysia-20.pdf?sfvrsn=9ce8cd81\\_8](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/international/tne-overview-report-malaysia-20.pdf?sfvrsn=9ce8cd81_8)

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Malaysia before transferring to the UK to complete the final part of their programme. In 2019/20, this accounted for almost 40 per cent of new first-degree undergraduates, although this dropped to 29 per cent in 2020/21 due to the pandemic.

While the volume of UK TNE enrolments in Malaysia remains substantial, there has been a sustained downward trajectory over recent years. Malaysian TNE student numbers peaked at just over 79,000 in 2014/15 but have declined every year since and were down by almost 40 per cent from peak by 2020/21. The QAA attribute the declining trend to an increasingly competitive market, the development of the domestic higher education system and changes in local regulations.<sup>30</sup> Further, there is also strong and growing competition within the institutions hosting TNE students in Malaysia. Indeed, several of these universities offer their own degree programmes that they want to attract more students to, at the expense of TNE enrolments. Adding to this, some of these universities are now similarly-ranked or even higher-ranked than the UK partner university, which is in contrast to the situation when the programmes were set up, when the local institutions either didn't have degree-awarding powers or were much less prestigious than their UK counterparts.

The downturn over recent years in UK TNE enrolments in Malaysia has been closely correlated with the reduction in inbound international student flows from Malaysia to the UK over the same period. TNE enrolments are down by 39 per cent from their peak level several years ago, while inbound student flows are down by a remarkably similar magnitude of 36 per cent from their previous peak level. This implies that the recent downturns in both markets are a reflection of reduced appetite for UK education generally, rather than demand for TNE replacing demand for physical mobility or vice-versa.

Looking ahead, while the sustained downward trend seen in recent years is a major concern in what is a crucial TNE market for the UK, reasons for optimism remain. With a gross tertiary enrolment ratio of around 43 per cent in 2020, there is considerable scope for an increase in higher education demand in the years ahead as tertiary participation increases. Indeed, tertiary enrolment rates have historically shown a strong correlation with economic prosperity, as measured by GDP per capita. As discussed prior, strong economic growth in Malaysia is expected over the next decade as Malaysia strives to achieve high-income status, and the strong projected growth in GDP per capita should provide a significant boost to higher education demand, with demand for international education also likely to benefit. Further, with the vast majority of UK TNE provision in Malaysia taking place at bachelor's level, the postgraduate market represents a relatively underdeveloped market where significant untapped demand could be realised.

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<sup>30</sup> UK TNE a "success story" in Malaysia, report finds, *The Pie News*, 2020, <https://thepienews.com/news/uk-tne-a-success-story-in-malaysia-report-finds/>

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## 6 UK Cooperation

Bilateral linkages between the UK and Malaysia remain strong in the international higher education sector. Malaysia is the UK's second largest TNE market and twelfth largest source of international students, while the UK remains the leading international research partner for Malaysia's HEIs, with researchers and academics from the two countries collaborating to publish more than 11,000 articles from 2016 to 2021.

One of the key collaborative programmes between Malaysia and the UK over recent years has been the Going Global Partnership Programme. Set up by the British Council to support partnerships between universities, colleges and education policy makers in the UK and in Malaysia, the programme aims to build stronger, more inclusive, internationally connected higher education and TVET systems. As part of this programme, the British Council in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia launched the UK-Malaysia University Consortium in January 2022. The Consortium comprises of 16 UK universities and all 20 Malaysian public universities and is designed to be a flagship initiative that promotes strategic engagement and bilateral cooperation in higher education between its partner universities in the UK and in Malaysia. The Consortium will lay a foundation for creating long term collaborations, shared priorities and complementary expertise between the UK and Malaysian HEIs. The Consortium is aligned with the Malaysian Higher Education Blueprint 2015-2025 and the UK International Education Strategy. The aim of the Consortium is to reinforce the global perceptions of both countries as centres of higher education excellence and to enable the higher education sectors in both countries to share resources and expertise and attract top academic talent in the future.<sup>31</sup> Further, under the Consortium a catalyst grant has been set up with the value of GBP220,000 to support four higher education collaborative projects between the UK and Malaysia Consortium member institutions that address emerging higher education challenges which are shared by both countries.<sup>32</sup>

In the area of TNE and given the extensive links between the UK and Malaysia in this segment of the international higher education sector, a review by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was conducted in 2019 in close engagement with the Malaysian Qualifications Agency. The review found that the quality of UK qualifications being delivered in Malaysia was similar to those delivered in the UK, with UK degrees in Malaysia meeting both local employment needs and UK-based provision standards.

Continuous investment in education especially from the private sector will likely see more domestic students decide to remain in Malaysia, for at least part of their education as the quality of domestic provision improves. Consequently, UK universities will need to invest time in finding the right partnerships with Malaysian institutions to nurture exchange through articulation and TNE and to build the pipeline for postgraduate recruitment.

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<sup>31</sup> UK Malaysia University Consortium, *Liverpool John Moore's University*, 2022, [www.ljmu.ac.uk/microsites/uk-malaysia-university-consortium](http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/microsites/uk-malaysia-university-consortium)

<sup>32</sup> UK-Malaysia University Partnerships Catalyst Grant, *British Council*, 2022, [www.britishcouncil.my/uk-malaysia-university-partnerships-catalyst-grant-2022](http://www.britishcouncil.my/uk-malaysia-university-partnerships-catalyst-grant-2022)

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Whereas the foundation of the UK's relationship with Malaysia has been based on the movement of resources and expertise from the UK to Malaysia, building productive partnerships in the future will require a clearer understanding of our counterparts' needs and willingness to match their ambitions; their growing demand for equality in partnerships and increasing capability to deliver locally (on their own).

Therefore, the UK needs to constantly refresh its education relationship with Malaysia to remain relevant and successful. This includes marketing the UK as a quality study destination and producer of quality education goods and services; investment in building and managing our networks of alumni; responding promptly and effectively to Malaysia's education plan; and most importantly, investing more in preparing young British people with the language, knowledge and confidence to be 'Malaysia/ASEAN-literate'.

A strategic working group with members from the British Council, British High Commission, DIT and British Chamber has been formed to review and progress education initiatives with Malaysia that would see the UK leverage and apply its diverse strengths to a shared purpose of supporting Malaysia's ambitions and ensuring the UK's relevance in one of its most important education markets globally.