



Managing international student recruitment agents: approaches, benefits and challenges

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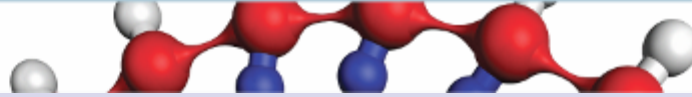
Vincenzo Raimo, University of Reading

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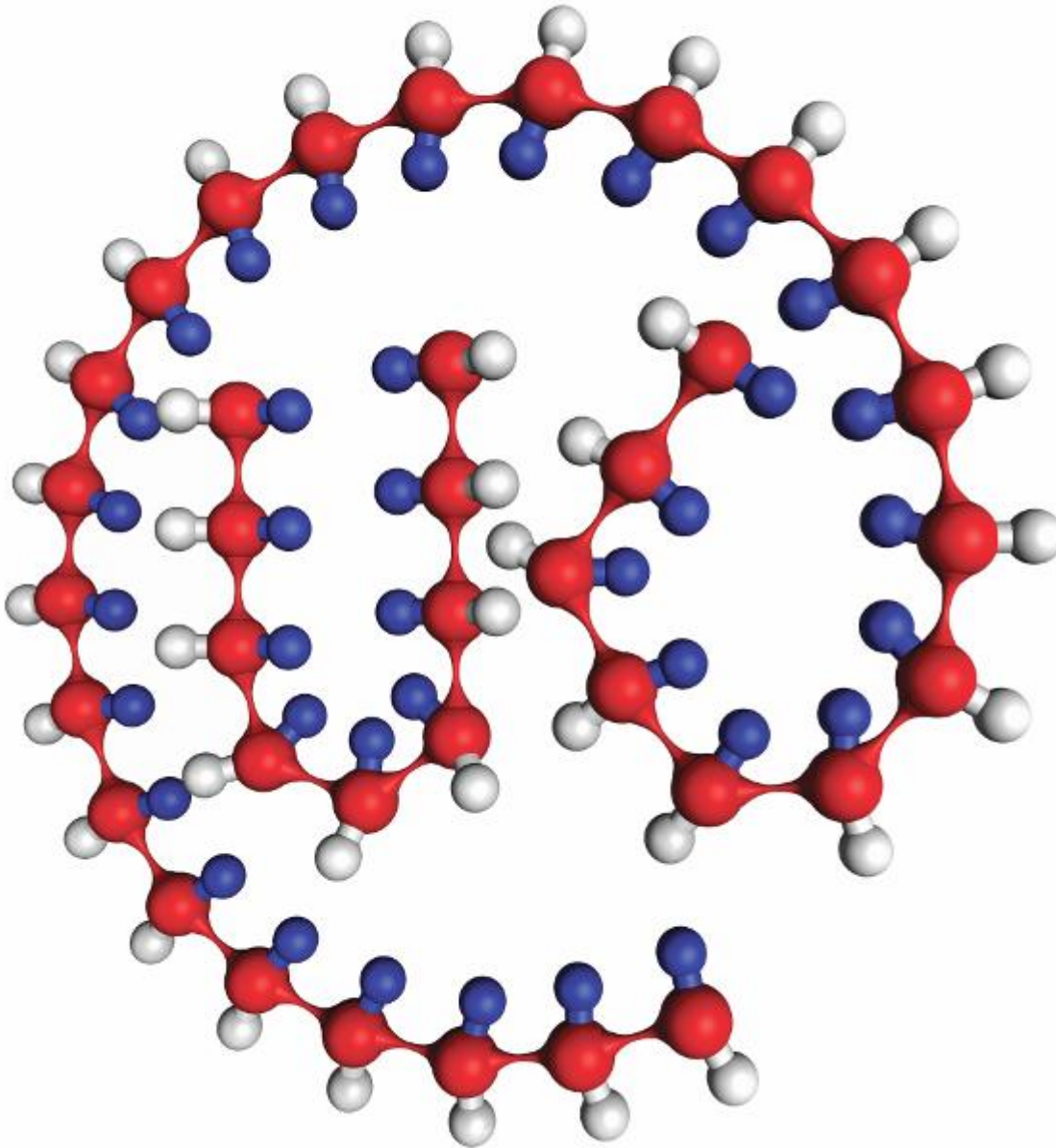
Why the British Council Works with Agents



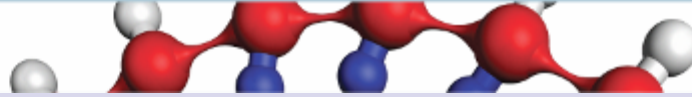
- to share our expertise in education counselling and information provision to ensure a high quality service is delivered .
- to increase their capacity to promote UK education
- to promote and reward ethical and professional behaviour and to improve the quality of agents, by providing a British Council professional development route

Helen Obaje

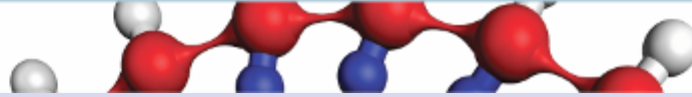
Working with
agents:
encouraging
best practice



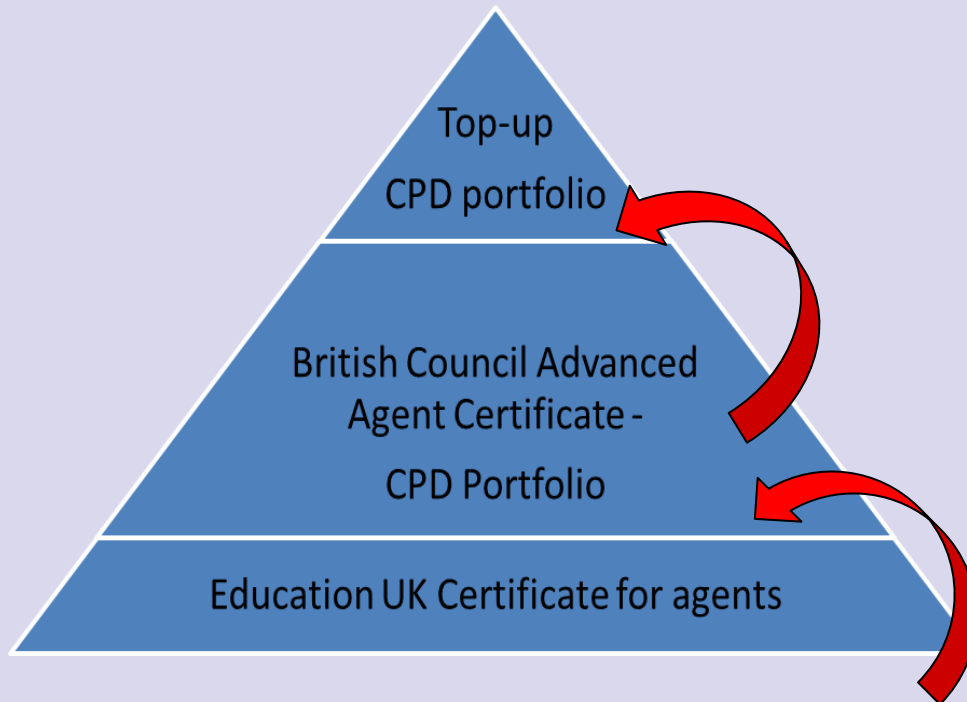
How many agents?



Levels of certification



2 years certification is gained for successful completion of each agent training programme



Year 3, Advanced level

British Council Advanced Agents Certificate

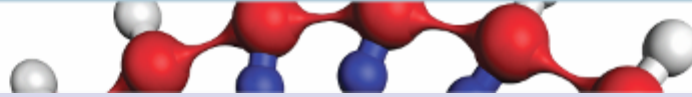
- agent practitioner led
- evidence of CPD activities

Year 1, Foundation level

Education UK Award for Agents, Advisors and Education Counsellors

- 8 weeks' supported on-line learning
- Formal exam

Professionalism and the new CPD programme



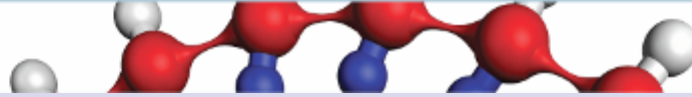
Drivers

- A consistent, defined recertification model for all countries
- Agent demand for context-specific, advanced training opportunities
- Embedding professionalism and ethics in capacity-building activity

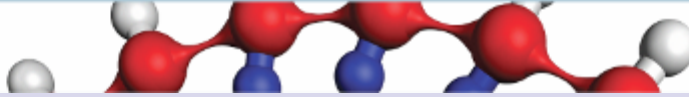
Recognising:

- the diversity of agents' roles, relationships and contexts
- the need for flexibility in recertification, acknowledging context, experience and professionalism
- the role of all partners in agent capacity building – developing a collaborative approach to agents' training and professional development through education partners

The CPD Cycle – working together to build capacity



What agents say.....

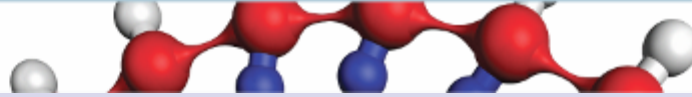


“The agent training programme is a very useful resource for us to understand UK education.

Its content is very rich; it includes history, culture, geography, environment and government of (the) United Kingdom. Education structures, courses, subjects and international student support are also main parts of the certificate.

Other than that it includes agency services, ethics and responsibilities, visa application and regulation, pre-departure duties etc.... I believe that this course helps to control our quality in order to run our business”

The British Council Trained Agent List



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Education UK
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Trained counsellors

keep their professional knowledge up-to-date, with regular recertification and assessment required to remain on this list of British Council trained certified agents.

Agent Search

Country:

GCSE, A Level or other equivalent

Boarding Schools

English Language Schools

Undergraduate study

Post Graduate study

Business or Organisation or Agent Association:

Family name:

The British Council supports and works collaboratively with education agents and advisors for international students to the UK. Our aim is to facilitate access to the best agents for students, parents and all accredited UK education providers. Our agent training programmes are rigorous and highly valued by all of our partners. Agents on this list have all successfully passed our training programmes, starting with the Education UK Certificate for agents / advisors, and subsequently the BC Advanced Agent Certificate. All certified agents and advisors on this website have given permission to their local British Council office for their details to be listed. For more information contact us at agent.enquiries@britishcouncil.org

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The United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.

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Agents that fit your search criteria

Number of results from your search - 114. [Click on the name for more information.](#)

Chin, David	ioi Consulting Ltd - BC trained since 19/06/2012
A.W. Paton, Neil	Native Speaker Tutors and Consultants - BC trained since 26/02/2012
Ahmed, Shaheen	Total Care London Ltd - BC trained since 07/03/2014
Al Qadi, Amani	A Queen's English (AQE Ltd) - BC trained since 09/07/2013
Alam, Md Zahidul	Shrabju Global Outsourcing Limited - BC trained since 19/06/2012
Amin, Vaishali	Shreeji Overseas - BC trained since 17/01/2014
Araki, Reina	Reina Araki - BC trained since 24/09/2013
Arora, Megha	Global Reach - BC trained since 17/01/2014
Arora, Vikash	Global Reach - BC trained since 17/01/2014
Arumugam, Shanmukapriya	shanmukapriya - BC trained since 17/01/2014
Aslam, Adnan	Roots Education Consultants - BC trained since 04/07/2013
Asuncion, Judith	Education Links - BC trained since 15/01/2013
Azeem, Muhammad	One World Consultants - BC trained since 19/06/2012
Bethell, Rosa	Bespoke Education Consultancy - BC trained since 29/01/2013
Bharti, Priya	- BC trained since 17/01/2014
Bhujayan, Md Arifuzzaman	New College of Finance - BC trained since 18/12/2012
Bidwai, Shekhar	Chimray Education Consultancy - BC trained since 17/01/2014
Bogoslovskaya, Elena	Collection-Consulting Ltd - BC trained since 18/12/2012
Brown, Nisha	De Browns Associates Ltd - BC trained since 07/03/2014
Chan, Ya-Tang, Zoe	StudLink Education Advisory Services Ltd. - BC trained since 29/01/2014
Chandnik, Charu	CI Careers - BC trained since 17/01/2014

Education UK | UK | Home - Google Chrome

www.bcagentinfo/gall/business_card.php?id=3364

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Mr. David Chin

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London
W5 2NR

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Fax:
Email: dchin@ioi-consulting.com
Web: www.ioi-consulting.com

Educational sectors represented **British Council Qualification(s)**

GCSE, A Level or other equivalent British Council Advanced Agent Certificate (Gained: //)

Boarding Schools Education UK Certificate (Gained: 19/06/2012)

English Language Schools

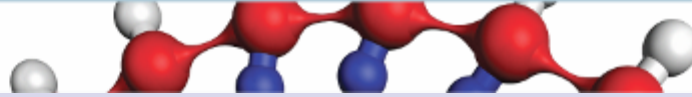
Undergraduate study

Post Graduate study

Agent Reference: BC/GAL/3364

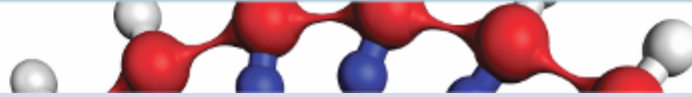
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Benefits to UK Institutions



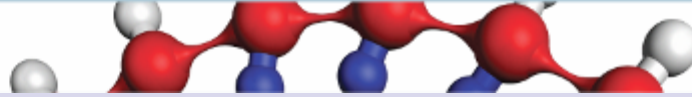
- Agents have a better understanding of UK education at all relevant levels
- Agents must undertake CPD and commit to code of professional behaviour and ethics
- Trained agents associated with British Council/Education UK with additional exposure to UK marketing and promotion
- Opportunity to engage with us to shape the offer and integrate your own training
- Offer increased access to high quality and eligible students

Summary of developments in 2014



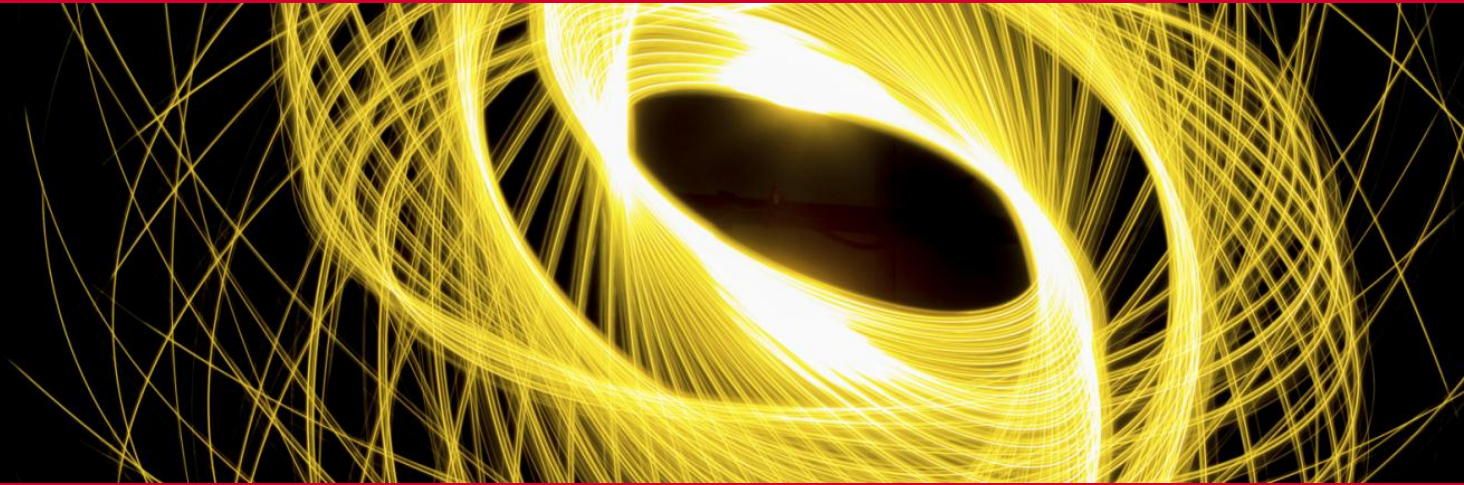
- Launch of Global Trained Agents list and Agents site
- Launch of Advanced Certificate
- Marketing and promotion
- School counsellor training development
- 500 new agents trained globally
- Working more closely with UCAS and QAA
- University focus groups
- Presentations for Institutions` agent conferences
- Agents Newsletter

Plans for 2015



- Roll out of Advanced training
- Launch of school counsellors training
- Promotion to and consultation with UK sector leading to new content and developments
- New module on professional standards and ethics
- Updating the UK Regional Institution offer to International students
- Education UK website to include trained agent search (integration with Global Agents List)
- New countries/regions to launch training
- Developing new workshop series for UK institutions

MANAGING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT AGENTS: APPROACHES, BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES



Vincenzo Raimo, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement),
University of Reading

Dr Iona Huang, Senior Lecturer, Harper Adams University

Managing International Student Recruitment Agents: Approaches, Benefits and Challenges

Agents: why do we use them?

Approaches to agent management

Understanding risk

Ensuring successful university-agent relationships

Questions & discussion





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Agents: why do we use them?

An export agent can also help:

- give you information and contacts for overseas markets
- identify and make the most of opportunities overseas
- cut the cost of setting up your own offices overseas and recruiting and training your own employees to work there

And all while allowing you to keep more control over your product (or service) e.g. the final price, brand image (when compared with using a distributor)

<https://www.gov.uk/export-agents>

Agents: why do we use them?

They're effective in helping us to meet volume, income and other student recruitment related targets.

“Agents are a very quick way in to getting students”.

“And for that (diversity) reason we are looking at appointing new agents and we are looking at West Africa, Indonesia, Middle East and South America.”

“The cost of going there (emerging markets) is so high and the return on investment is not there.”

Certain countries are regarded as unsafe for UK travel and therefore places more reliance on the agent(s) concerned.

Agents: why do we use them?

- **Agents can provide market intelligence and cultural negotiation**

“They’ve got a wealth of local knowledge, expertise, cultural experience.”

“You have to have an agent to negotiate with that culture.”

“They’re kind of like our eyes in the market.”

- **Agents act as a conduit between universities and students (and their parents)**

- In some markets it’s a normal expectation for prospective students to use an agent or educational counselling service (e.g. Taiwan, India)

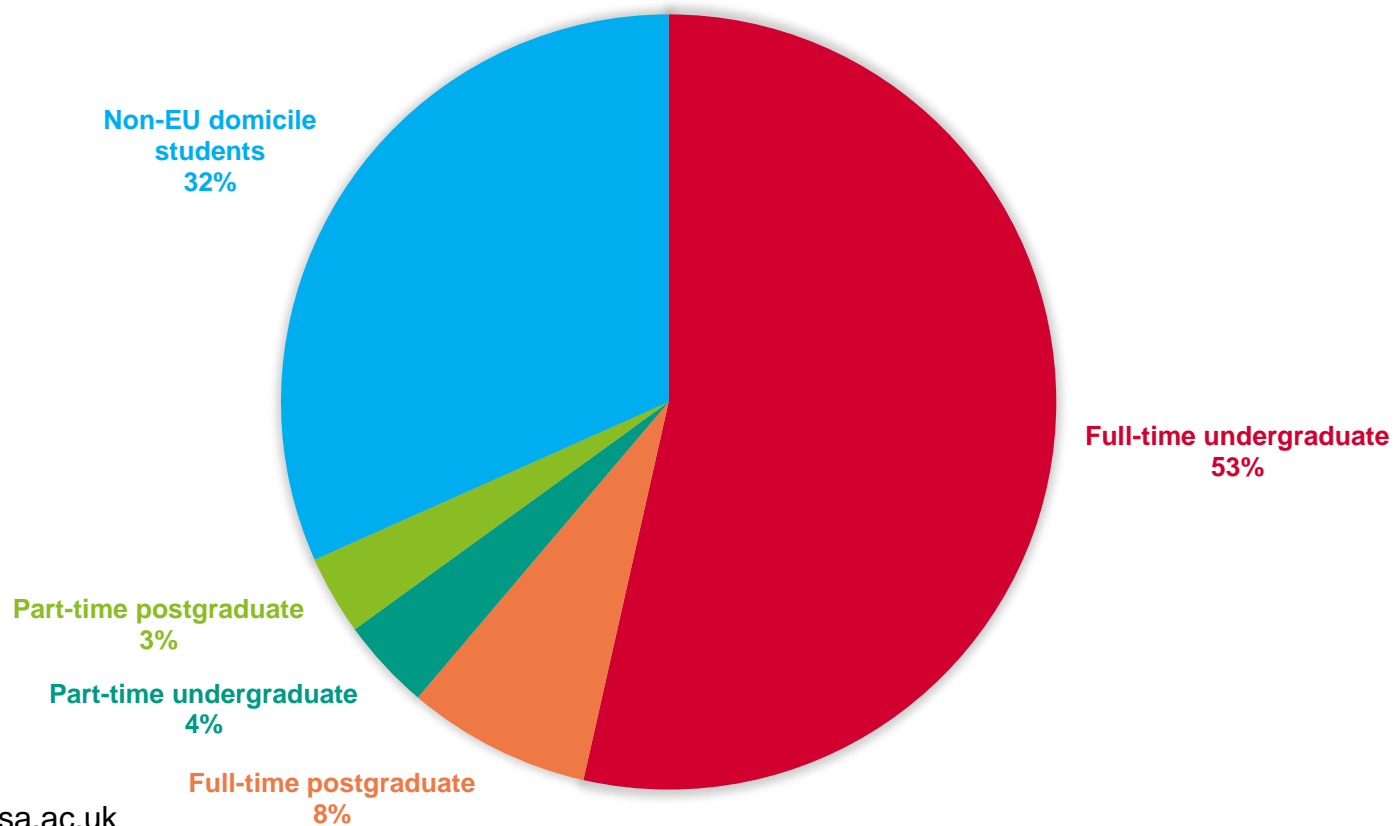
Agents: why do we use them?

- **Course promotion**
- **Encouraging applications**
- **Conversion activities**
- **Verification of documents**
- **Visa advice**
- **Deposits collection**
- **Organising alumni events**
- **Making local connections (with schools, universities and local authorities)**
- **Market research (for course development,**
- **Supporting overseas travel of UK staff**

“When you travel internationally and you are on your own. It’s a great joy to walk into an office to meet somebody you have known for a few years.”

Agents: why do we use them?

UK universities sources of tuition fee income 2012-13



source: www.hesa.ac.uk

What percentage of our intake comes through agents?

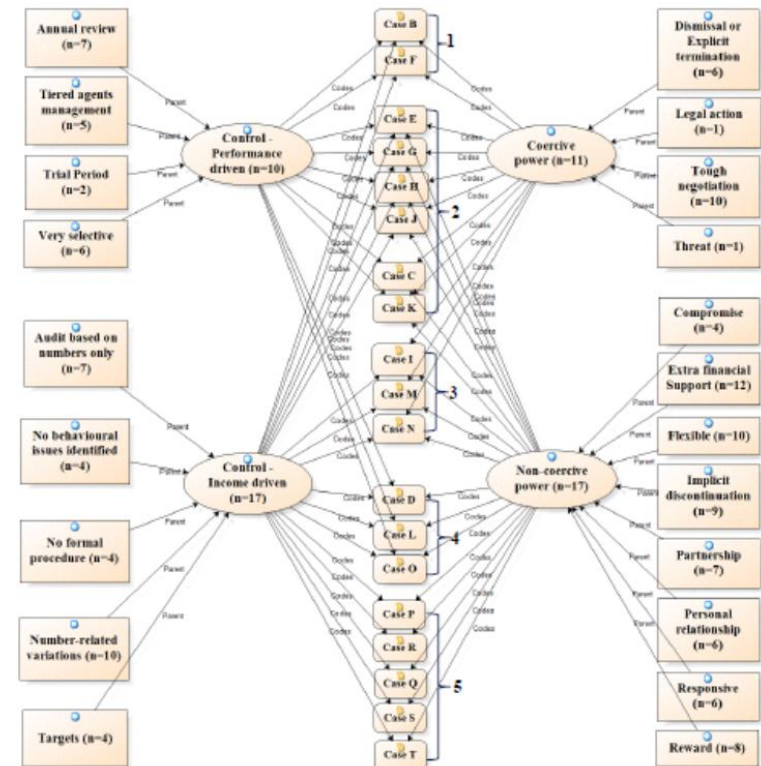
Country of Recruiting Institution	Proportion of international students recruited through agents (average %)
Malaysia	56
Australia	53
New Zealand	47
Canada	41
UK	38
Netherlands	20
United States	11
OVERALL	38

Research Methods




- 41 hours of valid recordings of semi-structured interviews (24 one2one and 12 group)
- 57 participants (up to 25 years of experience in Intl recruitment, including IOs and IDs)
- 20 UK Universities (9 below and 11 above 410 UCAS tariff mid-point)
- **All data were anonymised prior to being shared with co-researchers (Raimo and Humfrey).**
- Content analysis via Nvivo 10

Agents management process

- Selection
- Due diligence
- Contracting
- Training
- Support
- Monitoring
- Enforcement

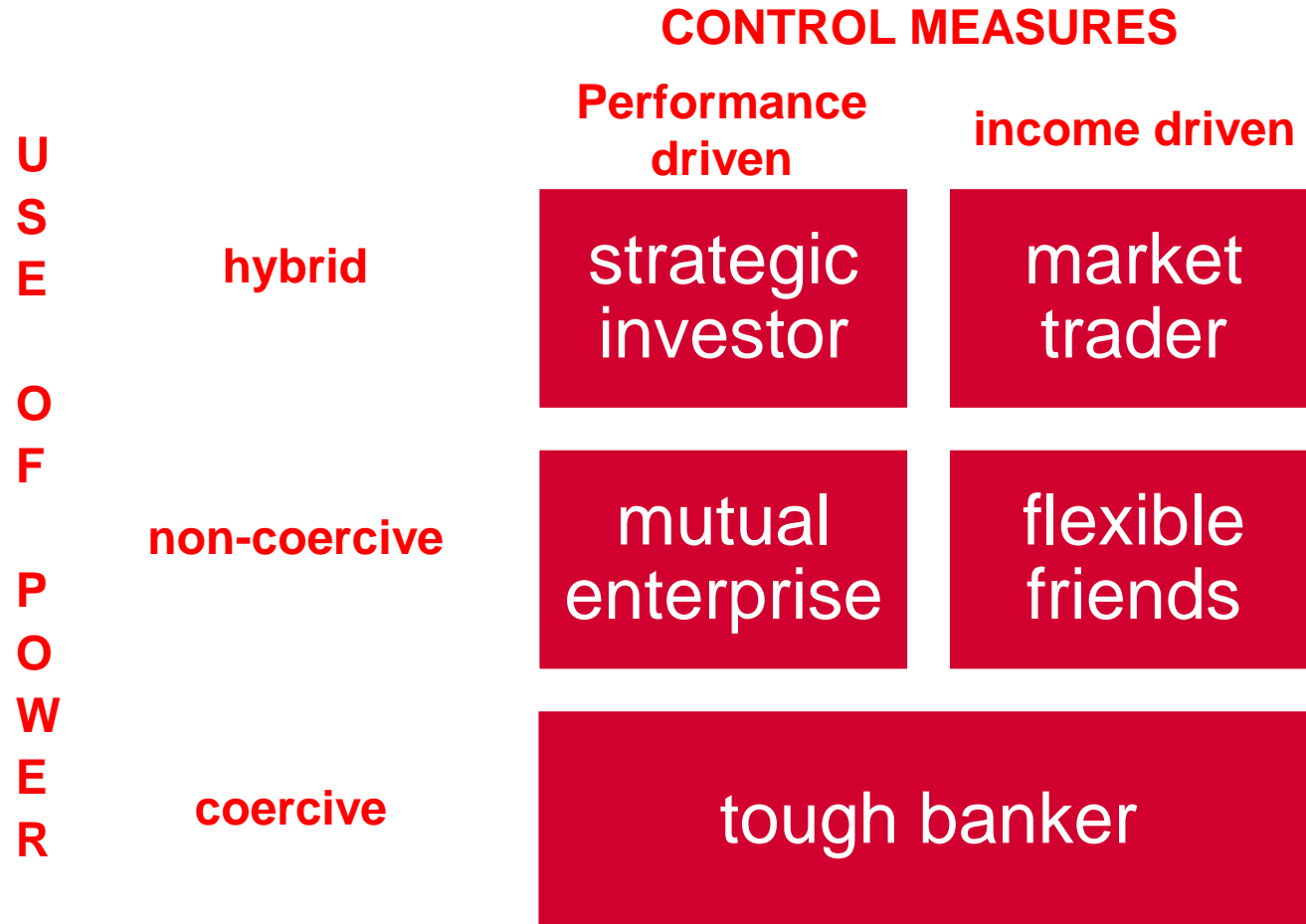


Legend

-  Parent node (n - number of coding sources i.e. case institutions)
-  Child node (n - number of coding sources i.e. case institutions)
-  Case institutions (letter - Code for institution arranged by the strength of market position indicated by UCAS entry points as explained in the text, B the strongest and T the weakest)

1. Tough banker
2. Strategic investor
3. Market trader
4. Mutual enterprise
5. Flexible friends

Approaches to governing agency relationships



Strategic investor

“Agents are definitely a vital tool in terms of recruitment. We are not afraid to take action. ... We do sponsor familiarization trips, where we will pay for agents to come over and visit and put them up at the university to look around us..... We would prefer to work with as few agents as possible.”

Market trader

“And if they haven't been able to meet the level of recruitment, why have them on our books.”

Mutual enterprise

“We treat agents as our customers even though we're their customers.” “We don't work with a huge number of agents in any of our markets. Ideally we want loyalty.”

Flexible friends

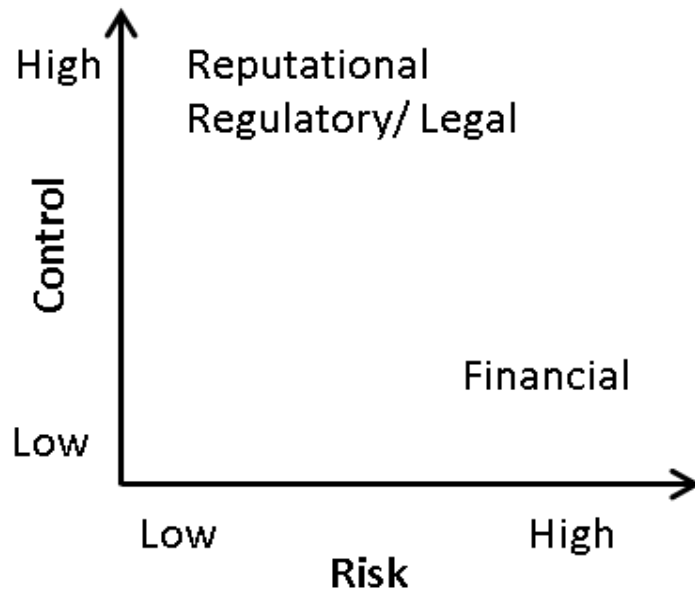
“I think we're just grateful for applications... we need to be kind of more flexible with some agents to try and nurture that relationship in the first place. ”

Tough banker

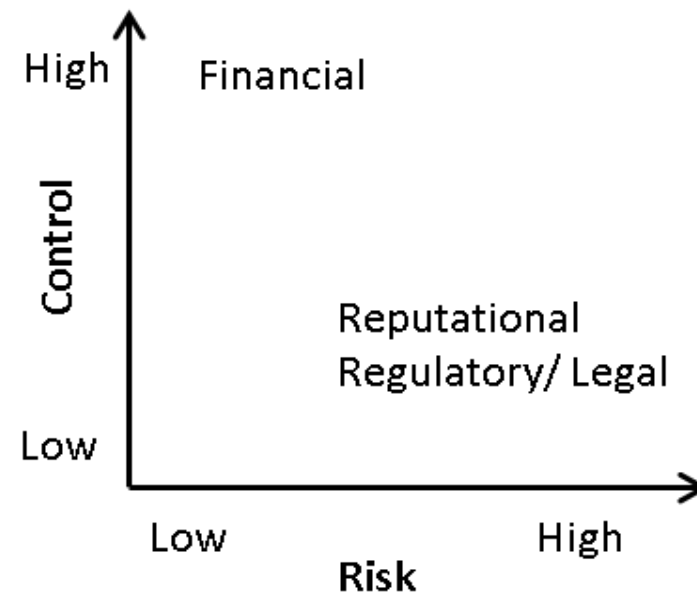
“So we found out today, and we terminated the next day.”

Understanding risks

Employing own staff

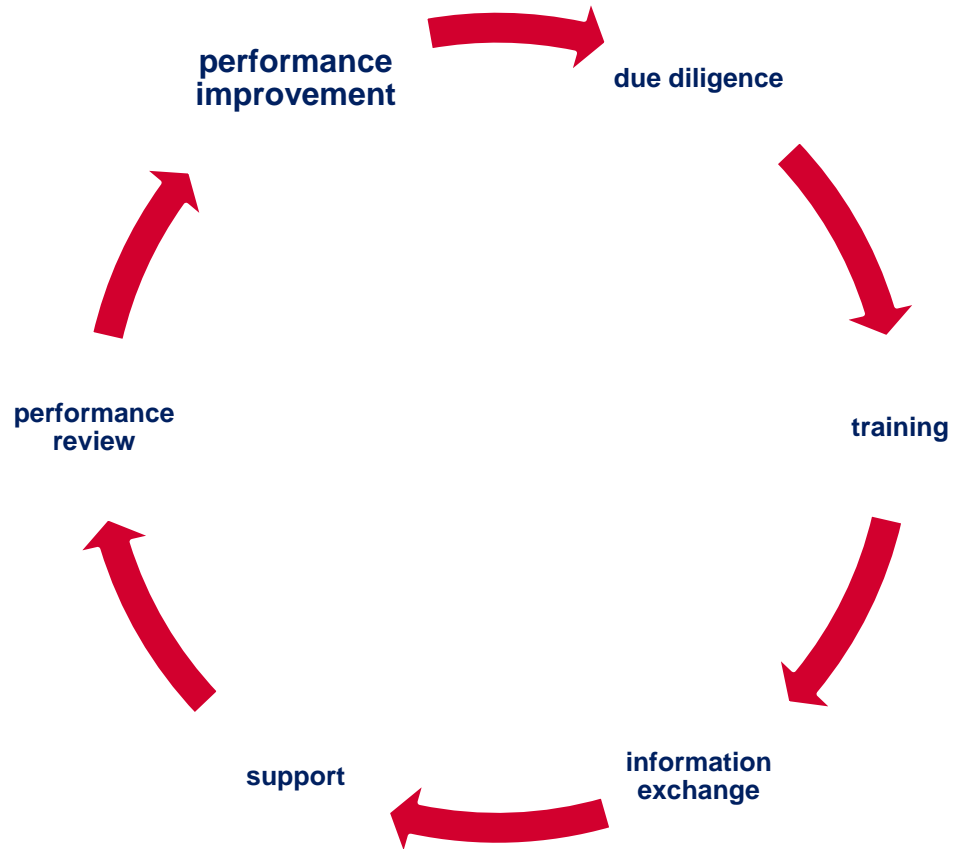


Working with agents



Recommendations

Remember that
due diligence is a
continuous
processes



Recommendations

- asses processes against UKCISA Code of Ethics and QAA Guidance
- ensure proper legal advice (and no *gentlemen's agreements*)
- develop and articulate clear agent strategies & understand the financial model
- improve training for recruitment staff
- consider tendering for the appointment of agents
- tailored communications to better support your agents
- do not make assumptions about the power relationship between your own university and agents

Recommendations

- put students at the centre of your agent strategies – that means greater transparency

Let's avoid the scandal of commission based mis-selling that's taken place in other sectors

The Telegraph

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Banks' reward structures encouraging mis-selling, FSA warns

Britain's banks are facing a clampdown on commission-based sales that have encouraged mis-selling of financial products going back two decades, the City regulator has said.

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Or are we already too late?

The Telegraph

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The 'strategic partners' who offer Chinese students a route to UK

For tens of thousands of Chinese students, the route to a British education begins at one of the universities' "strategic partners" or "official agents" in Shanghai and Beijing.



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school of social and behavioral sciences
In collaboration with IE Executive Education

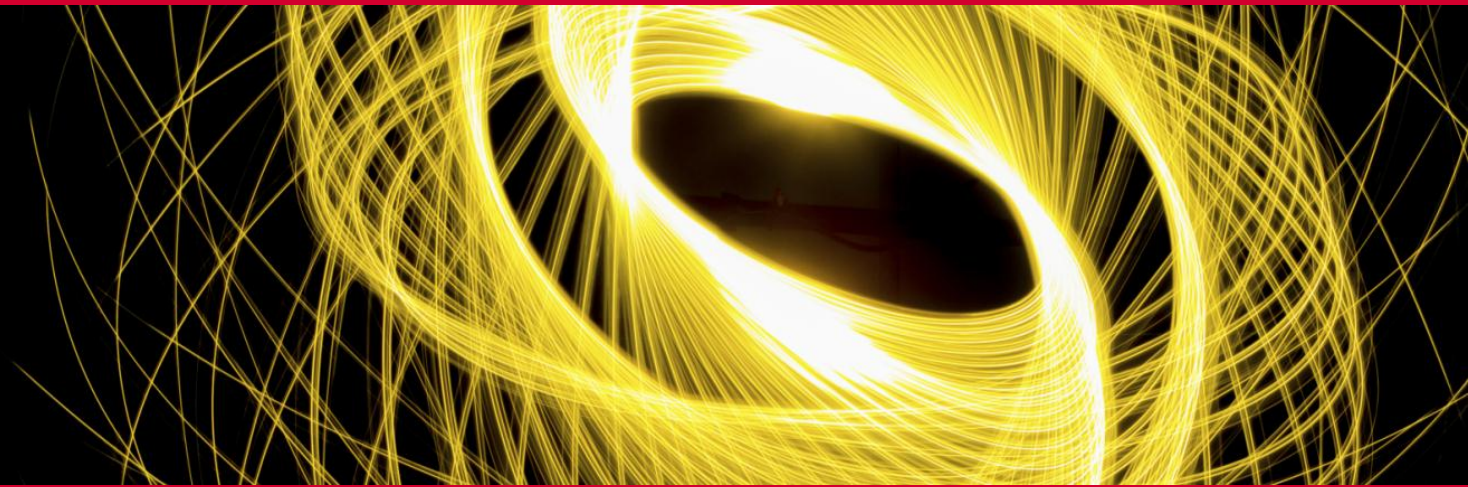
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MANAGING AGENTS FOR
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION



Huang, I. Y., Raimo, V., Humfrey, C. (2014)
Studies In Higher Education. Online version is available at
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.968543>

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