



# Emerging Iran: Opportunities, Challenges, and Recommendations for the UK's Education Sector

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## The last 12 months in UK-Iran relations

- Election of President Rouhani
- The JPA – and its extensions
- Non-resident Chargés d’Affaires
- Reopening Embassies & challenges
- Visas, insurance, and travel
- The coming year(s)
- The British Council’s response

A map of the Islamic Republic of Iran, highlighted in yellow, showing its geographical location in the Middle East. The map includes major cities and surrounding countries.

## Islamic Republic of Iran

**Population: 77 Million(2014), 50% below age 30**

**2<sup>nd</sup> biggest economy in the region; potential growth estimated at 10%+ per year with sanctions suspension**

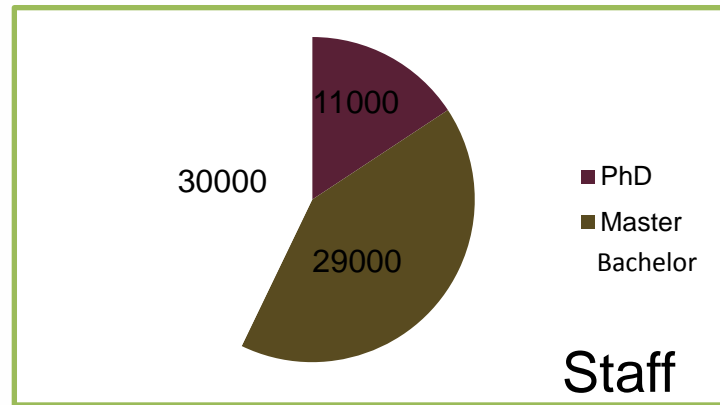
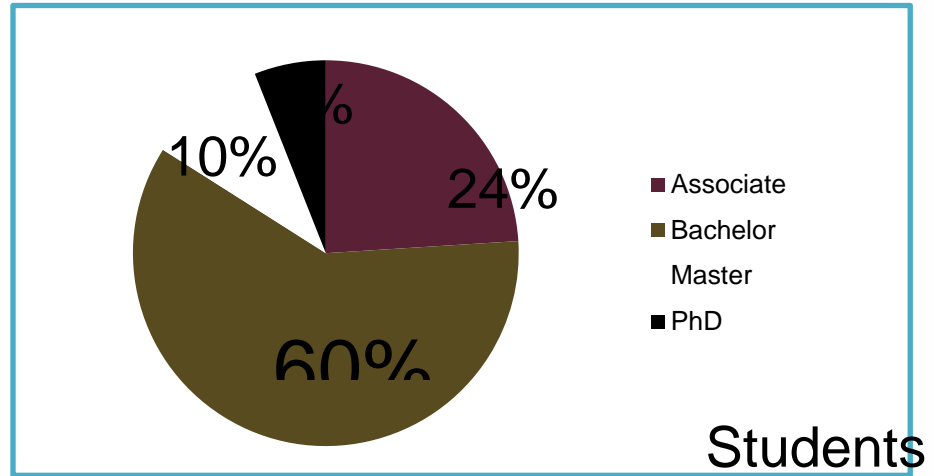
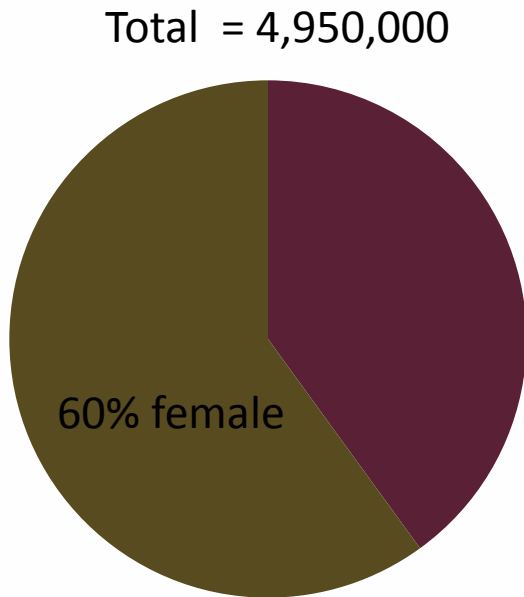
**Most diversified economy in the world (WTO)**

**Highest literacy rate in the region**

**Highly connected – over 100% mobile phone penetration, and internet penetration at 70%+**

**Second largest country in the Middle-east, 18th largest in the world**

**Primary and secondary Education is free and obligatory (6-17 years old)**

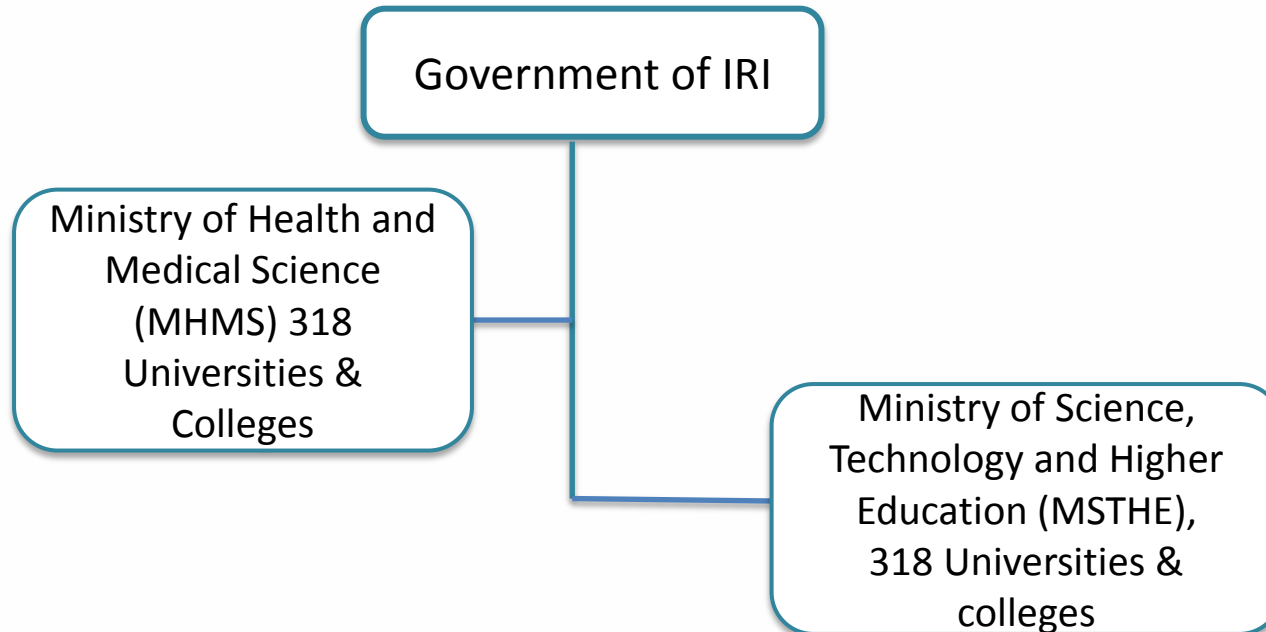


## Higher Education: Demographics & Trends

- Due to the poor labour market, there has been an increase in applicants for master's degree programmes: last year there were over 1m applicants for 300,000 places.
- 300,000 PhD applicants expected this year for 60,000 places
- Increasing importance of technology – Azad University
- Strength maintained in science and technology subjects
- New proposed initiatives for partnerships with international institutions, organisations, and countries

- 125 universities in the state sector under the Ministry of Science Research and Technology (MoSRT)
- 270 teacher training colleges under the MoHE
- 30 additional universities under other Ministries
- 550 branch offices with the Iranian Open University
- Applied Science University (TVET) with 739 branches
- 340 non-governmental / private universities (Azad University has 1.5m students)
- In the natural sciences, 80% of academic staff are men and 20% are women. This distribution is reversed in the arts and social sciences. There is a huge shortage of staff in the Applied Science institutions.

- It is estimated that there are between 50,000 and 70,000 Iranian students studying overseas. There are approximately 3,500 in the UK; in comparison, there are over 6,000 in Germany. There are 12,000 in the USA, and up to 20,000+ in Malaysia and India
- Drop in UK enrolments not due to political distancing under Ahmadinejad, but primarily down to visa issues after closing of Embassy
- Huge potential with warming diplomatic ties



Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution

Students recruitment: National Exam (known as Konkor for all levels)

No tuition fee, heavily subsidized accommodation and food



## IRI Higher Education

**Highest rank in the region**

**Tehran Medical Universities ranked 348 and Sharif Universities of Technology ranked 800 amongst 2400 internationally recognized universities (2013)**

**Iran's share of academic output increased from 0.01% in 1980 to 1.62% in 2013**

**Student exchange programs with neighbouring countries and North African countries**



## IRI HE: strengths & constraints



Level of Science and Technology

Local demand

Regional Demand

Copyright

Sanction

Elite Immigration or brain drain

HE expansion and declined local demand (2012 to present)

High rate of unemployment amongst university graduates

## UK-Iran Academic Relations: Benefits & challenges

Profitable market

Young, talented and educated population

UK Education Excellence

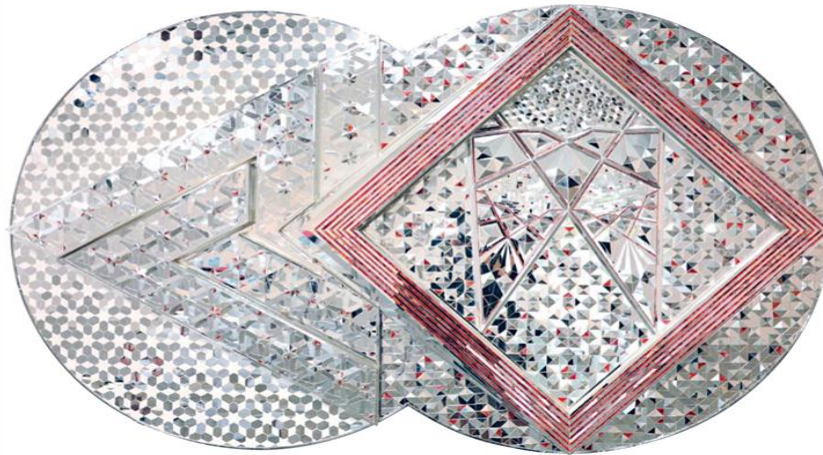
Strong academic network at individual level

UK alumni

Highly politicized and closely controlled HE system

High cost of Education in UK

## UK- Iran Academic Relations: prospects



Areas of Interest, Environment, Medical Science, Oil and Petroleum, Finance and Banking

Joint degrees (e.g. Birmingham- Amirkabir University of Technology)

Joint projects ( e.g. Cambridge and Sharif University)

Research visit of PhD students (e.g. UCL- Tehran University of Medical science)

## UK-Iran exchanges: Bucking EU trends

Positive view of Iranian third level institutions

Personal initiative and through people-to-people relations

Italy, Germany more agreements on STEM, whilst Poland, Denmark and France, humanities

Public institutions and national governments most important source of funding

## EU-Iran exchanges: Prospect and constraints

Political difficulty in dealing with Iran, particularly due to the nuclear negotiations (wait-and-see)

4 blockages: knowledge of funds, skills in bidding, institutional links, logistics

Recruitment: problem, as in many cases discouraged travel

No regulatory authorization

Funding issues

- scepticism with big schemes (such as Erasmus), more comfortable with Summer schools, workshops...
- issue of sanctions

## **Upcoming initiatives and engagement**

Global Education Dialogue participation

Researcher workshops with early career researchers

British Council / EIRG partnership on EU-Iran Higher Education cooperation and coordination

Steps towards formal cooperation and needs analysis

# Thank you

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