

Education UK exhibition

Sofia, Bulgaria, 3 November 2013

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1. Event fact file

Sofia

Venue	The Sheraton Sofia Hotel Balkan , Sofia, 3 November 2013
Opening hours	1100-1800
Stand costs	Exhibitor costs: £ 735.00 plus VAT (£ 882.00 inc VAT)
Unique feature to give added value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to use the events venue at the British Council office free of charge for 1 event/presentation (live or via video conferencing) within 1 year of the exhibition. Please note that the organiser would be responsible for the promotion of the event. • Opportunity to display any leftover materials at the British Council office throughout the year (in a dedicated Education UK reference section) • Free assistance at the exhibition stand by local English speaking students was arranged by British Council for institutions that have requested it. • NEW! All presentations (by exhibitors, guest speakers and/or British Council experts) took place on the day before the exhibition and were broadcast online – they were live streamed from the British Council office so that people from the whole country are able to watch them. Recordings of all presentations will remain available on British Council Bulgaria’s digital channels after the event. Currently, presentations which can be viewed on http://new.livestream.com/BritishCouncilBulgaria/education-uk-1-november http://new.livestream.com/BritishCouncilBulgaria/education-uk-2-november • NEW! Within one year of the exhibition we offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Opportunity to display promotional materials about science programmes offered by UK exhibitors at the Sofia Science Festival which British Council organises in May every year and is attended by app. 7000 visitors (8-11 May 2014) ➢ Opportunity to display promotional materials of UK exhibitors at the European Day of Languages, an open-air celebration with an audience of approximately 3,000 visitors (28 September 2013)
Seminars	Instead of a seminar programme running during the exhibition day we have live streamed presentations online (please see section above).

2. Key statistics

Attendance	Sofia	
	2012	2013
Total number of visitors	1,200	1,100
Independent schools & colleges	0	3
Higher Education	16	28
UCAS	no	1
Visa	n/a	n/a
British Council	1	1
IELTS	no	1
Total number of exhibitors	17	35*

*A full list of exhibitors can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

Visitors' primary market objectives	Sofia	
	2012	2013
Undergraduate	45%	48%
Postgraduate	37%	32%
University foundation	11%	3%
Diploma	9%	8%
Distance learning	6%	8%

Demographics of visitors	Sofia	
	2012	2013
Male	1,200	1,100
Female	0	3



3. Impact of marketing plan

Given the extremely competitive environment in Bulgaria the 2013 communications campaign for the Education UK exhibition was focused on highly targeted marketing activities, which were all aimed at reaching very high quality candidates. The campaign included a combination of the following channels:

- **Smart outdoor advertising:** branded bus stops at key locations (meeting spots) and billboards in the busiest underground station (where the metro lines connect)
- **Targeted promotion in schools:** exhibition posters in 60 of the best secondary schools in Sofia
- **Large-scale social media campaign:** a very targeted campaign on Facebook reaching over 350k people living in Sofia (about 45 per cent of the whole Facebook population of Sofia)
- **Innovative Google remarketing campaign:** using the Google AdWords network to target people who have been identified as most likely to be interested in British Council related activities
- **Display ads (web banners) on a local email provider website:** a local free web-based email provider (abv.bg) which, according to exhibition registration data from previous years, is used by half of the exhibition visitors
- **Display ads (web banners) on the biggest events directory website:** the website (programata.bg) which young people visit when planning their time out (going to cinema, theatre, concerts, etc.)
- **Display ads (web banners) on media partner websites:** media partnership with the only magazine in Bulgaria specialising in international education (the Study Abroad magazine)
- **E-mail marketing:** two special issues of the British Council monthly newsletter that was sent to 2x9000+ contacts.
- **Exhibition website:** 11,000 visitors (9,000 unique) during the campaign
- **Press:** a press release sent to all media

Based on the visitors' questionnaires submitted during the event and from the online registration form, the top 5 ways visitors have found out about the exhibition are (in order of popularity): (1) Internet (2) Recommendation from a friend (3) Facebook (4) BC website and newsletters (5) Billboards and posters.

Handouts on IELTS and the UK Education system were also made available at the front of the exhibition hall which was branded with GREAT campaign banners.

The biggest success of the 2013 digital activities was the online streaming of university presentations which were broadcast live on the day before the exhibition. As a result the presentations were watched by people from across the whole country (not only those living in Sofia) and also by much more people than a regular presentation hall would be able to accommodate:

- University presentations were watched by 200 people on average, with some of them reaching more than 350 viewers
- More than 1000 viewers of the UCAS presentation alone

[A full media plan can be found in Appendix 4](#)



4. Conclusions and follow up

4.1 Key recommendations for institutions

- As stated on our website, the target audience for this exhibition was predominantly postgraduate and undergraduate level, and although we received good quality and numbers from potential undergraduate and postgraduate applicants, we received little interest for foundation/A level studies. We received feedback from all 3 independent schools that attended (of which one was with their local agent at the stand), and the 2 schools that did not have an agent at the stand felt they did not receive a good number of visitors. This was always going to be a concern and a calculated risk on their part, therefore with our future exhibitions we will advise against accepting independent schools/boarding schools to avoid any undue disappointment.
- We would like to remind exhibitors that arranging their freight is their own responsibility as stated in the exhibition handbook. The handbook contains clear instructions as well as the contact details of the member of staff at the hotel who received incoming freight and who can be contacted about this exhibition.

4.2 Key recommendations for the British Council

- Based on exhibitors' feedback we are considering changing opening times - 11.00-17.00 (instead of 11.00-18.00) to concentrate visitors during earlier hours
- We are also considering having the exhibition on a Saturday (again in November) rather than a Sunday – exact date to be announced by the end of the year
- The marketing campaign was focused on better targeting of prospective students while maintaining the number of visitors from the previous year. However we do acknowledge that with the increase of exhibitors (from 16 in 2012 to 33 in 2013) we need more of those well targeted visitors so that there is maximum efficiency of your time during the exhibition. We have started planning the next campaign accordingly.
- The live streaming of presentations was very successful and we will definitely have it next year again
- We plan to optimise networking with agents – we are considering having an one-hour cocktail-type networking event rather than spending half a day at the British Council office (details to be announced by the end of the year)
- Even though the Sheraton hotel in Sofia is a five-star hotel, there are a couple of comments that rooms were not properly cleaned. We have passed on the feedback to the hotel and they replied that the standard service which is always provided at the Sheraton hotel in Sofia is a morning clean-up and an evening turn-down service. The hotel pointed out that that the only case in which a room is not cleaned in the morning is when there is a 'do not disturb' sign.
- A few exhibitors pointed out that it would be very helpful if they could capture visitor details via the visitor registration system. It is planned that the SIEM Exhibitions team will be launching a new visitor registration system for all SIEM exhibitions globally in April 2014 which will improve the overall exhibitor experience.

Appendix 1: List of participating institutions

1	Adcote School For Girls
2	Brooke House College
3	Brunel University, London
4	BPP University
5	Canterbury Christ Church University
6	Cardiff University (including Cardiff Business School)
7	City University London
8	Glasgow Caledonian University
9	Liverpool Hope University
10	London Metropolitan University
11	London South Bank University
12	Northumbria University
13	Nottingham Law School
14	Queen Mary University of London
15	Stover School
16	Swansea University
17	The University of Manchester
18	The University of Sheffield International Faculty, CITY College
19	UCAS
20	University College Birmingham
21	University of Bedfordshire
22	University of Bolton
23	University of Bradford
24	University of Central Lancashire (UCLan)
25	University of East Anglia and INTO UEA
26	University of Essex
27	University of Greenwich (London)
28	University of Kent
29	University of Surrey
30	University of the West of England, Bristol
31	WMG, University of Warwick
32	York St John University

Appendix 2: Visitors' survey results

Data extracted from 238 visitor questionnaires.

	I definitely agree	I agree	Neither agree nor disagree	I don't agree	I disagree
1. The exhibition met my expectations	42%	44%	12%	1%	1%
2. Overall, this was a high quality exhibition	43%	44%	11%	2%	0%
3. The British Council is among the leading organisations in its field	49%	36%	13%	1%	0%
4. Please comment on how well we did or did not meet your expectations and the quality of service you received.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very high level. My questions were answered fully • Excellent organisation • Very good organisation, excellent helps during registration and with finding the right universities, great list of exhibitors • Very well organized, excellent level, representatives of universities gave complete information 				
5. If you could change anything about this exhibition, what would it be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include representatives of Oxbridge • The day of the event • More universities 				

	Yes	No
6. Did the exhibition help you make a decision to apply in a UK university	90%	10%



	Billboard in the metro station	Billboard on a bus stop	Poster	BC newsletter	Email from UCAS
7. How did you find out about the exhibition?	8%	4%	5%	7%	5%

Abv.bg	Facebook	Google	BC website	Ad on another website
3%	16%	5%	11%	2%

Friend / relative	programata.bg	other media	other
28%	1%	2%	3%

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8. To what extent is it likely to recommend BC to a friend or a colleague? (0= Probably will not recommend; 10= Probably will recommend)	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	4%	6%	14%	22%	15%	35%

Appendix 3: Exhibitors' survey results

Data extracted from 31 Higher education institutions feedback forms

	Yes	No
1. Has your institution attended this exhibition before?	52%	45%

	Recruitment	Profile raising	Both
2. What were your objectives for coming?	29%	16%	71%

3. What is your primary market interest in this event?	
Undergraduate	90%
Postgraduate research	23%
Pre-university foundation courses	10%
Post-16 A-levels	0%
Postgraduate taught	55%
Higher national diploma & equivalent	3%
Foundation	10%
Pre-sessional English	10%



	Good number & quality	Good quality only	Good number only	Disappointing	Not sure
4. What is your assessment of the visitors?	48%	39%	0%	3%	3%

5. What market trends have you noticed at the exhibition?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide variety of subject areas – was expecting more business and engineering • Increase in PG research • More UG than PG, but strong and interested students
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	Yes	No	Not Sure
6. Have you developed new links or built on existing feeder or agent relationships by coming?	84%	19%	3%

	Excellent	Good	Average	Bad	Very bad
7. Please give your overall assessment of the exhibition	19%	58%	16%	3%	0%

	Excellent	Good	Average	Bad	Very bad
8. How do you rate the support to your business needs from British Council?	74%	16%	6%	0%	0%



9. Please rate the following: (1=very bad; 5=excellent):	5 - Excellent	4 - Good	3 - Average	2 - Bad	1 - Very bad	N/A
Level of BC support before the exhibition	87%	6%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Level of BC support during the exhibition	74%	19%	3%	0%	0%	0%
Quality of venue	48%	32%	13%	3%	0%	0%
Quality of accommodation at Sheraton Hotel	23%	35%	16%	0%	6%	16%
Length of exhibition	32%	39%	19%	6%	0%	0%
Value for money	26%	35%	23%	3%	.	10%
Networking opportunities on 2 November	13%	23%	23%	10%	0%	32%
Live-streaming of presentations instead of a seminar programme during the exhibition day	42%	16%	10%	0%	0%	29%

9. Additional comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea of the live streaming was brilliant; I hope other BC offices do the same. • Couldn't be better • Diana was particularly helpful. Thank you! • The pre-event information has been 1st class – better than any other BC events (across the world) • The Bulgarian BC is excellent. Very informative with lots of information provision in timely manner
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<p>10. Please give your assessment of the exhibition in terms of innovation, promotion of Education UK brand, presentation and overall impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent innovation with the live-streaming • Excellent setup, great support, professionalism. • Well organised, well set out, seemed well marketed. • [Promotion – very good • Market research – good, very helpful • Live-streaming – excellent idea and very efficient] • Overall an excellent exhibition • Great! I think the live-streaming and the use of social media were brilliant ideas • Excellent! • BC has new ideas each year which is excellent and I believe the event was marketed in the right places • A decent event with a fairly steady stream of visitors. Never seemed particularly busy though. Will come again • Good, but would like to see more visitors • Good exhibition. Staff at BC were very helpful; knowledgeable and thorough. Thank you for your help
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<p>11. What recommendations to the British Council would you give on this event?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe try earlier in the year and on Saturday instead. This was my 3rd visit and it seemed quieter. I could spend more quality time with people but it felt quiet. • Presentation streaming was good. Shorter networking period perhaps and maybe length of the exhibition could be one hour shorter. • Capture and share student details for easy following • Need to try and assess what happened to the visitors this year, e.g. because of the protests or if the Friday education holiday did affect the exhibition – hold it on a different date next year.
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	Same as this year	Earlier than this year	Later than this year	N/A
<p>12. What would be your preferred date for this event next year?</p>	71%	16%	0%	10%



13. Additional comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before the 15th October deadline for early UCAS applications as I am told some schools encourage students to apply early.• Mid- October• Early October• Earlier – probably in November, after all agents fairs, students have already been to a fair + some have already applied/ decided• Before agents' fairs
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14. Additional comments and suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thank you once again to everyone especially Diana and Lyubov for all your hard work. Thanks to all in the office! It was very well organised as always + lunchboxes were a brilliant idea! See you again soon!• Well-organised, good communication, helpful staff – well done! Hopefully more visitors next year!• Good quality of students, well-informed, asking the right questions. Surprised by the increased interest in PG courses, both taught and research.• All around a great event• Great work by the whole BC team. I am very happy with the experience and hope we can come again next year.• This was the first time attending this fair and due to the excellent value for money, I would attend again• Even though the exhibition this year was disappointing, I do believe that this could be due to extended factors as I believe the BC worked hard in terms of marketing and promotion. The areas that promotion and advertising took place seemed well thought through and innovative.• The Bulgarian British Council remains the most supportive of all BC-s I have worked with. Very organised, good information provision before and during the event.• Always creative in new ideas each year, e.g. in year 2 introduced networking day; in year 3 introduced live presentations (with lasting effect in being kept online).• I think Diana and the team at BC Bulgaria are doing a great job, always friendly and seem conscientious in their work! Gold star*• Thank you for providing an assistant - Yoana Georgieva was excellent - very hard working and supportive.• Event was too long
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Data extracted from 3 Independent schools and colleges

	Yes	No
1. Have you attended this exhibition before?	0%	100%

	Recruitment	Profile raising	Both
2. Your objectives for coming?	33%	33%	100%

	Post-16 A level	Postgraduate taught	Higher national diploma and equivalent	Foundation
3. Your primary market interest in this event?	100%	0%	0%	33%

	Good number & quality	Good quality only	Good number only	Disappointing	Not sure
4. Assessment of the visitors?	1	0	0	2	0
	33%	0%	0%	67%	0%
	33%	0%	0%	67%	0%

	Yes	No	Not Sure
6. Have you developed new links or built on existing feeder or agent relationships by coming?	100%	0%	0%



	Excellent	Good	Average	Bad	Very bad
7. Your overall assessment of the exhibition?	0%	67%	0%	33%	0%

	Excellent	Good	Average	Bad	Very bad
8. How do you rate the support to your business needs from BC?	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%

9. Please rate the following: 1 - very bad & 5 - excellent:	5 - Excellent	4 - Good	3 - Average	2 - Bad	1 - Very bad	N/A
Level of BC support before the exhibition	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Level of BC support during the exhibition	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Quality of venue	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Quality of accommodation at Sheraton Hotel	33%	33%	33%	0%	0%	0%
Length of exhibition	0%	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%
Value for money	0%	67%	0%	33%	0%	0%
Networking opportunities on 2 November	0%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Live-streaming of presentations instead of seminar programme during the exhibition day	0%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%

10. Please give your assessment of the exhibition in terms of innovation, promotion of Education UK brand, presentation and overall impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Totally focused in university • Good but mainly for universities • Good
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11. What recommendations to the British Council would you give on this event?

- To promote all pathways/ private colleagues/ boarding schools. Informative presentations would be useful.
- Promote boarding schools more

	Same as this year	Earlier than this year	Later than this year	N/A
12. What would be your preferred date for this event next year?	67%	0%	0%	0%

13. Additional comments and suggestions

- Currently of limited value to UK boarding schools
- Thank you for everything

Appendix 4: Advertising and promotion plan (media plan)

Education UK exhibition in Sofia - 3 November 2013

Marketing and Communications Plan

	Activity		Media/ Marketing Channel/ Company	Schedule					
	Type	Details		w/c 23 Sept	w/c 30 Sept	w/c 7 Oct	w/c 14 Oct	w/c 21 Oct	w/c 28 Oct
1	ONLINE	event registration website live	event website	V	V	V	V	V	V
2	ONLINE	online registration system open	BC registration system	V	V	V	V	V	V
3	OUTDOOR	Ads on central bus stops (bus shelters)	JCDecaux					V	V
4	OUTDOOR	Targeted distribution of posters in high schols	BG Plakat				V	V	
5	OUTDOOR	Ads on central tube stations	Metroreklama					V	V
6	ONLINE	Display ads (web banners) - local event directory website (programata.bg)	Programata				V	V	V
7	ONLINE	Display ads (web banners) - local email provider website (abv.bg)						V	V
8	ONLINE	Facebook social ads	Facebook	V	V	V	V	V	V
9	ONLINE	Facebook organic posts campaign	Facebook			V	V	V	V
10	ONLINE	Facebook promoted posts	Facebook	V	V	V	V	V	V
11	ONLINE	Google ads / Google remarketing campaign	Google		V	V	V	V	
12	ONLINE	Blog posts on the BC Bulgaria blog	blog			V	V	V	V
13	DIRECT MAILING	BC monthly newsletter (BC mailing list - 9000+ contacts)	Newsletter				V		
14	DIRECT MAILING	Special newsletter (BC mailing list - 9000+ contacts)	Newsletter						V
15	DIRECT MAILING	BC teacher contacts	Email				V	V	
16	MEDIA	Press release sent to the media	Press						V
17	PRINT	Study Abroad Magazine ad (media partnership)	Study Abroad Magazine				V	V	V
18	ONLINE	Display ads (web banners) - Study Abroad Magazine website	Study Abroad Magazine					V	V