



BRITISH UNIVERSITIES' INTERNATIONAL LIAISON ASSOCIATION

BUILA Pakistan RIG

Updates from Bangladesh, Nepal
& Sri Lanka

In partnership with the
British Council



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Market sentiments towards the UK in the Pakistani market
May 2020
Khawar Abbas, Head of IES Pakistan

<https://education-services.britishcouncil.org>

Agenda

- **Covid 19 update – key Government decisions, examinations and more**
- Coverage of the UK and international students in the Pakistani media
- What are Pakistani students thinking - findings from student perception survey
- Key questions from agents and counsellors
- Communication – how should you engage in the market?
- Covid19 response from the British Council in Pakistan
- Q&A

Covid19 in Pakistan – quick update

- Lockdown extended till 9 May – smart lockdown instead of complete lockdown
- Restrictions imposed on public gatherings, assemblies and educational institutes
- Groceries and pharmacies are opened for limited hours a day
- Intra and inter city movement heavily monitored.
- Government has decided to extend visa of foreigners stranded in Pakistan for 02 months



Covid19 in Pakistan – quick update cont.

- All educational institutes to remain closed till end of May
- Most schools have adjusted lockdown with summer vacations
- Primary and Lower Secondary school exams are cancelled and students will be promoted to higher classes
- Currently many schools and colleges have started classes online to varying degrees of success – Teleschool
- CAIE May/June exams have been cancelled – evidence based marking
- Local board exams postponed till June/July so far with a view to be cancelled if lockdown persists



Covid19 in Pakistan – quick update cont.

- Higher Education Commission (HEC) issued policy guidelines issued to all universities.
<https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/Pages/Covid-19-Guidance.aspx>
- Open Distance Learning (ODL) policy is being designed and all universities have been asked to initiate online classes or abandon current semesters. Universities using LMS and other tools for distance learning - online Academic Councils and criteria to be met for readiness
- QAA UK and British Council are supporting HEC to revise quality codes and standards. Revision will include standards around online and distance learning education, which are currently missing
- HEC also floated a call for Rapid Research Grant specific to Covid-19 in March for research grants up to \$100,000
- Challenge around delivery of online education with limited capacity of faculty members especially in remote areas.

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“Students stranded in UK amid pandemic”

Date: 29 April 2020

Media: Geo News

“Thousands of international students from different countries are stranded in universities across the United Kingdom. Amongst them, there are Pakistani nationals as well, who are willing to go back but can’t due to either ticket prices or the cancellation of flight operations.”

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Thousands of international students stranded in UK amid pandemic



Photo: File

LONDON; Thousands of international students from different countries are stranded in universities across the United Kingdom. Amongst them, there are Pakistani nationals as well, who are willing to go back but can’t due to either ticket prices or the cancellation of flight operations.

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“Pakistani students being forced to pay for housing despite moving out”

Date: April 2020

Media: The News - Pakistan

"Most of my flatmates had already left by that time. I was a bit shocked when my accommodation management told me that I cannot opt out of the contract and will still have to pay for the remaining months even though I will not be living there anymore. What shocked me more was that they kind of treated this global crisis as if everything was normal," he added, expressing disbelief. "My university said that they are not able to do much as the accommodation is run by a third party."

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Pakistani students to take legal action for being forced to pay for housing despite moving out



Unsplash/Jesus Rodriguez/via The News

LONDON: International students, including those from Pakistan, who have returned to their home countries owing to coronavirus lockdown in the UK are pondering initiating legal action over contracts forcing them to pay for their accommodation.

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“UK to provide funds to Pakistan”

Date: 18 April 2020

Media: ARY News

“British High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr Christian Turner CMG said current were extraordinary times as millions of people were affected by COVID-19 across the world. He, however, said he was confident in Pakistan’s resilience and capability to defeat the pandemic.”

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COVID-19: UK to provide £2.67 mn to Pakistan, announces British HC

Web Desk — On Apr 18, 2020



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan Christian Turner on Saturday said that the United Kingdom (UK) would provide pound sterling (£)2.67 million to Pakistan to tackle COVID-19 pandemic, ARY NEWS reported.

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UK and international students in Pakistani media - summary

Local media mainly focused on:

- Plight of Pakistani students stranded in the UK
- Lackluster response from Pakistan government towards those stranded in UK and other countries
- No such coverage on prospective Pakistani students meant to travel to UK
- Coverage on Pakistan students getting evicted in the UK due to lack of money

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Headlines from the student survey



Headlines from the student survey cont.

Q: When you think about the idea of studying overseas, how concerned are you about the following issues?

China
India
Pakistan



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Key Concerns from Prospective Students

- Students keen to study abroad but most school students are more concerned about their GCE results and will wait till June to make decisions
- Student appetite towards online classes is very low.
- Students have a lot of questions and need clarity around dates, Sep/Jan intake, impact of CIE exams on intakes, refunds etc.
- More information and details needed around GIR
- Students and counsellors have asked for webinars with UK Universities and UCAS for clarity amid the current situation.



Questions from agents

ADMISSIONS:

- Will admission dates be extended (and not cancelled)? How flexible will UK HEIs be?
- If September cycle is running, would the classes be online only? If yes, then what about the fees, will there be any reduction?

ENGLISH TEST

- UK HEIs preferred English Language assessment, in case IELTS exams do not happen in near future. IELTS Indicator? What if classes are online? Alternatives?

FINANCE:

- Is there a clear policy on refunds of deposits in case the COVID situation does not improve or if the student does not wish to/ allowed to travel to the UK for safety issues?
- Relaxation in fee amid covid-19 and financial situation?



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Communication with students

Current – students are anxious and unsure about their higher education

- Regular updates to students, engage through live online interactions, communicate and be present - Constantly clarify doubts, answer questions and reassure
- Refrain from overselling the online/distance learning – the local response has not been too encouraging

Situation improves – students are thinking about going abroad

- Online promotion with relevant messaging
- Focus on employability, health and well being, positive government policies, GIR, scholarships and opportunities in the UK



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How can the British Council help?

- British Council can facilitate counselling and briefing sessions for students by UK HEIs, IELTS, UKVI etc.
- Webinar series for agents and counsellors in partnership with BUILA
- Supporting UK HEIs in carrying out customised surveys/research/studies
- Focus group discussions with prospective students from Pakistan to understand student perceptions and concerns
- Virtual roundtables and recruitment platforms

Contact Khawar.Abbas@britishcouncil.org.pk for any queries.



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Questions

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