

Higher Education  
for Employability  
Policy Forum Report

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# The role of English in higher education and its impact on graduate employability

Tashkent, 16-17 October 2019

# English in higher and its impact e employabilit



**“It was a good conference and I think that it served to spread a fuller understanding of the practical issues involved in introducing EMI in a way which I hope will be helpful to colleagues across the region.”**

**Andrew Linn,  
United Kingdom**

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## Introduction

For the first time in Tashkent, the British Council brought together 120 policy makers, researchers, academics, practitioners, and students from eight countries to discuss the important topic of the role of English in higher education and its impact on graduate employability.

This is the first of three annual policy forums we plan to host under our regional programme Higher Education for Employability. Over the two days, we were encouraged by how much countries share in common, the quality of the debate, the valuable and important discussions, the rigour of the academic references, and the engagement delegates had with each other.

We increased our shared knowledge of the variety of definitions of EMI, different models, and concerns over implementation. We had an honest and open dialogue to tackle all critical issues, from aligning systems and policies to improving institutional support and introducing better integration, and enhancing the proficiency of content teachers as well as recognising the role of assessment in the process.

Moving forward, we want to consolidate our learning, our ideas, and our innovations to make a change. Here we have summarised the key challenges and opportunities we came up together, and more importantly, the specific actions for the community of practice we formed. Delegates will continue the individual and professional connections between one and another as well as the broader network we have set up.

We are already on this fast-moving train but together we can make this journey smoother and more enjoyable. I look forward to seeing you all in next year's forum in Turkey where we will be exploring the area of quality assurance in teaching and aligning the curriculum to the labour market.

Summer Xia  
Programme Director



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## Key forum outcomes

Through workshops and discussions, participants identified a set of challenges related to the provision of English at universities. These are summarised below:

### Challenges identified

- Lack of national policy to support reform; continuous changes in policies not allowing current EMI models to make an impact
- Need for an impact analysis of current EMI approaches to identify strengths and areas for improvement
- The understanding of the EMI pedagogy which is open to a variety of interpretations
- Need for cooperation between universities and industries
- Lack of quality in the provision of English - limited levels of students' proficiency in English, Academics' lack of knowledge to develop language-appropriate curriculum and pedagogy, mismatch between students' language levels and language used in teaching; opportunities for developing language capacity of subject specialists (Level B2 and above);
- Tensions in the use of an EMI approach within countries and within institutions
- Lack of effective models of EMI implementation with a potential for replication in different contexts but taking into consideration the complexities and constraints of local settings.
- Minimum synergies operating between English language instructors and subject specialists to negotiate sustainable approaches to implement EMI beyond the model of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP).
- The use of EMI and the issue of 'domain' in relation to the transmission of specialised knowledge in the national language/s.





**“The experience of other countries on the EMI program was very useful. I learnt some new aspects in assessment and their role in EMI implementation.”**

**Svitlana Karpova,  
Ukraine**



**“I had plenty of opportunities to communicate with different practitioners and policymakers about all interesting aspects of English as a communication tool and its impact on students’ employability.”**

**Oleksandr Petrash,  
Ukraine**

## Forum recommendations

The following recommendations provide a summary of the forum delegates' responses to the challenges:

Development and implementation of national EMI policies - careful planning to avoid unrealistic expectations required.

Planification of EMI approaches based on local needs.

Reviewing curricula to identify whether and how EMI can be implemented successfully to improve the quality of provision – create more coherent contextually-appropriate quality assurance processes.

Increasing collaboration with industry.

Maintaining the network to share information, showcase best practice and build future collaborations.

Undertaking research on EMI pedagogy and current practices in order to understand how and to what extent these are aligned to country policies or otherwise.



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## Next steps

The British Council is committed to working with partners in the region to help implement the outlined recommendations wherever possible.

In the short term, the British Council will focus on building on existing partnerships to drive forward the following activities:

### 1. Dissemination of the conference

- Share conference report to all key stakeholders and forum participants
- Share slides and recordings of conference sessions

### 2. Action planning

- Engage with relevant individuals and organisations in programme countries to follow up on the conversations and action plans within countries' contexts
- Help to identify the country's needs related to the provision of English and EMI by collecting the evidence through the research
- Identify examples of good practice in EMI in the region and replicate models taking into account local needs.
- Link country stakeholders to the relevant UK expertise and help them to come up with interventions
- Form UK delegates think tank on EMI

### 3. Community of practice

- Share information on joining the online platform suggested by Dr Nicola Galloway
- Regional coordinator of the network to be identified in November
- Support the engagement of community of practice through regular webinars



- **4. Develop British Council EMI position paper in Higher Education**
  - A roundtable with UK university representatives to take place in London in November
  - Contribution to this paper to be coordinated by Roy Cross and Ann Veitch from the British Council in the UK
- **5. Next regional forum** focused on 'Quality assurance in teaching and aligning graduate outcomes to the labour market' to be held in Turkey 2020

## Downloads



**Forum programme**



**Forum video**



**Participants' interviews**



**Session videos**



**Presentations**



**“It was very positive to see colleagues engaged in networking and in fruitful discussions, which we will continue in London. I am very much excited to know where ‘the train that left the station’ takes us next.”**

**Mario Moya,  
United Kingdom**

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## Background

In 2019-2020, the British Council launched a new regional programme on Higher Education (HE) for Employability in the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan), Ukraine, and Turkey. The three-year programme focuses on three strands:

- English in higher education
- Quality in teaching
- Aligning graduate outcomes to the labour market

Across the region and the world, there are successful examples of programmes being delivered through the medium of English (English Medium Instruction, or EMI) to attract international students, broaden possibilities for research collaboration, and increase graduate employability in a very competitive global market.

There are a number of initiatives in the Higher Education (HE) sector in the region focusing on the quality of English language provision, both in EMI and non-EMI programmes. These include work in Ukraine concerning the development and the implementation of a national policy for English in Higher Education, work to embed EMI nationwide in Uzbekistan, and ongoing work to develop quality in English teaching in universities in Turkey. Similarly, countries in the South Caucasus are looking at developing their own national approaches to English in Higher Education.

In most of these countries, the British Council has a long history of developing impactful and sustainable partnerships with Ministries of Education and other important stakeholders to support education reforms in public, vocational and Higher Education.

The new regional HE for Employability programme builds on previous work and responds to new ambitions following new education strategies announced by most countries such as increasing competitiveness of higher education institutions, increasing research capacity, collecting and analysing data to produce clear, contextually-appropriate recommendations on how stakeholders in these contexts can approach education transformation and reform programmes in a coherent and holistic ways.

