



ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

2024 - 2025

Chair's Foreword

2024-25 saw a year of global unrest, a UK Government striving to decrease net migration through various policy changes and an unprecedented pressure on the financial circumstances of UK universities. Against this backdrop BUILA's mission has remained steadfast to advocate for, connect with, and empower the UK's HE international recruitment community.

Our focus this year has been to support our members in sustainable and ethical international recruitment with three key projects focussing on quality and best practice. We embedded the vital Agent Quality Framework with support from our education sector colleagues, and commissioned an English Language Testing guide to support our members and government understanding. We also held roundtables across the Home Nations to author a 'Global Talent Local Impact Report' highlighting the work universities do in collaboration with their local communities to drive regional growth while supporting international students.

As we move forward, these Frameworks, Guides, and Reports will provide evidence to stakeholders of the value of international students and act as a repository for all members as they continue to implement best practice. BUILA will continue to bring members together to share insight, shape policy, and champion ethical practice.

By working together, BUILA, sector partners, our university members, local government, service providers and communities can ensure that international students continue to succeed in their academic endeavours, feel welcomed, and remain an important contributor to helping our regions to grow, innovate, and thrive.



Andrew Bird,
BUILA Chair



"The Department of Business and Trade is delighted to have an ongoing strong and positive relationship with BUILA. We look forward to continuing to work together on delivery of the International Education Strategy".

Sarah Chidgey
Head of International Education
Department for Business & Trade



"Collaboration is key to the success of the UK sector. We've continued to work closely with BUILA and its members to ensure that the international student experience is considered carefully in the implementation of the Agent Quality Framework, as well as sharing insights from UKCISA's Immigration Compliance Network to support good practice."

Anne Marie Graham
Chief Executive, UKCISA

Strategic Priorities & Achievements

Lobbying & Influencing

During the year, BUILA's lobbying activity focused on influencing Government thinking around the Graduate Route, key elements of the Immigration White Paper and the impact of the International Student Levy.

Through our submissions to the Education Select Committee, correspondence to key politicians, and responses to consultations with the Department for Education and Home Office, BUILA ensured members' experiences and insights influenced policy outcomes.

The BUILA Team continued to meet regularly with UKVI during the peak recruitment periods to highlight issues and barriers, identify trends and work through solutions.

Highlights included:

- Submission of evidence and data sets to the Education Select Committee, Home Office and DfE consultations on the Immigration White Paper.
- Close collaboration with the APPG for International Students around how universities collaborate with communities to support international students and drive regional growth.
- Leadership in cross-sector coordination on Graduate Route protection
- Work with the Home Office around their survey on English Language Testing.

Looking Ahead:

- BUILA will seek to influence government policy through evidence-led lobbying, especially around delivery against areas such as the BCA metrics from the Immigration White Paper, and Student Levy consultation.
- Lobby for more data sharing between the Home Office and the sector.
- Develop enhanced international recruitment data and benchmarking tools to support and inform both government and our members.

"UUKi has really valued our collaboration with BUILA over the last year, particularly in the further development and implementation of the Agent Quality Framework. We look forward to continuing to work together on this, and many other initiatives, to support a sector-led approach to quality and responsible, sustainable international student recruitment."

Charley Robinson
Head of Global Mobility
Universities UK International



"UKVI remains committed to maintaining partnerships with education representative organisations, such as BUILA. The collaboration throughout 2024/25 highlighted the vital role of ongoing communication to support institutions bringing genuine students to the UK. We look forward to continuing this effort into 2025/26 and beyond."

Jack Rose
G7 Study Service Manager
UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)



Driving Ethical & High-Quality International Recruitment

Agent Quality Framework (AQF)

The AQF entered a new phase of delivery and adoption in 2024–2025, with BUILA facilitating discussions with government and representative bodies regarding its inclusion in the sponsor guidance and the tools needed to support this.

Key achievements:

- All BUILA members who work with international student recruitment agents have signed up to the AQF commitment
- The AQF steering group was expanded to include representational bodies from all parts of the International Education sector
- The development of monitoring and evaluation tools to embed continuous improvement continued.
- A highly effective HE AQF practitioners' group was established to exchange best practice, **435 university staff attended the first two sessions**
- BUILA also worked closely with the British Council to deliver 60 virtual and in person agent and counsellors events to raise awareness of the AQF to **over 7500 agents**.

Next steps include the creation of mechanisms to monitor progress and the impact of the AQF right across the education sector and continued support of sponsors around implications of relevant legislation.

[Link to Global Talent Local Impact report: https://www.buila.ac.uk/activities/international-students-driving-regional-growth-and-innovation-new-report-highlights-impact-across-the-uk](https://www.buila.ac.uk/activities/international-students-driving-regional-growth-and-innovation-new-report-highlights-impact-across-the-uk)

The logo features the number '7500' in a stylized font with a '+' sign. The digits are composed of overlapping circles in shades of blue, purple, and gold.

Education Agents attended AQF briefing events

Global Talent Local Impact

The Government's Immigration White Paper set out new expectations for institutions to illustrate consideration of local impact when recruiting international students. To address this, and to build on the APPG for International Students' report on regional impact, BUILA convened a series of regional roundtables, bringing together voices from higher education, housing, health, business, and local government.

Our goal was to identify the partnerships already making an impact and to bring them together in one place, both to showcase their success to the Government as it shapes policy and to enable our members to learn from each other.

The findings from our report demonstrate that the management of provision in housing or healthcare is a shared challenge that affects all students, domestic and international. The more we can work together on a strategic basis, the stronger our local communities will be. The report includes a wealth of examples of achievements and innovation highlighting the huge value international students bring to the communities they study in.

The logo features the number '435' in a stylized font. The digits are composed of overlapping circles in shades of blue, purple, and gold.

University staff attended the first two sessions of the AQF Practitioners Group

English Language Discretionary Testing

In partnership with the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP), BUILA held focus groups to support a research project aimed at identifying and sharing best practice in English Language Testing to support our members and governmental understanding. The output will be used in a guide and a series of best practice workshops to be launched and delivered in 2026.

BUILA continued to strengthen mechanisms for collecting a balanced, representational set of recruitment data for members and for Government. During 2026, BUILA plans to strengthen this evidence base by developing with partners a tool for tracking recruitment trends, application conversion rates, and agent performance indicators.



BALEAP-BUILA English Language Good Practice Guide:

Testing, Qualifications and English
for Academic Purposes



Supported by:



“BALEAP is delighted to be partnering with BUILA on this jointly funded project to enhance quality across the sector. The Good Practice Guide and planned workshops represent an exciting opportunity to surface good practice and governance in English for Academic Purposes assessment, learning and teaching for a wide audience beyond our own field. Through this collaboration, we aim to enhance understanding of the positive impact of English for Academic Purposes and to provide case studies and evidence to use as necessary to influence future Home Office policy considerations in this area. ”

Hannah Jones

Director of English Language Education at the Centre for Open Learning
Chair of BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes)



Services to Members

Professional Development

The year saw a consolidation of BUILA's training and mentoring services to equip members with the skills to navigate ever-evolving recruitment and compliance challenges. Our revamp of the '102: Experienced Professionals' included a well-received practical workshop, where attendees learned skills in approaching change, building resilience and instilling confidence in others.

New programmes are being worked on for 2026 to ensure members continue to benefit from specialised training opportunities.

- BUILA ran 7 tailored training programmes, with 225 attendees,
- Expanded the mentoring network connecting senior and emerging professionals.
- Extended speaking opportunities for experienced members to share advice and best practice with newer international staff

Looking Ahead:

BUILA will introduce a new two-year training cycle to rotate workshops and allow for the introduction of new sessions, including a session for regionally based staff & workshops on new technologies.

7 tailored training programmes with

225
attendees

90%
rated sessions as
Excellent or Good



"A highly experienced group of speakers, representing a wide range of institutions and roles, who built brilliantly on each other's insights."

Member feedback, November 2025



"Extremely valuable content - great range of speakers, sessions, breakout, Q&A etc - thank you!"

Member feedback, March 2025



"The Workshop had a great structure to it with knowledgeable, experienced, speakers"

Member feedback, November 2025

Conferences & Forums

We were delighted to welcome the Right Honourable Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister of State for Education, to our milestone 20th Annual Conference, themed “Time to Collaborate and Consolidate”.

Baroness Smith reaffirmed the Government’s support for international students and universities, highlighting their economic and cultural contributions, while also defending tougher oversight measures and the potential introduction of a new financial levy. This was echoed by government officials from the three key departments impacting international DFE, Home Office and Department for Business & Trade at the opening of our Directors Forum at the Conference.

The Annual Conference, Directors Conference and our Directors Forums all continued to act as vital spaces for members to engage in strategic discussions, knowledge exchange, and important peer networking opportunities.

Directors Conference 2024

122
Attendees
from 95
institutions

500+
Directors attended
online Forums
throughout the year

Annual Conference 2025

431
Attendees
from 114
institutions

95%
rated sessions as
Excellent or Good.

Keynotes from:

- New President of EAIE, Sara López Selga; Nous Group Principal, Matt Durnin; Cardiff University’s COO, Dr Paula Sanderson challenged the way universities approach their international strategies and their reliance on traditional markets.
- GeNEOus CEO, Alejandra Otero, encouraged members to understand how AI can complement the international recruitment journey.
- Founder of Beacon Changemakers, Ajay Sood, reminded members of the positive impact our work has on students themselves through his work with a new generation of future African leaders with a desire to give back to their country.



Regional & Special Interest Groups (RIG & SIG)

Relevance and effectiveness

BUILA RIG and SIG activity expanded further, with **16 active groups representing all the key recruitment regions**, Directors, Working with Agents, Transnational Education (TNE), International Marketing and a new Small and Specialist group to support this important part of the BUILA membership. BUILA also created greater opportunities for RIG Chairs to strengthen their contribution, effectiveness, and collaboration with each other through specific training and networking meetings.

- **11 RIG sessions** online reached **over 1000 individuals**.
- Additional dedicated WhatsApp channels introduced for knowledge sharing.
- Highly successful in-country RIGs in Hong Kong and USA.

Looking Ahead:

Further enhance all forums for membership discussion and sharing of best practice.



Communications & Engagement

2024–25 saw a revamp of BUILA's digital communication channels to better connect members and partners.

- Creation of a new BUILA website with enhanced security and member resources including a dedicated, confidential discussion forum due to launch early 2026.
- Introduction of new WhatsApp Group Guidelines to protect the validity of information shared between members.
- Media engagement and commentary on key topics including Graduate Route, recruitment trends, diversification, and ethical recruitment.

Looking Ahead:

- BUILA will be creating a new strategic communication plan to ensure members and partners are supported with real-time information and have the right opportunities to share and exchange ideas.
- The members forum will provide a safe and accessible space for information, data and topical conversation to be shared and archived.

East Asia Education Week 2025

5 - 7 March 2025
Hong Kong



Looking Ahead 2025-2026

BUILA's focus for the coming year will centre on:

- Influencing government policy through evidence-led lobbying, especially around delivery against the Immigration White Paper
- Consolidating the AQF's impact across the wider education sector and implementing mechanisms to measure its success
- Sharing best practice on English Language Self-Assessment
- Delivering enhanced international recruitment data and benchmarking tools
- Disseminating examples of international student contributions to regional growth and skill agendas
- Championing sustainable international recruitment
- Creating an appropriate regulatory structure for BUILA to maintain and grow its services to members.



Acknowledgements

BUILA would like to thank our members, Executive Committee, and partners across government, the British Council, UUKi, UKCISA, and the wider education sector. **Your collaboration and insight continue to define BUILA's collective success.**

Financial Overview

Key highlights (2024–2025)

- Maintenance of membership in a challenging financial environment
- Surplus reinvested into crucial sector best practice research and enhancement of member services.

The following accounts have been subjected to an ‘independent examination’ rather than a full audit in line with our role as an association.

The main income streams during the financial year were from annual membership fees, Annual and Directors’ Conference fees, sponsorship generated to support and enhance the Annual Conference, training fees and a small amount of bank interest. The main streams of expenditure were for activity and service costs supporting BUILA’s priorities and services to members.

Income and Expenditure Account 31 July 2025	2025 £	2024 £
Turnover	604,083	579,910
Cost of sales	(442,237)	(400,837)
Gross surplus	161,846	179,073
Administrative expenses	(124,979)	(114,143)
Operating surplus	36,867	64,930
Other income	3,971	4,270
Surplus for the year	40,838	69,200

Balance Sheet 31 July 2025	2025 £		2024 £	
Current assets	62,122		10,108	
Trade debtors	393,379		404,785	
Reserve and current accounts	455,501		414,785	
Current liabilities	2,631		2,862	
Trade creditors				
Net current assets		452,870		412,031
Members' funds		452,870		412,031



Website: buila.ac.uk

LinkedIn: BUILA