

Brief Report

Globalising Higher Education: TNE Models and Regulatory Insights in Latin America



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Overview

This is a brief summary of the research “The landscape of Transnational Education and mutual recognition of qualifications in Latin America, with special emphasis on Brazil, Mexico and Peru”. Developed by the British Council, this report examines the opportunities and challenges for Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships and the role of mutual recognition of qualifications in facilitating these.

To establish the benefits of internationalisation of higher education, the research studied:

- 1 International engagement in higher education between the UK and Latin America
- 2 The international higher education landscape in the studied countries – Brazil, Mexico and Peru
- 3 The regulatory policies for Transnational Education in Brazil, Mexico and Peru
- 4 The benefits and challenges for Transnational Education partnerships as perceived by higher education and government stakeholders in those countries
- 5 The perceived importance of mutual recognition of qualifications agreements for internationalisation of higher education cooperation and, in particular, Transnational Education growth.



Main research findings

An analysis was undertaken of current quantitative data on collaboration between the UK and the wider Latin America region. This focused on the three main components of internationalisation of higher education: international student mobility, research collaborations and Transnational Education partnerships. This helps to understand the context in which internationalisation of higher education and Transnational Education (TNE) in the three countries operate. It also provides some comparisons with other world regions in terms of the development and landscape of internationalisation of higher education.

1. The state of internationalisation of higher education engagement between the UK and Brazil, Mexico and Peru

A prominent feature of internationalisation of higher education engagement with the studied countries is the critical role of government funding and support. This research found that higher education (HE) relations between the UK and the studied countries blossomed when they were supported by government-backed initiatives.

1A. International student mobility

There has been little mobility between Latin America and the UK over the past two decades. Latin America accounted for approximately 1 per cent of the internationally mobile students in the UK. The peak in mobility from Brazil in 2015 was driven by the country's Science without Borders programme. Based on the UK HESA data, in 2021-22 Peru hosted a total of 350 students on UK Transnational Education programmes – which means a 23 per cent increase since 2018-19.

350

Students on UK Transnational Education programmes hosted by Peru in 2021-22

71%

UK Transnational Education students in Peru studying in undergraduate programmes

26%

UK Transnational Education students in Peru studying in postgraduate programmes

1B. International research collaborations

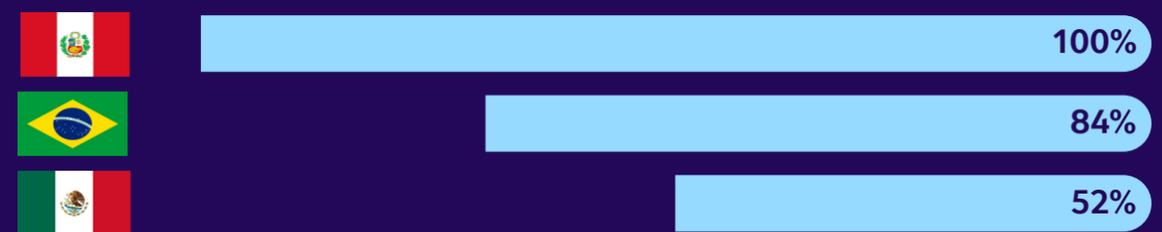
There is an active research collaboration between the UK and Brazil, Mexico and Peru. Bibliometric analysis shows that the UK is among the top research partners for the three countries and accounts for between 4 and 6 per cent of their collaborative research output.



1C. Transnational Education

Compared with the rest of the world, Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships between the UK and Latin America remain limited. Across the region, Mexico is the most active country for TNE, with almost 900 TNE students going to the UK in 2021-22. Brazil was home to 745 TNE students, and Peru had 405 in the same period. According to the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA's) Aggregate Offshore Record, TNE partnerships are limited outside the provision of distance learning and online education.

Distance learning and online education are the dominant TNE delivery mechanisms

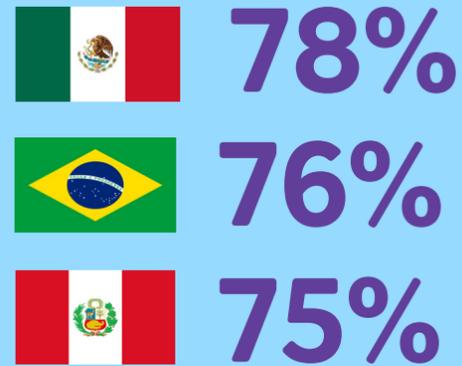


• UK Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA's) Aggregate Offshore Record about distance learning and online education
 • Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships with the UK in 2021-22

2. Internationalisation of higher education priorities in the studied countries

Studying abroad and student exchange are top internationalisation of higher education priorities in Brazil (for 76% of the surveyed higher education institutions), Mexico (78%) and Peru (75%). The following most important areas are international research collaboration (65% of the surveyed higher education institutions in the three countries) and international partnerships (64%).

Study abroad and student exchange are top priority for internationalisation of higher education as follows:



International research collaborations are a priority for:



International research collaborations are a priority for:



3. Regulatory Frameworks for Transnational Education (TNE)



Brazil: While the internationalisation of higher education is an emerging priority for many higher education institutions in Brazil, there is no regulatory framework to facilitate international partnerships, with little activity in terms of international mobility of academic programmes and institutions. Institutions in France and Germany were pointed by the surveyed higher education institutions as their main Transnational Education (TNE) partners.



Mexico: The regulatory environment in Mexico is supportive of TNE, primarily in the areas of dual degrees. Several agreements exist to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications. At the national level, there is a streamlined policy and process for the recognition of foreign qualifications. The Mexican Ministry of Education leads on recognition of HE degrees.

Peru: While there is no specific regulation for TNE in Peru, there is provision for the operation of foreign universities in the country. These universities require licensing even if they involve a partnership with a Peruvian university. The local government's regulatory reforms from 2014 placed internationalisation as a key area for improving the competitive position of universities.



4. The value of Transnational Education (TNE)

Dual degrees are the most common type of activity that Latin American institutions were involved in. Half of the surveyed higher education institutions were engaged in dual degrees and 38 per cent were involved in the online delivery of courses from foreign universities.

In Brazil, Mexico and Peru, universities perceive TNE partnerships as an important way to internationalise higher education and increase its quality. There are, however, challenges at the institutional and government levels, which hinder their efforts.

Brazilian stakeholders perceived TNE as a vehicle to achieve greater internationalisation of higher education. Additional benefits included the socioeconomic development of regions and local communities. TNE made a valuable contribution to the provision of courses that did not exist in particular regions, strengthened links and capacity building for the local market, and helped retain talent and prevent brain drain.

Almost all institutions that responded to the survey in Mexico agreed that joint and dual provision increased knowledge transfer. Joint degrees were perceived to contribute to improved internationalisation of education and institutional competitiveness.

Peru's higher education system is less internationally oriented than those of Brazil and Mexico, and there was much more emphasis by stakeholders on potential benefits at national level.

50%

Higher education institutions engaged in dual degrees

40%

Country's dual degrees at undergraduate level

38%

Higher education institutions involved in the online delivery of courses from foreign universities

43%

Brazilian higher education institutions engaged in cotutelle PhD degrees



5. Transnational Education (TNE) challenges

Similar top challenges were identified among stakeholders from the three countries, with a large degree of congruence:

5A. Regulatory: No higher education legislative or regulatory framework in any of the countries were written to include TNE – which means that TNE was neither a political priority nor on government agendas. TNE engagement is developing faster than the countries' ability to develop appropriate regulations.

5B. Cost of TNE: Costs involved in partnerships with UK higher education institutions were particularly challenging. Tuition fees were higher than in most other countries, and these were rarely reduced or waived. Higher education institutions in Brazil, Mexico and Peru could negotiate reciprocal agreements so that tuition fees were not charged by either institution, but that was not usually possible with UK.

5C. English language proficiency: English language proficiency was a challenge across the three countries, where it's seen as directly related to the wealth of families. There was a perception that TNE (usually conducted in English) disadvantages students from deprived backgrounds.

5D. Institutional capacity: A lack of institutional capacity was noted in the survey, as TNE required higher education institutions to allocate additional staff and financial resources, although budgets were already under pressure. The survey identified professional training of staff to engage in TNE partnership as a development priority for institutions.

5E. Lack of knowledge about TNE: Limited awareness about the benefits of TNE to students, institutions, businesses and national agendas. Many of the interviewed stakeholders conflated TNE with study abroad. At the national level, there were few universities with TNE programmes.

6. Mutual recognition of qualifications

The survey points to the ambitions of higher education institutions in all three countries to grow their Transnational Education (TNE) engagement. Streamlined recognition of foreign degrees and qualifications is one of a number of challenges for TNE engagement. Also making the regulatory framework for TNE more friendly was seen as an important step in encouraging its growth.

In Mexico and Peru, bilateral mutual recognition of qualifications agreements are one important tool for doing this – although none of the interviewees in the two countries was familiar with the qualification recognitions signed with the UK.

Brazil and the UK signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance international cooperation in education in 2016 (largely related to the Science without Borders programme), but there is no bilateral mutual recognition of qualifications agreement.

7. Recommendations

7A. Policymakers: Greater government-to-government cooperation is needed between the UK, Brazil, Mexico and Peru.

- To develop a shared understanding of what Transnational Education (TNE) comprises and also its potential to deliver to the socioeconomic agendas of Brazil, Mexico and Peru.
- To create bilateral (or multilateral) incentives, particularly financial, to prioritise and support those TNE partnerships that will contribute value to agreed agendas that meet the needs of countries. The research shows that successful TNE programmes are those backed by government-funded programmes.
- To review how existing research networks can be capitalised on to build priority TNE partnerships, and how national funding agencies can work collaboratively to achieve this.
- Where mutual recognition of qualifications arrangements exist (Mexico, Peru), to facilitate their operation by identifying and addressing barriers (including regulatory and cultural) that serve to limit their practical effectiveness. Where mutual recognition of qualifications does not exist (Brazil), to identify other routes to achieving mutual recognition of degrees.
- For agencies and higher education institutions to collaborate on developing national guidelines to help support universities wanting to engage in TNE.



7B. Higher education institutions: Huge interest among higher education institutions in deepening international collaborations, despite the little knowledge about Transnational Education (TNE). It leads to an opportunity to develop an understanding of what TNE provision is and also how it can benefit higher education institutions and students.

- A greater awareness across the institutions about TNE and its potential value.
- Institutional internationalisation strategies that include TNE as a component alongside research collaborations and student and staff mobility.
- Building institution-wide support for TNE engagement to ensure that it can be appropriately staffed and resourced as part of institutions' core resource allocation.
- Developing and sharing knowhow between institutions, including examples of successful models and operational practice.

7C. UK stakeholders: There is an opportunity for the UK higher education sector to strengthen its engagement with some of the world's largest HE systems.

- UK government support will be critical if Transnational Education (TNE) engagement between the UK and Latin America is to succeed. Support should include collaboration with the governments of the three countries to provide jointly funded incentives.
- UK higher education institutions should consider the feasibility of delivering TNE in the local language. TNE can make a huge contribution to the local area when it is adjusted to meet local skills and demand. Given the limited English language proficiency across Latin America, TNE in the local language would significantly widen access to international degrees and qualifications.
- UK higher education institutions should consider developing platforms for virtual collaborative online international learning (COIL) projects with Latin America. These could bring together institutions and their students and facilitate the virtual mobility between institutions.

Improving international collaboration | Peru and UK universities

A Universities UK study defines Transnational Education (TNE) as the delivery of degrees in a country other than where the awarding provider is based. It can include, among others, branch campuses, distance learning, online provision, joint and dual degree programmes, double awards, fly-in lecturers and blended models involving online and face-to-face delivery, traditionally referred to as blended learning.

There are three models of Transnational Education (TNE):



Autonomous

From a branch campus, or distance learning and online provision



Locally supported

Under a franchise or blended learning



Collaborative

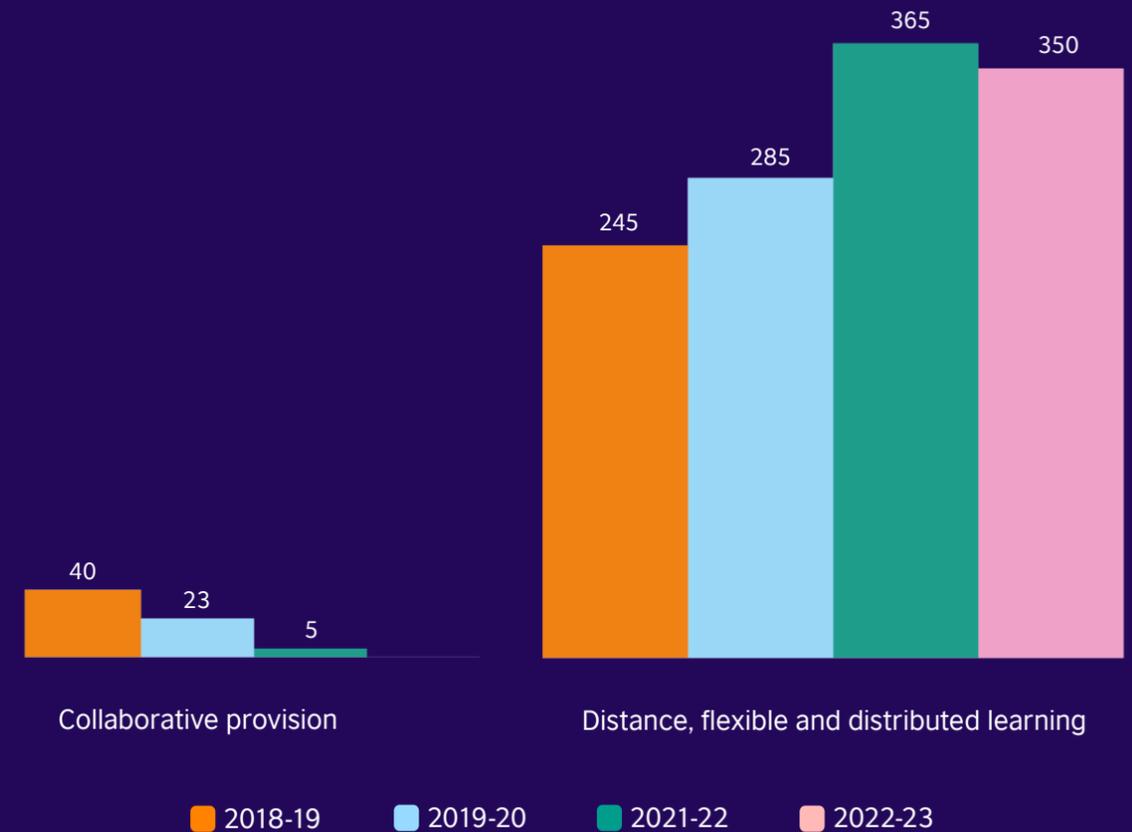
Through a joint degree programme or dual degree programme

Table 1 gives an extension of the regulatory environment with reference to each of the critical types of Transnational Education included in Peru.

Table 1: Transnational Education in Peru

Model of Transnational Education		Regulatory aspects from a Peruvian and foreign university perspective
Autonomus	Branch Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Peruvian university can create a branch campus abroad. This will be subject to the regulations of the host country. A foreign university can create a campus in Peru but will require full licensing by SUNEDU.
	Distance Learning and Online Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Peruvian university can provide its programmes fully online. A foreign university can provide its programmes fully online (with no local support) in Peru without the need for licensing.
Locally supported	Franchise/ Validation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A foreign university is not allowed to provide its programmes 'in situ' in Peru without a licence. This is required even if there is an agreement with a Peruvian higher education institution. Hence this will impact any in-country delivery directly by a foreign provider.
	Blended learning	
Collaborative	Joint Degree Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Mexican and a foreign university are allowed to establish a joint degree however this should be licensed by the Ministry of Public Education (SEP).
	Dual Degree Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Mexican university is allowed to establish a dual degree with a foreign university.

Figure 1: Number of UK TNE students in Peru



Source: HESA

The Transnational Education landscape in Peru

Peruvian universities have been promoting the development of international partnerships, mainly in the form of double or dual degrees. However, considering the size of the Peruvian higher education sector, international partnership activities remain underdeveloped.

Online and distance learning has increased since 2020 due to the Covid pandemic. Often this has been done in collaboration with a foreign university, particularly with UK universities.

1,6 MM

Students enrolled in Peruvian universities in 2021

+43%

Increase since 2018-19

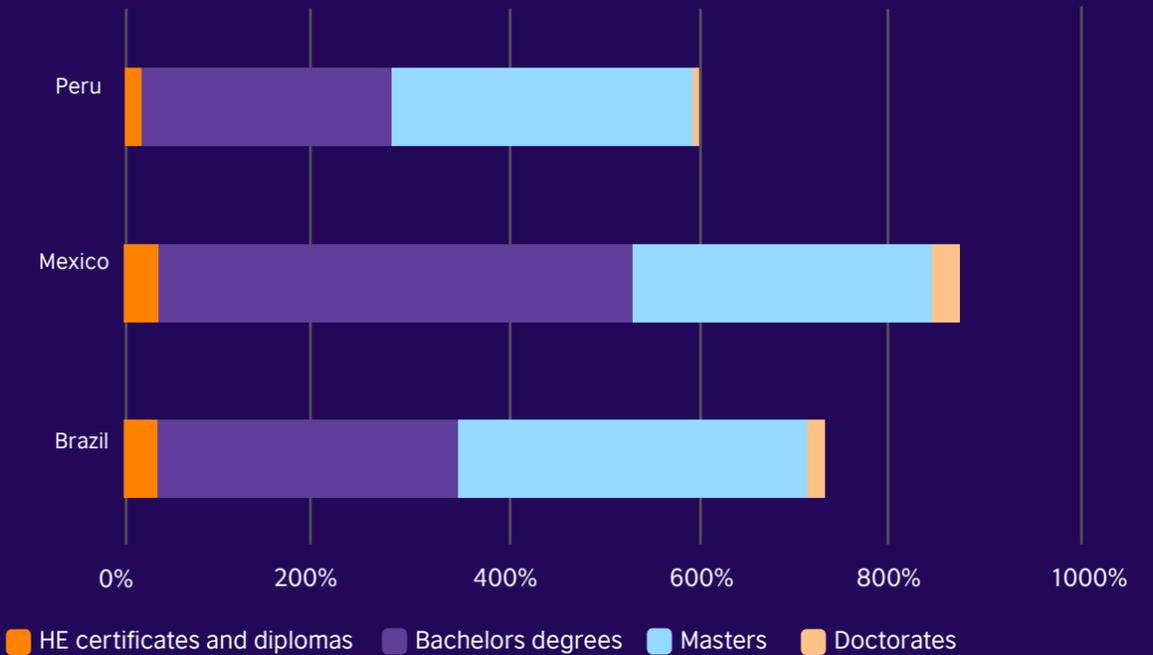




The amount of UK Transnational Education students in Peru is extremely small considering the number of enrolments in Peruvian universities

Most TNE is at bachelor's level and represent 71% of TNE in Peru, compared to master's courses that are less popular in the country, representing 25% (Figure 2).

Figure 2: TNE in Brazil, Mexico and Peru by level of study in 2021-22



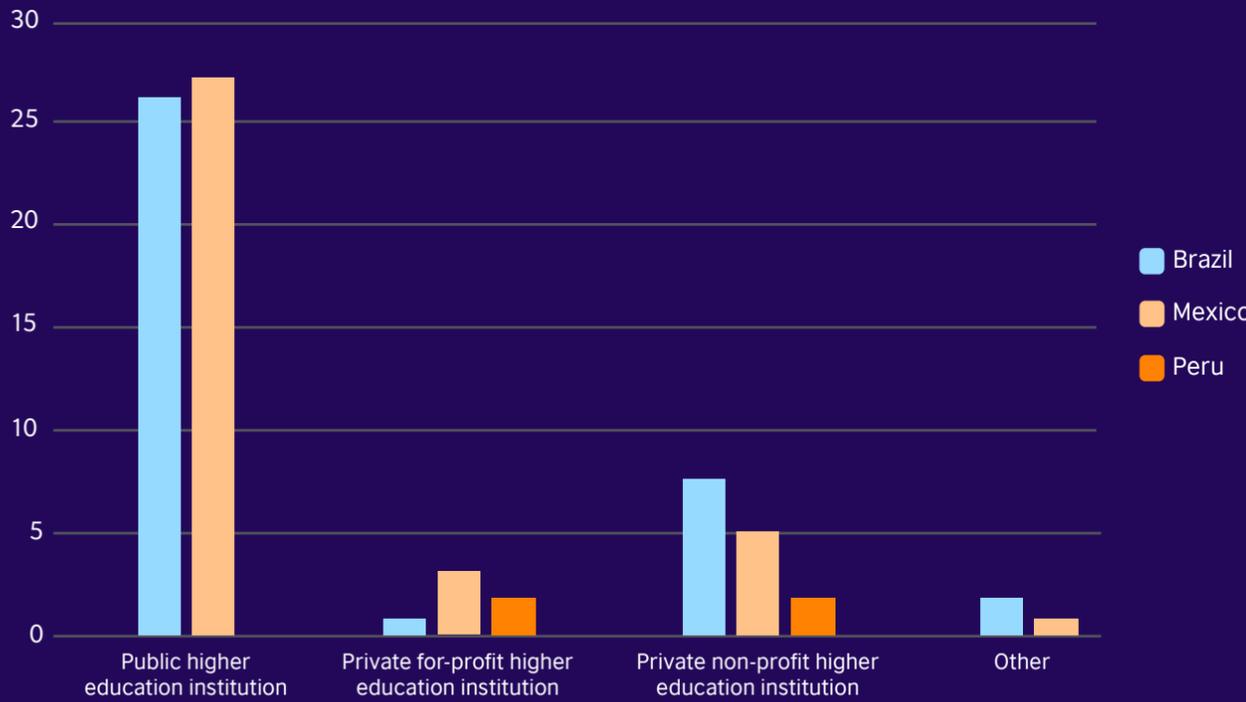
Source: HESA Aggregate Offshore Record 2021-22, excluding dormant students

International higher education priorities

Results of the online survey of the main actors responsible for the internationalisation of education in the higher education institutions of Brazil, Mexico and Peru:

- While the majority of higher education institutions from other countries such as Brazil and Mexico respondents worked at public universities, in Peru there is an equal split between private for-profit higher education institutions and private non-profit universities (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Type of institution (higher education institution) per country



Source: Online survey. N = 77. Multiple responses.

- Regarding institutional priorities for international participation, the most common response was that the institution was carrying out studies abroad and student exchanges. In Peru, this represented 75%.



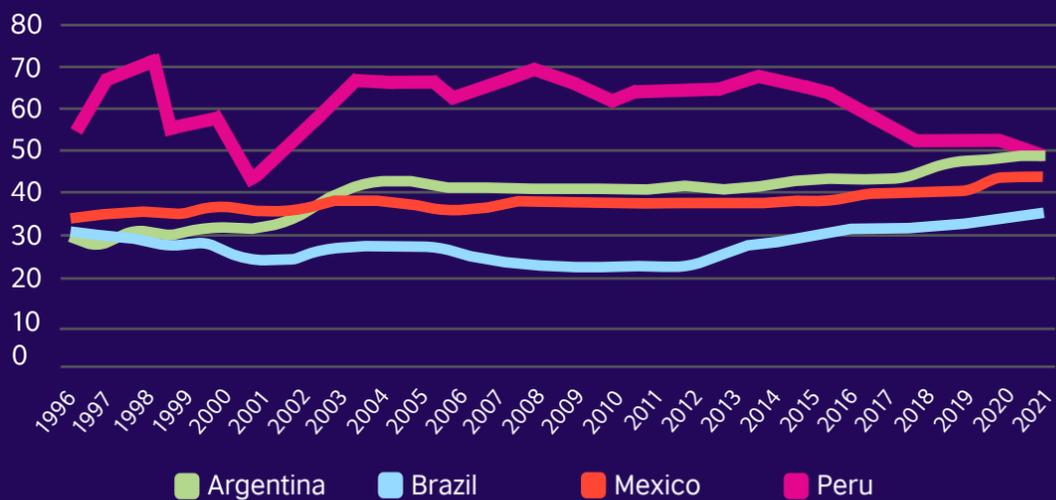
International research collaboration in Peruvian universities

There is an increased growth of research outputs by Peruvian universities, especially from international collaboration. Between 1996 and 2021, publications involving an international co-author varied between 45% and 70% of all academic output in Peru.

The top five contributing countries are United States, Brazil, Spain, the United Kingdom and Colombia. Five out of ten of Peru's top ten research collaborating countries are in the Latin American region. This shows increased regional collaborative activity, along with collaboration with major research countries such as the US, UK, France and Germany (Figure 4).

61 Countries covered by agreements signed by Peru for mutual recognition of higher education qualifications

Figure 4. International collaboration (% of total publications)



The regulatory framework for international partnerships in Peru

In Peru there is no specific regulation for Transnational Education; however, the University Law N° 30220 regulates the operation of foreign universities in the country. It applies to all universities operating in Peru, public and private, national or foreign.

Foreign universities that provide university education services in the country, regardless of where they issue the degree, must have the corresponding institutional licence beforehand.



Recognition of foreign qualifications

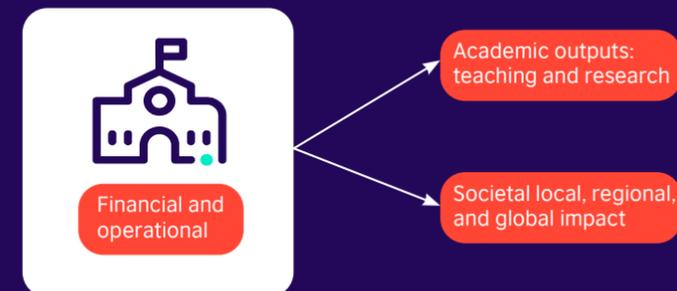
The Mutual Recognition Treaty on Professional Qualifications and Academic Degrees between Peru and the UK, active from 2021, allows for the continued recognition of higher education qualifications awarded by universities in both countries. Peru has been very active in establishing bilateral agreements with other countries.

Recommendations for Peruvian higher education institutions

The process of developing successful international partnerships

To be successful, universities must focus on two key aspects: teaching and research. Beyond results, it is important to note that universities are evaluated on their social impact at local, regional and global levels (Figure 3).

Figure 5: University success factors for international



Reasons why international partnerships fail

The main reasons for universities in Peru and other Latin American countries to become unsuccessful in closing international partnerships with universities based in UK and other regions are:

- 1** Lack of strategic vision and integration into a broader internationalisation plan.
- 2** Lack of clear objectives/evaluation measures.
- 3** Lack of interest (buy-in) from teachers.
- 4** Lack of clear objectives/evaluation measures.

University internationalisation strategy

The internationalisation strategy for Peruvian UK collaboration should include:

1

Having a decision-making and resource allocation centre

2

The governance structure should be supported by local managers (at university/school level) who are responsible for leading and managing the implementation of the internationalisation strategy

3

There needs to be an institutional rationale as to why international partnerships are being sought that will be used to define specific objectives and therefore measures that will be used to evaluate success

Universities need to identify the activities that are best suited to the objectives of their internationalisation strategy and are likely to achieve maximum results



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