



British Council

The UK's future in France: what role do culture and education and Research play?

Key findings

Education and Culture in France

- The French Government is diversifying education models and growth in technology is impacting ways of working
- Multilingualism in schools is at the heart of the education strategy in France and academies are implementing this through immersion classes.
- The French higher education system is quite structured and provides definite routes for students attending more specialised Grandes Écoles or generalist universities.
- International study is a priority for the Grandes Écoles and increasingly important across the whole higher education system.
- French Government is aiming to increase international student numbers from 320,000 to 500,000 by 2027.
- Culture strategy is fairly centralised in France- artists and leaders are encouraged to be creative with their programmes.

UK-France: Opportunities

- There is a desire for collaboration across Europe in the Higher Education sphere which include the piloting of the European Universities Initiative in 2019.
- France and the UK share a lot of similarities in the culture sector and benefit from exchange of ideas in the realm of actor-led production, diversity models and funding.
- Working with education ministries overseas gives arms-length bodies the opportunity to help shape policy in education and culture. This in turn impacts international relations between countries.
- Exchanges between schools and multilateral programmes are effective and the UK and France both need to ensure these remain in the future
- Higher education collaboration is happening and will continue post-Brexit

UK-France: Risks

- Other countries are becoming leaders in language teaching, meaning that the UK is no longer alone in this space.
- Immigration policies and bureaucratic nature of visa applications could threaten artist and student mobility
- Multilateral programmes and approaches to working are different. These differences should be considered and, in some cases, addressed
- Collaboration can receive resistance from both or either side- this needs to be addressed and collaboration promoted.
- Domestic laws around equality data are different in France, meaning that the UK working with a French organisation approach the monitoring and evaluation of EDI targets differently.

Please find a full summary of the delegation below. Note that comments have not been attributed to specific individuals.



Education in France:

The French Government is looking to diversify education in France and the British Council is supporting the Ministry of Education in areas like English language teacher training. Investment is also going into technology and innovative ways of teaching, for example ensuring bilingualism in schools and utilising it as a teaching method in other subjects (Content & Language Integrated Learning – CLIL).

In France, there is an expectation that students speak a foreign language and English is almost always the preferred choice. The French Government view it as a basic competency and skill. English language supports employment opportunity, business and exposure to culture. The French also focus on their people returning from the UK and maintaining their level of English in education and work back in France.

Académies (local education authorities) are provided with a budget and can choose how much to spend on [training](#). Focus is often on infant school and early years education, with core subjects like literacy and numeracy taking precedent. Taken into consideration, schools do focus on Baccalauréat and lycée reform as well as vocational training.

In France, the education system sets out a clear and competitive pathway for students. Those who finish high school and want to head into specialised high-level careers often choose to attend a Grande École, specialist higher education institution (sometimes preceded by a preparatory two years) whilst other students will head straight to a university. Education is centralised and the Ile de France region (Paris and its surroundings) represent 40% of students in higher education. Following a meeting with the Conférence des Grandes Écoles, it was noted that the UK is the top destination for French students visiting or studying overseas as part of their course. Grandes Écoles have outward mobility built into their strategies. There are 227 members of the Conférences des Grandes Écoles, of those 155 are in engineering, 40 are management schools and 40 represent other specialist areas. The first Grandes Écoles were created in order to improve technical ability and research during the revolution. 17% of students go to a Grande École, 42% of those students do a masters (Bac+5). Up to 24% of Grande École students are international, compared to only 10% in French Universities. Grandes Écoles are striving to develop programmes that adapt to the international trends and to enable more inward and outward mobility. It is an aim of French Government to increase the number of foreign students overall from 320,000 to 500,000 by 2027.

Case Study: École Polytechnique

École Polytechnique is a Grande École that combines top-level research, academics and innovation at the cutting-edge of science and technology. As part of their strategy they are committed to international collaboration and are at the heart of the development of the école. It provides double degree agreements and promotes international experience with countries where France hold strong industrial links.

Nearly 85% of their students undergo an internship or portion of their degree studies abroad. Their website specifies American and British Universities as key partners in this, but they also highlight the importance in other countries across the world. It does not appear to host “double-degrees” with a UK institution. École Polytechnique takes part in Erasmus+ and also hosts its own Exchange programmes with trusted partners. During a meeting with the Conférence des Grande Écoles they highlighted the importance of working with the UK.



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Grandes Écoles do not have a limit on student numbers, however many ensure smaller numbers in order to remain adaptable and provide the students with bespoke study programmes. Most Grandes Écoles do not exceed 1000 students. As most Grandes Écoles are private, funding mainly comes from high student fees. Limited funds come from state budgets, research partnerships and fundraising etc. It should also be noted that research and development is normally done outside of Higher Education and the French are looking to change this.

Culture in France:

Cultural institutions in Paris are publicly funded, and directors are often appointed by the Culture Ministry. This means that cultural strategy is fairly centralised.

Case Study: Théâtre du Châtelet

The Théâtre du Châtelet is currently under refurbishment and will re-open in September 2019. When Ruth Mackenzie was appointed as Artistic Director in 2017 along with Thomas Lauriot Dit Prévost. They were offered a blank canvas and have developed a cultural engagement strategy and artistic schedule from scratch.

The theatre offers varied pricing in order to cater for different sections in society, for example each year there are 10,000 tickets available for 10 euros. There is also a “Robin Hood” scheme where guests can purchase two tickets and buy two more for those from disadvantaged backgrounds which enhances a socially active policy. In terms of arts in France new approaches are being developed in order to engage wider communities in the theatre sector. The Théâtre du Châtelet organises town hall meetings in the suburbs of Paris in order to engage people at grassroots level and in the creation of theatre. By reaching out to more boroughs in Paris, they inadvertently reach out to tourists too. Lastly, in terms of language, the theatre offers subtitles and performances in other languages. Within the theatre, staff often speak English and French and are provided with language training where required. This makes for a truly international theatre. Current shows in creation are being directed and produced by theatre troops from Paris and overseas. The UK should be engaging and can learn a lot from French models in the arts. This should be enabled.

British Council in France:

British Council France works to promote strong relationships between the UK and France in the fields of education and culture. It works directly with French Government Ministries, UK Government in France, local schools, Higher Education institutions, arts organisations and English language stakeholders. It is this work that enables collaboration and relationship building. The importance of culture was highlighted as a tool for community cohesion and a way to promote diversity in society. Initially, the British Council in France was set up to work only in arts and education and to promote cultural values through libraries and community work. However, in time, it took on teaching from the British Institute and today teaches over 6,000 Parisian students as well as runs 50,000 exams across France. This changed the way it worked.

The British Council in France is changing- the teaching and exams side of the organisation will soon be a registered business. This is quite common among other institutes in that they utilise surplus from their business to put back into soft-power efforts and local community work and programmes. It also provides a small amount of language training for migrants through other organisations. It is this work and connection between language learning and culture that promotes a certain soft power



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and encourages international stakeholders to engage with British values, culture and educational opportunities.

The British Council is currently delivering a professional development programme for teachers and school leaders in the Paris region in order to help increase competence in teaching through English, from primary and secondary school and also to support initiatives for applying for schemes such as Erasmus+.

Comparative Case Study: Institut Français

The Institut français promotes French language and culture and encourages cross-cultural exchange and cultural diversity. The London branch was founded in 1910 and hosts a language centre, a cinema, multi-media library, children's library and a café-restaurant- it welcomes 200,000 people a year.

All activities in the UK are Franco-UK and promote specifically relationships between the two countries. It takes part in networks like the Association for Language Learning and similarly to the British Council supports British teacher training for French language.

Culturally speaking, the Institut administers programmes like **Fluxus** in partnership with the British Council and Ministry of Culture in France. It enables French and British artists to move between both countries, learning, sharing and developing knowledge and skills (methods of working). **Night of Ideas** is a series of events bringing together leading researchers from France and the UK to discuss changing ideas in democracy, citizenship and truth.

Thanks to the Institut, both countries exchange specific knowledge, for example in the disability arts sphere, France has learnt a lot from the UK, especially in the dance field.

It was noted that Brexit has not impacted the Institut, but cultural and educational collaboration isn't always at the top of the agenda for either Government. However, the Institut in London is autonomous in the way it spends its surplus from teaching (earned in the UK and spent in the UK), meaning that cultural programmes can be adapted and prioritised according to the context on the ground.

The UK and France: Opportunities to Collaborate

The importance of bilateral scholarships programmes such as the EntenteCordiale were highlighted as well as the strength of arms-length organisations and multilateral programmes like Erasmus+ and Creative Europe.

An example of collaboration in school teaching was provided by the Académie de Grenoble who do an exchange collaboration between Utah in the USA. It was highlighted that reciprocal new skills enabled teachers to improve their own language teaching as well as benefit the students. In order to develop this type of work between the UK and European countries, organisations like the British Council are crucial. Académie de Grenoble are looking into evaluating the impact of such work with the University of Edinburgh, this will look at behavioural changes, cognitive effects, attitudes in class and the desire to work and be open with different cultures.



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Upon the success of the Utah exchange, the Académie de Grenoble have also opened “Immersion Schools”. They use foreign language to teach school subjects- up to (due to French law) 50% of school is taught through another language. The Académie utilise pre-existing school buildings for this. It was noted that in France, catchment area pre-determines which school a child goes to, more so than the UK. Another approach that the French believe is useful is having a language and subject teacher in the same class, so that their skills are shared. In general, it was agreed that the French and British can learn a lot from each other in terms of methods, models, skills and funding. It starts at the centre, with communication from Ministries and requires connectivity on both sides; reciprocal reciprocity.

ESCP are a business school (Grande Ecole) that offer triple accreditation and have 6 campuses in Europe, including London.

The French view collaboration as positive, it encourages growth and is good for students who very rarely remain in the same institution from Bachelor through to PhD study. This is positive for international education, as it encourages students to study overseas too. This kind of opportunity and collaboration enables growth and healthy competition can only improve this. It was noted that stronger links should always be promoted. The UK higher education sector is always open to collaboration which would work in its favour in the future- this should be encouraged even more.

Connection between higher education institutions in France and the UK have been established historically, partnerships were a part of the original strategies. They tend to go for quality over quantity and therefore limit new prospects, which could be seen as a barrier to non-specialised universities in the UK. However, it is proven that long-term relationships, legacy and deep existing relationships are a stable way to ensure collaboration cross-country meaning that following Brexit, they don't see any barriers to their current work in the UK. It was also noted that even without Erasmus+ there would be other opportunities for bilateral collaboration in education, and this should and would be promoted by academics. Most institutions work outside Europe and know what international collaboration looks like. This means that even post-Brexit, working bilaterally with French institutions shouldn't be an issue- processes are already in place for collaboration outside of the EU.

Case Study: European Universities Initiative

Throughout Europe there, is a drive to create “[European Universities](#)” which will partner universities across Europe, enabling students to study at different campuses across their three years at university and will result in a degree, verified from at least three different institutions. The initiative will bring together a new generation of creative Europeans, cooperating across languages, borders and disciplines to address societal challenges, and skills shortages that Europe faces. It is thought that by 2024, international competitiveness and collaboration will increase the standard in European education across the board.

There is appetite for this in France, however the UK may be excluded.

It was suggested that UK has a lot to share in terms of cultural policy and artistic practices more generally. The UK could also learn from France in specific art form areas, like music. In France, it was suggested that Conservatoires offer free training for children in dance and music- it encourages more instrument learning, meaning the French are leading the way in this.



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It was commented upon that there is a perception that innovation in the arts is decreasing in the UK – the French are encouraging of their artists and directors – allowing them to start from a blank piece of paper, whether it be as a theatre, or a single production.

Overall, this is great opportunity for collaboration; many countries in Europe are going through change politically and culturally. This change provides opportunity to support the arts sector even more. In the UK, the Arts economy is bigger than agriculture and is an enormous export and import for the UK. It was agreed therefore, that moving forward this should be highlighted and brought to the top of the UK-European relations agenda.

UK and France: Risks to collaboration:

It was raised that schemes such as Erasmus+ are viewed differently in the UK in comparison to France. Parliamentarians agreed that in their opinion, Erasmus+ was not well known, apart from within the Higher Education network and affluent areas. It should be noted however that 55% of young people awarded funding for volunteering or youth exchanges, and 30% of UK vocational learners awarded funding for training abroad in 2014-15 were from disadvantaged backgrounds or have additional needs.

However, the French believe that France takes advantage of Erasmus+ across varying class and education levels. It is used for varied professions and ages and meshes together many levels and areas of society. France use Erasmus+ to validate their language degrees. It was suggested that the UK should highlight international opportunity more in order to ensure citizens are exposed to culture, especially in Europe.

Case Study: Erasmus+ Participant Figures UK

Figures for UK Erasmus+ participation each year:

- 18,000 UK higher education students to benefit from a study or work placement abroad
- 10,000 UK vocational education and training students to benefit from a work placement abroad which is directly linked to their vocational qualifications
- 7,500 young people, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, to benefit from and youth exchange or placement abroad
- 6,000 school pupils to take part in a school exchange visit

Current Figures for France Erasmus+ participation (2016/17):

- 43,905 French higher education students benefitted from a study or work placement abroad
- 15,374 French vocational education and training students benefitted from a work placement abroad
- 18, 000 are considered within the youth mobility area and benefit from youth exchange or placement abroad.
- 18,896 school pupils benefitted from school exchange visits

It was commented that as part of school exchange programmes, often UK schools and institutions are not as willing to reciprocate sharing of teachers and knowledge meaning that often for schools in France, financially and in other ways, they do not gain anything back- this tendency needs to be reversed. It should be noted however that there is appetite amongst universities in the UK to bring



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their work to France, for example the Courtauld administering courses in Paris. It was noted however that it is possible that immigration polices could put this at risk. Overall some universities don't recognise an exchange period as an accredited part of study and this should be addressed.

Barriers of course for higher education students include visa immigration, not only can visa issues block students from studying in France, and vice versa, but the bureaucratic nature of applications can be a blocker for institutions processing such documents. In 2011, France implemented visa regulation rules that meant that foreign students had to return home immediately after studying in France- it was noted that this had a negative impact on student numbers and legacy.

Barriers to cultural collaboration often come in the form of culture and ways of working- performers, directors and artistic creators work differently in both countries and adjusting to this when collaborating can be difficult. Methods like "artist-led development" is quite a niche way of working and initially, theatres in the UK were not too accommodating to it. In addition, it was noted that practical language barriers can be an issue so this is something that needs to be addressed, regardless of Brexit.

In France, diversity data is not collected due to regulation, meaning that a cultural institution is able to implement a diversity strategy when employing staff and putting on performances, but cannot evaluate and provide data as to whether the strategy works. This could be a barrier to collaborative working between the UK and France. The UK does collect this data and is able to evaluate diversity policies.

Whilst in Education it was noted that the UK can be perceived as reluctant to collaborate, in the Arts it has been seen to be the other way round. For example, La Comédie Française performed at the Barbican in London, however this was not reciprocated, due to the Comédie Française not normally hosting foreign companies. Overall British artists and directors are being employed across French theatres, like Ruth MacKenzie at the Théâtre du Châtelet and Simon Baker at the Museum of Photography, so this symbolises a desire to collaborate.

There is a fear that due to Brexit, French teachers and students will go to other English-speaking countries such as Malta and Ireland. The level of English is extremely high now across Europe and this means that the UK is at risk of losing its high standard status.