

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER-WESTMINSTER INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN TASHKENT (WIUT) PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT) represents a unique partnership with the University of Westminster, whose long-term commitment to the collaboration is reflected in the shared name. The University of Westminster has been responsible for leading the academic design and development of this new international University in the Republic of Uzbekistan. It validates the programmes delivered by WIUT where students can complete all aspects of their study in Tashkent, whilst being eligible for the conferment of a University of Westminster award. WIUT is an excellent example of a sustainable British-Uzbek partnership which is making a difference to the development of Uzbekistan through the provision of world-class British education.

The University of Westminster co-founded WIUT in 2002 as the first International University in Central Asia fully accredited to provide UK degrees. The objective of providing international university education in Uzbekistan was to provide capacity in the form of courses but also capability development, as a role model to influence the reform and modernisation of higher education. WIUT represents a wholly distinctive model of UK Transnational Education (TNE): an autonomous institution designed and developed in partnership, delivering programmes leading to UK HE qualifications.

WIUT's governance structure is modelled on that of the University of Westminster and quality assured by Westminster's policies, processes and regulations. The University's exclusive validating role with WIUT is reflected in WIUT's title as an Accredited Institution of the University of Westminster.

Although the 2002 Founding Decree was signed by the Minister of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education, WIUT's independence from the Ministry was secured by its co-foundation by Westminster. WIUT's development was funded by and subsequently replaced UMID, the Uzbek international scholarship scheme.

Currently, over 3,000 WIUT students are studying for a University of Westminster qualification, one of the largest number of students registered on at a British TNE location. There have been over 2,000 graduates from both Undergraduate and Postgraduate courses since 2005. There are 130 academic Faculty members – most of whom are Uzbek citizens – and over 40 professional and support staff. WIUT was the first HEI in Central Asia to be awarded a UNESCO Professorial Chair (in Economics). As an early adopter of e-learning, WIUT has led and contributed to several international projects of direct benefit to Uzbekistan's HE sector.

Background

In 2000 the Uzbek Government commissioned the British Council's feasibility study on the establishment of a UK model university. The Council brokered the tender process the following year, when seven UK HEIs applied for the appointment of a capacity building contract. The design of the new university was informed by feasibility studies conducted by the British Council (2000) and the University of Westminster (2002). The initial contract was for 3 years 2002-05. The fourth contract for 2015-20 has been signed, the combined of the contracts will be over £15 million. Both parties are also committed to continuing into the next decade.

WIUT staff were recruited and inducted in August 2002 and Alan France OBE, the First Deputy Rector (Academic), was appointed by the University of Westminster in September 2002, to lead WIUT's development and expansion. He was awarded an Order of the British Empire in the 2011 New Year's Honours in recognition of his services to UK-Uzbekistan educational and cultural relations.

The first 120 students enrolled in September 2002 on the Level 3 Certificate of International Foundation Studies (CIFS) course, and the first year of the BA (Hons) Business Administration degree. Through incremental validation, additional Bachelors courses have been introduced in Commercial Law, Business Information Systems, Economics, and Economics with Finance, with two innovative part-time Masters courses, in International Business and Management, and in International Commercial Law, and a unique Postgraduate programme in Teaching and Learning. The student population has grown to over 3,000 and is targeted to grow to 4,000 plus by 2020.

WIUT's role

WIUT's leadership mission within the Uzbek HE sector has been fulfilled through its commitment to the proactive development of co- and extra-curricular student engagement, its programme of staff development modelled on the best practices of the UK, its research development and direction and its social inclusive policies through its regional outreach programmes training staff and providing opportunities for students in the region to join WIUT. WIUT has also had a number of EU Tempus projects that has enabled the quality of WIUT's work to spread through the region and the wider Europe.

WIUT has become a role model in many ways, demonstrating the quality and strength of British Education. In particular, the introduction at WIUT of the UK's paradigm of independent learning – strongly embedded at WIUT amongst staff and students – has been disseminated widely. The WIUT Students' Union provides an inspiring model of engagement and social enterprise. Over 2000 Westminster alumni have completed their studies at WIUT, 90% of whom have secured employment within six months of completing their studies, many forming their own business as well as gaining employment in public and private organisations, within and outside of Uzbekistan.

Achievement of academic quality and standards has been attested to by the University of Westminster appointed External Examiners and by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

Westminster-WIUT partnership development 2015-20

An ethos of openness and reciprocal development has sustained the WIUT/Westminster collaborative relationship in the two capital cities of London and Tashkent for over 14 years. The TNE partnership with WIUT is of significant strategic importance to the University of Westminster and is the focus of further development. Priorities for the next five years embrace the development of further development of joint research and educational projects, and of two-way modes of student and staff interaction. These will include a Summer School hosted by WIUT on global issues in the Central Asian context, open to WIUT and Westminster students, and student and staff exchanges.