



All eyes on India: Global partnerships to build a new education superpower

Reflections, commentary and discussions
from the QS India Summit 2024

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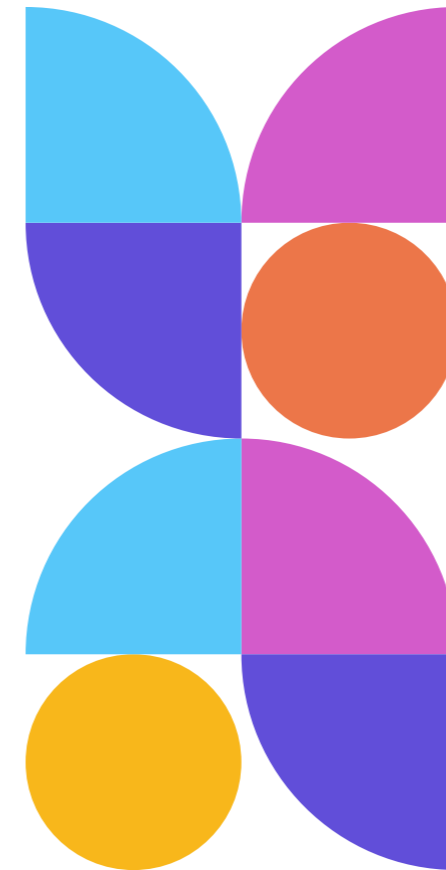


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Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of the speakers at the QS India Summit for your invaluable contributions and helping push Indian higher education forwards. Those featured in this report include: Prof. Colin Bailey, Brett Berquist, Dr Roger Brindley, Prof. Stephen Flint, Prof. Melinda Fitzgerald, Prof. Dawn Freshwater, Dr Veezhinathan Kamakoti PhD, Dr Dishan Kamdar, Shivraj Kanungo, Atul Khosla, Gauri Kohli, Leanna Kowallis, Prof. Koen Lamberts, Prof. Banchong Mahaisavariya, Prof. C. Muthamizhchelvan, Prof. Claire O'Malley, Dr Richard Reece, Radhika Shrivastava, Prof. Saurabh Sinha, Shishir Kumar Upadhyaya, Dr Sekar Viswanathan, and Prof. Ian White.

Setting the scene

by Dr Ashwin Fernandes, Executive Director (Middle East, Africa and South Asia),
QS Quacquarelli Symonds



Collaboration is not limited to within universities, but beyond.

Dr Ashwin Fernandes
Executive Director (Middle East, Africa and South Asia),
QS Quacquarelli Symonds

The QS India Summit 2024 was a true convergence of global and Indian leaders committed to reshaping India's high education landscape through partnerships and collaboration. The town we were in – Mahabalipuram – has a rich history and provided a fitting backdrop for discourse on a nation's journey towards the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 (VB 2047), Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brainchild.

The vision aligns with the government's broader development goal to transform India into a developed nation by 2047, the centenary of our independence. The emphasis on quality education and institution empowerment as key components of this vision reflects the Indian government's commitment to fostering growth and progress in this domain.

During my welcoming remarks, I used a Sanskrit sloka (a verse-form consisting of two lines of 16 syllables each) from one of ancient India's greatest teachers, economist and political leaders Chanakya. When translated to English, the meaning is:

"Everyone extols knowledge. Knowledge is considered great everywhere. One can attain everything with the help of knowledge and a person is respected everywhere with knowledge."

So, with these words in mind let's review how we navigated the overarching theme of this year's QS India Summit: **"Empowering excellence: unleashing the potential of partnerships and collaboration in Indian higher education"**.

The Summit addressed multiple avenues for opportunities that India must grasp to realise the vision of VB2047. All of them require collaboration and strong partnership to succeed.

- International universities opening branch campuses in India
- Strengthening industry-academia partnerships
- Exploring the importance of micro-credentials
- Empowering interdisciplinary research
- Pushing forward the agenda of social impact

Collaboration is not limited to within universities, but beyond. Henry Ford, the American industrialist and business magnate said, "Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

Academic institutions serve as repositories of knowledge and innovation - I hope they will play a pivotal role in applying and commercialising this knowledge alongside industry, and push forward with addressing real-world challenges.



The QS India Summit provided a platform for stakeholders from across the education spectrum to exchange ideas, share best practices and forge meaningful collaborations.

We explored new pathways to excellence, inclusivity and sustainability in Indian higher education, and reaffirmed our commitment to nurturing the next generation of leaders, innovators and changemakers.

We hope this report gives you the inspiration to challenge the status quo towards making India a superpower, a much-developed nation much before 2047.

Overview and speakers

In Mahabalipuram, Chennai, QS welcomed 47 speakers and over three hundred delegates to the QS India Summit 2024.

Over the three days, a diverse range of panels, meetings, workshops and speeches saw experts discuss this year's theme: **Empowering excellence: Unleashing the potential of partnerships and collaboration in Indian higher education.**

Speakers included:

 <p>His Excellency Shri R.N Ravi Honourable Governor of Tamil Nadu</p>	 <p>His Excellency Dr Subhas Sarkar Minister of State for Education Government of India</p>
 <p>The Lord Kamlesh Patel OBE House of Lords & Chairman of India Business Group</p>	 <p>Dr V Kamakoti Director, Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM)</p>
 <p>Prof Achutya Samanta Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha & Founder KIIT & KISS University</p>	 <p>Prof Rajita Kulkarni President Sri Sri University</p>
 <p>Prof Raj Kumar Founding Vice Chancellor O P Jindal Global University</p>	 <p>Prof Mark E Smith Vice Chancellor University of Southampton</p>
 <p>Prof Dawn Freshwater Vice Chancellor University of Auckland</p>	 <p>Prof C Muthamizhchelvan Vice-Chancellor SRM Institute of Science and Technology</p>

Key findings from the QS India Summit 2024

- 1 India will play a key role in the future of higher education. 25% of school age children worldwide are Indian while the Indian government's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) will stimulate an increase in quality universities domestically, many of those children will have to study abroad for their higher education.
- 2 Strategic, equitable international partnerships will be crucial to the success of Indian and global universities – there is a particular opportunity for collaboration between American and Indian universities. Constructive partnerships will support the development of trans-national education, research impact and academic quality.
- 3 Employers have identified skills gaps among the Indian graduates they hire. Lifelong learning opportunities will help ensure a more productive workforce and create a more equitable society.
- 4 To further bridge skills gaps, Indian universities must foster stronger partnerships with industry. Understanding the needs of employers will help universities improve their graduates' outcomes.
- 5 Indian universities should consider establishing offices for sponsored research and consultancy efforts to better articulate the resource, capability, and quality of their faculty.
- 6 VB2047 "aims to make India greener and cleaner". The Indian higher education sector, and global universities partnering with Indian institutions, must implement sustainable policies and strategies to enable these efforts.

Continue the conversation about Indian higher education.

Join us for the QS India Summit 2025 in Goa.

Register today

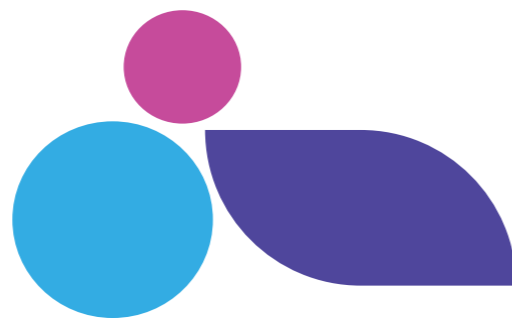


In the meantime, explore how QS can help you realise your international education strategy in India.

Find out more

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“
The positive momentum driving Indian higher education institutions continues to build with institutions rising in prominence.
”

Jessica Turner,
Chief Executive Officer,
QS Quacquarelli Symonds

Executive summary

by Jessica Turner, QS Chief Executive Officer

The QS India Summit 2024 was truly remarkable in its nature, not just because of the town that we were in – the historic Mahabalipuram – but also the diverse representation present, all keen to be part of India's dynamic higher education journey.

It was wonderful to bring so many university leaders, experts, government representatives and education enablers from across the globe together to explore the striking breadth and scale of opportunities ahead for Indian higher education.

Over the past two years, there have been a series of new projects and policies with the aim of transforming Indian higher education:

- 1. The expedited implementation of the NEP 2020** which promotes the use of mother tongue in teaching, provides students with multiple entry and exit points in courses and eases PhD rules.
- 2. The launch of the initial draft for the National Credit Framework** which aims to integrate academic education and skilling.
- 3. The advancement towards the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)** facilitating a digital repository of students' credits earned throughout their educational journey.
- 4. Increased budget allocation** for the Department of Higher Education for 2024-2025 at a whopping INR 47,610 crore (\$5.7 billion USD), with a focus on digital India and research and innovation.
- 5. Establishment of Centres of Excellence in AI** in educational institutions to promote multidisciplinary research in agriculture, health, and sustainable cities, supporting the NEP 2020 vision.



- 6. The move to a Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP)** from the 2023-24 academic session, with over 105 universities adopting it.
- 7. The establishment of the first branch campuses of global universities** and advancing legislation that allows international campuses of world class universities to operate within India, responding to the huge demand for closer collaboration with higher education institutions globally.

India truly is on the ascent. After a remarkable 2023, we've started to see the impact of the VB2047 masterplan in 2024. This visionary document laid down India's ambitious plan to transform the nation into a developed entity by the centenary of its independence in 2047. VB2047 encompasses diverse facets of development such as economic prosperity, social advancement, environmental sustainability, and effective governance.

As QS, we are a partner to higher education institutions, to governments and to students around the world – helping motivated people to realise their ambitions, and institutions to excel. We help institutions to find and enrol the right students, to communicate their strengths and build their reputations, to engage globally to support employability success, and deliver sustainable outcomes.

Both QS and our founder and president Nunzio Quacquarelli have long standing ties to India's higher education community.

- We're honoured to have been working with Indian institutions since QS was founded almost 35 years ago.
- Our annual India Summit is an expanding thought leadership forum for the world to network with India.
- We are present and invest in human capital with over a third of our global team based in our Mumbai and Bangalore centres of excellence, and additional sites across India.
- We operate India's first private sector higher education and education rating system called QS I-GAUGE which helps to inspire and to push Indian institutions to achieve global standards.
- We support Indian students to realise their ambitions globally and institutions around the world to communicate their message to students, partners and alumni in India.
- Our TopUniversities website saw 9 million visits from Indian students, including those looking at the QS rankings, which is really the primary source of data on university excellence used by students.

The positive momentum driving Indian higher education institutions continues to build with institutions rising in prominence and building their global impact, creating and expanding the innovative partnerships, joint degree programmes, research, collaborations and exchange programmes which enrich the personal, academic and professional development of students and faculty across the world.

As with every higher education ecosystem in the world, there remains some real opportunities. Some of our data shows us that there's great potential for deeper industry – academia collaboration – with a third of current industry partnerships concentrated in the 10 Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). There is also scope for institutions to focus more on their sustainability performance and potential, with India's sustainability credentials needing a stronger push.

However, given the ambitions for economic transformation and growth, it is perhaps graduate outcomes which represent the most salient opportunity for India's colleges and universities. Respondents to the QS International Student Survey 2023 said that their three most important career considerations when choosing a university are: 'It allows me to learn new skills', 'It will help me to build a professional network' and 'it will give me international experience.'

All of these are opportunities which can be further strengthened through meaningful partnership and collaboration – the key theme of our Summit and this year's report.

It is our hope that this report acts as a springboard for meaningful and long-lasting collaboration and community between universities and industry partners; between universities within India and universities globally; and between yourselves and QS.

Ministerial address delivered at QS India Summit 2024

by His Excellency Dr Subhas Sarkar, Minister of State for Education Government of India



Dr Subhas Sarkar
Honourable Minister of State for Education, Government of India

The spirit of collaboration remains strong as we gather to discuss unleashing the potential of partnership and collaboration in Indian higher education, hosted by the SRM Institute of Science and Technology.

This Summit represents a pivotal moment in our collective pursuit of excellence and collaboration in Indian higher education. Together, we're shaping the future of education in our nation. In the 21st century, education serves as the foundation of progress and prosperity. As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, it is imperative that we embrace innovation and foster a culture of collaboration.

Excellence in education goes beyond academic achievements. It encompasses critical thinking, creativity, and a sense of responsibility towards society. The theme of this Summit - empowering excellence - resonates deeply with our shared vision for the future of education in India.

I commend Dr Ashwin Fernandes and the entire organising team for their dedication and hard work in making this event a success. Reflecting on our achievements, allow me to share some statistics from the latest all-India survey on higher education. With over 11,068 universities and 45,000 colleges, our higher education ecosystem continues to expand and flourish. The surge in enrolment across diverse disciplines underscores our commitment to providing quality education to every aspiring learner.

Under the visionary leadership of honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi the NEP 2020 was launched, marking the beginning of a transformative journey to develop our education system. The NEP 2020 serves as a guiding light championing principles of inclusivity, equity, quality, flexibility and relevance. Together we are working towards creating a more dynamic and globally competitive education system in an increasingly interconnected world.

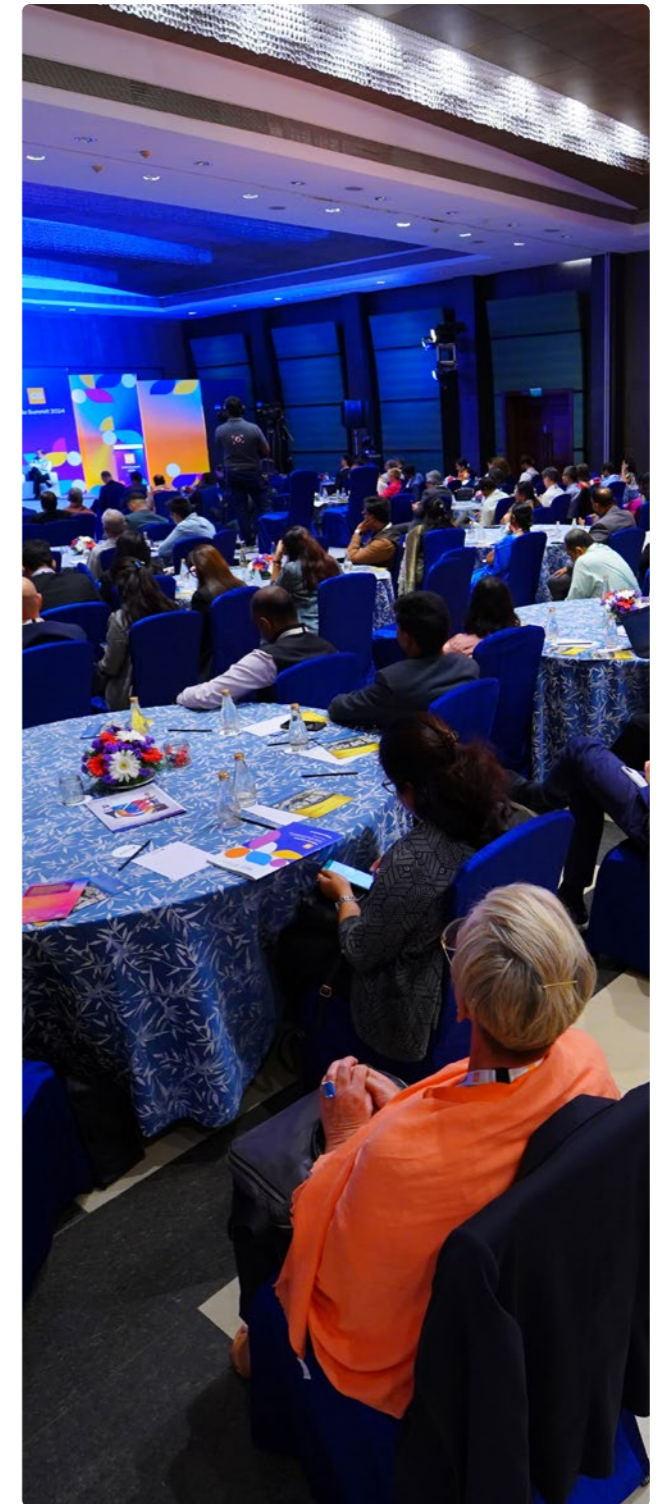
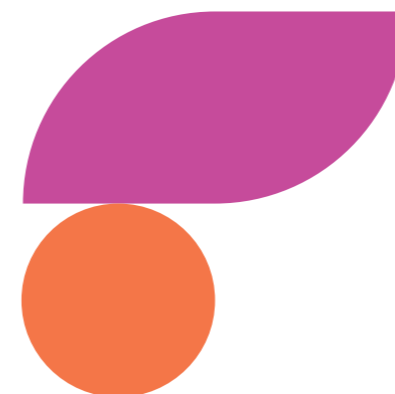
In the 21st century, education serves as the foundation of progress and prosperity.

The internationalisation of higher education holds paramount importance in India's new education policy. It underscores the significance of global collaboration and engagement in enhancing the quality and relevance of our academic institutions. Through strategic initiatives, such as promoting global collaborations, facilitating academic mobility, recognizing international qualifications and integrating global best practices, we are positioning India as a premier destination for higher education on the global stage.

Let us re-affirm our commitment to excellence, inclusivity and innovation in higher education. Let us leverage the transformative power of partnership and collaboration to unlock new opportunities and propel India to greater heights.

As we embark on this journey together, I invite each of you to engage in thoughtful discussions and explore avenues for collaboration. Together, let us shape a future where education knows no bounds, and every individual has the opportunity to realize their fullest potential.

May your deliberations unleash the true potential of partnership and collaboration in India.



Higher education's role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Dr Veezhinathan Kamakoti PhD, the Director of the Institute of Technology Madras (IITM) took to the stage to discuss strategies that progress Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality Education.



Dr Veezhinathan Kamakoti PhD
 Director, Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM)

We have close to 6,000 courses in engineering, science and technology disciplines, open for any student across the globe to take.

India has the youngest population in the age group of 15 to 35, and it is very important for us today to ensure that education is done correctly for this population. If we mess that up, we may become potentially an uneducated nation in the next 10 years, which will have its own repercussions. What are some activities we're doing to stop that happening?

SDG 4's full title is
"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all."

Technology-enhanced learning

I come from the Indian Institute of Technology - There are 23 Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) in the country. Close to 1.5 million aspirants take our entrance exam, and 20,000 of them get seats in the IITs. What do we do for the remaining 1.48 million who are not given an opportunity to study with us? In 2003, as a collective, IITs put together a national certificate programme for technology-enhanced learning and today we have close to 6,000 courses in engineering, science and technology disciplines, which is open for any student across the globe to take. Whatever educational background, whatever class, the session is recorded from a premium higher education institution and accessible at a low cost.

We also conduct online examinations, and we give them the certificate. The University Grants Commission and the All India Council for Technical Education has now permitted every institution to have 40% credit for online education. So, any student doing an undergraduate programme in these colleges can gather 40% of their credit through online courses.



Key stats

1.4m
students taking online courses yearly

\$15USD
per course

1.69bn
views

6,000+
courses recorded, with nearly

65,000
hours of video with English subtitles

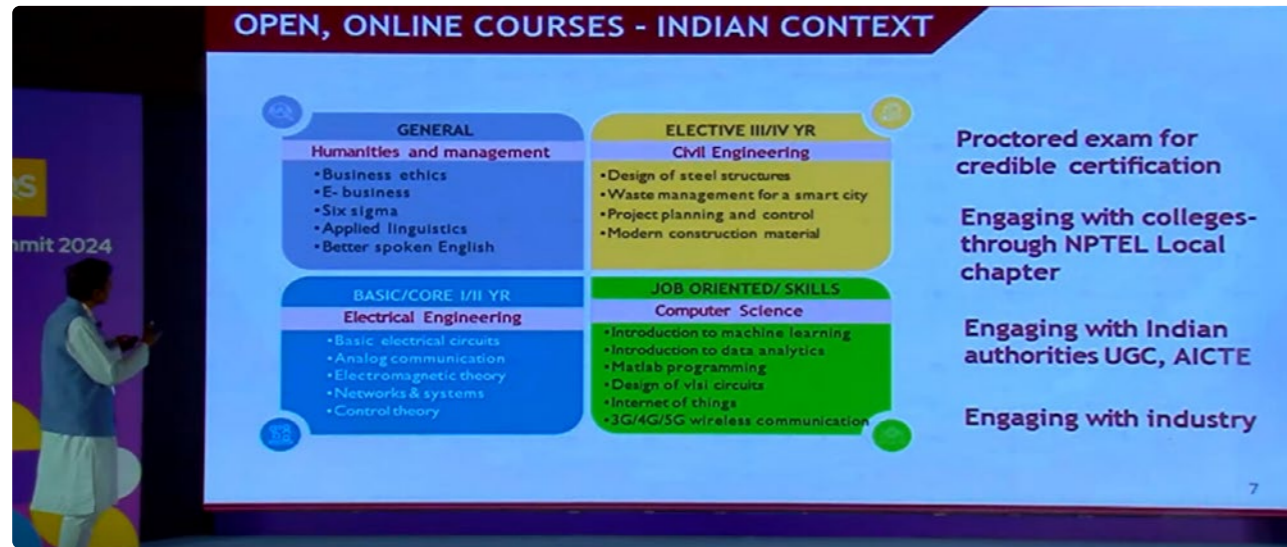
3,535,000
exam registrations

25,500,000
enrolments in free courses

88%
of students who enrol take the examinations and

70%
pass

QS Reimagine Education Gold winner



This is not just an online platform that gives you video lectures. We give them regular assignments, where we evaluate them. There are live sessions by the faculty. They have a proctored examination.

We run courses across multiple disciplines. You could have a lot of electives that you can take at the third and fourth year for example. We have basic and core subjects that they take on first and second year, and a lot of job-oriented programmes that they can take. We cover the entire gamut of core elective general courses and job-oriented courses across the engineering discipline. My request to the global fraternity is "can we make this national programme for technology and as a global programme? Multiple universities - can we all join together? Can we make this an international platform?"

Following that success, we are now looking at degree programmes, asking "can a student come and take a degree from a premier institution?" According to the US Bureau of Labour statistics, there will be 11.5 million jobs in data science to be open by 2026, we are trying to create scalable solutions to develop the human capacity in India. We have launched two programmes. One is the BS in Data Science and Applications and another is a BS in Electronic Systems.

You may be wondering how admission works. Simply, students take an eligibility test - there is no age cap. Our national education policy has allowed multiple entries and multiple exits so people can come at any age after 17. There is an 82-year-old grandpa who is taking this course.

- After the first year - students develop fundamental knowledge, exit with a certificate
- Year two - exit with two diplomas
- Year three - exit with a BSc degree
- Year four - BS degree, and become an alumnus of IIT Madras

Today more than 22,000 students have enrolled, and 50% of these students are below the poverty line. We also give scholarships, subsidised to almost 75% of the fees. For many of these students, a higher education degree could not have been possible without a serious intervention.

Reaching rural India

We also do activity in Indian schools. There are lots of students in rural India, and we want to reach them. The NEP 2020 states that the gross enrolment ratio of students who cross from school into higher education must improve from the current 27% to 50% in the next 10 years. It's important that we reach these people at the grassroot level, interact with their parents and take it forward.

To do this, we have opened nearly 200 rural interaction centres. Every evening our alumni network, volunteers, and school teachers can virtually interact with children from rural areas. They motivate them towards higher education, and alleviate parental concerns.

Within one year of intervention, we are seeing the pass percentage increase from 50% to 98% in these institutions.

Nurturing engineering skills

India needs a lot of electronic engineers, but we've found that kids are more attracted towards machine learning and artificial intelligence. We need to really create more enthusiasm among kids for electronics - so, in partnership with the Tamil Nadu government, we have identified 250 schools, and we are giving them IIT Madras in-house made electronic kits to each of these schools, and the kids in that class will perform 100 electronics experiments. At the end of this they will have enough knowledge of electronics so that they can clear the first three years of Electronics and Communication BTech without any issue.

Now we are targeting 100 students per class, 400 students per school, 100,000 students per year. That's a massive rollout programme that we have done. We believe that in the next two years, we'll have 25,000 students coming out every year. Assuming 20% of them are interested in electronics, we will have 5,000 Electronics enthusiasts in this and that is how we are trying to build in the core capacity right from the school level.

Celebrating linguistic-diversity through education

We believe educating in the mother tongue is very important, but with India having 22 spoken languages, it can be difficult to navigate. When we look at the competitive examinations versus school examination, there are some small gaps which we need to fill. We have identified an issue in students' mathematics exams, where more complex questions can leave students unable to answer questions - if a question involves trigonometry, calculus and vector algebra, but a student forgets one topic, they are unable to solve it.

We try to bridge this gap and that we record this in English. Now we have a project called "Bhashini", where we translate English into the 22 Indian languages and lip sync it so the same video will now be put into the different mother tongues so that different students from different parts of India can partake. This is how we are trying to address the linguistic divide, which is very, very important if we are to implement SDG 4 in its full spirit.

We have lots of learning experience - we have been doing it for more than a decade, we'll share our experience. We know you would have similar experiences. We should pull together and try to make a global platform that will comprehensively address SDG 4.



Bridging the Gap: Nurturing Industry-Academia Partnerships



“I think that the combination of work-integrated learning in the curriculum should be a requirement prior to graduation.”

Professor Saurabh Sinha
Executive Dean, Engineering, University of Canterbury, New Zealand

“We need to ensure that partnerships are adding widely recognised value to both partners, to ensure that they become about the organisations rather than the individuals involved.”

Professor Ian White
Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Bath, UK

“In order to bridge this gap, institutions need to ensure that what we’re teaching aligns very well with industry demands.”

Dr Sekar Viswanathan
Vice-President, VIT University, India

Key insights

- With Indian employers identifying skills gaps in the graduates they hire, academia-industry partnerships can be used to close those gaps.
- But, partnerships can be challenging to set up and maintain. Partnership stakeholders should build a robust partnership from the start, being careful not to over-rely on individuals.
- The opportunity provided by such partnership is great for students, businesses and universities. Students receive relevant teaching, businesses can utilise the resources of universities, while universities themselves benefit financially and can better serve their key audiences.

The higher education sector is uniquely placed to holistically develop students for the uncharted territories of our globalised world. Strong academia-industry partnerships help equip students with the skills they require to thrive in a career in the knowledge age, but there’s room to collaborate more closely, according to experts.

‘Bridging the Gap: Nurturing Industry-Academia Partnerships’, a panel at QS India Summit 2024, explored how education institutions can collaborate with industry for regional economic growth and close skills gaps.

In the QS Global Employer Survey 2023, Indian companies identified skills gaps in problem-solving, communication, teamwork and active learning among graduates.

QS data, detailed by QS CEO Jessica Turner, highlighted the current skills gap: “Comparing the data in India versus other places in the world, the gap between employers’ expectations and students’ performance was a bit smaller than some other places in the world – and smaller than some countries in Asia. That is great news.”

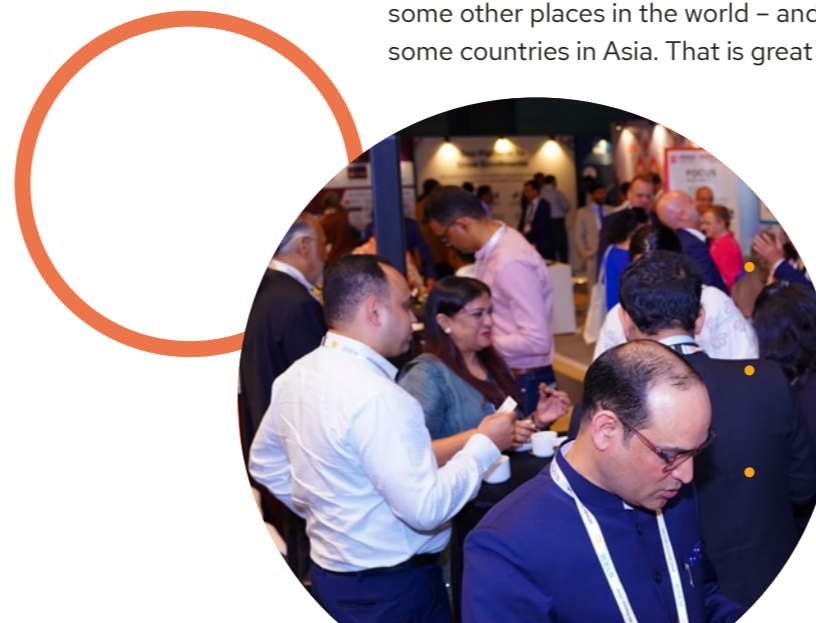
The value of partnerships

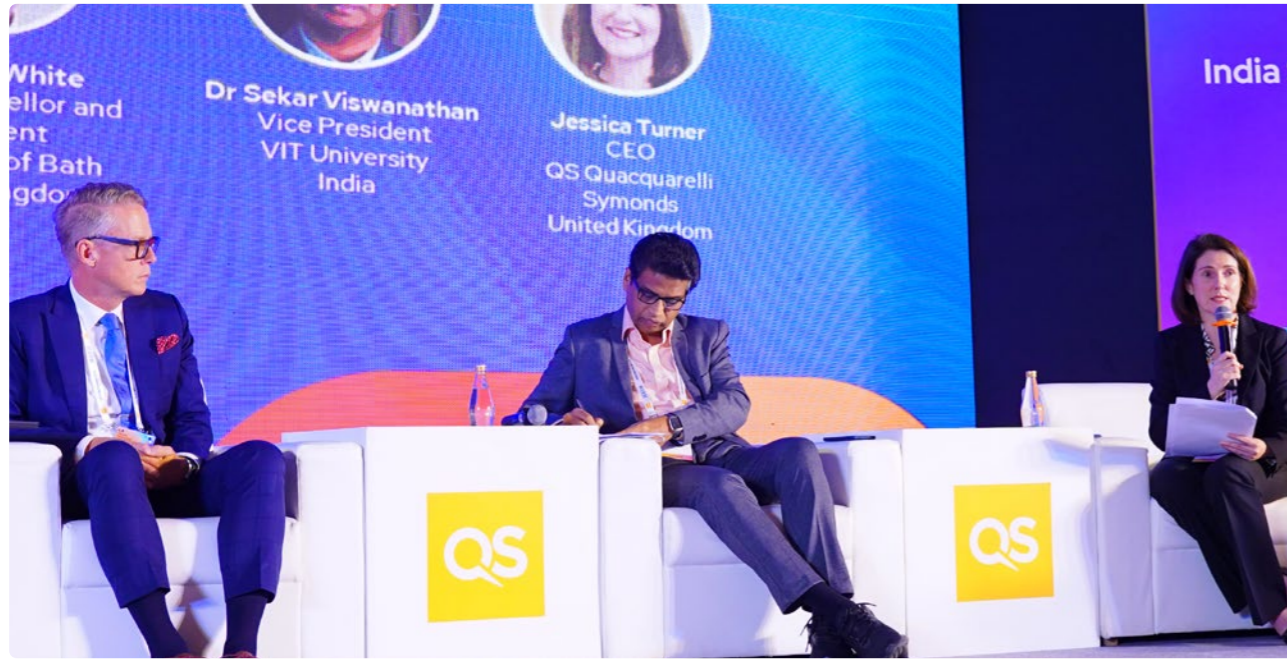
The value of academia-industry partnerships was fully recognised by the experts on the panel.

- Partnerships help students understand the value of their academic learning, and how they can use that in the world of work
- Through partnership, universities can ensure they better serve society through research opportunities and innovations.
- True collaboration between universities and industry helps universities know they are meeting industry demands and delivering education that gives students the skills they need to thrive.

Identifying opportunities

Though clearly valued, panellists said partnerships can be a challenge due to a disconnect between industry and academia in India, with both operating independently – akin to sitting on “separate ivory towers”. Taking care not to blame academia or industry, the experts recognised that each sector have their own areas of work, and collaboration can be difficult. To remedy this, experts said academics could reach out to industry as a first step.





Navigating challenges and looking ahead

Institutional and organisational relationships require a long-term commitment. What challenges do universities face when sustaining these partnerships over a long period of time?

The pace of higher education was identified as a challenge. "Although the higher education sector can be fast, sometimes our processes can affect our pace," one expert said. Partnerships can only flourish when both parties can react effectively while maintaining their culture and good governance.

Partnerships between industry and academia may be undermined if they are over-reliant on particular individuals - people moving on in their career can cause a breakdown in communication. This is particularly problematic if those that leave are senior leaders, as their replacements may have different strategies and priorities.

Wider economic changes and fluctuations within sectors can lead to changes in business priorities, processes, redundancies and other disruptive outcomes.

Ensuring that the value of partnerships and the work to maintain them is recognised by both parties and senior stakeholders is key to partnership's continued success.

How can Indian institutions facilitate partnerships across India?

Indian experts on the panel identified that universities should create offices for sponsored research and industry consultancy efforts - two key ways industry and academia collaborate. These offices would explain the built-in potential of universities' faculty and students and highlight the capabilities of educational institutions.

To promote the idea of partnerships within universities, experts said that focusing on how they benefit graduate outcomes will be useful. "The combination of work-integrated learning in the curriculum should be a requirement prior to graduation," one panellist said.

Closing the Indian student skills gap with collaboration

Key insights

- The Indian employers we surveyed say teamwork, communication, problem solving, active learning and interpersonal skills are the most important skills for graduates to have.
- The importance of these skills is higher for Indian employers than for the average global employer, indicating strong demand for work-ready graduates. For all of these top skills, Indian employers are, on some level, dissatisfied with their graduates' abilities, evidencing a skills gap.
- To meet industry demands, Indian universities should ensure their graduates have these skills and they are able to articulate their proficiency.

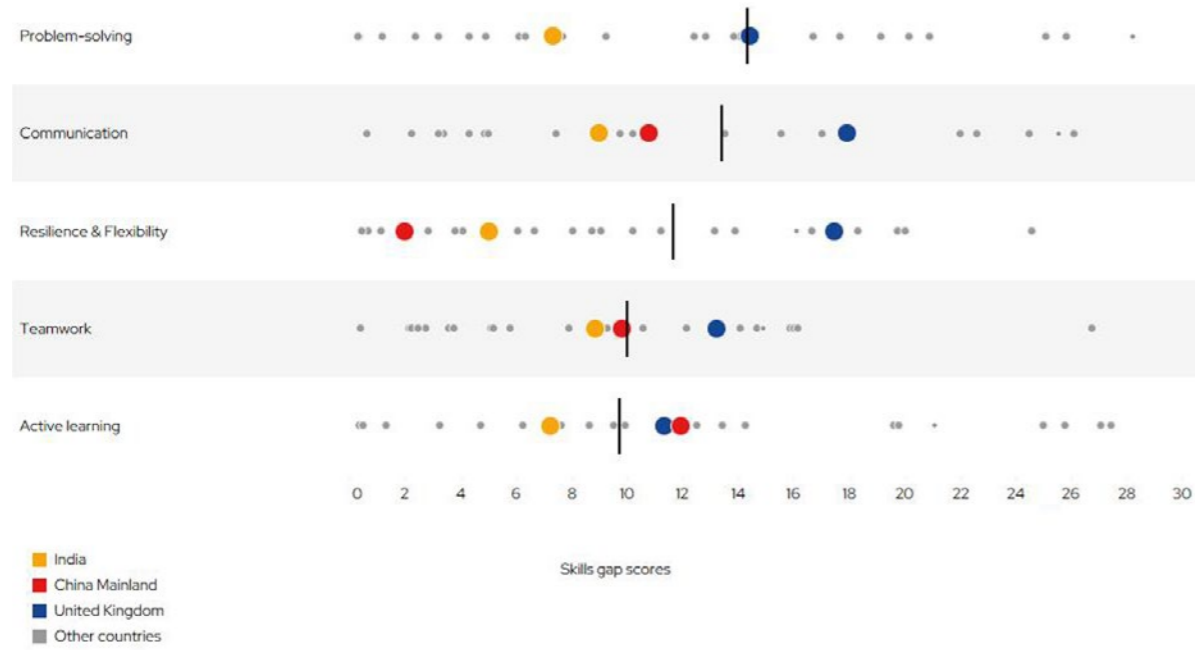
Across all of the top five largest global skills gaps, India has a smaller skills gap than the global average.

Collaboration is a topic on the minds of university leaders around the world, with Indian institutions being no different. Partnership is an invaluable tool for universities trying to improve their student recruitment, global engagement, graduate outcomes.

Already discussed in this report is the relationship between academia and industry. In Chennai, panellists discussed how universities working with businesses can help close emerging skills gaps. Automation and Generative AI are being increasingly embedded across workflows, potentially causing skills gaps to widen at an accelerated pace. With over 40 million university students in India, identifying and closing skills gaps can be a real challenge without data. At the QS India Summit, QS CEO Jessica Turner outlined the data we've gathered from our Global Employer Survey. Exclusively for this report, we're publishing further insights and details.

Existing skills gaps and how to close them

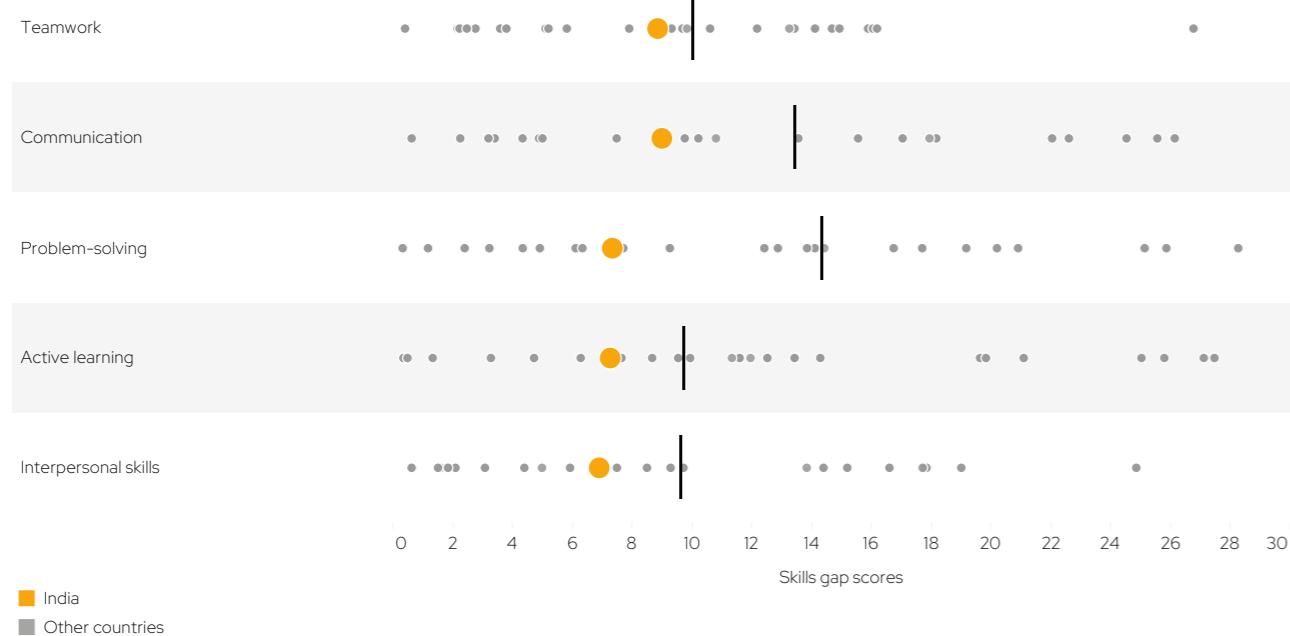
Using our data, we can understand the skills employers want from graduates and the degree to which those skills are present in the graduates they employ. With data from the QS Global Employer Survey from 2021 to 2023, we can see some trends emerging from our preliminary analysis.



For Indian institutions, there is good news here. Across all of the top five largest global skills gaps, India has a smaller skills gap than the global average, indicated by the black vertical line, and performs well compared to China and the UK.

Similarly, Indian graduates perform well in the top five most important skills for Indian employers.

Of course, this data also highlights room for improvements. While Indian universities are clearly preparing their graduates with the soft skills necessary, employers remain slightly dissatisfied. Embedding the development of these skills into the curriculum explicitly will further reduce these skills gaps. At the QS India Summit, Jessica outlined the opportunity partnerships between academia and industry presents to also help close these gaps: "Exposure to industry, work placements, the ability to do collaborative research projects, and internships can give students the skills seen as lacking."



Enabling students to articulate their skills for success

In some cases, students do already have the skills employers are looking for but aren't able to assess and articulate their skillset. The newest QS acquisition, 1Mentor, helps students explore career pathways and understand the skills they need to stand out in the job market.

After using 1Mentor, there was a 50% increase in students' identification of soft skills like decision-making. Indian universities can empower students to articulate and understand the human skills they already possess to improve graduate outcomes.

Better understanding the needs of industry – be that in India or abroad – ambitious Indian universities can close skill gaps and enhance graduates' job-readiness.

Impact on students' understanding of the skills employers look for:

32% Without 1Mentor only 32% of students rate their understanding above 7/10.

90% With 1Mentor 90% of students rate their understanding 9/10.





“Global partnerships are going to be critical to meeting this challenge.”

Ben Sowter,
Senior Vice President,
QS Quacquarelli Symonds

Partnerships between Indian and global institutions can solve the upcoming teaching crisis

Key insights

- India, with a rapidly growing population, has 25% of the world’s school-age children. The country doesn’t have the capacity for all of them to go into higher education domestically. Innovative partnerships will be crucial to educate the next generation.
- To forge new partnerships, Indian universities must create global engagement strategies to ensure they’re ready for partnerships with international universities.
- Using QS data and International Research Network scores, we have identified opportunities for Indian universities to improve their global engagement.

India is a spectacular country on a spectacular trajectory. It has so much to offer the world, with plentiful intellectual and material resources. But it’s facing a very real and fast-arriving challenge. Its rapidly growing population means India has 25% of the world’s schoolchildren. How will it educate them?

In 2020, India released its National Education Policy, aiming to transform education in the country by 2035. To achieve its goals and annually teach the agreed number of Indian students, India would need to create two new universities that can teach 20,000 students every week between now and 2035.

The problem is not going to be solved in India alone. There isn’t enough real estate, faculty, or student demand for brand new universities. So, global partnerships are going to be critical to meeting this challenge. India has already overtaken China as the top source of international students in the UK and the USA, according to the UK Home Office, and the US Department of Homeland Security. Whether they stay at the top remains to be seen but it’s clear – many Indian students will have to go abroad for their higher education.

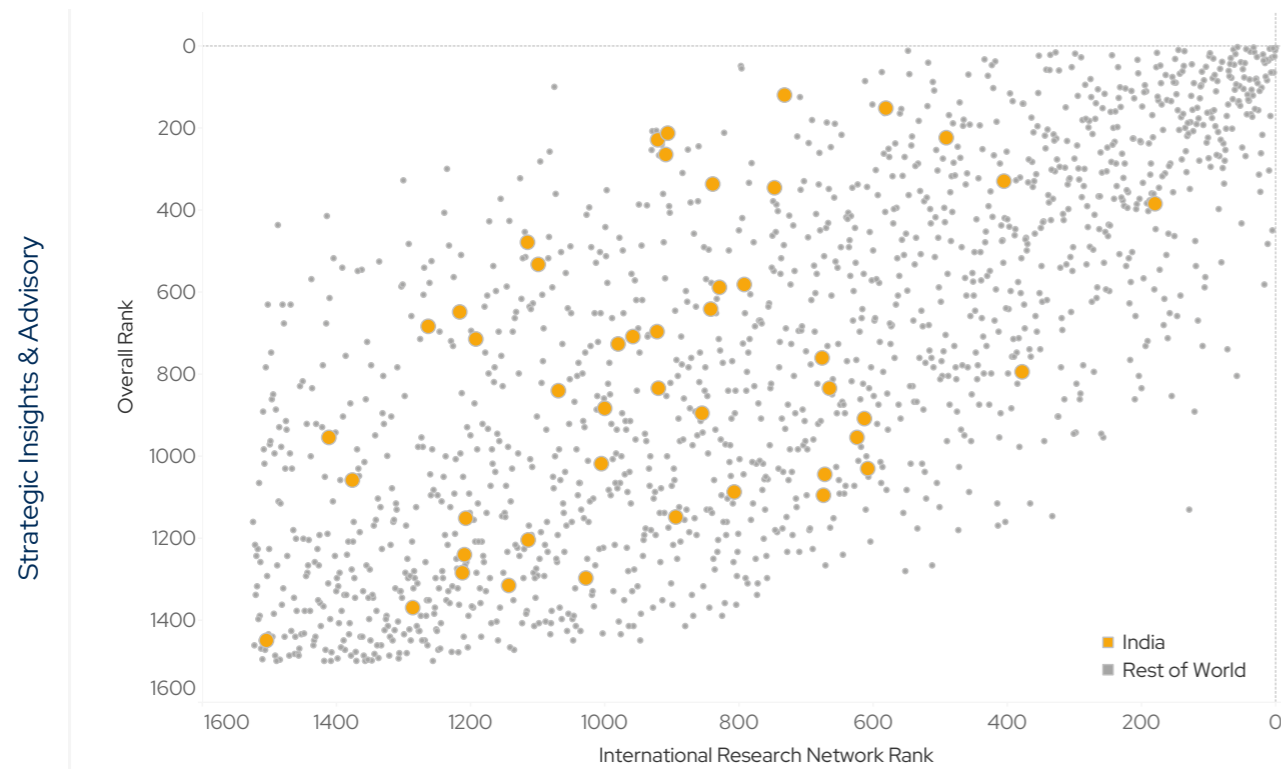
Global engagement between universities to solve societal issues

A well-executed global engagement strategy benefits multiple facets of institutional performance.

What can great global engagement do for your institution?

- Develop partnerships for international campuses
- Enhance your institution’s reputation
- Establish international alumni networks
- Diversify classroom perspectives by welcoming more international students and academics
- Attract world-class talent
- Create career opportunities for your staff and students

Partnerships are forged and strengthened through global engagement. I said it during my session at the QS India Summit: “It’s impossible to be the very best you can be without the support and collaboration of others.”



Using QS data, we can map Indian institutions QS World University Rankings position against their International Research Network (IRN) rank. The IRN is a measure of global engagement, and specifically of how institutions create and sustain research partnerships resulting in internationally published research. What the data shows is that global engagement correlates closely to overall ranking position, but Indian universities haven't yet optimised their global engagement strategies.

It's innovations like remote campuses that will solve India's impending education crisis. It's the trans-national education agreements. It's the unique digital study options being worked up as you read this.

That's the way forward. An Indian higher education sector with robust ties to global institutions. Now, it's up to the universities and influential friends of the sector to come together and chart a globally enabled path forward, ready for the future.

At the Summit, I saw the ambition of Indian universities to improve their global engagement through partnership with institutions worldwide. We were privileged to have a strong group of leaders join us in Mahabalipuram, from the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand and across Asia. I know they discussed partnerships in various forms, including seriously considering setting up campuses in India as the NEP 2020 now allows.



Forming new ties

A central theme of the QS India Summit 2024 was the importance of collaboration – evident in the formation and expansion of partnerships throughout the event. The University of Sheffield is a prime example, with Professor Koen Lamberts, the University's President and Vice-Chancellor, sharing his reflections on the event and the partnerships forged.

"The conference was a fantastic opportunity to engage with colleagues from the UK, QS, and a host of international universities. We made some invaluable connections with Indian institutions. We are already in the process of following up and considering what Sheffield's engagement will look like. Needless to say, meeting such a diverse and insightful group of institutions is constantly shaping Sheffield's activity in India, and this is a strategic focus for the University in the coming years."

Contact us and realise your international education strategy in India



Improving bilateral relations between the universities of global superpowers

Leaders of Indian and American universities sat down to discuss how to forge strong partnerships between institutions in the two nations.



Key insights

- Partnerships between faculty at Indian and US institutions is a common and successful way to collaborate, but institutions should put measures in place to ensure they are not over-reliant on individuals.
- The global perception of India needs updating to reflect how the nation has evolved.
- There is real opportunity for collaboration between the second and third tier cities in India and the US.
- Virtual learning has removed barriers to India – US partnership. Universities should explore opportunities to have students collaborate without having to physically travel to each other's country.

There's every opportunity now to bring India into the classroom.

In many ways, the relationship between the higher education sectors of India and the USA is already strong. According to the Open Doors Report (ODR), the number of international students travelling from India to the United States increased by 35% and resulted in an all-time high of 268,923 students in academic year 2022-23.

But how can they be improved? A truly bi-lateral relationship would be less one-sided. In January 2024, the Association of American Universities (AAU) published a report titled "Task force report on expanding US-India Partnerships" - at the QS India Summit, we hosted a breakfast with leaders from universities based in both nations and discussed the report and how to strengthen US - India collaboration.

[Read the Taskforce report](#)

Faculty-to-faculty collaboration

One common theme throughout the meeting was the prevalence of faculty-to-faculty collaboration and the opportunity that presents. Indian university leaders identified that 'no one' wanted to collaborate with small universities 15 years ago, meaning that faculty-to-faculty collaboration was key. For one university, 85% of their SCOPUS publications use international research collaboration, and that collaboration is typically faculty-to-faculty.

Throughout the bi-lateral meeting, it was identified that grassroots faculty partnership development was the "only" way, with one industry leader saying that there is always faculty-led collaboration, be that a student mobility or research partnership, because "someone has to take ownership."

What challenges are holding back collaboration between Indian and US universities?

Financial challenges were identified as the main difficulty. In the US, external funding has become increasingly competitive, making the ambition to forge a robust research partnership between the two countries difficult.

Student mobility also poses difficulties. According to one American university leader, US undergraduate students are hesitant to study in India, highlighting that perceived cultural differences are too large.

Faculty-to-faculty collaborations can be extremely powerful beyond institutional collaboration.

Of course, this can cause issues. One American university leader said "the problem with faculty-to-faculty interaction is that it's personality driven. If that faculty leaves your institution, the partnership ends. It is the responsibility of the internationalisation office at your university to find those linkages across departments and faculties."

The leader proposed two solutions:

- Bring affinity groups of faculty together, pulling in multiple disciplines to broaden the partnerships and ensure they're less reliant on individuals
- Indian universities should consider scaling up their internationalisation offices to better facilitate partnerships.

To nurture strong partnerships, experts said:

- Build research partnerships between US and Indian universities first, and allow academic articulation to flow from that. This will then improve student mobility.
- Re-think what a partnership can look like. For example, where there's a partnership between two universities, give students a common assignment, and have them work together virtually. This, then, breaks down the cost of student mobility.



Dr Edward Harcourt, Senior Vice President of Student Recruitment at QS highlighted the importance of digital learning. “The walls of the classroom have really fallen down. So, students may still be reluctant to travel and spend time in India, but there’s every opportunity now to bring in India into the classroom and to make it a required part of the curriculum. I think that opportunity is now self-evident.”

India as a research destination

Research partnerships were identified as another avenue for partnerships. For example, India is a biodiversity hotspot and so provides fruitful research opportunities for climate change research. “That’s a strength in India,” a Vice-Chancellor of an Indian university said, “think of India as a lab.”

An Executive Director of an Indian business school said that, by identifying societal challenges and aligning their work to solving them, they’ve created opportunities to work with industry.

Realising India’s unique selling points as a research destination, and having Indian universities align their research resources to industry needs may prove beneficial in improving bilateral relations between the US and India.



Join us at the QS India Summit 2025

Innovating interactions: Interdisciplinary research and education collaboration best practices

by Gauri Kohli

Transforming higher education in India through interdisciplinary research and collaboration



“It is our responsibility to create the environment to foster the growth of this form of research.”

Professor Colin Bailey
President and Principal,
Queen Mary University of London

“Our graduates also need to be effective communicators with digital competence and they must be industry connected and career capable.”

Professor Melinda Fitzgerald
Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research,
Curtin University

“You have to be prepared to change how you allocate resources, how you manage activities, how you divide those activities, how you carve them up, and ultimately how you thereby guide people towards certain behaviours.”

Professor Koen Lamberts
President and Vice-Chancellor,
University of Sheffield

Key insights

- Interdisciplinary graduates, nurtured by progressive universities, will be the ones equipped to solve the world’s most pressing challenges.
- The necessary skills are not just academic. Soft skills, and generic hard skills – such as technological proficiency – will also be key for the future.
- University leaders are the ones to instil transdisciplinary thinking among their faculty and graduates.

The world’s most pressing challenges, such as climate change, pandemics and sustainable development, require solutions that transcend individual disciplines. Recognising this, India is leveraging interdisciplinary research to internationalise its higher education system.

Recent initiatives like the NEP 2020 encourage Indian institutions to promote interdisciplinary research, enabling them to engage more effectively in global dialogues and attract international recognition. It also steers institutions towards increased competitiveness, enhanced research outcomes and improved student learning experiences.

On stage at the QS India Summit 2024, experts reaffirmed this sentiment in a panel discussion.



Why cross-discipline research is important

Cross-disciplinary collaboration in global research and education particularly in the context of expanding operations in India, is very important.

Using the example of NEP 2020, which is built on the five pillars of access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability, experts agreed that the policy also promotes multidisciplinary education and research in India.

The Anusandhan National Research Foundation Bill 2023 in India also focuses on this. Experts agreed that it is university leaders’ responsibility to create the environment to foster the growth of this form of research.

Universities that consistently produce impactful interdisciplinary research gain international recognition and prestige. This can lead to increased student and faculty mobility, partnerships with top universities abroad, and ultimately, a more internationalised higher education sector in India.

Global challenges won’t be solved alone, panellists agreed. Bringing together different disciplines within and outside universities to address challenges such as climate change, health inequalities, water and food security and the ethical use of AI.

Challenges that come along the way

As the top sender of students abroad and with increasing attention on internationalising higher education by national and state governments, India is positioned to play a significant role in shaping global academic landscapes. However, to succeed, universities must address challenges in implementing strategies to boost multi-stream research and collaborative education.

The main challenges are:

- The siloed education system
- The rigid structure of the Indian education system with its emphasis on compartmentalised learning discourages interdisciplinary education from an early age.
- The discipline-based department structure in institutions can create barriers to implementing diverse and multi-stream programmes.
- India’s linguistic diversity can also pose a lot of challenges in communication and collaboration, especially when faculty and students are from different regions.
- Many Indian universities lack dedicated centres or resources for research and teaching. There is need to create more multi-disciplinary faculty positions and the institutions need to fund more research and collaborative initiatives.

More efforts needed to create transdisciplinary graduates

Having faculty and students that specialise in different disciplines can help solve large-scale problems, panellists agreed. This means breaking down siloes, which in itself is a challenge. Allocation of resources, work management, and having to create new behaviours among the university community were all identified as hurdles.

The panellists also discussed if ‘transdisciplinary graduates’ exist and what the graduate profile of the future will look like. The panellists agreed with QS data identifying the key skills employers want, and graduates need to succeed. They should be innovative, creative, and entrepreneurial, globally engaged and responsive, effective communicators with digital competence, and industry-connected and career-capable. This would create graduates that are able to apply their knowledge to the workplace.

Globally, the top five most important soft skills identified by employers are:

Teamwork

Communication

Problem-solving

Active learning

Ethics and social responsibility

Source: QS Global Employer Survey 2023



Social impact and community engagement

Driving sustainable development through social impact and community engagement



Key insights

- Indian universities have an opportunity to improve their social impact.
- Engaging with local communities and solving the problems that matter to them is crucial for universities' social ambitions.
- Widening participation in higher education is an important way universities can maximise their social impact.

An opportunity knocks

The QS International Student Survey 2023 highlights the importance of community engagement in promoting sustainability awareness among students, with a majority (68%) expecting universities to foster student participation in local community initiatives for social sustainability.

Data gathered for the QS World University Rankings: Sustainability 2024 reveals an opportunity for Indian universities to enhance their sustainability efforts. There's a disparity in the social impact performance of leading Indian institutions compared to their counterparts in Japan, Singapore, and South Korea.

Leaders from UK and Indian universities took to the stage at the QS India Summit to explore what activities universities are already doing, and how they can continue to deliver social impact.

“We have to get people to understand — from the get-go — that university is something for them too, so they can go on to do great things.”

Professor Claire O'Malley
Pro-Vice Chancellor (Global),
Durham University

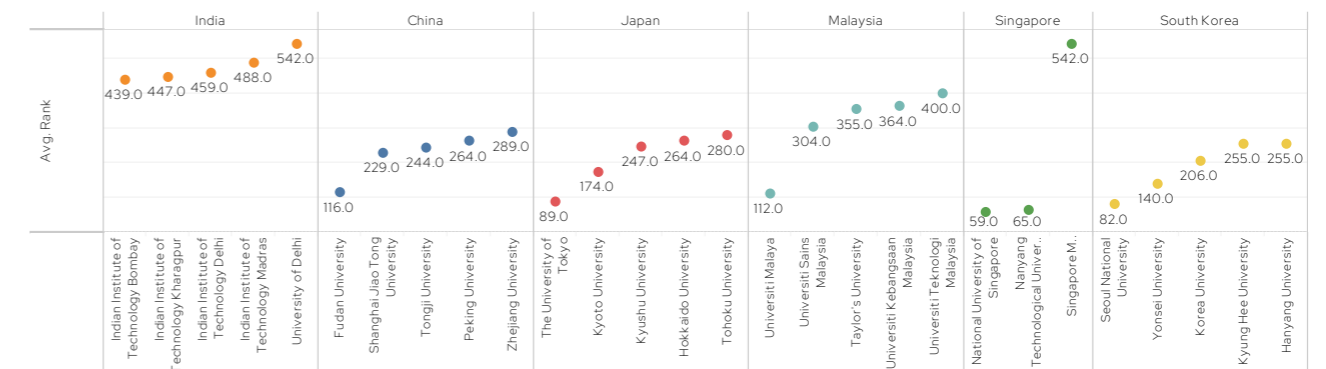
“The University of Kent was really keen to make sure that we got together with our neighbours and our communities to make sure that we could establish a medical school within the county.”

Dr Richard Reece
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
University of Kent

“I think the best impact is our endeavour in changing the mindset of our students.”

Dr Dishan Kamdar
Vice-Chancellor,
FLAME University

India vs Peers Social Impact for Top 5 Universities



Widening participation to higher education

Whether it be socio-economic constraints, or limited access to educational resources, students may feel discouraged from applying to universities. Globally, there are real complexities in promoting educational opportunity and equitable access.

Experts agreed that promoting universities as places welcoming and available for all is critical, saying that it's the universities role to highlight higher education's capability for social mobility. Having a more educated populace is a direct way universities can improve their social impact.

The role of community engagement in universities

Experts said that working hand-in-glove with local communities is how universities can become anchor institutions for their area. Dr Richard Reece, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Kent, gave an overview of the healthcare challenges faced in their local community.

"Up until 2020, there was no medical school in the county," Dr Reece said. "We know from research across the country that trainee doctors tend to stay within the area that they trained in – so we have very few general practitioners (GPs) as well, and we find great difficulty in attracting GPs." The University of Kent then collaborated with community leaders to establish a local medical school that's centered on the needs of the people of Kent, and to the benefit of that community.

Experts identified other community-focused initiatives universities can undertake, such as riverbank conservation, blood donation drives, and empowering women in rural Indian villages.



"Many of the deep problems that regions face are possibly too big for us to handle alone," Professor Claire O'Malley, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Global), Durham University said. Infrastructural issues like mass transportation, housing, and local economies require universities and regional partners working together to solve, and maximizing the social impact that work has.

Nurturing a conscious mindset among students

While universities have a unique role to play in their local area, graduates will also have a massive impact on the world, and so should leave with a mindset of public service, panellists agreed. Dr Dishan Kamdar, FLAME University's Vice-Chancellor said, "We hope that through our curriculum, all students will work together on multiple projects on social engagement. Not only with students from the same university, but other universities in India and abroad – collectively and in solidarity – hoping to solve problems issuing the global community.

"If the entire philosophy is enduring in nature, then multiple interventions will have a long-term effect not only to the region, but also to the country. In my opinion, just continue to do good – I think the best impact is our endeavour in changing the mindset of our students."

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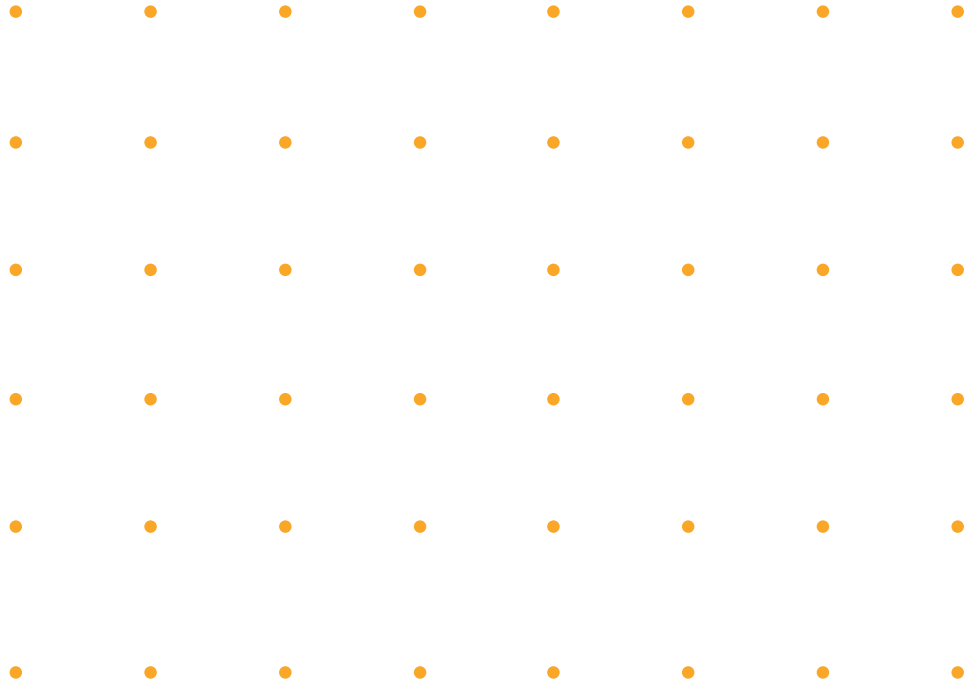
It's going to have to be a team effort.

— —

Professor Claire O'Malley
Pro-Vice Chancellor (Global),
Durham University







Discover the QS Global India Initiative

Benefit from our in-country presence and expertise to strengthen your institution's reach, partnerships and impact in India.

Which objectives can we help you achieve?

1. Navigate the complexities of India's higher education landscape to facilitate strategic market entry and long-term growth.
2. Capitalise on emerging trends and seize opportunities for sustainable growth, excellence and global recognition.
3. Expand your institution's reach and impact through targeted student growth strategies.

Want to find out more about how QS can support your impact and influence in India?

