



# BUILA

BRITISH UNIVERSITIES' INTERNATIONAL LIAISON ASSOCIATION

## A Partnership For Quality: A Route to a UK Framework with Education Agents

In partnership with

# Context for the Research, and Main Aims

## Aims:

- Commissioned in response to a government request to review recruitment practices in 2019
- Wanted the sector to lead on this
- Identify how agents, HEIs and sector bodies can work together to ensure that UKHE is best represented & students are supported

# Context for the Research, and Main Aims

## Aims:

- Understand the experience of international students who use agents, and give agents and university staff a voice
- Review the existing UK regulatory frameworks and benchmark against competitor destinations
- Obtain a set of actionable insights and recommendations

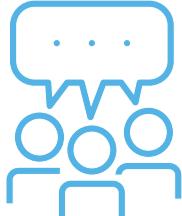
# What did we do?

- Surveyed over 300 education agents from over 50 recruitment markets
- Surveyed over 500 international non-EU students PG & UG reflective of markets
  - 2/3 used an education agent
  - Ran 3 focus groups – 2x used agents 1x did not use agent
- Surveyed over 100 HEI staff
  - Deeper interviews with best practice HEIs cited by agents
- Ran 10 stakeholder consultation sessions
- Reviewed previous research



# What Did The Report Clarify About Agents?

- Looked at the different Models of agents
- Identified why students use agents
- Clarified the services provided to students & universities
- Highlighted their Importance:
  - *circa £11.88bn contributed to UK economy over the lifetime of their studies;*
  - *50% of international students who started their studies in 2019 used an education agent.*



## Models

 **The Sole-Trader**  
20% of agents

UK High Street: The corner shop or independent newsagent

Examples



 **The SME**  
60% of agents

UK High Street: Fullers

Examples

 威久留学 留学梦想  
你将有梦实现

 **The Market Specialist**  
5% of agents

UK High Street: Zizzis

Examples

THE CHOPRAS GROUP IS BECOMING  


 **The Multi-National**  
10% of agents

UK High Street: IKEA

Examples



 **The Education Giant**

UK High Street: Amazon

Examples



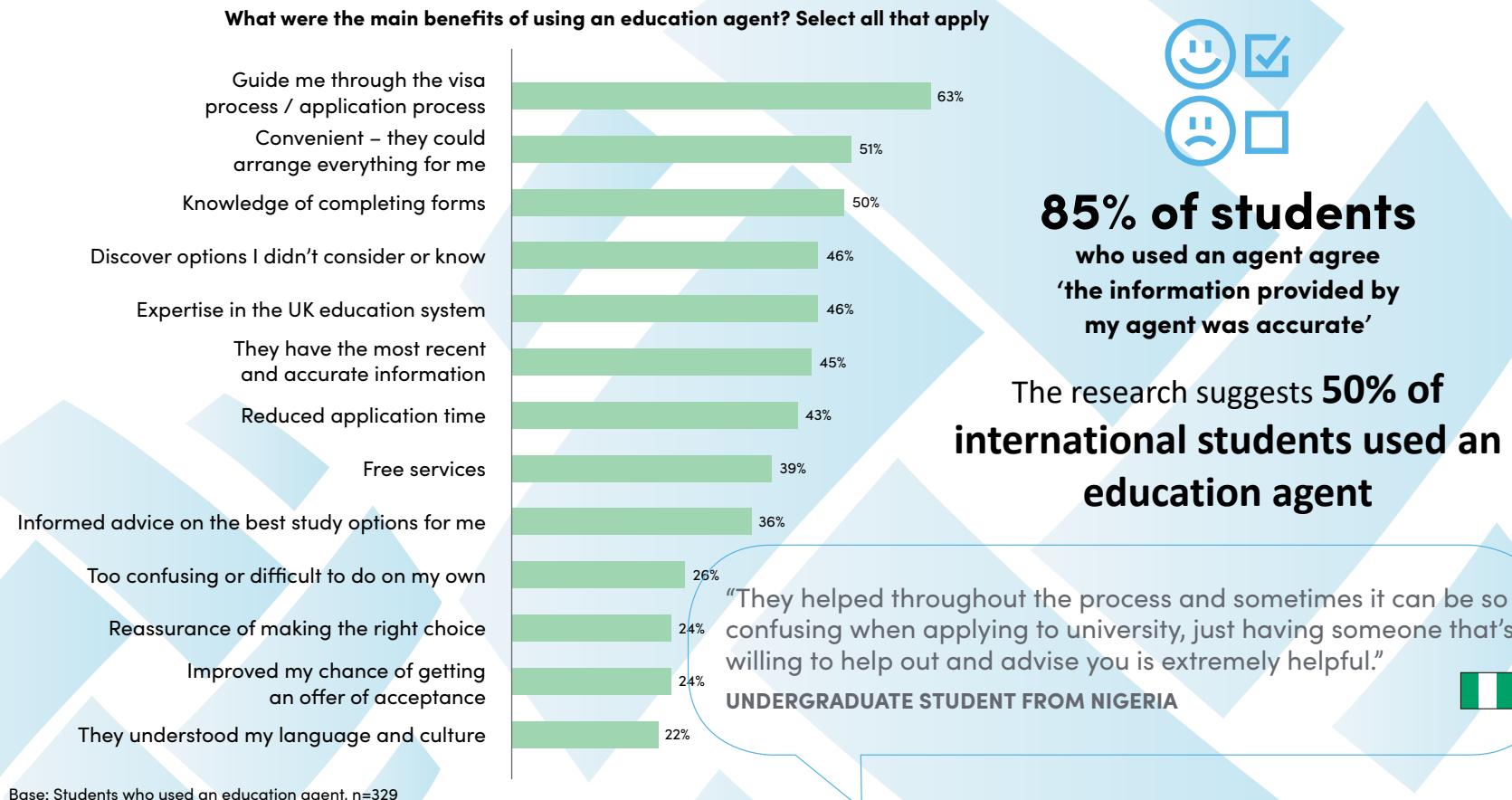
 **The Specialist/Innovator**

UK High Street: Pickled Pepper Books / Truro Arts Company

Examples

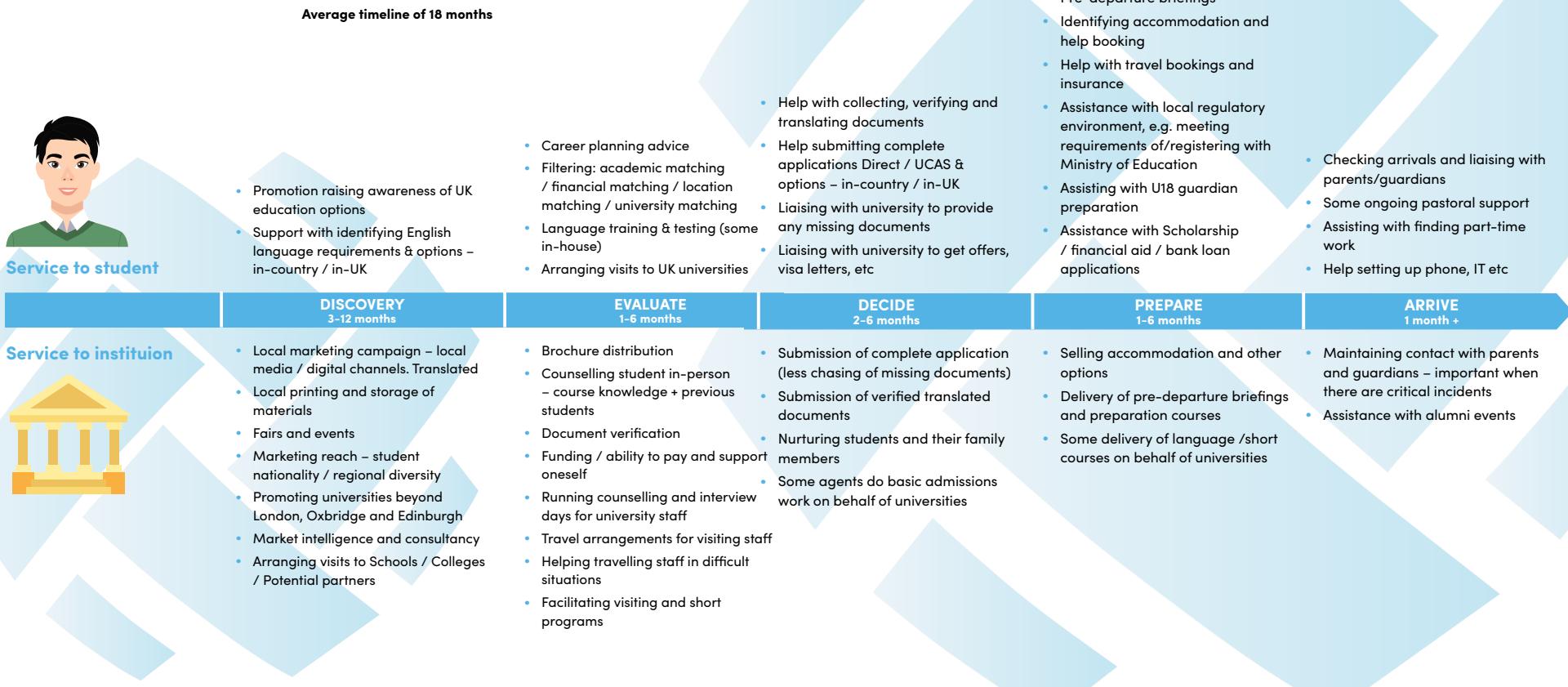


# Why do students use education agents?



# Timing & delivery of education agent services

Illustrates the services mapped against the student journey to both the student and the providers



# Main Findings

- **85% of HEI agree ‘agents are well informed and up-to-date on the higher education sector in the UK’**
- **85% of students who used an agent agree ‘the information provided by my agent was accurate’**
- **70% of international students would recommend their education agent to others**
- **There are structures & best practice to build on**

# Main Findings

## Transparency & Student Voice

- How an agent is contracted by which HEI needs to be made clearer to students and stakeholders alike
- Greater clarity on how a student can raise issues or submit a complaint to the HEI about an agent should be integrated into agent & provider existing processes

## Training & Communication

- Existing agent training covers majority of legislative & education environment but comparatively low uptake/completion rates compared to competitor countries
- Examine ways to increase access
- Create a framework to keep agents informed & up to date with important information

# Main Findings

## Improve Performance & Ensure Consistency

- Institutional contracts, training and other education agent management protocols are important tools in education agent quality management so its important that this is done well right across the sector
- There is not uniform awareness & adoption of a single Code of Ethical Practice for education agents
- A shared good practice guide would serve to benefit agents and providers
- Research into what information can be legally shared with gov & between providers to improve agent performance would be helpful

# Main Findings: Create a Quality Framework





## RECOMMENDATION ONE

Develop and promote a Code of Ethical Practice for UK Education Agents

- Create a single Code used and referenced by entire UK international education sector
- Seek input from education agents and students at the early development stage
- Plan to engage and include wider sector
  - IHE, English UK, Schools Sectors, FE sectors



## RECOMMENDATION TWO

Redesign the education agent training scheme to increase access and engagement

- Significantly increase the number of trained education agents – and look at ways of cascading training & important information to them
- Consider the ongoing training options for already certified education agents i.e.– CPD framework
- Ensure provider, student & education agent engagement in course development – it has to work for them
- Accessibility – research on pricing models to ensure it gets the uptake we want
- Integrate Code of Ethical Practice
- Replicate good practice in agent communications



### RECOMMENDATION THREE

Develop and promote a Good Practice Guide for Providers Using Education Agents

- A step-by-step how-to-guide on education agent management covering the full life cycle
- Highlighting:
  - Case studies of best practice
  - Approaches to legally sharing information about education agents among providers
  - Integrating complaints/review processes for students
  - Proforma questions for new student surveys about education agents (agent review practice)
- Integrate Training and Code of Ethical Practice

# Initiative Development Timeframes



- Research uncovered many elements of good practice to build initiatives on
- Initial Government & Stakeholder Initial engagement started



- Launch the Research
- Draft the Code of Practice for cross sector input



- Workshops in key regions for agents & students to input into the development of all 3 recommendations
- Creation of a cross sector advisory group to work with British Council to identify opportunities to increase access, uptake and the value of training



- Launch Code, Good Practice Guide, Communication Framework & Training as a suite of quality improvement measures at the BUILA Annual Conference in July
- Workshops on implementation & adoption of the Quality Framework for Agents & Providers



- Regularly review success of initial measures with all stakeholders to determine need for further initiatives