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Starting Over: Exploring how UK and EU universities can establish high-value international partnerships in the post-Brexit, post-Pandemic world.

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Abstract

This pilot study explored the lived experiences of Higher Education professionals with responsibility for developing Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships between UK and EU universities. The project was framed within stakeholder theory, and a qualitative research methodology was adopted, using semi-structured interviews to collect data from two university decision makers, with one based in a United Kingdom (UK) university and the other based in a private European Union (EU) institution. The data were analysed using a thematic analysis, with the responses highlighting an appreciation for the strategic value of UK/EU partnerships, the development of improved academic quality, the benefits of shared brand visibility, and the ability to collaborate, which is contingent upon government policy in both the UK and the EU. There was also evidence of differing perceptions from participants on the importance of commercial objectives and the impact of Brexit in each locality, with these viewed and prioritised differently in either context. The findings demonstrate evidence of EU partners being overlooked by UK universities post-Brexit, the impact of EU responses to Brexit at the country level from institutions working with UK providers and a misalignment of stakeholder values at the institutional level, which need to be overcome if collaborations are to succeed. The main study, designed to follow up on this piece of work, is already underway and will explore this field more comprehensively.

Keywords: Higher Education professionals, international partnerships, Transnational Education (TNE), Universities Partnerships, University, EU, UK, Brexit.

Introduction

In the international context, UK Higher Education is widely recognised as world-leading (Purcell, Beer and Southern, 2015; Highman, Marginson and Papatsiba, 2023). UK universities consistently rank amongst the top institutions in the world and in the latest QS World Rankings, the UK has 28 institutions in the top 200 (QS World Rankings, 2025). The UK is known as one of the most attractive international student destinations, and an environment which offers high-quality programmes underpinned by robust quality assurance mechanisms (Hoecht 2006). The perception of UK higher education places it alongside the USA, Australia and Canada as somewhere that represents a worthwhile investment amongst prospective students and their families (Lamie and Hill, 2024, p.142).

In recent years, Britain's ability to live up to its reputation as a provider of world-class higher education has found itself under threat. In 2016, the UK voted to leave the European Union, signalling a lasting shift in the relationship between the UK and Europe and representing a permanent departure point for virtually every area of British society. The arrival of Brexit was both a once-in-a-lifetime event and one for which the Higher Education sector was highly under-prepared (Corbett, 2016; Corbett and Hantrais, 2023).

Following the negotiation period that followed the EU referendum, speculation around what Brexit would mean in practical terms became inescapable, with options ranging from an arrangement where the UK would retain some elements of its EU membership, such as access to the free market via the European Economic Area (EEA) and freedom of movement, to a situation where the UK would end all association with the EU, becoming an entirely separate 'third' country. Despite a large majority of MPs having supported Remain in the 2016 referendum, all attempts to pass a 'soft' Brexit failed, with the final withdrawal agreement reflecting what would become known as a 'hard' Brexit (Quinn, Allen and Bartle, 2024). This decision set the UK on a path to withdraw from the EU, ending 47 years of membership and creating a situation in which many MPs were working to deliver a Brexit which they ultimately believed would damage the country (Edwards, 2018). As a result, the future of the UK's role in Europe and the world now looked increasingly uncertain.

For the UK Higher Education sector, the impact of Brexit was also felt acutely across a number of areas. Firstly, the UK could no longer participate in pan-European initiatives such as the Erasmus programme, limiting the scope for collaboration between institutions and impacting students and staff on both sides. Secondly, the removal of freedom of movement meant that UK and EU staff could no longer move between locations for work, study or collaborative purposes. This had an immediate impact on activities between universities but also meant that EU students could no longer come to the UK and benefit from lower fees, visa-free living and access to UK student loans. This alone caused significant damage to the student recruitment and mobility markets between the UK and EU (UUKi and StudyPortals, 2022). Thirdly, as a 'third country' the UK no longer enjoyed a preferential position in terms of collaborative research bids as they were now simply classed as any other non-EU nation would be in dealing with the EU bloc.

These issues demonstrate how, as a result of Brexit, the UK found itself shut out of the EU market. This is especially noteworthy given the UK's history of benefitting both from measures taken to harmonise regulation between UK and EU universities (via the Bologna framework) and the proximity of the UK to a large and diverse education market (Garben, 2019). As the impact of Brexit started to become apparent, coupled with the ongoing fallout from Covid-19, matters were compounded further in early 2024 as the UK changed its immigration rules, preventing international students from bringing dependants with them on taught study visas (Adams, 2024). The resulting fall in international students impacted the finances of UK universities significantly, with many reporting income deficits and announcing both voluntary and compulsory redundancies (Martin, 2025). Given the scale of this crisis, the ability to work with European universities on collaborative, and income-generating initiatives would have been highly appealing yet, due to Brexit, the UK HE sector found itself at once desperate for European collaboration yet entirely unable to access it. This paradox, and the urgency for the UK HE sector to address this if it is to remain viable, forms the basis for this study and the reason for conducting primary research in this area.

Since the election of the Labour government in mid-2024 the Prime Minister Sir Kier Starmer has re-iterated that the UK will not re-join the EU (Stacey, 2024). In practical

terms, this means there is no prospect of a return to free movement, access to Erasmus funding (with the UK now having effectively replaced this with the Turing Scheme in any case) or equivalent access to collaborative research as the UK enjoyed pre-Brexit. There is, however, one area open to UK universities which is, at least partly, insulated from these issues and could offer an ongoing means of working in partnership with EU institutions on high-value initiatives. This is the development of UK/ EU Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships, which may still be able to flourish, even against the otherwise bleak post-Brexit, post-Pandemic landscape.

The UK has a strong track record of developing high-value TNE partnerships in other parts of the world, and there are examples of these across the EU, albeit not at the scale seen in China or Southeast Asia, (UUKi, 2022). With this in mind, there is a strong basis for undertaking research into the role that TNE can play in establishing high-value partnerships between UK and EU universities post-withdrawal, at a time when this could well impact the future of the UK sector.

Research Rationale

This research is motivated by first-hand experience of the uncertainty within the UK HE sector stemming from Brexit and the shadow of Covid-19. As outlined by Highman, Marginson and Papatsiba (2023), UK universities face a challenging outlook as a result of the current political situation and the closure of the numerous avenues through which collaboration with EU institutions had been possible. As the UK HE sector attempts to adjust to financial and political pressures, the opportunity to re-set relations with EU partners could make a tangible difference to the fortunes of many UK HEIs and provide assurance at a time when the viability of UK HE is under threat.

Aim, Research Questions and Objectives

The aim of this research project is to explore and understand how UK and EU universities can establish high-value partnerships in a challenging external environment. The main research question is:

‘What are the lived experiences of practitioners working on the establishment of UK/EU HE partnerships in the post-Brexit, post-Pandemic world?’

The objectives of the study were:

Objective 1: To identify and explore literature in the field of international higher educational partnerships, within the overarching theme of Transnational Education (TNE)

Objective 2: To explore lived experience and understand perceptions of value from a key stakeholder within UK universities in terms of EU partnerships

Objective 3: To explore lived experience and understand, from European partner institutions, their perceptions of value and the challenges faced in terms of establishing successful UK partnerships

Objective 4: To draw conclusions from the primary research relating to shared areas of value that can be pursued and developed.

Brief Literature Review

The literature addressing the impact of Brexit and Covid-19 on Higher Education in the UK covers a diverse range of disciplinary areas. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, it is necessary to highlight examples within the literature that touch upon the international dimension of universities in the post-Brexit, post-pandemic world and to situate these alongside contributions more closely aligned to understanding high-value partnership work. In doing so, it is possible to divide some of the contributions supporting this area of study into the following thematic areas:

- The (negative) Impact of Brexit on Universities;
- International partnerships in HE;
- Developing successful/ high value TNE in a range of international settings.

The (negative) Impact of Brexit on Universities;

Many academics have acknowledged the negative impact of Brexit to UK HE, with this being true both prior to and following the UK's EU withdrawal. Mayhew (2017) outlines a number of threats to UK HE following the EU referendum, alongside proposing mitigations that, evidently, did not materialise in the ensuing years. Highman (2018) discusses the threat to the sector further and highlights the risks of a 'club' mentality emerging, as UK universities aim to establish partnerships with 'like-minded' global institutions that include research and student mobility arrangements. Due to the underpinning framework of Erasmus and the freedom of academic staff to establish

partnerships this mentality had largely been avoided in Europe, however post-Brexit this is a challenge for UK institutions being increasingly driven by a corporate, strategic approach. The work of Courtois and Veiga (2020), supports this view, suggesting that the broader value of institutional partnership is being overshadowed in universities by pragmatic, economic-based rationales. Highman, Marginson and Papatsiba (2023), not only outline the negative impact of Brexit for UK higher education but also identify the lack of new opportunities for the UK following EU withdrawal, and with specific reference to student mobility. Fox and Beech (2024), explore the way in which key policy decisions (in this case the decision for the UK to leave Erasmus and establish the Turing Scheme) were made against a backdrop of UK Euroscepticism. Corbett and Hantrais (2023), suggest that whilst the impact of Brexit has been felt most on Higher Education policy, the UK was already taking steps to 'de-Europeanise' the sector, with the aim of pursuing a marketized education strategy, something further justified and accelerated by Brexit rather than caused by it. These examples present an almost unanimous position that Brexit has negatively impacted both UK universities and their ability to engage in HE focused initiatives across Europe, providing a clear indication of the existing contextual landscape.

International partnerships in HE

In relation to some of the work already undertaken within UK Higher Education to improve or optimise institutional partnerships, Lamie and Hill (2024) introduce Covid-19 as an element of the post-Brexit landscape with governmental and institutional reaction playing a central role in the acceleration of technological innovation around both delivery and administration. Otto (2021), reinforces this view by discussing the impact of Transatlantic political developments on the relationship between US and EU institutions, demonstrating the role politics can play at the institutional level in a different regional context. In a similar vein, studies from both Ayoubi and Al-Habaibeh (2006) and Montgomery and Ma (2019) explore how barriers to establishing international partnerships between universities should be overcome and the value of inter-personal relationships can be realised, again in a non-EU context.

The scholarship related to this theme includes examples of best practice, pragmatism from universities and, importantly, brings forward the interpersonal element of partnership work. The literature contains examples that outline how international

partnerships can succeed and how universities can increase their chances of success, even when faced with challenges, such as the pandemic. What is missing from this literature is an application of these interventions within a post-Brexit, post-pandemic context, exploring their relevance to the reality of the post-withdrawal period.

Developing successful/ high value TNE in a range of international settings.

There are a number of academic contributions which deal with TNE developments more directly. Knight (2015) proposes a set of naming conventions for TNE partnerships and a framework for developing these, while Healey (2021) takes this further by discussing how stakeholder motivations, including those of institutions, governments and students, need to be aligned in order for TNE partnerships to succeed. Kleibert (2020) highlights the term 'Global Britain', often used by the UK government post-referendum as an aspirational slogan for the possibilities of international collaboration, importantly outlining the economic rationale for UK universities to pursue TNE opportunities in the face of diminishing government funding and increased reliance on student fees. Lindsay and Antoniou (2015) explore the parallels between TNE strategies for UK universities and market-entry approaches utilised in business, with evidence of some alignment between these two fields, while the contributions from Bordogna (2018) and Bolton and Nie (2010) both look at the role individual stakeholders can play in ensuring the creation of value in TNE partnerships.

Theoretical Framing

In developing this research project a number of theoretical frameworks were identified which would provide an appropriate basis for the interpretation of research findings. As this project relates to the field of organisational management, it was important to consider which strand of management theory would best align with the area of international partnerships in Higher Education and to apply this to the process of undertaking primary research and data analysis.

The first of these frameworks was the Resource-Based View theory (RBV), which suggests that it is the unique 'bundle' of resources possessed by an organisation that enable it to gain and sustain superior performance (Barney and Clark, 2007). In the case of HE partnerships this theory also has a strong association with the concept of

value creation, wherein resources, capabilities and competencies allow organisations to establish value-creating strategies and achieve competitive advantage (Grant, 1991). Although the resource-based view provides a legitimate lens through which to analyse the research question it was discounted as the central framing concept due to its hyper-internal view and its limitations in terms of fully appreciating the macro environment, something essential to ensuring a thorough understanding of the research matter.

Institutional theory

The second consideration was institutional theory, specifically the concept of institutional work, which explores practical actions through which institutions are created, maintained and disrupted (Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2009). This theory, which focuses on interventions carried out by key actors presented the opportunity for the research design to utilise the contributions of individuals engaged in managing and developing partnerships. The idea that value could be created by intentional actions taken by individuals engaging with institutions highlighted that this was an avenue that held logical associations with the research area but had not been extensively explored. This theory shared commonality with the research field; however, there was a possibility this approach could miss the point of the primary research by focusing on the institution of Higher Education without making room to analyse the partnerships themselves. For this reason the decision was taken not to use this framework for this study.

Stakeholder theory

Having discounted these two theoretical groundings, stakeholder theory was then considered as a potential framework, with this approach recognising the importance of stakeholder influence in creating value for customers, suppliers, owners, employees and local communities (Langrafe et al, 2020) Stakeholder theory presents an emergent paradigm within the field of strategic management in Higher Education, with stakeholder relations viewed as a means of justifying the existence of Higher Education institutions and analysing their success. (Kettunen, 2015) Given that the aim of this project was to analyse the lived experience of key actors engaged in UK/ EU HE partnerships (i.e. stakeholders) this framework offered a justifiable alignment with the research area and presented a sound basis for undertaking data analysis of

the primary research. On this basis stakeholder theory was identified and selected as the theoretical framing for this project.

Literature /Theory Synthesis / Research Gap

From these published works, there is a breadth of scholarship within the wider area of TNE and HE partnerships, with a significant amount of this relevant and applicable to this study. The table in Appendix 1 provides an overview of the literature reviewed for this pilot study. What is not evident is any depth exploring UK/ EU TNE, either in the pre- or post-Brexit context or with any parallel analysis of the risks or challenges posed by Brexit and Covid-19. This represents a gap in research that needs to be bridged. Alongside this, current scholarship offers numerous contributions which support the wider understanding of Transnational Education within universities and the potential for this to present HEIs with an opportunity for both financial and developmental value. The missing element from the literature is how this can be utilised in the post-Brexit, post-pandemic context at a time when universities need to both develop new partnerships and overcome legitimate challenges in doing so with EU partners. Additionally, to enable better exploration and understanding of the findings of this pilot study, the stakeholder theory explained above was adopted as the theoretical framework underpinning this research.

Methodology

The aim of this study was to *explore* the role Transnational Education can play in creating high-value Higher Education partnerships between the UK and the EU in the post-Brexit, post-pandemic context. Because the research is exploratory in nature it was appropriate to use a phenomenological approach, where the study aims to use the lived experiences of key actors to explore the '*meaning and experience of organisational life*' (Tomkins and Eatough, 2013).

For the pilot study, the decision was taken to use a very limited sample size in order to test the robustness of the approach. Purposive selection of candidates was undertaken to ensure those interviewed were most likely to yield appropriate results with the time and resources available (Campbell et al, 2020). Of the two participants identified, both had current experience of managing UK/ EU TNE partnerships. One

participant was currently employed at a UK university with the other having recently left a private EU institution with a TNE partnership in place with a UK university.

There is evidence of the use of semi-structured interviews as a qualitative research method from a number of articles covered within the literature (e.g. Healey, 2021), therefore this method was selected for gathering primary data. A draft set of questions was compiled and shared with participants ahead of the interviews taking place and both candidates were made aware that due to the format these would be just to guide the interview, allowing responses to occur naturally in a conversational nature. The interviews were conducted and recorded using MS Teams and transcribed using the in-built transcription function, something which added convenience but also meant the text needed to be reviewed for accuracy in terms of mis-heard words or phrases.

Data Analysis

For the pilot study, a thematic analysis was conducted following the outline presented by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Table 1- Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Coding the Data

As with any new primary research being conducted via semi-structured interviews, it was necessary to ensure that an approach to coding was undertaken which allowed for the results to be thoroughly and systematically analysed without losing any of the richness of the contributions being made by participants. In order to do this an initial stage was undertaken, aligned to 'structural coding' outlined by Saldana (2009). To achieve this, interview transcripts were read and annotated several times with general codes linked to the research question added to segments of data on each read through, with these amended or re-organised as required. Because this was intended

to be a new piece of academic research, *a priori* codes were not considered, with each new code generated organically from the data set. Because the interviews were being carried out with participants with similar roles but contrasting perspectives, the aim was, where possible, to identify codes that could apply to both sets of data, creating a basis for a comprehensive analysis to be undertaken. The process of reading, annotating and frequently returning to the interview content is an approach described within the literature as highly valuable in organising analysing qualitative data appropriately. (Galletta, 2013, p.119)

Examples of codes and development of themes

The process of data analysis led to a number of codes being identified based on participant responses, followed by the establishment of specific themes that began to emerge from the data set. Whilst the process of coding is not consistently documented across the supporting literature it is generally accepted that two levels of coding are necessary, partly as “text data are dense data, and it takes a long time to go through them and make sense of them” (Cresswell, 2015, p. 152) The first of these occurs on the descriptive level, used to summarise segments of data, while the secondary level focuses on identifying patterns, or themes. (Punch, 2014) For the purposes of this paper the primary level will refer to ‘codes’ and the secondary level will discuss ‘themes’ that have emerged from grouping codes together. Although there are a range of approaches to coding in qualitative research, this approach is logical and appropriate for this study. (Elliott, 2018)

For example, where responses focused on the motivations behind partnership work there are segments that were coded as ‘financial contribution to host country’, ‘commercial gain’ or ‘income diversification’. Whilst distinct from each other, the identification of these codes from the structural approach led to the broad theme of commercial gain emerging from the data, allowing the transcripts to then be reviewed further with this in place.

Similarly, codes such as ‘promote university brand’, ‘highlights globally relevant programmes’ ‘positive press’ were subsequently able to be grouped under the theme of brand visibility, leading to a better understanding this aspect of partnership work in relation to the research question.

Where codes including 'government level' or 'ministerial level' were used the theme of government influence was able to be identified and distilled into an understanding of the macro environment in which TNE partnerships operate.

Students were mentioned consistently by both respondents in a number of different contexts, including recruitment, decision-making, mobility and employability, so while it was important to code all of these areas individually, some needed to be separated when applying themes to the data, leading to the identification of 'student benefit' and 'student support' amongst others. Overall, this approach to data analysis allowed for an initial organisation of responses to be undertaken before following these with a more detailed exercise which moved beyond what participants were *saying* and into what they *meant*.

Findings

The findings from this study highlighted a number of interesting areas in relation to the research question and linked to the research framing of stakeholder theory.

Alignment of Perceptions

Firstly, there was evidence of some alignment in perceptions of value between the UK and EU participant. These included the understanding of the appreciation for the strategic value of UK/EU partnerships, the development of improved academic quality and the benefit of shared brand visibility when working in partnership. These areas of alignment highlight that there are collective motivations associated with the establishment of TNE partnerships between UK and EU institutions and that these should form the starting point for new partnership developments. One element of stakeholder theory concerns issues of values, choice and benefits and posits that alignment of stakeholder relationships better equips practitioners to create value and avoid moral failures (Parmar et al, 2010) This suggests from the outset that there is a common ground between stakeholders in connected but distinct institutional environments which may provide a platform for the pursuit of further developments.

Government Policy

The findings also highlighted the substantial role of government policy on influencing the way in which partnerships can be developed between the UK and EU, something perhaps unsurprising given the dual themes of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. Alongside this, however, there were differing perceptions of the extent to which Brexit had impacted the institutions the participants represented. The UK participant had a far greater sense of a global outlook beyond the EU, meaning that EU partnerships would now be treated in the same way as those in the wider world. For the EU participant, whose university had one long-running TNE partnership with a UK institution, the impact had been far more severe, leading to the need to revise the structure of the partnership in its entirety. This was partly due to local regulation within the EU country they were based in but suggested there could be a lack of appreciation from the UK side for the complexity of working with UK universities for EU partners in the post-Brexit context. This area within the research findings is of particular interest, both in terms of what the participants highlighted but also the potential theoretical cross-over between stakeholder and institutional theory. The role of government as a stakeholder presents both challenges and opportunities for universities, as this represents a party whose needs could be catered to via the establishment of UK/ EU TNE partnerships, whilst also symbolising the kind of external threat that can create significant barriers to institutions, particularly in the case of Brexit and Covid-19. While this is an area that could be worthy of its own research, it outlines a key consideration within the context of this research project and one which was highlighted from the perspective of both participants.

Importance of Financial Gain

Within the findings, one of the most pronounced examples of contrasting views around perceptions of value was evident from the extent to which the commercial, income-generating aspect of partnership work was prioritised by each candidate's institution. For the UK participant this was mentioned frequently within the responses as one of the central drivers for working with any partner, EU or otherwise, while the EU participant did not allude to the commercial aspect at all within the responses, instead focusing on wider issues of academic rigour and collaboration in areas such as student mobility and research. This again suggests an area for development between the UK and EU as omitting the commercial element from partnership developments could

make these unlikely to succeed. Equally, an imbalance of views on the pursuit of financial gain over and above considerations of academic quality presents an ethical dilemma for collaborating organisations, limiting the chance of successful progress being made.

One of the fundamental aspects of stakeholder theory concerns ‘the problem of value creation and trade’ identified as one of the three, interconnected problems relating to business, alongside ‘the problem of the ethics of capitalism’ and ‘the problem of managerial mindset’ (Parmar, et al, 2010). This section within the findings suggests that, rather than simply a differing view of the role of income in TNE partnerships this issue represents a fundamental misalignment of values between UK and EU universities in how partnership work should be managed, coupled with ethical debates that need to be clearly articulated and resolved if partnerships are to succeed. The findings present enough common areas for UK and EU partnerships to be able to flourish, however the results suggest that prior to tackling the bigger external challenges of government intervention and external policy UK and EU universities wishing to develop shared TNE initiatives need to ensure better alignment on their motivations and guiding principles in relation to collaborative work.

Limitations

Whilst thematic analysis is noted for its flexibility and resulted in key themes being extracted from the data, some of the disadvantages of this approach were also evident throughout this study. It is possible that a different approach would have led to better data analysis and a set of key themes that had been more robustly explored. In addition, both participants displayed some level of narrative in their responses to the questions, describing the process through which they dealt with Brexit or the pandemic in a storytelling manner. This iterative description would have added some richness to the data, however the pursuit of identifying themes meant this aspect was largely lost. To mitigate this, in the main study, we hope to adopt a more robust research approach that will enable capturing the nuances required to do justice to the study phenomenon. Additionally, the use of stakeholder theory as an underpinning framework during the pilot study was useful, but could have been undertaken more thoroughly or potentially alongside institutional work, to provide a perspective that considered the wider HE

environment alongside the role stakeholder management can play in developing high-value TNE partnerships.

The limited sample size from which data was gathered is also clearly a limitation that needs to be addressed in a subsequent piece of research alongside the fact that, whilst Brexit featured a driving topic in both interviews, the issue of Covid-19 was nowhere near as salient. For the next piece of work on this subject, which is the main study, a minimum of 15-20 participants will be interviewed and it may be prudent to revise the study to focus solely on Brexit and to treat the pandemic as an occurrence within the wider Brexit landscape. Ultimately, in spite of these issues, the outcome is that a number of key developmental points have been identified ahead of the full study into this topic, a piece of work which is now underway.

Summary and Conclusion

The research topic looking at how UK universities can re-engage with their European counterparts via the mutually beneficial vehicle of Transnational Education has a huge amount of potential. Through an in-depth exploration of the experiences of key actors engaged with establishing, developing and managing these partnerships on both sides it may be possible to support UK and EU universities with plotting a course through this challenging landscape, providing them with outcomes that support the achievement of priorities on both sides. For UK universities at least, this may go some way to providing reassurance as to the long-term viability of the sector, as renewed access to the EU market could support sector-wide transformation, above all benefiting students and the longevity of the university experience for all. The results of this study, and successive, related research into this area may be invaluable for the wider UK HE sector in reinvigorating UK/ EU partnerships with TNE at the centre, supporting the long-term survival and growth of this central element of society.

Further Development for main study- Introduction to TPCA Analysis

For the main study, an alternative approach to data analysis could be the Trans-Positional Cognition Approach (TPCA) developed by Olekanma et al (2023), which offers a means of comprehensively analysing, coding and reviewing qualitative data being gathered as part of a phenomenological study. Although this method was not

used in the pilot study, doing so in the main study could offer a more consistent and robust approach to data analysis. An overview of the TPCA is included in Appendix 2.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Outline of key literature

Theme	Author(s)	Year	Title	Overview
The Impact of Brexit on Universities;	Mayhew, K	(2017)	<i>UK Higher Education and Brexit</i>	Captures the high potential for HE to be negatively impacted by Brexit
The Impact of Brexit on Universities;	Highman, L.	(2018)	<i>Repositioning UK Partnerships Post-Brexit</i>	Explores impact of Brexit for HE and starts to discuss what behaviours this will drive
The Impact of Brexit on Universities;	Courtois, A and Veiga, A.	(2020)	<i>Brexit and higher education in Europe: the role of ideas in shaping internationalisation strategies in times of uncertainty</i>	Highlights economic rationales for UK institutions to work with EU universities
The Impact of Brexit on Universities;	Highman, L Marginson, S. and Papatsiba, V.	(2023)	<i>Higher education and research: multiple negative effects and no new opportunities after Brexit</i>	Demonstrates bleak outlook for UK HE post Brexit
The Impact of Brexit on Universities;	Fox, O and Beech, S.	(2024)	<i>International student mobility options following</i>	Outlines key decision making

			<i>Brexit: An analysis of the genesis of Britain's Turing Scheme</i>	against a Eurosceptic backdrop
The Impact of Brexit on Universities;	Corbett, A and Hantrais, L	2023	<i>Higher education and research in the Brexit policy process</i>	Looks at role of Brexit in legitimising an extant 'de-Europeanising' strategy from UK universities
International partnerships in HE;	Lamie, J and Hill, C	2024	<i>The Evolving Nature of Universities: What shapes and influences identity in international higher education (Book)</i>	Discussed impact of Covid within post-Brexit context
International partnerships in HE;	Otto, J.M.	2021	<i>The Impact of Evolving Transatlantic Relations on International Partnerships in Higher Education</i>	Explores partnership work against shifting political backdrop (EU/US)
International partnerships in HE	Knight, J.	2015	<i>Transnational Education Remodelled: Toward a Common TNE</i>	Proposes a framework and naming conventions for TNE partnerships

			<i>Framework and Definitions</i>	
International partnerships in HE	Rami M. Ayoubi, Amin Al-Habaibeh	2006	<i>An Investigation into international business collaboration in higher education organisations: A Case study of international partnerships in four UK leading universities</i>	Looks at role of key stakeholders in partnership development
International partnerships in HE;	Montgomery, C and Ma, J.	2019	<i>Constructing Sustainable International Partnerships in Higher Education: Linking the Strategic and Contingent Through Interpersonal Relationships in the United Kingdom and China</i>	Looks at role of key stakeholders in partnership development
Developing successful/ high value TNE in a range of	Healey, N.	2021	<i>The Challenges of Managing Transnational Education Partnerships: The</i>	Researches stakeholder perceptions of partnership management

international settings.			<i>Views of 'home based' managers vs 'in-country' managers</i>	
Developing successful/ high value TNE in a range of international settings.	Kleibert, J.	2020	<i>Brexit geographies of Transnational Education: uncertainty, 'global Britain' and European (re-) integration</i>	Discussed UK context for TNE focus in university international strategies
Developing successful/ high value TNE in a range of international settings.	Lindsay, V and Antoniou, C	2015	<i>Applying Foreign entry market strategies to UK Higher Education transnational education strategies: Finding fifty Shades of Green</i>	Suggests alignment in business and university market entry strategies
Developing successful/ high value TNE in a range of international settings.	Bordogna, C. M.	2018	<i>Transnational Higher Education Partnerships and the Role of Operational Faculty Members: Developing an Alternative Theoretical Approach for Empirical Research</i>	Re-affirms role of key stakeholders (Faculty) in developing and managing high-value partnerships

Developing successful/ high value TNE in a range of international settings.	Bolton, D and Nie, R.	(2010)	<i>Creating Value in Transnational Higher Education: The Role of Stakeholder Management.</i>	Role of stakeholder management in creating high-value partnerships.
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Appendix 2: Overview of the Trans-Positional Cognition Approach (Olekanma et al 2023)

