



THE CAREER DISPATCH

April 2025





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TARUN GUPTA
Global Managing Partner



South Asia today stands at the intersection of rising aspirations and shifting global education dynamics. As student mobility patterns evolve and transnational education (TNE) gains momentum, the region is becoming a vital theatre for innovation, partnership, and long-term institutional presence. Higher education institutions (HEIs) seeking to grow globally can no longer afford to treat South Asia as a peripheral market—it is central to the future of international engagement.

In this edition of **The Career Dispatch**, we explore the multi-dimensional nature of South Asia's education landscape—one that demands not just recruitment, but meaningful regional engagement. Our primer, South Asia Unlocked, offers practical insights for institutions looking to deepen their presence across India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh.

This issue also spotlights Australia as our Country in Focus, examining how recent policy changes, cost-of-living pressures, and post-study uncertainties are impacting student sentiment—despite a continued preference for Australian institutions among South Asian learners.

We're especially proud to have led a session at PIE Live Europe 2025 in London, where we unpacked the pressing issue of post-study employability. With only 60% of

international graduates securing jobs aligned with their skills within six months, the call for cross-border career support is more urgent than ever.

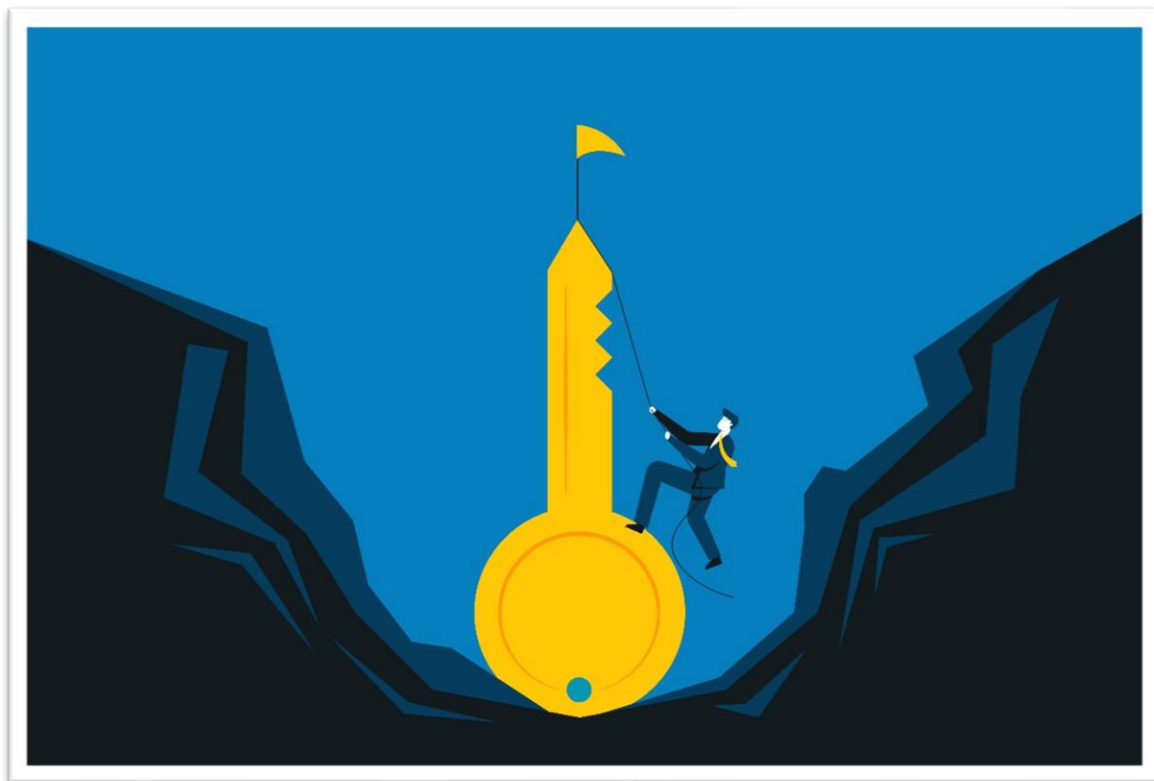
From polar bear pitching events to multi-city outreach with Queen's University Belfast and in-country support expansion for the University of Derby, this edition captures how collaboration, creativity, and cultural alignment are shaping the future of international education in the region.

At T&A Consulting, we remain committed to helping institutions unlock the full potential of South Asia through informed strategy, on-ground execution, and a shared focus on student success.

We hope you enjoy this edition of **The Career Dispatch**.

SOUTH ASIA UNLOCKED

A primer for HEIs looking to enter the market



Transnational education (TNE) is reshaping the higher education landscape in South Asia, offering students access to globally recognized qualifications without the need to relocate. By bridging geographical barriers, TNE provides an alternative pathway for students seeking international degrees while remaining in their home countries.

In this edition of **South Asia Unlocked**, we explore the evolving TNE ecosystem, with a focus on India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, where demand for international education is growing rapidly. These markets present significant opportunities for both students and higher education

institutions, as global universities expand their presence through dual-degree programmes, branch campuses, and academic collaborations with local institutions.

The growing demand for internationally accredited degrees reflects a shift toward career-driven education aligned with global industry standards. While South Asia's private education sector has expanded, concerns over quality assurance persist due to a lack of standardized frameworks. This has increased interest in TNE models that offer structured pathways to globally recognized qualifications while ensuring regulatory alignment with local policies.

Transnational Education

Redrawing Borders in Global Learning



TNE models in South Asia are emerging in two key forms—standalone programmes delivered directly by international universities and collaborative partnerships between global institutions and local higher education providers.

UK institutions, for instance, are actively engaging with South Asian universities to create joint programmes, franchise models, and dual-degree pathways that

align with regulatory requirements while maintaining international academic standards.

As demand for international education rises, TNE presents a significant opportunity for universities to expand their reach, strengthen academic collaborations, and cater to the aspirations of students seeking globally competitive qualifications

Did You Know?

Asia remains the largest host region for UK TNE, accounting for 51.5% of all TNE students, totaling 312,295 enrollments.

The number of TNE students based in India studying at UK universities grew by 89%, from 7,950 in 2019–20 to 15,015 in 2022–23

TNE in South Asia: Insights from Key Emerging Economies

India



Transnational Education (TNE) in India is entering a new phase, marked by policy support and early institutional moves. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has paved the way for foreign universities to establish independent campuses, leading to concrete developments such as Deakin and Wollongong setting up at GIFT City in Gujarat and the University of Southampton announcing a campus near Delhi.

These initiatives reflect a clear shift from distance learning and franchised programmes towards in-country delivery. Indian students are showing strong interest in locally delivered international degrees, especially in fields like business, computing, and health sciences, driven by cost advantages and proximity to home. While the majority of TNE activity remains concentrated in urban centers, there's increasing engagement from Indian private universities seeking foreign academic partnerships for joint degrees and curriculum development.

Foreign universities in India



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA



DEAKIN
UNIVERSITY



University of
Southampton

To build on this momentum, international institutions must align their TNE strategies with India's employment landscape, price sensitivity, and regional diversity. Success will depend on delivering career-oriented programmes, ensuring strong industry linkages, and creating student experiences that replicate global exposure. With demand rising and regulatory clarity improving, India presents a rare opportunity to establish large-scale, locally grounded, and globally connected TNE models.

Sri Lanka



Transnational Education (TNE) in Sri Lanka is growing, driven by demand for international degrees and limited public university capacity. Academically eligible but financially constrained students see TNE as a viable alternative to studying abroad. Most TNE is delivered through franchise and validation partnerships, with private institutions collaborating with universities from Australia, India, Malaysia, and Europe. Fully foreign-owned campuses are rare but permitted under the Board of Investment (BOI) framework.

Foreign universities in Sri Lanka



The regulatory environment—led by the UGC, Ministry of Education, and BOI—is increasingly open to international collaboration, though accreditation and quality challenges persist. TNE is largely urban-centric, with business, IT, engineering, and health sciences being the most sought-after fields. Students are motivated by employability and global recognition, though affordability remains a key barrier. With improved regulatory clarity and support for blended delivery, TNE can significantly expand access and strengthen Sri Lanka's workforce development.

Bangladesh



Transnational Education (TNE) in Bangladesh is gaining traction, driven by rising demand for international qualifications among students unable to study abroad due to financial constraints. Most TNE activity is centred in urban areas and delivered through models such as franchise, validation, and distance learning. Branch campuses are rare, and participation from rural and underrepresented groups—especially women—remains limited. Popular programmes include business, law, and IT, reflecting local job market demand.

Bangladesh has introduced frameworks

Foreign universities in Bangladesh



like the Bangladesh National Qualifications Framework (BNQF) and the 2014 Cross Border Higher Education (CBHE) legislation. The University Grants Commission (UGC) oversees implementation and recognises overseas qualifications offered through approved domestic institutions. However, a lack of clear guidelines for non-branch campus models limits innovation and expansion. Still, TNE holds strong potential to support workforce development—provided regulatory clarity and accessibility improve.

COUNTRY IN FOCUS

Australia



Australia remains a top destination for South Asian students, especially from India, Bangladesh, and Nepal. With globally recognized universities, attractive post-study work rights, and a vibrant multicultural environment, the **country draws over 100,000 Indian students annually**. Recent government initiatives, including scholarships and university collaborations, have further strengthened its appeal.

However, policy shifts in 2025 have added complexities. A key change is the mandatory inclusion of a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) for all student visa applications, replacing the earlier Letter of Offer. Australia has also announced a **cap of 270,000 new international students in 2025**, raising concerns about long-term access and migration pathways.

Despite these changes, Indian students

continue to lead in visa approvals, overtaking China in February 2025. Yet, student experiences vary. Rising living costs, limited housing, and challenges in securing jobs post-study have been frequently cited, especially in cities like Sydney.

The 2024 Austrade survey found that while sentiment toward studying in Australia remains positive, many students voiced concerns about financial strain and changing immigration rules. Still, Australia holds a strong position among students in South and Southeast Asia, often ranking alongside the UK as a top destination.

In short, while Australia's reputation as a quality education hub remains intact, evolving visa rules and on-ground realities are prompting students to weigh their options more carefully.

EVENT IN FOCUS

THE PIE LIVE



The PIE Live Europe is a flagship international education conference hosted annually by *The PIE (Professionals in International Education)*. Held in March 2025, it brought together over 800 professionals from 40+ countries, including leaders, educators, entrepreneurs, and policymakers.

The event focused on emerging trends, challenges, and innovations in international education, featuring 100+ expert speakers, interactive workshops, and a dynamic expo with country pavilions. It served as a hub for collaboration, professional development, and knowledge-sharing across the global education sector.

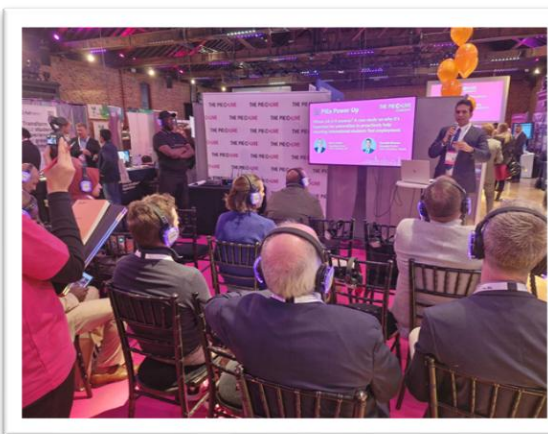
T&A Consulting was proud to lead a compelling session at PIE Live Europe 2025 in London, where our colleagues Barry Clarke and Saurabh Khanna addressed a pressing and often overlooked issue—student employability post-graduation, particularly for returnee international students.

With international enrolments on the

rise, many graduates return home to face saturated job markets, skill mismatches, and minimal career support—prompting concerns around the true ROI of global education. According to European Association for International Education, only 60% of international graduates secure roles aligned with their qualifications within six months of graduating.

EVENT IN FOCUS

PIE Live Europe 2025, London



Our session called on higher education institutions to expand career services beyond campus, emphasizing the need for localized support in students' home countries, especially in India and the Middle East. Drawing on our experience, we showcased how HEIs can leverage employer networks, digital platforms,

and regional partnerships to improve employment outcomes.

With over 50 delegates from academia and industry in attendance, the session sparked meaningful dialogue on why career services must evolve into a transnational responsibility.

Key Takeaways and Learnings

- ❑ Universities must rethink employability as a cross-border, long-term commitment
- ❑ Graduates returning home need targeted, localized career support to thrive
- ❑ Technology and employer partnerships are key to bridging the education-to-employment gap
- ❑ Shifting immigration policies and global economic trends require institutions to proactively adapt
- ❑ Collaborative models between HEIs and in-country experts can significantly enhance graduate outcomes

NEWS AND UPDATES

Global education must embrace AI while keeping human-centered values at its core



The United Nations emphasized that AI had the potential to transform education by enhancing learning tools and expanding access to information for both students and teachers. However, UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that as AI-driven systems grew more powerful, they posed risks if not aligned with human intentions.

To address this, UNESCO dedicated this year's International Day of Education to AI's role in learning. Director-General Audrey Azoulay stressed the need for investment in teacher and student training to ensure responsible AI use. She highlighted that AI should complement rather than replace human-led education and be guided by ethical principles to maximize its benefits.

Trump's Re-Election Sparks Global Shift in Student Mobility

Trump's crackdown on pro-Palestine protests and anti-immigration stance is fueling uncertainty for international students and academics in the US. Visa revocations and policy changes are prompting students—especially from the US—to consider the UK and Europe. UK universities are seeing record US applications, while Europe positions itself as a safe haven for displaced researchers.

International Students Provide Germany with a Significant Economic Advantage

A study by the German Economic Institute shows international students in Germany return eight times the investment made in them, contributing €15.5 billion more in taxes than they receive in state benefits over their

lifetimes. With high retention rates (45%) staying a decade after enrollment—international graduates strengthen Germany's economy and workforce.

KIX EMAP Webinar Explores EdTech Futures in SAMENA

On December 4, 2024, the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange – Europe, Middle East, North Africa, Asia, and the Pacific (KIX EMAP) Webinar brought together 120+ participants from over 35 countries to explore the future of EdTech in South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. Speakers shared experiences from Bangladesh, Egypt, and Tunisia, with support from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The event emphasized collaboration to address key South Asia, Middle East, and North Africa region challenges, including digital access, policy execution, and teacher training.

China's Universities Go Global: Expansion Amid Challenges



China is accelerating its global education ambitions, with 22 universities establishing overseas campuses, particularly in Asia under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While initiatives like Luban Workshops are expanding vocational training worldwide, efforts to open campuses in Western nations face political resistance.

Additionally, geopolitical tensions have led to a slowdown in Sino-foreign joint programmes, with several US universities severing ties with Chinese institutions. Despite these hurdles, China continues to leverage digital education platforms and strengthen global education governance. The government remains committed to positioning China as a leading education power by 2035



Indian students abroad down 15%, Canada sees 41% drop

Indian student enrolments abroad dropped by 15% in 2024, with Canada seeing the steepest decline of 41% due to stricter visa regulations and diplomatic tensions. The US (-13%), UK (-28%), and Australia (-12%) also saw declines, driven by visa restrictions, rising costs, and post-study work permits.

Meanwhile, Germany, France, Russia, and New Zealand emerged as alternative destinations, offering affordability and better post-study work opportunities



India: The New Hub for Global Education Partnerships

India is fast emerging as a transnational education (TNE) hub, driven by its young population, rising middle class, and enabling policies. Global universities like Deakin, Wollongong, Southampton, Lancaster, Queen's Belfast, Coventry, and Lincoln (Malaysia) are setting up or planning campuses across India, particularly in GIFT City, signaling strong momentum for international academic partnerships.



African Students Prioritize Health and STEM Abroad

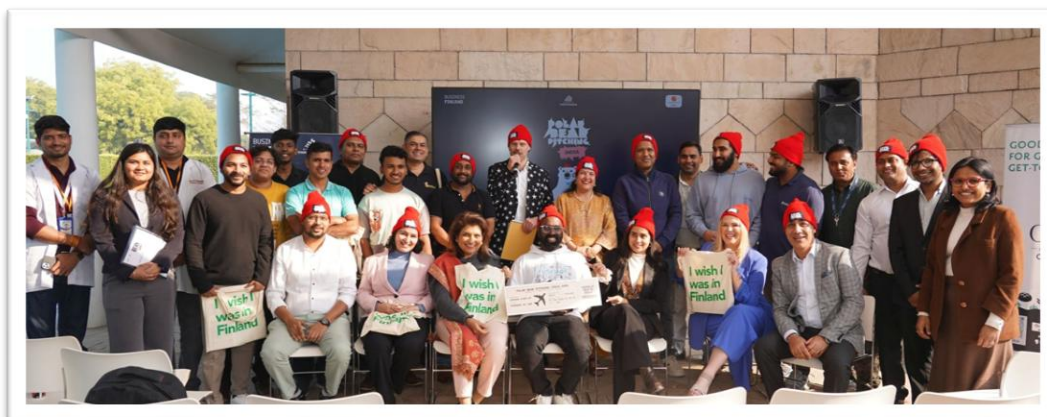
African students, especially from Nigeria and Ghana, are prioritizing health and STEM programmes abroad.

Their choices align with global job demand and healthcare worker shortages in top destinations.

Interest in the US and UK rose in 2024, while Canada saw a dip due to policy changes. Visa rules and career prospects are major drivers of shifting student preferences.

T&A EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

Innovation Meets Endurance: Polar Bear Pitching India Edition



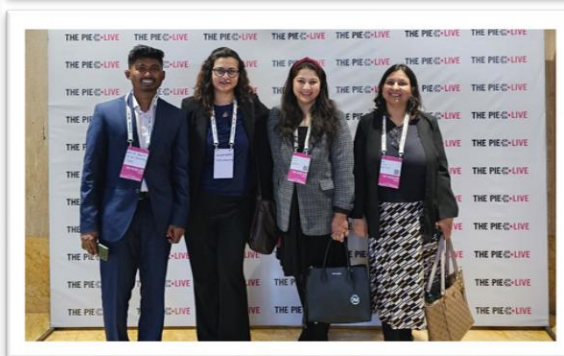
T&A Consulting was proud to support an extraordinary event hosted by Business Finland in collaboration with the Kerala Startup Mission—where innovation met endurance at the Polar Bear Pitching India edition.

In a truly unique challenge, eight daring startups from Kerala pitched their business ideas while standing in freezing water, testing both their grit and their vision. The event brought together passionate founders, an esteemed jury, and a spirit of fearless entrepreneurship.

Devan Chandrasekharan from Fuselage Innovations emerged as the winner and will go on to represent India at the renowned Polar Bear Pitching event in Oulu, Finland, in February 2025. As India's dynamic startup ecosystem continues to scale globally, platforms like these offer invaluable international exposure and learning opportunities.

We extend our sincere appreciation to Business Finland for launching such an engaging initiative in India, and we look forward to deepening our collaboration within the innovation and startup landscape.

PIE Live India



T&A Consulting was pleased to participate in PIE Live India—an inspiring and action-driven gathering that brought together international higher education institutions, Indian universities, education service providers, and industry leaders to reimagine the future of global education.

The event echoed India's commitment to opening its higher education landscape to the world, as envisioned under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Discussions centered around deepening cross-border collaboration, advancing transnational education, and creating inclusive and impactful learning ecosystems.

Key themes throughout the event included:

- Supporting Indian students studying abroad.
- Building meaningful, outcome-oriented partnerships beyond traditional MoUs.
- Strengthening India's position as a global study destination.

Enhancing industry-academia collaboration in R&D, PIE Live India reinforced a shared goal of making education more accessible, interconnected, and transformative.

Engaging in Global Education Dialogue at QS India Summit 2025



T&A Consulting, South Asia office for Queen's University Belfast was delighted to participate in the QS India Summit 2025 in Goa during February.

The summit, themed "Creating Equitable Educational Partnerships Amid Global Uncertainties: India's Role in Fostering Innovation and Research," brought together global leaders to explore India's pivotal role in shaping the future of education through innovation and research-driven strategies.

During the summit, Ashwin Merchant, representing QUB South Asia, engaged with senior representatives from Indian and foreign universities, as well as industry associations, to discuss strategies for fostering meaningful partnerships and enhancing academic collaborations in the region.

One of the key takeaways from the summit was the focus on Equitable Educational Partnerships, moving beyond traditional agreements to build more resilient institutions.

Discussions delved into how universities can transcend digital adoption and drive real transformation in teaching, learning, and institutional management. The emphasis was on reimagining education through adaptive strategies that not only embrace technology but also foster inclusivity, sustainability, and long-term impact.

The summit was a testament to the power of collaboration in addressing global educational challenges. We extend our heartfelt thanks to QS for organizing such an insightful event and for fostering meaningful connections in the education sector.

Strengthening Academic Ties in India at APAIE 2025



T&A Consulting, South Asia office for Queen's University Belfast (QUB) was pleased to participate in the APAIE Conference 2025, held in New Delhi, bringing together higher education leaders, policymakers, and institutions from across India, Asia, and beyond.

This year's India Focus highlighted the importance of fostering academic partnerships and exploring collaborative opportunities in alignment with India's evolving National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and internationalization goals.

Representing QUB South Asia, Ashwin Merchant engaged in a series of productive meetings with leading Indian

higher education institutions (HEIs) to explore potential academic and research collaborations.

These discussions reinforced QUB's commitment to strengthening ties with institutions that align with its research and academic priorities—both at its Belfast campus and at the upcoming GIFT City Campus (GFC).

APAIE 2025 provided a vital platform for global engagement, knowledge-sharing, and strategic partnership-building. We look forward to fostering deeper collaborations and contributing to the dynamic higher education landscape in the region.

Strengthening India–Finland Workforce Ties: Talent Mobility Roundtable



As the Knowledge Partner for Business Finland's Talent Boost programme in India, T&A Consulting was pleased to support the Round Table Discussion on Bridging Skill Gaps: Opportunities for Indian Talent in Finland, organized by the Embassy of Finland and Business Finland.

The roundtable convened recruitment agencies, staffing firms, training institutes, and workforce mobility experts to explore the evolving dynamics of Finland's labour market. Discussions covered rising demand across healthcare, IT, and blue-collar segments, immigration and regulatory pathways, and India's competitive advantage in supplying skilled talent.

Case studies of successful placements and models for institutional collaboration were presented, underscoring the need for streamlined mobility frameworks and skill development partnerships.

T&A Consulting actively contributed to the event—engaging with key recruitment stakeholders, offering operational support, and participating in the discussions as both, emcee and speaker. The exchange of ideas provided valuable insights into navigating international recruitment and fostering sustainable talent pipelines between India and Finland.

Queen's University Belfast: Business School Outreach and Citywide Engagements Reach 1,000+ Students Across South Asia



Between December 2024 and March 2025, Queen's University Belfast's South Asia team sustained strong regional momentum, engaging over 1,000 students through more than 60 targeted events.

In December, a standout initiative was the Queen's Business School roadshow across four cities. Each session, attended by 30 school and independent counselors, was led by Alexander David Wilson, Director of Internationalization, and Gemma Sarah O'Donnell, Student Recruitment Manager. The sessions offered deep insights into the Business School's programmes and helped counselors guide students more effectively.

January featured 10 virtual education fairs and 17 in-person events, reaching nearly 300 students through interactive

and personalized sessions. In February, the team conducted 35 offline engagements and 5 virtual sessions, with Gemma leading offer-holder meetups in four cities to support students preparing to join Queen's.

In March, a Queen's faculty member visited India, meeting two universities in Pune and five in Chennai, along with hosting engagements in Mumbai. Additionally, two virtual meetings were held with stakeholders in Kerala, further expanding regional outreach.

Through these efforts, Queen's University Belfast continues to grow its presence in South Asia and foster meaningful connections with students and institutions alike.

University of Derby: Strengthens Student Support and Agent Engagement Across South Asia



Between December 2024 and March 2025, T&A's team, in collaboration with the University of Derby, demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting prospective students in their academic journey. The primary focus during this period was securing offer letters for the January 2025 intake, while also assisting applicants preparing for the September 2025 intake.

Our team worked diligently to conclude the January 2025 intake and gear up for the September cycle. We participated in three school/university fairs and nine agent fairs—both virtual and in-person—providing counseling and addressing queries on the application process, program offerings, and career

pathways.

We also visited ten agent offices across key regions, conducting detailed training sessions to strengthen partnerships and ensure agents were equipped to support prospective applicants effectively.

Our outreach extended to over 400 students across Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Mumbai, and Nepal. In March, we further expanded efforts with agent fairs in Bangalore, Amritsar, Indore, Kochi, and Delhi; five agent office visits and two fairs in Colombo; one virtual fair; and two virtual counselor training sessions—reinforcing our regional presence across India and Sri Lanka.

ABOUT T&A CONSULTING

India and South Asia Education Representation Services



T&A Consulting (hereinafter referred to as T&A) is a global consulting practice to Government economic development agencies, businesses and academic institutions across North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. We offer an in-house portfolio of end-to-end services across the trade and investment spectrum.

Our team of over 60 full-time professionals, primarily based in our Global HQ in Gurugram near New Delhi, which is also the lead team for Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, is complemented by offices in Canada, covering the Americas, and representatives in the UK and Dubai.

For entry into South Asia only, T&A Consulting has advised multiple foreign governments and their Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on the opportunities for growth arising from student mobility and, more latterly, partnerships, especially in

India, following the introduction of the New Education Policy.

We represent a number of universities, overseeing and managing their relationships with agents and schools, attending multiple recruitment events and offering ongoing guidance to their international teams and academics on government policy, course design and emerging higher education trends.

We believe in the adage that the pursuit of higher education is a journey and not a destination. While we help the students begin their journey with all the needed preparations, we also ensure that the destination at our client's end is well served with all the necessary back-end support.

As we continue to expand our international network and expertise, T&A's position as a respected strategic advisory and consulting firm has enabled us to continue our original guiding principle for success – **WE GO BEYOND** – our clients' expectations.

HOW CAN WE HELP?



- Act as an on-ground local representative, promoting international universities to enhance their brand visibility and reach in India through strategic engagement initiatives.
- Develop innovative and targeted marketing strategies along with promotional campaigns to increase awareness and visibility of the represented universities among prospective students, parents, and educational institutions.
- Conduct in-depth market research and analysis to identify and prioritize target regions, institutions, and opportunities across India.
- Prepare and present detailed industry insights through country reports, market analysis, and industry deep-dives to provide actionable intelligence to partner universities.
- Guide students through the entire application process, offering personalized counselling to help them make informed academic and career decisions aligned with their aspirations.
- Offer comprehensive pre-departure support, including orientation sessions for offer holders, ensuring a smooth transition to the represented universities.
- Collaborate closely with universities to optimize and streamline the admissions process, ensuring a seamless experience for Indian students.
- Build, nurture, and sustain robust relationships with Indian educational institutions, government bodies, and other stakeholders to create long-term collaboration opportunities.
- Keep partner universities updated on evolving market trends, competitor strategies, and changes in Indian education policies, offering valuable insights to refine their approaches.

Get in touch with our University Engagement Manager

Rohil Mandi

Engagement Manager – T&A Consulting
Email: rmandi@taglobalgroup.com

**T&A Consulting
India**

Mr. Tarun Gupta

Global Managing Partner

tgupta@taglobalgroup.com

(+91) 124 4314960

**T&A Consulting
Americas Inc**

Mr. Saurabh Khanna

Managing Partner

skhanna@taglobalgroup.com

(+1) 437 9838483

**T&A Consulting
UK Representative Office**

Mr. Barry Clarke

Consulting Partner –
International Markets

bclarke@taglobalgroup.com

(+44) 77727 26449

**T&A Consulting
UAE Representative Office**

Ms. Pooja Dayal

Engagement Manager –
MENA Region

pdayal@taglobalgroup.com

(+971) 50 6190351

T&A Consulting – India: Global Headquarters

416, Tower A, Emaar Digital Greens, Golf Course Extn. Road
Sector 61, Gurugram 122001 | **India**

T&A Consulting – India: Bengaluru Office

Workafella Business Centre, 150/1, Infantry Rd,
Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru, Karnataka 560001 | **India**

T&A Consulting – Americas Inc

Suite No 501, 77 City Centre Drive
Mississauga ON L5B1M5 | **Canada**

T&A Consulting – UK Representative Office

124 City Road, London
EC1V 2NX | **United Kingdom**

T&A Consulting – UAE Representative Office

Dubai, P. O. Box 123234, The Old Town,
Downtown Dubai, Dubai | **UAE**

www.taglobalgroup.com

contact@taglobalgroup.com

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