

East Asia Education Week

ThinkTNE Forum 2026

Key Takeaway Report

4 February 2026
Indonesia



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Event Overview

ThinkTNE is British Council East Asia's flagship event aimed at advancing strategic dialogue and collaboration on transnational education (TNE) between East Asia and the UK.

As a platform for policymakers, higher education leaders, TNE practitioners, and quality assurance agencies to assess the mechanics and opportunities in multilateral TNE partnerships, the forum aims to identify pathways for sustainable and future-oriented collaboration.

Engagement and participation at ThinkTNE 2026 were notably active, with diverse voices, valuable insights, and experiences shared,

particularly across policy, leadership, and practice. Open and honest discussion on TNE collaboration, operations, regulation, and governance enabled realistic expectations for future strategies to be set. The emphasis on opportunities and limitations enriched the quality of dialogue, while deepening and consolidating mutual understanding of TNE among participants.

ThinkTNE was attended by **198** leaders and practitioners from universities across the UK and Southeast Asia, representing **14** countries. Policymakers, regulators, and government advisers from the UK and across the region contributed directly to discussions and outcomes.

Context

The theme this year aimed to delve deeper into the concept of multilateral partnerships, exploring their significance, implementation, and impact on TNE. This theme is particularly relevant given the evolving landscape of TNE in East Asia, where the shift from bilateral to multilateral collaborations is gaining momentum, especially as institutions face limitations in resources and impact, in addition to the changing behaviour and expectations of young people towards learning, value, flexibility, relevance, and international recognition of qualifications.

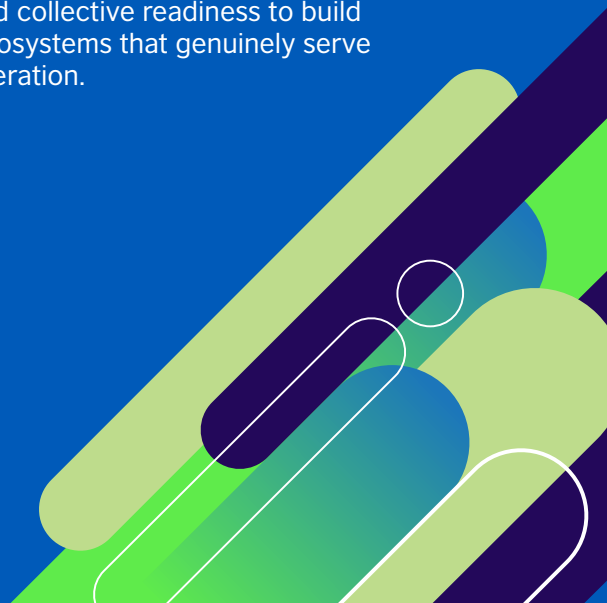
ThinkTNE 2026 explored the what, why, and how behind models that bring together multiple universities, governments, and industry actors to deliver quality at scale. The agenda's candour from "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" panel to sessions on leadership in operations signalled something important: *we achieve more when we talk honestly about what works and what doesn't.*

The good is easy to celebrate because we can see it. During the campus visit to Deakin Lancaster Indonesia (DLI), colleagues stepped inside collaborative teaching spaces and observed how UK quality is enacted locally as a living example of multilateral partnership in practice.

The bad is more elusive and more common. Partnerships do not usually fail because we lack policy; they falter when relationships fray, when alignment drifts and when we underestimate the complexity of operating across accreditation regimes, calendars, and cultures.

Indonesia's policy climate gives cause for optimism. At the same time, ASEAN already holds deep expertise. Malaysia's decades of UK TNE operations, for instance, have yielded lessons in quality assurance, partnership design, and regulatory navigation.

ThinkTNE 2026 was more than momentum; it represented collective readiness to build education ecosystems that genuinely serve the next generation.



Key Takeaways

TNE is a long-term game

Discussions reaffirmed that TNE needs to be a long-term national and institutional strategy, not a quick recruitment or revenue generator. Sustained investment and the willingness to wait for the academic, reputational, and societal returns contribute to successful TNE initiatives.

Quality matters more than quantity

The risk of diluting quality and straining operational capacity by pursuing many partnerships simultaneously was a recurring theme. Mature TNE ecosystems prioritise depth over breadth.

Multilateral partnerships bring opportunity and complexity

While multilateral partnerships can increase scale and resilience, they make governance, quality assurance, and coordination more complex. Multilateral TNE models should only be pursued with strong partner alignment, value propositions, and sufficient institutional capacity.

Trust and strong governance promote healthy TNE partnerships

Transparency, respecting partner values, and openness in discussing challenges all promote trust. Lack of alignment, more than financial or regulatory hurdles, was identified as the primary reason for partnerships becoming unviable. Many challenges stem from unclear decision-making authority, weak internal alignment, and poor risk accountability in institutions. Effective TNE demands robust internal governance and institutional readiness across academic and professional services.

Regulatory and local sensitivity are essential

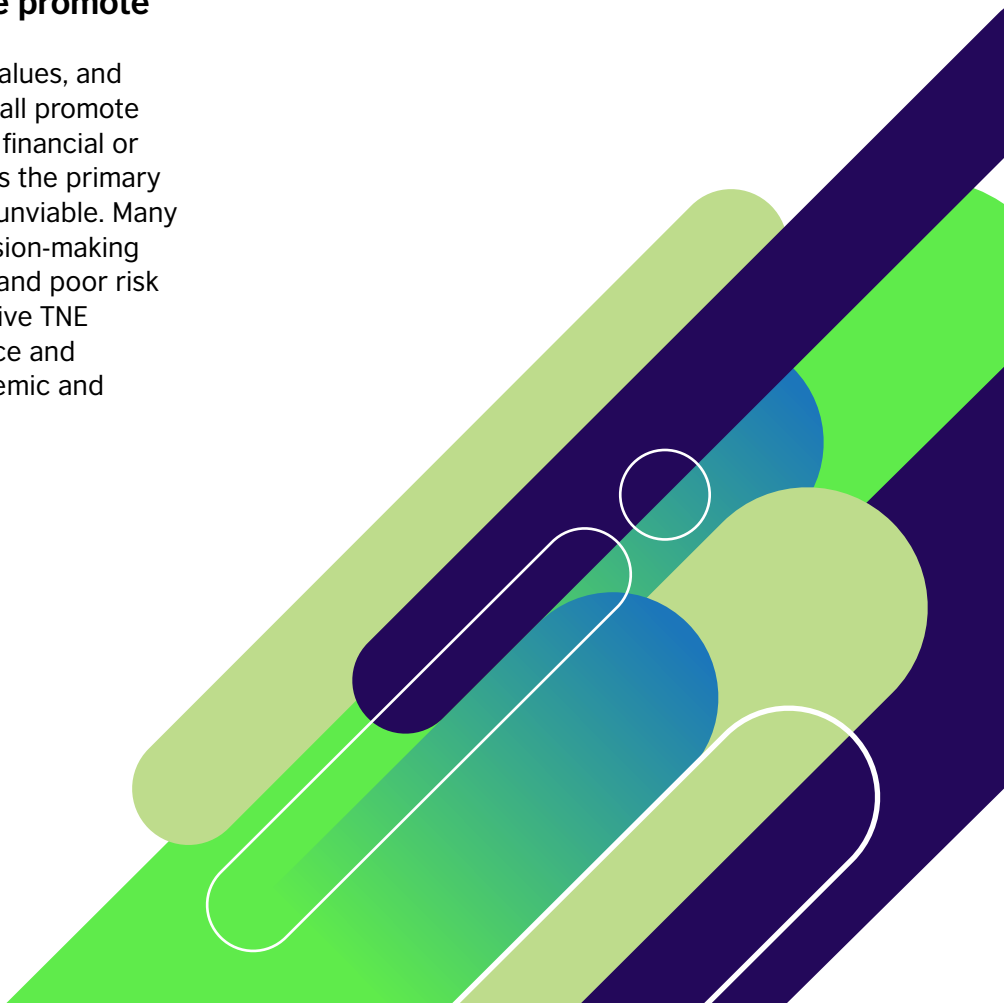
Successful TNE partnerships adapt models to local operating contexts rather than transfer home institution practices wholesale.

Employability and student outcomes define credibility

TNE's future credibility relies on demonstrable student outcomes. TNE must be designed with industry engagement and must clearly articulate the value delivered to students, employers, and societies.

TNE boosts access, sustainability, and soft power

TNE increases access to international education for non-mobile students, helps reduce carbon usage, and enriches connections between people and research.



Quotes from Think TNE 2026



Transnational education can serve as an important pathway to develop globally minded human resources. The Government of Indonesia is committed to providing the widest possible opportunities for Indonesian students to access high-quality education.

H.E. Professor Brian Yuliarto, Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Technology of Indonesia



Transnational education is one of the quiet engines of global progress. It deserves our ambition, our care, and our continued investment. The future of TNE will be co-created through collaboration, dialogue, and shared ambition.

**Professor Sir Steve Smith
UK Government
International Education
Champion**



As our future is shaped by AI and global uncertainties, the narrative is shifting. The future of TNE does not belong only to stable economies but also to the most resilient ones.

**Josephine Win
Co-founder and President,
STI Myanmar College**



There must be a real connection between the leadership teams of the institution with which you are partnering. It's about... really bringing your leadership teams and those working together into a space of real cultural listening.

**Dr Paula Sanderson
Chief Operating Officer
and University Secretary,
Cardiff University**



Transnational education is not only about preparing students to be engineers, doctors, and accountants... it is about building the right mindset and ability to become leaders. And to me, the number one job of a leader is to build shared purpose and mutual trust.

**Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi
Provost and CEO,
Heriot-Watt University
Malaysia**



Programme and Speakers

Time	Session	Speakers and Chairs
09.00	Welcome and introduction Welcome from University Host	Dr Hassan Wirajuda, Rector of Prasetiya Mulya University Lindawaty, Chief of Operations D-Hub SEZ
09.15	Opening from Country Host Indonesia Indonesia's international education ambitions and opportunities for collaborations	Summer Xia, Country Director, British Council H.E Professor Brian Yulianto, Minister of Higher Education, Research, and Technology of Indonesia
09.30	Opening Keynote UK ambitions, contributions and future role in international education <i>This opening keynote explores the UK's strategic vision for international education, focusing on its ambitions, contributions, and evolving role in the global TNE ecosystem. The speaker reflects on the UK's commitment to fostering impactful partnerships and its approach to navigating the changing dynamics of global higher education.</i>	Professor Sir Steve Smith, UK Government International Education Champion
09.45	Plenary 1 The evolution and future of TNE <i>A thought-provoking analysis of how transnational education has evolved over the years and what the future holds. The keynote examines global trends, student expectations, and the shifting paradigms in higher education delivery, offering insights into how institutions can adapt and thrive.</i>	Matt Durnin, Principal, Nous Consulting

<p>10.30</p>	<p>Plenary 2 UK TNE in East Asia – State of Play</p> <p><i>A data-driven insights and policy perspectives, setting the stage for deeper discussions on regional collaboration and innovation in TNE. The session delves into the current landscape of UK TNE in East Asia, highlighting key developments, challenges, and opportunities.</i></p>	<p>Eduardo Ramos, Head of Higher Education Systems and Internationalisation, British Council</p>
<p>11.00</p>	<p>Reflections</p>	<p>Professor Stella Christie, Vice Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Technology</p>
<p>11.15</p>	<p>Coffee break</p>	
<p>11.30</p>	<p>Panel Discussion TNE partnerships –The Good, The Bad and The Ugly</p> <p><i>This panel explores real-world experiences of TNE partnerships, highlighting success stories, challenges, and lessons learned. Panelists will share candid reflections on what works, what doesn't, and how institutions can navigate the complexities of multilateral collaboration.</i></p>	<p>Chair: Jazreel Goh, Director, British Council Malaysia</p> <p>Panellists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matt Durnin, Principal Nous Consulting • Professor Ova Emilia, Rector, Universitas Gadjah Mada • Professor Simon Guy, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global, Lancaster University • Caryn Nery, Director, Transnational Education Partnerships, Victoria University • Dr Paula Sanderson, Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary, Cardiff University • Dr Ly Thien Trang, Vice President, Ho Chi Minh City University Technology

<p>12.15</p>	<p>Presentations Successes and Learnings from TNE partnerships</p> <p><i>This 'ted-style' session showcases diverse perspectives on TNE partnerships, from setting up collaborations to managing and operating them in-country and the view from a TNE graduate. It offers a holistic view of the impact and outcomes of these partnerships.</i></p>	<p>Chair: Eduardo Ramos, Head of Higher Education Systems and Internationalisation, British Council</p> <p>Voices from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Jonathan Galloway, Provost and CEO, Newcastle University, Singapore • Josephine Win, Co-founder & President, STI Myanmar College • Professor May-Tan Mullins, Provost and CEO of the University of Reading Malaysia • Amanda Mojilip, Alumnus, University of Nottingham Malaysia • Paul Rowe, Director of International Partnership, University of Central Lancashire
<p>13.15</p>	<p>Lunch break and networking</p>	
<p>14.15</p>	<p>Breakout 1 – Making partnerships work – the Dos and Don'ts</p> <p><i>This breakout session focuses on practical strategies for building and sustaining effective TNE partnerships. Panellists shares best practices, common pitfalls, and actionable advice for institutions looking to strengthen their collaborative efforts.</i></p>	<p>Chair: Professor Abhi Veerakumarasivam, Provost and Deputy Vice- Chancellor, Sunway University</p> <p>Panellists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Kim Dale, Vice-Principal (International), University of Dundee • Joanne Fowler, Deputy Vice President, Global Business Development, King's College London • Christopher Jeffrey, Founding Dean, British University Vietnam • Dennis Wong, Regional Provost and Group CEO University Newcastle (ASEAN)

	<p>Breakout 2 – Leadership in TNE Operations</p> <p><i>Focusing on leadership and operational excellence, this session delves into the critical role of institutional leaders in driving successful TNE initiatives. Discussions covers governance, quality assurance, and the leadership competencies needed to navigate complex international partnerships.</i></p>	<p>Chair: Professor May-Tan Mullins, Provost and CEO of the University of Reading Malaysia</p> <p>Panellists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Simon Guy, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global, Lancaster University • Dr Paula Sanderson, Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary, Cardiff University • Professor Sue Welburn, Executive Dean, University of Edinburgh Joint Institute (ZJE)
<p>15.15</p>	<p>Closing plenary Beyond Borders: TNE partnerships for a resilient and inclusive global higher education</p> <p><i>The closing plenary reflects on the day's discussions and look ahead to the future of TNE. The session discusses strategies for enhancing institutional adaptability in the face of global disruptions, fostering inclusive practices that ensure equitable access to TNE, and the role of multilateralism in addressing shared global challenges such as sustainability, digital transformation, and geopolitical shifts.</i></p>	<p>Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi, Provost and CEO, Herriot Watt University Malaysia</p>
<p>15.45</p>	<p>Final word of thanks and group photo</p>	<p>Eilidh Hamilton, Regional Cultural Engagement Business Director, East Asia, British Council</p>
<p>16.00</p>	<p>End of Forum</p>	



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