



The Association
of Commonwealth
Universities

WHO WILL BE GOING TO UNIVERSITY IN 2030?

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World Access to Higher Education Day

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For the lives we can lead



WHY DOES ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION MATTER GLOBALLY?

- Access to HE remains dependent on wealth and geography
- Universities are central to re-imagining education
- The ACU is campaigning for the UN to recognise the essential role of HE in achieving SDG 4 and to support and protect HE as an integral part of the education sector
- Wide regional variation in the global Gross Tertiary Enrolment Rate (GTER)
 - 77% in Europe and North America
 - 9% in sub-Saharan Africa
- Research demonstrates the value of an international experience for students' academic performance, graduate earnings, and intercultural agility.



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CHALLENGE: THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

- Covid caused an emergency digital transition across universities world-wide.
- Major discrepancies in digital access and usage globally.
- Stark disparities in internet connectivity and infrastructure persist for institutions in low-and-middle-income-countries.
- ACU survey of digital engagement (May 2020) showed a 'double digital divide': between high and low income countries but also within universities, between students, academics, and professional staff.
- Online and blended provision set to be the predominate model for universities in the short to medium term.
- ACU members are collaborating with telecommunications companies to facilitate the provision of affordable or free access to the internet for students, including Wits University in South Africa and Ashesi University in Ghana.
- The ACU will be asking governments and policymakers - including Commonwealth education ministers – and coordinating multi-stakeholder dialogues to make digital access to education a priority, to support a more equitable future.



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OPPORTUNITIES

Blended learning

- Switch to online teaching at unprecedented pace and scale.
- Acceleration in implementing digital solutions to pre-Covid problems
- Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL) in East Africa

Virtual mobility

- Virtual mobility programmes can be an effective complement to traditional options.
- Potential to engage many more students, developing culturally agile, digitally competent, and internationally connected graduates.
- The ACU Virtual Engagement toolkit.



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ROLE OF THE ACU

- Campaigning for the UN to recognise the essential role of HE in achieving SDG 4 and to support and protect HE as an integral part of the education sector;
- Sharing experience and learning;
- Diverse network of members;
- Working with member universities, wider HE sector and policymakers;
- Sharing and developing good practice in digital engagement, virtual mobility and inclusion;
- Championing international mobility.



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THANK YOU



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