

Comparative Higher Education

Custom, experiential learning abroad



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It is hard to imagine a period of greater uncertainty for the UK higher education system, as existential woes play out against a drastically changing political backdrop. In 2012, a new tuition fee system came into place finally ending free higher education for UK citizens and sparking fierce debate and large student protests in London and across the UK. Ever since, conversations around privatization and commercialization of higher education have gained increasing attention while institutions test boundaries with new administrative models and ‘bespoke’ degrees that challenge traditional conceptions of the UK university and student. Many private higher education providers are restructuring, with support of the government, to gain access to publicly funded students. They offer a range of non-traditional programs including modular degrees completed in less than three years and in subject areas not formally covered in the public higher education sector, such as music production and vocational courses.

All this as Britain renegotiates its relationship with the world and Brexit casts a shadow of doubt across UK university globalization initiatives, research and international enrollments.

ACCENT London’s expansive network allows for engaging guest speakers and roundtable conversations to enrich a customized program exploring international and comparative higher education. Institutions and speakers in that network include:

Universities

- University College London
- Queen Mary University of London
- King’s College London
- New College of the Humanities, ‘bespoke’ private liberal arts higher education

Governing bodies & representative organizations

- UK Department for Education
- Universities UK
- Independent Higher Education
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
- UK Council for International Student Affairs

Students

- Meeting with cohort from UCL Institute of Education, MA in Development Education & Global Learning or MA in Comparative Education programs
- Guest lecture and discussion with leader of the National Union of Students, founded in 1922 to advocate for student welfare; a springboard for politicians on the national stage
- Q&A with UK university students
- Conversation with UK graduate students about university life in the UK

Visits and lectures

- Visit student residence at local university
- Guided tour of Student Central, union open to all University of London students, and discussion of student life and ‘student services’ in the UK
- Tour of UCL with current graduate students
- Roundtable with Institute of Ideas public debate project examining freedom of speech in UK universities or the relevance of philosophy in today’s university curriculum
- Meeting with UK academic to discuss teaching in the public university system

