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CONNECTIVITY, CONTENT AND INSIGHTS: A SUITE OF SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

UK transnational education (TNE) programmes are not new, although they have seen unprecedented growth in the past decade. According to a 2018 report from Universities UK, the number of students studying on TNE programmes equates to 1.6 times the number of international students coming to the UK to study, in the same year.

The global increase in TNE activity – with over 700,000 students studying offshore for UK degrees – presents huge opportunities for universities, but it also presents some new challenges, and for network providers like Jisc.

A key challenge to meet at the outset is to ensure access to seamless connectivity between sites at home and overseas, as well as access to content and administration systems; to create a fully equitable and high-quality experience for TNE students, and those staff delivering it.

Jisc has been working to create a portfolio of TNE services, not just for UK members, but all potential beneficiaries. By working with global NRENs we are able to ease the issues of connectivity, access to content and monitoring student experience - wherever that may be in the world.

One of our services, Global Connect, is already successfully linking UK institutions with branch campuses in Malaysia and Malta, providing students and staff with the connectivity they expect. The service ensures students

can access course materials in real time, not be waiting for better bandwidth out of hours, and it too is available to institutions who are not Jisc members.

At Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) and Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, a unique partnership combines the academic expertise of two international institutions to create one jointly taught programme. A major issue in delivering this course was the internet delay and packet loss, as public networks route via the US to Europe. By connecting to Jisc's Janet network, connectivity has greatly improved as traffic through CERNET is now routed westward from China.

Our network is one of the only NRENs in the world to offer dedicated services to support transnational education. We're encouraged by the ongoing requests for collaboration and looking forward to working closely with in-country NRENs to deliver some of our new services to member universities. One of these potential services, specifically designed to help institutions support students, is based on the

success of a service with UK universities, so this year we're piloting Jisc's Digital experience insights survey but for TNE students.

We know from the last two years of running this pilot service (with more than 22,000 UK participants in 2017) that 80% of HE students believed reliable Wi-Fi to be critical to accessing digital services. With TNE, the connectivity needs of students are no less, and these students are more likely to be reliant on virtual learning environments (VLEs), powered by their internet service. As it's so important to our members that they get the learning environment right - to deliver a seamless student experience - we're piloting this service for TNE. Some of our other UK based findings from this year's digital experience survey were:

- 62% of HE learners access their VLE on their mobile phone
- 79% would collaborate online with fellow learners
- 95% of HE students search online for content once a week or more

Words
Esther Wilkinson, Jisc

Content is key to student success and one of the areas where inefficiencies emerge in providing a TNE offer. The current TNE licensing pilot, will launch as a further new service later this academic year, and by using the experience of Jisc Collections in engaging with publishers and aggregators of content, we're establishing agreements with publishers to support the pricing and licensing requirements of TNE providers. Without the duplication from individual negotiations, universities will see efficiencies and cost savings that ensure they can keep pace with the expectations of TNE students and support their success.

We are also listening to our global community and as part of the work of the GÉANT TNE Special Interest Group (SIG) we have issued a short survey to European NRENs on their current and planned TNE support activities. We plan to extend this globally in the medium term, and the initial results will inform our data collection on TNE; a draft report can be found at: https://wiki.geant.org/pages/

Global Connect, the student digital experience tracker and the TNE licensing pilot were developed as pilot projects with Jisc members, through the TNE support programme. We hope that more services will be developed through global collaborations with other NRENs and education providers to be able to support our globally mobile students, and staff.

For further information about all these services, or the work of the GÉANT SIG-TNE, visit **https://www.jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/transnational-education or contact transnational@jisc.ac.uk**

Esther Wilkinson is responsible for driving the development and delivery of Jisc's international strategy, coordinating and providing a leadership role for international activities across the Jisc portfolio, and positioning these within Jisc's vision and overall strategy. A key part of this role includes the strategic and business development of Jisc's transnational education support programme. Esther also leads the GÉANT SIG-TNE.