

The early bird: why careers support and integrated learning for international students at university is key to success afterwards

Hayley Iovannelli, Head of International – University of the West of England (UWE Bristol)
Sarah Tompkins, Undergraduate Student Recruitment Manager (International) – Keele University



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
Middle East & North Africa 2025

Key Findings: Why a University Degree Matters

- Employers prioritise ***soft skills*** over technical knowledge
- Employers expect universities to deliver graduates who are ***work ready***
- Employers increasingly look for ***transferable skills***

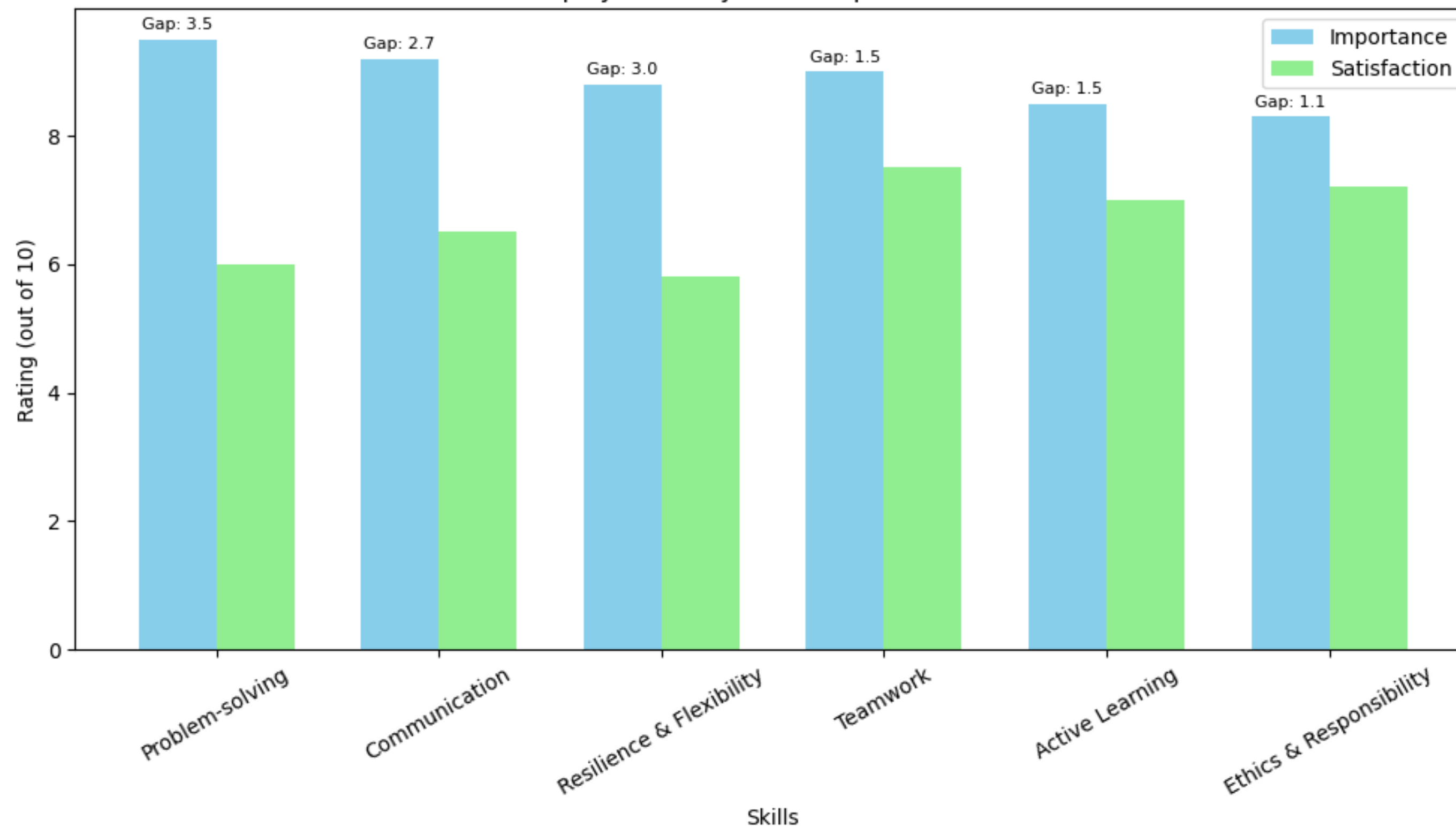


REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025



QS Global Employer Survey: Skills Importance vs Satisfaction



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025

Why these skills matter

- ***Communication***

Enables collaboration, leadership and conflict resolution
Crucial in remote, hybrid work environments

- ***Problem solving***

Drives innovation and efficiency
Analysis and strategy – act independently

- ***Resilience and Flexibility***

Able to adapt and change, manage stress and stay productive

It's not just about getting a job; it's about gaining the skills and attributes to be successful



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025





“The future isn’t humanless – it’s hybrid”

AI should support, not replace the human connection

- 79% of consumers believe humans will always have a role in customer service
- AI is best used for routine tasks, while humans handle complex or emotional interactions (49% of consumers are at ease with using AI in this way)
- Companies that blend AI and human agents see higher customer satisfaction and loyalty

Source: Forbes – AI + Human Touch



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025

Why the UK?

- Reputation and Quality
- Cultural diversity
- Language proficiency (business English)
- Graduate average annual salary £42,000
- Masters' students earn even more avg. £47,000
- More likely to achieve a senior role faster than peers (source: QS)
- UK degree is valuable currency



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025

How students can get involved

Library

Careers
Service

Volunteering

Societies

Internships

Placement
year

LinkedIn

GradLink

UWE
Bristol | University
of the
West of
England

Keele
UNIVERSITY



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025

Focus on: Internships

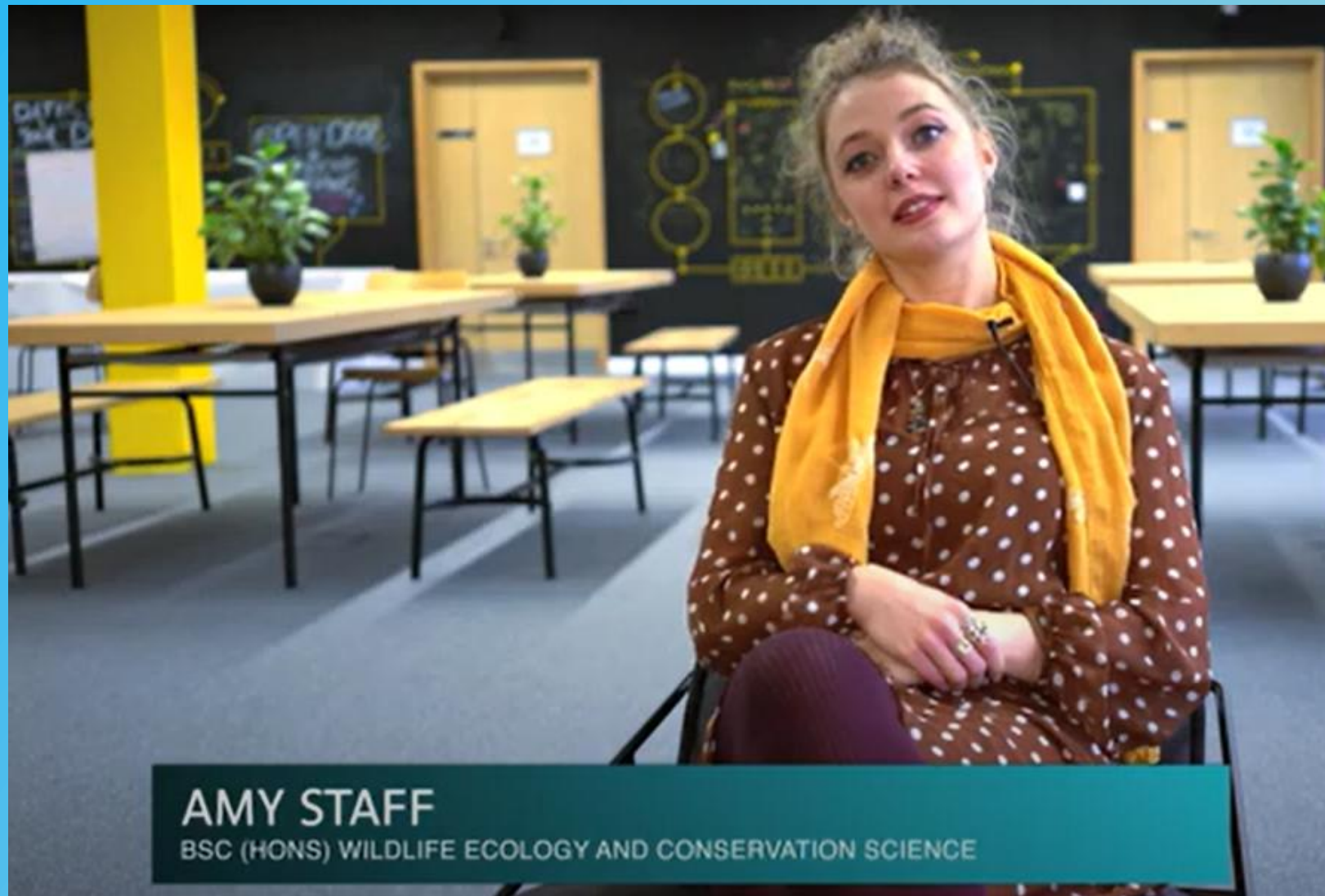


- Work in a sector connected to your degree
- Gain a competitive advantage in your future job market
- Mentorship, support and knowledge
- Start to curate your professional network
- Use knowledge from your studies (put this into practice)
- Starting hourly wage approx.£12.21 (over 21s)



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
Middle East & North Africa 2025

Focus on: Volunteering



Amy Staff, BSc (Hons) Wildlife and Conservation Science

- Wanted to make a difference and make UWE a greener place to be
- Student voice is more powerful than you realise
- Increased confidence (introvert)
- Recognition 'Past the Detox' campaign was 'highly commended' in the Campaign of the Year category at the National Student Fundraising Awards
- Now advising other HEIs on sustainability policy



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025

Focus on: LinkedIn

- Networking and access to the 'hidden' job market
- Improving digital presence
- Demonstrating soft skills
- Conducting company research
- Being found by recruiters
- Build your own professional network
- Showcase your skills and stay informed



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
Middle East & North Africa 2025

Case study: Prince Isofi



Former UWE student Prince Isofi – was head hunted by his current employer shortly after he updated his LinkedIn profile to highlight his skills and achievements from his studies at UWE Bristol. Prince is now working as a Graduate Mechanical Building Services Engineer at Morgan McDonald

Top tips from Prince:

1. Use the resources you have – utilise from everyone e.g. careers, lecturers. Ask lots of questions
2. Put yourself out there – go out and get it
3. Focus on the academics – make yourself an attractive applicant
4. Placement or internship
5. Specialisation



Case study: Ginny Ngai Pik Gin



“My experience at UWE Bristol has taught me to be independent and, most of all, made me realise that I won’t know what I’m capable of if I don’t try.

I went into UWE Bristol thinking I’m nobody. I thought I was just an ordinary student but upon graduating, I have realised we are all capable of becoming somebody.

As the lecturers and community have supported my journey, I have slowly gained more self-confidence and was assured that I could achieve excellence.”

Ginny Ngai Pik Gin spent two years studying International Business Management in Malaysia, before spending her final year at UWE Bristol



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

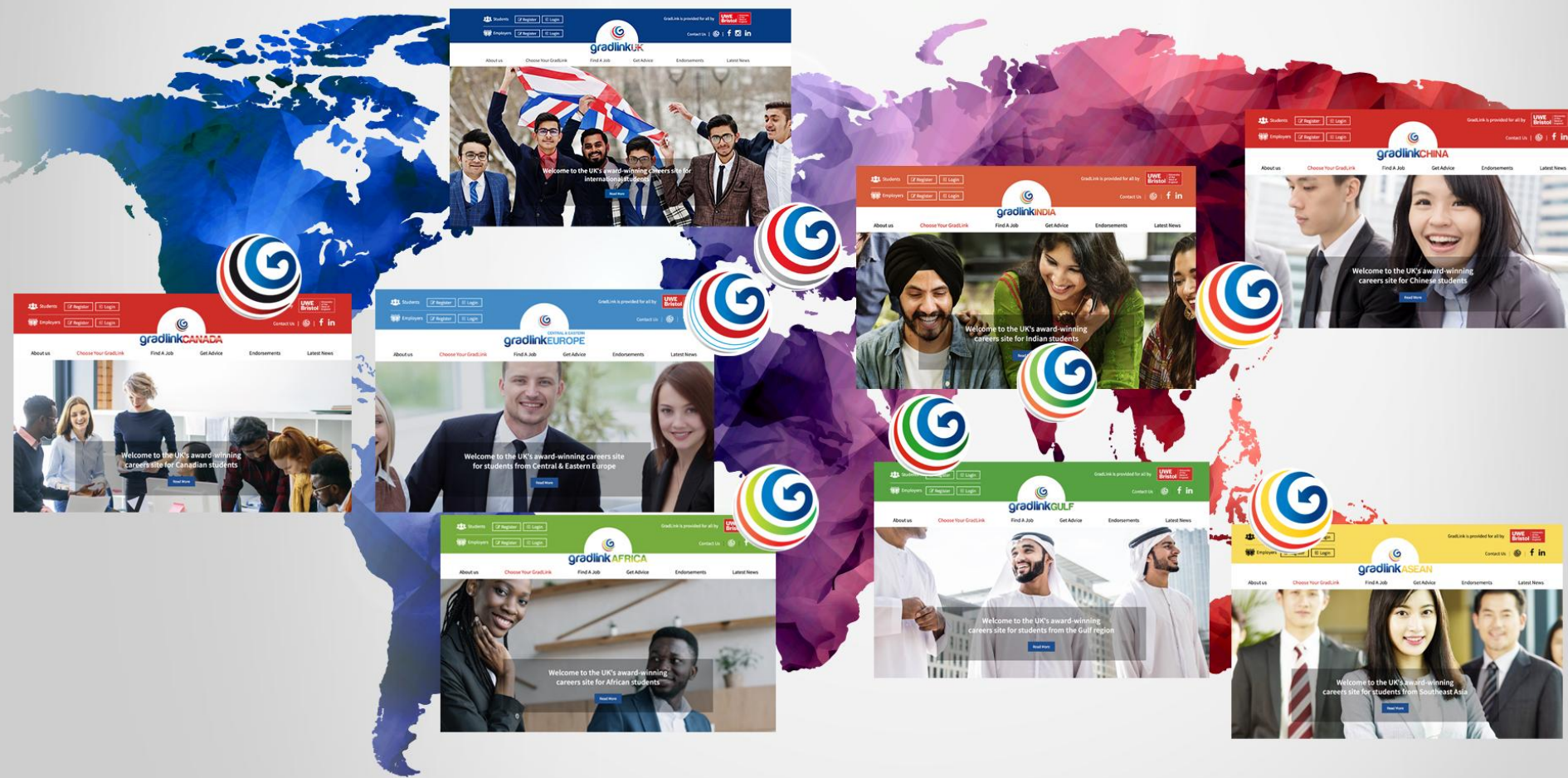
Middle East & North Africa 2025

Focus on: GradLink

www.gradlink.co.uk

UWE's award winning careers site for international students
8 gradlink sites: Africa, China, SE Asia, Gulf, Europe, Canada, India, UK

- View and apply for global jobs
- Link with leading graduate employers
- Gain expert advice on how to get a graduate job in their chosen country
- Build and submit a CV – make it visible so employers find you
- Follow socials for real time news, events and the latest job posts



REGIONAL INSTITUTE
Middle East & North Africa 2025



From **Keele University** to **The United Nations**

Noof Alotaishan, Office of the President of UN



- Graduated in 2019
- Studied International Law and Politics
- From Saudi Arabia – first time living alone when studying abroad
- Credits her lecturers ‘lived experiences’ helping her understand the world
- Gained soft skills in jobs post graduation working as a lecturer



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025



Graduated in 2005

Studied Psychology and Criminology

Always wanted to be a pilot but pivoted to University during turbulent time in airline industry

Credits his course in helping to make safe decisions during travel – understanding human factors, managing crew, problem solving, decision-making and teamwork



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025

Keele Careers Online



Career Assessment

Understand your motivations, resilience, workplace preferences and values



Interview simulator

Browse the most important interview questions, take mock interviews, and have your answers assessed by AI



CV builder

Get noticed! Create an expert cv based on employer requirements and get immediate online feedback



Elevator pitch builder

Create a 60-second summary about you to engage listeners



Job search engine

Search vacancies aggregated from job-boards, companies & agencies



Career Pathways

Need some ideas for the future? Career pathways can help you discover what you could do and how you could get there



Building your personal brand

Your personal brand is your reputation, your digital footprint and the way other people see you.



Career e-learning

Short courses tackling everything career-related from self-awareness to succeeding in the role



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025

Full Circle

Being an alumni is very powerful and holds many opportunities both personally and professionally. Students can:

- Understand who is in your alumni network and forge meaningful relationships to escalate your career
- Give back to others through mentorship, career advice and top tips

- Keele Connect and UWE Alumni Connect

<https://www.keeleconnect.org/>

<https://www.uwe.ac.uk/alumni/alumni-connect>



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025

What can we all do?

- ***Encourage***

Project based learning and introduction to LinkedIn

Speak to us, we are happy to run workshops virtually and in-person when visiting

- ***What can students do?***

Join clubs (debate, writing, coding) to practice communication and teamwork

Active reflection on personal experiences (e.g. volunteering, travel)

Analysis and strategy – act independently

Don't panic!



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025

THANK YOU



REGIONAL INSTITUTE

Middle East & North Africa 2025