

Mapping UK-Tunisia Higher Education Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities

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1. Background

The research was carried out as part of The British Council's Internationalizing Higher Education project, which promotes and supports the exchange and mobility of students, scholars and academics into and outward from the UK.

1.1 Scope of the Internationalizing Higher Education Project

To increase the Higher Education (HE) relationships between the UK and Tunisia, focusing on enhancing academic and student mobility; facilitating research and technology transfer; and improving cooperation around capacity building, quality assurance and employability.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this report include:

- To describe the institutional context in which Higher education cooperation between UK and Tunisian institutions has taken place
- To map out and showcase examples of past and present cooperation agreements between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Tunisia and the UK
- To analyse trends and shifts in past and present cooperation agreements
- To map out the types of research projects currently underway by UK-based academics in Tunisia.
- To make recommendations for further developing a Tunisia-UK Higher Education strategy and to prioritize strategy areas, providing a rationale for these priorities.

1.3 Methodology

The following report is the result of over 8 weeks of research carried out by two researchers who have employed largely qualitative methods, including documentation review, collation and analysis, archival research, extensive interviews with relevant government officials, HE administrators, faculty, academics and students. It also includes some statistical analysis of the data on student exchanges.

1.4 Setting the context

The Tunisian revolution marked a dramatic change at all levels of Tunisian society and governance. The realm of Higher Education has not been an exception, as students, faculty and administrators seek to comprehend the changed context and make the most of new opportunities. Over the course of our interviews with government officials, university administrators as well as students and academics, we discovered a great deal of excitement, along with some trepidation, in regards to the future of Tunisia's HE. All expressed openness towards strengthening institutional ties with British HEIs. There seems to be a strong desire across the various disciplines, and including both public and private universities, to integrate English language, curriculum and pedagogical practices to a greater extent into Tunisia's Higher Education system. The British HE system is held in high regard, especially for the many who feel the French model that has been in place in Tunisia since the colonial period, has run its course.

2. Historical Overview of British-Tunisian Higher Education Collaboration

From our observations, it seems UK-Tunisian HE cooperation can be generally divided into three eras. The first era entails collaboration that occurred towards the end of the Bourguiba

period/early Ben Ali rule (1980s-1990s), when it appears that considerable funds were invested into the educational exchanges, largely for students in the later phases of degrees in the Arts and Humanities, focusing on those studying the English language, British and American language as well as civilizations. Hundreds of Tunisian students were sent to study in the UK during the 1980s, though these programs began to taper down in the mid-1990s. In addition to short study programs, largely for Arts and Humanities students, there were a handful of academic exchanges and collaboration in different scientific disciplines. The 1990s also saw a handful of UK academics, especially working in the social sciences, coming from the UK to do research on various aspects of Tunisian social, political and economic relations, mostly funded by their universities or UK based scholarship and research grants.

The second era can be considered the late- Ben Ali era (from mid-1990s onwards), when there was a marked decrease in academic exchanges and cooperation. It is unclear whether this was due to a reduction in funding from MHE for these projects or a lack of political will to have them funded. Perhaps another factor that can account for the decline in cooperation is that British academics and institutions were hesitant to engage with state-run Tunisian institutions because of well-documented human rights abuses that were taking place during this time.¹

This downwards trend increased further after 9/11, presumably as a result of the increased difficulties in obtaining visas. However, the UK managed to avoid some of the knee-jerk immigration regulatory reactions experienced by other Anglophone countries with similarly high levels of international students, including Australia and the US.² This has changed somewhat in recent years though with the implementation of more stringent visa regulatory framework in place since 2010-2011, as well as higher visa costs. As detailed in a British Council report on the “Impact of Visa Changes on Student Mobility and Outlook for the UK,” the 2010-11 changes to the visa regulatory framework “have made it difficult for non-EU students to obtain a UK visa and are likely to denote the beginning of a downward trend in the number of students entering the practice UK.”³

The Nabeul Language Village, established in 2006, went some way towards filling the gap left by a decline in exchange programmes in the late-Ben Ali era as it provided Tunisian students with an opportunity to their English and have social and cultural exchanges with British as well as American peers.

The third era is that following the revolution (January 2011- onwards). In the aftermath of the revolution, there appeared to be a renewed interest in fostering stronger institutional ties and student and academic mobility between Tunisia and the UK. On the UK side, there was to be an exponential growth in interest in Tunisia, in particular in the social sciences, amongst students and academics alike. The changed institutional and social context means UK –based scholars feel much freer to carry out research, engage in activities of intellectual exchange, and spend extended periods of time living in Tunisia.

On the Tunisian side, there is an increasing interest to break with what many see as a HE system linked to the colonial past represented by the French system, and instead institute

¹Human Rights Watch 2006, 2007, 2008.

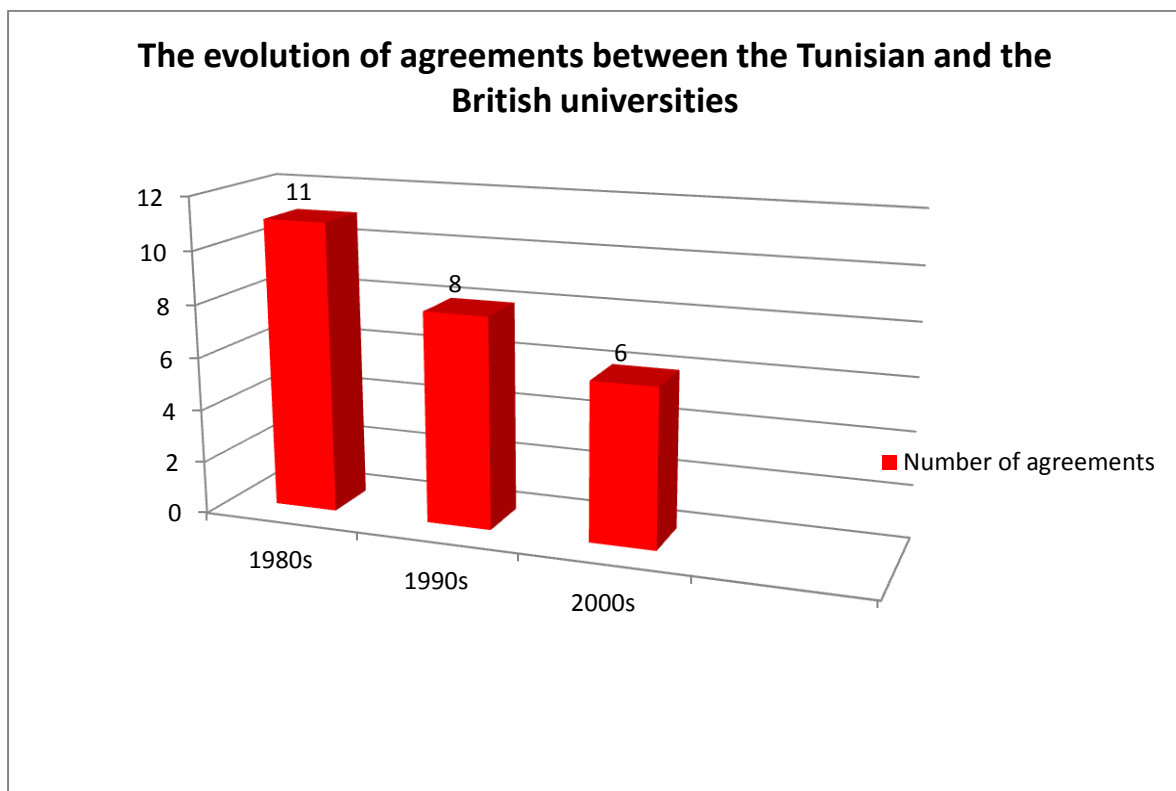
² Impact of Visa Changes on Student Mobility and Outlook for the UK, British Council 2011.

³Ibid.

meaningful change. This is connected in the minds of many Tunisians with increased international cooperation, in general, and with the UK in particular. Tunisian academics from a diverse range of disciplines, are more interested than ever in doing research, attending conferences, access libraries, etc. in the UK. Tunisian students increasingly look to the UK for study abroad programs as well as scholarship funds for postgraduate study. Tunisian HE administrators are increasingly interested in collaboration on capacity building and curriculum reform. However, as the Recommendations sections of this report will make clear, there still remain many financial and bureaucratic hurdles to enhancing cooperation between Tunisian and British HEIs.

3. Mapping out Past and Present HE Cooperation

The below summary of past and present cooperation agreements is extensive, though by no means exhaustive. A more detailed list of the agreements may be found in the Appendix to this report. Due to the absence of any one archival or administrative body that oversees cooperation agreements, the list we have put together undoubtedly contains some lacunae. However, we believe the overall picture that can be gleaned from this summary, which substantiates the three era analysis discussed above, is largely accurate. To begin with, here is a graph that demonstrates these trends:



3.1 Tunisia-UK HE cooperation: pre-revolution agreements

In pre-revolution Tunisia, there were a total of 23 cooperation agreements signed between UK and Tunisian HE institutions. The table below provides an overview of the dates and numbers of agreements.

Year	Cooperation Agreements
1986	2
1988	6
1991	2
1992	1
1993	4
2004	1
2006	1
2010	2

In 2006, the Language Village at Nabeul (LVN) was established. The LVN is a summer language camp organized by the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education. Since 2006 it has hosted over 600 undergraduate students in partnership with AMIDEAST Tunisia and the British Council Tunisia. The main objective of LVN is to expose students to English in order to enhance their communication skills.

In 2006, the British Council organised a visit to Tunisia for a team from the University of Strathclyde. The purpose of the visit to Tunisia was to explore the possibility of setting up a tripartite strategic partnership between the British Council in Tunisia, the Tunisian Ministry of Education and the University of Strathclyde, which aims to seek mutual benefits over the long-term for the improvement of higher education provision in both countries. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the three partners in 2007, covering various aspects of higher education collaboration, including: improvements to English language instruction, research collaboration, academic exchanges, guest lecturing, and well as pedagogical training. To date, the most tangible outcome has been the launch of three split-site PhDs. Two academics who benefited from this agreement, FahmiKhlil and Souhair Ben Zekri, are currently working with the Ministry of HE to enhance cooperation between British and Tunisian HEIs.

The majority of agreements signed between universities in the pre-revolution period entailed sending a group of Tunisian students to a UK institution to attend courses in English language, literature, and/or civilization as well as pedagogical training for linguistics majors. The students would be immersed in British life, often staying with British families, or in university dormitories, and including cultural excursions.

However, two of the agreements signed in 1991, including between Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis with the Central London Polytechnic as well as with the University of Manchester, entailed an exchange of UK students, as well as Tunisian students. In 1992, there was also an exchange of Tunisian and UK academics and post-grads as the result of an agreement between Manouba and Birkbeck universities, which entailed the integration of the Tunisian and British scholars into one another's departments respectively. In all three of these exchanges, fees were covered by the home institutions/governments of the students and academics.

Another unique agreement was signed in 2010 between the University of Oxford and the Tunisian Institut National du Patrimoine (INP). This agreement entailed cooperation between a group of specialists and students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, from the

universities of Tunis, Sousse, Manouba, Aix-en-Provence, Siena, Cambridge, Southampton, Leicester and Oxford, the INP and the British School at Rome, as well as professional archaeologists. The group undertook an excavation of the ancient city of Utica to better understand its urban development and economy, while developing new technologies, training archaeologists and helping to preserve the site. The project is funded by Baron Lorne Thyssen, the Society of Antiquaries, the John Fell Oxford University Press (OUP) Research Fund, All Souls College, and Oxford University's Institute of Archaeology.

3.2 Tunisia-UK HE cooperation: post-revolution agreements

Post-revolution, there have been two unique partnership agreements launched involving UK and Tunisian HE institutions. In 2013, an ERASMUS Mundus⁴ Project number 2013-2442/001-001-EM Action 2 partnership was launched, including participation of Tunisian and UK partners (9 Avril, University of Tunis, with the Tunisian Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency and Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, as well as Cardiff Metropolitan University). The project is entitled: "EU-Morocco-Egypt-Tunisia-Algeria-Libya International Cooperation Agreement (EU-METALIC II)". The project entails student and faculty mobility from Tunisian HE institutions and is aimed to improve leadership, identify problems and create sustainable development in Higher Education in the participating institutions.

The British Council has also facilitated various Higher Education agreements during this period. In July 2011, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the British Council signed a partnership to create the Virtual University of Tunis (UVT). This agreement enables the UVT to host a selection of British Council online learning materials, which will then be made available to all higher education institutes in Tunisia. Two British Council online courses, The English IT and Second Life Business English, have been recently piloted with three different higher education institutions in Tunisia.

Also in 2011, the British Council funded a cooperation agreement between the Faculty of Pharmacy in Monastir, Tunisia and the Royal Botanic Gardens, in Richmond, Surrey. The project deals with the theme of Variation in Volatile Leaf Oils of Seven Eucalyptus Species Harvested from Zerniza Arboreta (Tunisia).⁵

In December 2013, the Ministry of Higher Education and the British Council signed an agreement regarding teacher training. The agreement had two key aims: 1) Training and Certification of 120 University teachers through internationally recognised qualifications (e.g Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)⁶); and 2) Creating University Language Centres that are certified to administer the British Council APTIS test to university students as a means of increasing their employability.

⁴The Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-2013) aims to enhance the quality of higher education and promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through mobility and academic cooperation. It was replaced in 2014 by the Erasmus + programme.

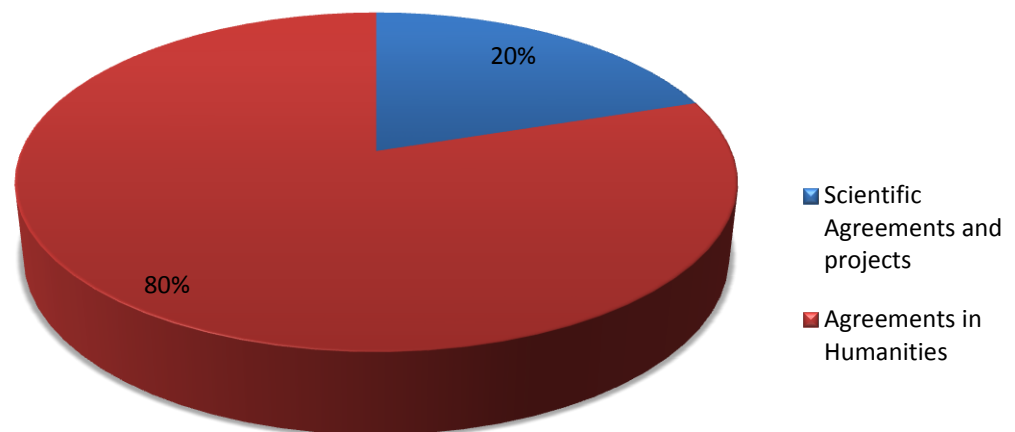
⁵<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cbdv.201000103/pdf>

⁶TKT is a new teacher training certificate test from Cambridge University for teaching English as a second language. It aims "to increase teacher's confidence and enhance job prospects by focusing on the core teaching knowledge needed by teachers."

Another interesting partnership is being developed between the Tunis Business School (TBS), University of Tunis and the LSE Middle East Centre, Emirates Foundation Collaboration Project. Launched in July of 2014, the purpose of this project is to enhance the didactic capacity of TBS on the level of International Relations teaching at TBS. The project will entail faculty exchanges, capacity building, training and curriculum development support.

3.3 Partnership trends

The dominance of agreements in the human and social science branches from 1982 to 2013



As one can see from perusing the various agreements and partnerships formed between Tunisian and UK HEI over the last three decades, there have been some marked trends and shifts in priorities.

Firstly, it appears that the majority of the agreements signed between British and Tunisian HEIs were limited to the disciplines of Arts and Humanities, and Linguistics and Literature in particular. There were fewer agreements in the scientific branches of study, and none engaging departments of political science as this pie chart demonstrates:

It appears that the focus of early funding was largely on pedagogy and training in order to improve the capacity of individual early scholars, presumably so that they could return to become teachers in their fields (largely in Linguistics, British and US Literature and Civilization). However, later funding tended to be geared towards institutional improvement, capacity building on departmental and institutional levels as well as skills building aimed at 'leadership' and 'entrepreneurship'. These shifts and trends are most likely the result of changes that have occurred over the years on two levels: 1) shift in the needs, aims and capacities of Tunisian HEIs; 2) shifts in spending priorities of UK and EU-wide funding institutions.

3.4 Student and academic HE mobility

Due to Tunisia's French colonial past and southern Mediterranean location, it is not surprising that a majority of academic exchanges in the past have been between Tunisian academics and scholars located in France primarily, but also Italy and Spain. Over the past 15 years, this has been changing. There has been an exponential rise in interest in Tunisia amongst UK scholars, in particular in the aftermath of the revolution, and an increasing number of Tunisian students and scholars interested in travelling to the UK for research, exchange and/or training purposes.

There are several undergraduate and postgraduate Tunisian students currently studying in the UK in a variety of universities, including Cambridge, King's College, Birmingham, and the LSE. Many of these students have paid their own way or have obtained financial support from the universities where they are studying.

Several Tunisian students have benefited from the Chevening Scholarship⁷ to study in the UK. The Chevening Scholarships are the UK government's global scholarship programme, funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and partner organisations. Operating in 118 countries worldwide, the scholarships are awarded to outstanding established or emerging leaders to pursue one-year Master's degrees in any subject and at any of the UK's leading universities. Some awards are also granted for tailor-made short courses. Chevening Scholarships have benefited over 150 Tunisian students over three decades.

Many government officials have benefited from Chevening training programmes, including:

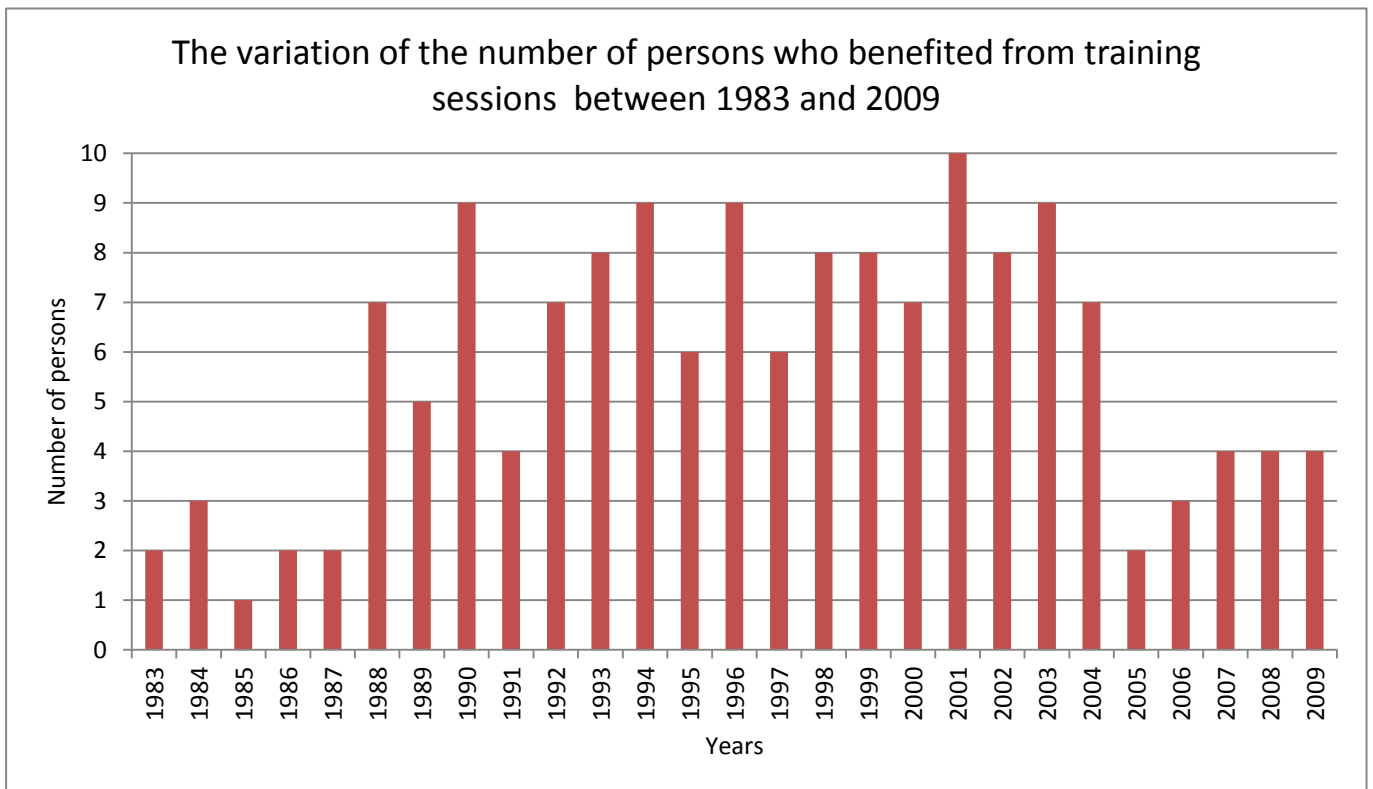
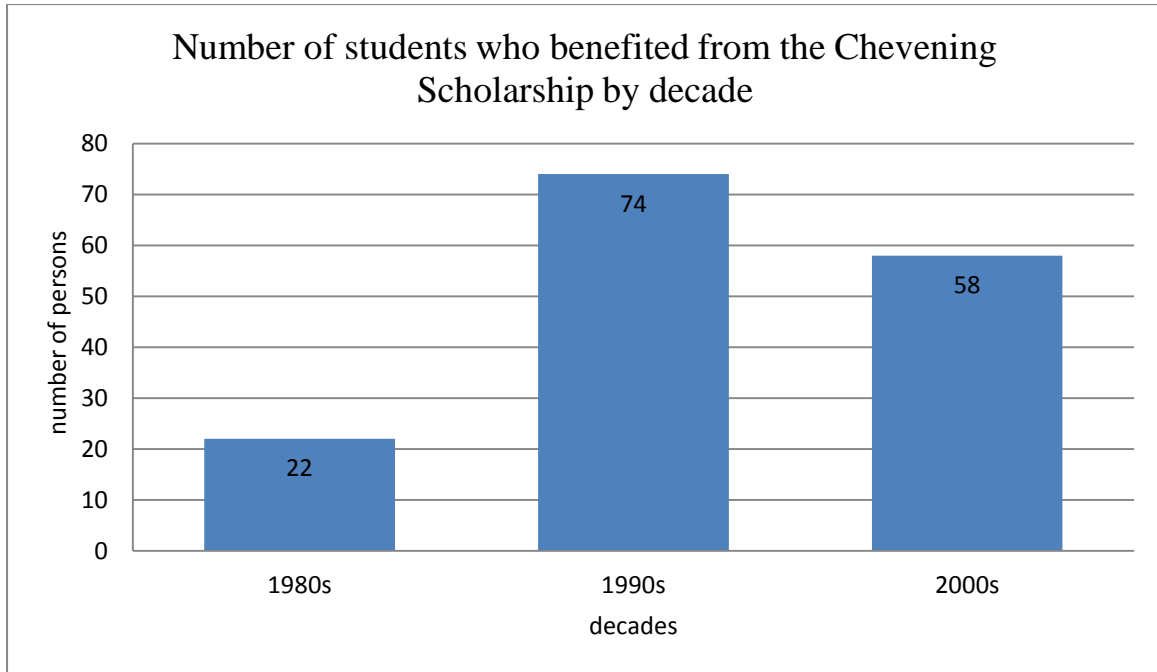
- **Karim Slihi**, Monitor Assistant to the General Control of Public Interests in the Prime Minister's office (3 months Chevening training in 2007).
- **Rachid Hussaini**, Advisor of Public Interests: Electronic Management Unit (4 months Chevening training in 2007).
- **Nidhal Bencheikh**, Counsellor in Public Interests, Department Head in the Ministry of Development and International Cooperation (4 months Chevening training in 2007).
- **Anis Zahraz**, Department Head in the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Family, Children and Elderly (4 months Chevening training in 2007).

There are currently 3 Chevening Scholars from Tunisia:

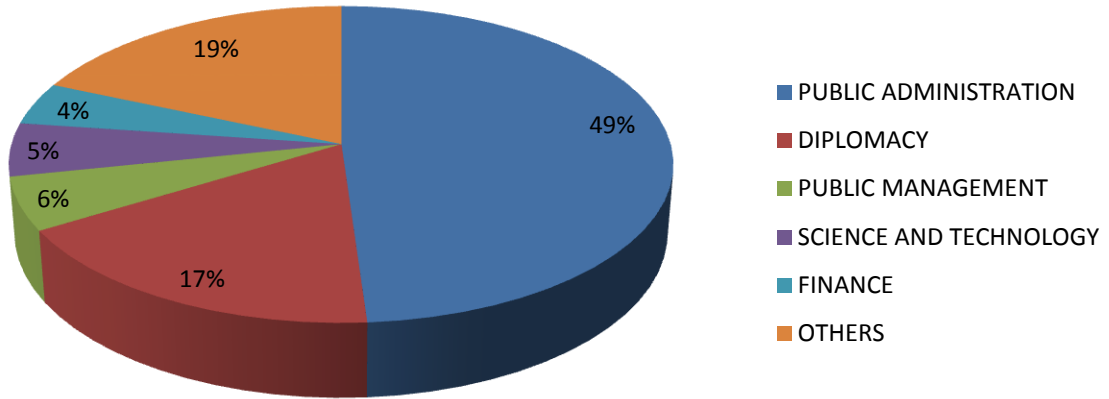
- **Mouna Ben Othman**, studying for a Masters in Management of Language Learning at the University of Greenwich.
- **Achraf Aouadi**, studying for a Masters in International Political Economy at the University of Birmingham.
- **Mohamed Habib Sayah**, studying for a Masters in International Relations at King's College London.

The below charts help to visualise key patterns and shifts that have occurred in the Chevening Scholarship programme over the years:

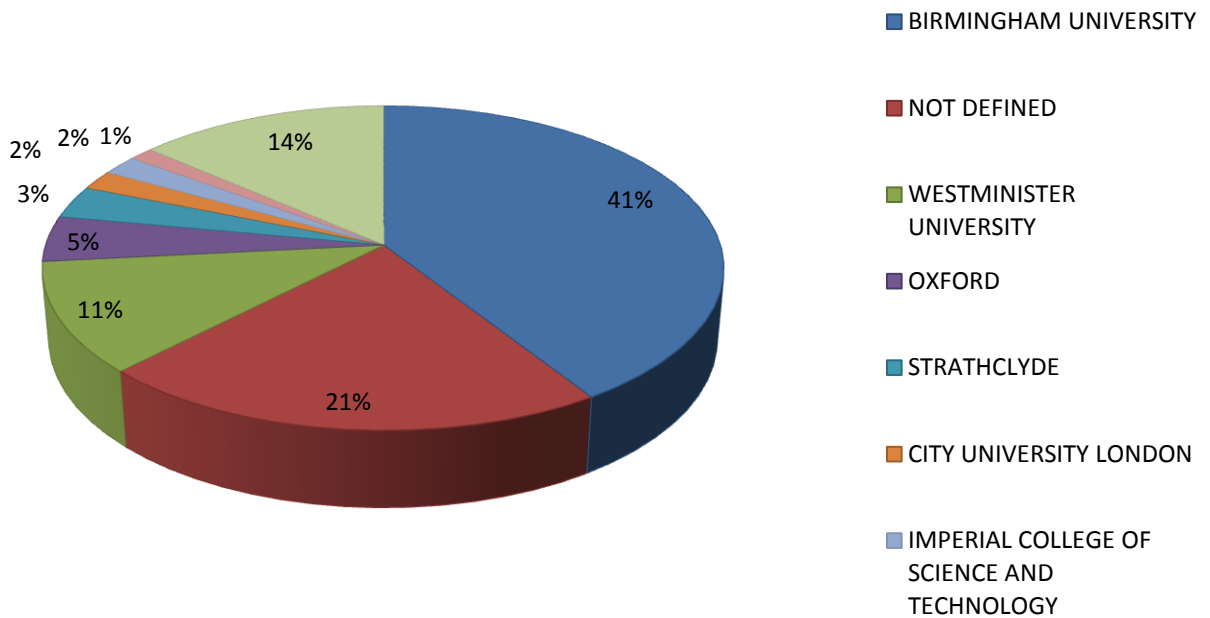
⁷http://www.chevening.org/about_us/



Types of Programmes



UK Universities



There are also several Tunisian academics working in UK universities, including Oxford and Exeter. It is difficult to know the exact number of Tunisian students or academics currently

based at UK HE institutions due to the absence of a trade organisation for Tunisian academics and researchers in the UK and/or accurate statistics supplied by the British Embassy in Tunisia. See section A.3 in the Appendix for further details.

Between 20 and 30 UK based scholars travel to Tunisia each year for research, largely coming from social science backgrounds. Though the exact number is difficult to ascertain, around 10 UK scholars each year register with CEMAT (Le Centre d'Etudes Maghrébines à Tunis), which is the overseas research centre of the American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS).⁸ It is the only English language HE Research Institute in Tunis at the moment. However, due to the ease with which UK based scholars may enter Tunisia for research purposes, many researchers find it unnecessary to register with a research institute. British researchers do not need visas to enter the country. The majority stay for short periods of time so do not need to apply for residency. Some teach in Tunisian HEIs. See Appendix A.4 for more detailed information on UK academics currently working on and/or based in Tunisia.

3.5 English in HE: Tunisian HE institutions and associations

Over the past several years, and in particular since the revolution, there has been an increase in the number of Higher Education Institutions interested in using English as the primary language of instruction and academic communication. This includes Universities, public and private, as well as associations that aim to increase the use of English, bring together Tunisian and Anglophone scholars for intellectual exchanges and joint projects. Below is an overview of English language projects launched in Tunisia in recent years.

3.6 Tunisian HE associations promoting English

United Colleges Association (UCA)⁹

United Colleges Association (UCA) is an independent non-profit association established in 2013, it aims to promote the English language and culture amongst university students as well as other sectors of Tunisian society. Its members are university and high school students, with professors and other professionals acting as advisors. UCA comprises four active committees: English, Human Rights and Citizenship, Leadership and Political Culture. UCA activities are addressed to people with different levels of English knowledge. They organize discussions in English every week under the banner of “Saturday Talks”, which are open to the public. They also provide lessons to children in the library of Ben Arous and hold conferences with academics such as Simon Hawkins. The first national event was launched by Expo Lgha. UCA participation in the event increased the association’s visibility and encouraged more members to join.

Tunisian Young Scholars Association (TAYR)¹⁰

The Tunisian Association of Young Researchers (TAYR) is an association for Tunisian researchers who are actively involved in the development of research and academic exchanges in English. The association aims to: provide a platform for discussing and debating

⁸ Interview with Brahim Rouabah, Program Manager, on 15 May 2014.

⁹ <http://uca.asso-web.com/>

¹⁰ <http://www.tayrweb.org/#!untitled/cihc>

issues related to scientific research in English, to foster academic research through conferences, seminars, and publications; to provide opportunities for networking and professional development between researchers and professionals working in English through workshops, study days, and lectures to the members of the association and the community at-large keeping them up-to-date with the latest developments in the field of academic research; to encourage the development of research relevant to teaching / learning of English. Through its activities, the organization also seeks to enhance national and international cooperation with organizations interested in promoting research in English.

3.7 Tunisian higher education institutions teaching in English

The two most reputable HEIs in Tunisia whose language of instruction is English are the Mediterranean School of Business (MSB), which is a private institution, and the Tunis Business School, which is a public institution and part of the University of Tunis system.

Mediterranean School of Business (MSB)¹¹

MSB is a private business school in Les Berges du Lac in Tunis. It was the first established business school in Tunisia with programmes and activities organized in English. It was legally established in 2004 as a private institution under the Tunisian laws regulating the organisation and functioning of private schools. Its Dean is Mahmoud Triki. MSB aspires to set the standards of new levels of academic and professional excellence to become an example for other emerging countries of the region. Its Executive MBA Program is the first and only MBA Program in Tunisia accredited by the London-based Association of MBAs (AMBA). It has several British national faculty members as well as many students who go on to study and work in the UK.

Tunis Business School (TBS)¹²

TBS¹³ is part of the state-run University of Tunis. Established in 2010, it is the only English language faculty in the University. All instruction and assignments are in English. Its Dean is Dr. Salah Benabdallah. The university currently has around 700 students though it has capacity for 7500 students. TBS will have its first graduating class this June, 2014. Though the university currently only has an undergraduate BA programme, it has the capacity and approval (through the Ministry of Higher Education) for MA and PhD programmes. It has one British national faculty member as well as many students who go on to study and work in the UK.

3.8 Tunisian HE programmes taught in English

In addition to these two new universities exclusively taught in English, there are also new programmes as well as courses that have been launched in existing University of Tunis faculties. These include two new professional MA degrees in International Relations taught in English at El Manar and the Institute of Human Sciences, Ibn Charaf. There is also a new

¹¹ <http://www.msb-online.org/>

¹² <http://www.utunis.rnu.tn/tbs/>

¹³ <http://www.utunis.rnu.tn/tbs/>

Research Methods and Writing course taught in English for the IT programme at The Higher School of Communications of Tunis (Sup'Com), a state engineering school.¹⁴

4. Stakeholder Recommendations

After a series of broad consultations, we have ascertained some of key concerns and recommendations for improvement as identified by a diverse range of HEI stakeholders. These largely revolve around three axes: 1) enhancing academic and student mobility; 2) facilitating research and technology transfer; 3) improving cooperation around capacity building, quality assurance and employability.

Below are some snapshots from interviews we have conducted with various HEI stakeholders regarding their recommendations for enhancing Tunisian-UK HE cooperation. We have organized these recommendations around the three axes listed above.

4.1 *Enhancing academic and student mobility*

Across the board, the various HE administrators, academics and students with whom we met expressed a desire to see greater academic and student mobility between Tunisian and British HEIs. However, as pointed out by the recent British Council report on its Higher Education Scoping Mission, Tunisian academic and student mobility are still dominated by French language programmes. This is particularly the case as French universities do not charge tuition fees and the Tunisian students are fluent in French. The majority of stakeholders we interviewed thought more could be done on the part of both British and Tunisian HEIs and governments to promote such mobility.

For example, Laroussi Bouchnek, an Assistant Researcher at the Higher Institute of Human Sciences of Mednine discussed what he viewed as some of the key obstacles to student and faculty mobility, especially for those coming from universities outside of Tunis. In particular, he mentioned the marginalization of regional universities and the various challenges facing a researcher in Medninelike “access to major educational English websites, researcher mobility, access to British university libraries as well as the possibility of attending conferences in the UK.”

Others pointed out the difficulties of obtaining visas. These difficulties pertain to both costs as well as bureaucratic hurdles. A blog¹⁵ written by Oxford based scholar of Ancient History Josephine Quinn, outlines what she views as unfair barriers imposed by the British government on foreign academics that prevented a Tunisian academic specialized in archaeology to attend a seminar in Oxford. This was despite the existence of a joint agreement signed between Oxford University and this scholar’s home institution (*Tunisian Institut National du Patrimoine*). Dr. Quinn delineated what she feels are some of the key burdensome bureaucratic obstacles facing Tunisian academics seeking to travel to the UK:

Tunisian academic must demonstrate “that they intend to visit the UK for no more than 6 months; that they intend to leave the UK at the end of their visit; that they have enough money to support and accommodate themselves without working or help from public funds; that they receive their salary from abroad;

¹⁴<http://www.supcom.mincom.tn/>

¹⁵Blog published on 29 October 2013 <http://josephinecrawleyquinn.wordpress.com/2013/10/29/visa-problem/>

that they will not be replacing someone in the UK; that they can meet the cost of their return or onward journey; and that they do not intend to take employment in the UK, produce goods or provide services, or take a course of study; that they do not intend to marry or register a civil partnership — in addition to paying a fee – for Tunisians 220 dinars (£84)¹⁶ – which naturally is not refunded if the application is refused”

Similar sentiments were expressed by Dr. Sami Riahi¹⁷, a geologist based at El Manar I. In particular, Dr. Riahi talked about the difficulties faced by Tunisia academics seeking to obtain travel or study visas to the UK, saying it “takes time, and is costly”, and deterring many from even applying.

Dr. Tarek Boukesra¹⁸, a specialist at the Bab Sadoun Hospital (Tunis), expressed a similar frustration with the British visa system. He gave an example of how he was not able to attend a workshop in Bolton on Intestinal Reconstructive Newborn Surgery in 2014. Although the workshop was invaluable to his future career, Tarek was not able to attend because of lack of funding for the visa and conference. We have heard similar stories repeated by Tunisian scholars and students we have met with across the disciplines.

Isaac Bolger, Director of International Programs at MSB, has reiterated the cost hurdle and suggested increased virtual cooperation between Tunisian and UK HEIs as one way around it. In particular, he recommended that private universities in the UK could make courses and lectures available online to share with Tunisian partner universities and use as supplements to courses taught in Tunisia. He also suggested the appeal of joint consulting projects on issues of sustainable development, social business, or other mission-oriented work. Bolger also thought more could be done to improve the teaching of English at HEIs in Tunisia as a way to facilitate student and academic mobility.¹⁹

4.2 Facilitating research and technology transfer

The issue of facilitating research and technology transfer seems to be of particular interest to scholars working in the scientific and engineering fields. Our interviews with L'École supérieure des communications de Tunis (Sup'com) professors and students demonstrated a desire to see more extensive collaboration in academic and applied research. The following is a quotation from Professor Sofiane Cherif, Head of Internet Technology Department and Assistant Professor of IT Leila Najjar²⁰ on the issue:

“In particular, the areas of research in which Sup'Com teachers and researchers are actively working cover mainly signal processing , digital communication , networks, security and have applications in several domains: beyond the telecommunications domain, including health and the environment. Many opportunities can then be found to establish collaborative relationships between

¹⁶This fee has recently been increased to 426 Dinars

¹⁷Meeting with Dr. Sami Riahi, 6 June 2014.

¹⁸Meeting with Dr. Tarek Boukesra, 26 May 2014.

¹⁹ Email correspondence with Isaac Bolger, 2 July 2014.

²⁰ Interview with Cherif and Najjar, 10 May 2014.

research teams from UK and Tunisia working on similar problems. This will allow to submit joint research projects and to exchange students in scholarships and in engineer graduation projects and doctoral theses.”

Cherif and Najjar also pointed out the importance of further English language training in order to facilitate research and technology exchange:

“The areas of training covered in Sup’Comp are mainly technical topics where publications are mainly done in English,” which is why it is imperative for engineering instructors at the undergraduate and graduate level “to incorporate the English language in all teaching materials.”

4.3 Improving capacity building, quality assurance and employability cooperation

As the British Council has pointed out in its “Higher Education Scoping Visit to Tunisia” report²¹, concern amongst HEI stakeholders regarding quality assurance and employability “is not unique to Tunisia.” Given the economic crisis that has affected almost all parts of the globe over the past several years, it is not surprising that HEIs like other sectors, are interested in improving their role in “preparing graduates with the skill sets the country needs,” including a focus on entrepreneurial and leadership skills.²² To be most effective, the report argues that HEIs work on skills preparation must be carried out in tandem with a government programme focused on job creation, engaging relevant industries as well. Amongst other recommendations, the report called for greater cooperation between The Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and the British Council to investigate further opportunities to promote English language training for university staff and students as this would facilitate employment opportunities.

Further to this end, the British Council participated in a regional conference on graduate employability in the Middle East and North Africa in Casablanca, Morocco, from 12-13 March 2013. This conference was followed by visits to the Universities of Liverpool, Central Lancashire, Huddersfield, Sheffield, Cardiff and South Wales. The Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education was also invited to participate in a conference on 4-5 February 2014 entitled “Fixing the Model: from University Management to University Governance,” organized by the British Council in Morocco in partnership with the Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Executive training, ISESCO and the African Development Bank. Academics and administrators from the region came together to discuss global education challenges and tackled questions of university governance, quality assurance and assessment evaluation.

Slim Choura, Director of International Cooperation at the Ministry of Higher Education, has expressed a keen interest in promoting employability in higher education reform.²³ In particular, Choura stressed the importance of reducing unemployment amongst Tunisian graduates, a key grievance expressed during Tunisia’s revolution and one that remains a source of societal tension today. According to Choura, 350,000 people who have graduated in recent years are unemployed. Out of the 75,000 Tunisians who graduate each year, only around 30,000 manage to find jobs. In particular, it is difficult for people to get jobs with

²¹ British Council Report, Higher Education Scoping Visit to Tunisia: 17th -21st February 2014

²² Ibid.

²³ Meeting with Slim Choura: 24 May 2014

MA and PhD graduates in relevant industries. He found it shocking that at least 500 PhD graduates in the bio-technology field are unemployed. He distinguished the practices of Tunisian industry from those of its US and UK counterparts, “where industry values this type of experience.”²⁴

Another person who raised the issue of employability amongst higher education graduates,²⁵ an Assistant Instructor in the Higher Institute of Nabeul. According to her, higher education reforms (the undergraduate programme went from a 4 year to a 3 year degree, called the ‘LMD’) in 2008 were a big part of the problem. She said that the system was unsuccessful in many ways: “The majority of people graduating from higher education do not have the necessary skills to succeed in their professional life, if ever they manage to build any. More and more youth have diplomas but cannot find jobs. Each year new fields and branches are being opened by the ministry without taking into consideration the necessities of the country in terms of specialties. I feel like there are no clear strategies or clear objectives underpinning the whole system!” Rabeb Sghair,²⁶ a sophomore student at Tunis Business School, said that Tunisian higher educational system should be more encouraging of “creativity”.

According to Slim Choura, the Tunisian government is interested in seeing Tunisia become a “hub for global investment” development because of its central geographical location, favourable climate, extensive social capital, relatively stable political environment, and increasingly tri-lingual population. The government seeks to expand employment through capacity building and inward investment but believes it could benefit by learning from the experiences of HEIs in the UK. In particular in terms of developing ‘Career Centres’, that would bring together the needs and skills sets of academics and potential employers and developing curriculums that are geared towards developing entrepreneurial and leadership skills amongst Tunisian students and faculty. In particular, Choura said he would like to see a new summer exchange programme with UK universities, organized across various universities over a period of few weeks, and which would encourage leadership, employment, skills building. “In the future,” Choura said “we need to focus more on engineering cooperation with HEIs in the UK, not just languages.”²⁷

Cherif and Najjar from Sup’Com made similar points, saying that “stiff competition in the worlds of higher education and industry due to globalization” require Tunisian engineers and other researchers and professionals “to acquire further knowledge” in order to remain competitive. This includes improving “soft skills” including “qualities of autonomy, creativity, leadership, where the need for further interaction with social sciences disciplines is clear.”

Isaac Bolger of MSB concurred, pointing out the important role that private universities could play in paving the way for the types of institutional reforms that he believes are necessary in the Tunisian university system in order to produce graduates capable of surviving in Tunisia’s increasingly competitive job market. For Bolger, the public university system in Tunisia had been focused for too long on “quantity rather than quality.”²⁸

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Meeting with Nessrine Triki, 5 June 2014.

²⁶Meeting with Rabeb Sghair, 10 June 2014.

²⁷Choura interview.

²⁸Meeting with Isaac Bolger, 29 April 2014.

5. Concluding Remarks

From our extensive research and interviews, we have found that there is a strong desire to enhance HE collaboration on the part of Tunisian students, academics and HE managers and administrators. However, there are several challenges that must be overcome in order to achieve enhanced cooperation, including, as detailed above, the cost and bureaucratic obstacles associated with the visa process, as well as the problems of funding associated with student and academic mobility, accessing conferences, libraries and online resources in English.

In light of the above, we recommend that the following measures be adopted as part of a strategy for enhancing British-Tunisian Higher Education cooperation, organized around the three axes described above:

5.1 *Enhancing academic and student mobility*

- Increase funds available for Tunisian scholars and students across the disciplines to attend conferences and training programmes, as well as to access British libraries and other resources. Compile a database of all available scholarships for Tunisian students and academics to study/research/attend conferences in the UK, to facilitate student and researcher mobility.
- Provide funds and advice for Tunisian students and scholars to facilitate the visa application process in order to encourage student and academic mobility across the disciplines.
- Initiate collaboration with Tunisian and British HE associations in order to facilitate research exchange and mobility and in cooperation.²⁹
- Initiate contact with prominent Tunisian student unions to discuss suggestions for enhancing student mobility, including: The General Union of Tunisian students (UGET) and the General Tunisian Union of students (UGTE).
- Identify sources of funding for joint projects between Tunisian and British HEIs and academics.
- Compile a data base of all Tunisian academics researching on/based in the UK and all UK based academics researching on/based in the Tunisia.

5.2 *Facilitating research and technology transfer*

- Prioritize previously marginalized branches of study in HE cooperation agreements, including scientific and engineering branches as well as political science disciplines.
- Prioritize funding for previously marginalized HEIs (e.g. those outside of Tunis).
- Increase access to English language books, journals and online resources across disciplines.
- Initiate UK HE courses in Tunisia, as well as UK HE branch campuses in Tunisia.

²⁹There are several long-standing as well as recently formed HE associations in the UK that could serve as platforms for launching and facilitating such cooperation. In particular, it is envisioned that these associations might facilitate cooperation in the areas of: research/researchers exchange, joint research opportunities, student and faculty mobility, conferences, networking, shared funding opportunities. The three most prominent associations include the Maghreb Academic Network, the British Institute for Middle East Studies (BRISMES) and the London Middle East Institute (LMEI). See Appendix A.5 for further details on these associations.

5.3 Improving cooperation around capacity building, quality assurance and employability.

- Create a research institute or centre similar to CEMAT in order to enhance the profile of British academics and academia in Tunisia and to enhance cooperation with Tunisian scholars, promote research exchange, promote the quality of research in Tunisia and enhance student and academic mobility.
- Increase accessibility to English-language instruction for non-linguistics majors so that they can better access journals and conferences in English and also increase their employment opportunities.
- Compile a data base of all of the available grants and programmes available to facilitate capacity building within Tunisian HEIs
- Support Tunisian HEIs to develop “Career Centres” within their institutions in order to facilitate student access to relevant internship, fellowship and employment opportunities.

In order to be most effective, the recommended initiatives should be carried out in close cooperation with Tunisian HEIs and stakeholders.

In light of the information and analysis provided in this report, it appears the institutional, political and social context is ripe for enhanced Tunisian-UK higher education cooperation. The British Council in Tunisia is well-placed to keep up the momentum and make the most of the new opportunities presented by Tunisia’s revolution. They should support Tunisian academics, students and administrators in their quest to achieve meaningful reform in Tunisia’s higher education system and to increase linkages with their colleagues and counterparts in the UK.

APPENDIX

A.1: Pre-Revolution Agreements

1982a

Tunisia Partner: 9 Avril, University of Tunis, Faculty of Arts and Sciences

UK Partner: College of St. Mark and St. John Foundation, Plymouth University

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets. Total cost: 1000 GBP per student.

1982b

Tunisia Partner: 9 Avril, University of Tunis, Faculty of Arts and Sciences

UK Partner: University of Sterling, Centre for English Language and Teaching

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets. Total cost: 1000 GBP per student.

1986a

Tunis Partners: 9 Avril, University of Tunis, along with the National Office of the Committee of Universities (L'office national des oeuvres universitaires)

UK Partner: Ealing University

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets.

1986b

Tunis Partners: 9 Avril, University of Tunis, along with the National Office of the Committee of Universities (L'office national des oeuvres universitaires)

UK Partner: University of Bognor Regis College, West Sussex Institute of Higher Education and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets. Total cost: 1200 GBP per student.

1986c

Tunis Partners: 9 Avril, University of Tunis, along with the National Office of the Committee of Universities (L'office national des oeuvres universitaires)

UK Partner: University of Brighton, Polytechnic

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets. Total cost: 1200 GBP per student.

1988a

Tunis Partner: Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: University of Brighton, Polytechnic

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets. Total cost: 1230 GBP per student.

1988b

Tunis Partner: Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: College of St. Mark and St. John Foundation, Plymouth University

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets. Total cost: 1220 GBP per student.

1988c

Tunis Partner: Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: University of Sterling: Centre for English Language and Teaching

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets. Total cost: 1190 GBP per student.

1988d

Tunis Partner: Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: University of Bognor Regis College, West Sussex Institute of Higher Education

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets. Total cost: 1240 GBP per student.

1988e

Tunis Partner: Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: Christchurch College, Canterbury

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets. Total cost: 1259 GBP per student.

1988f

Tunis Partner: Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: COSP, University of East Anglia, Norwich

Terms of Reference: Third year Tunisian Humanities students would travel to the UK for a 10-week study trip. They would be broken into 2 groups, with their numbers varying between 10 and 20 per group.

The Tunisian partners would cover: registration, room and board, transportation, excursions, healthcare and plane tickets. Total cost: 1246 GBP per student.

1991a

Tunis Partner: Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: Central London Polytechnic

Terms of Agreement: The two HEIs agreed to facilitate exchanges between the universities in the domain of teaching and research. Third and Fourth year UK students would come to Tunisia and one Tunisian student (MA degree level) would go to the UK. Each university would cover the fees for their students respectively.

Programme was subject to renewal at the end of each year. Not clear when the programme ended.

1991b

Tunisia Partner: Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: University of Manchester

Terms of Agreement: Facilitate exchange in domains of teaching and research. A number of students from each university would be exchanged- receive housing and inscription fees. The Tunisian students would come from English, Linguistics and Pedagogy background and would go to Manchester. Their fees and accommodation would be covered. Manchester students who study Arabic and French would spend time studying at Manouba. Each university would cover the fees for their students respectively.

Programme was subject to renewal at the end of each year. Not clear when the programme ended.

1992

Tunisia Partner: Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: University of Birckbeck

Terms of Agreement: Facilitate exchange in domains of teaching and research. Three faculty/post-grad fellows would be exchanged each way per year as visiting scholars in each other's departments. The placement would last for three months. The visiting scholars would be integrated into the exchange university's department life and also would have time for research and writing. UK research fellows would teach intensive seminars on issues of concern to English studies instructors.

Each university would cover the fees for their fellows respectively.

Programme was subject to renewal at the end of each year. Not clear when the programme ended.

1993a

Tunisia Partner: Bourguiba Institute of Living Languages, University of Tunis

UK Partner: Surrey Language institute

Terms of Agreement: 87 students from Tunisia would spend eight weeks over the summer studying in Surrey. Students would benefit from housing, food and board, free transportation, and free excursions/cultural activities.

Each student would receive pedagogical evaluation and feedback on their work, which would be sent back to their institute.

Total cost: 108, 576 GBP, paid for by the Tunisia Partner.

1993b

Tunisia Partner: Tunisia Partner: Manouba, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: Surrey Language Centre

Terms of Agreement: 34 students from Tunisia would spend eight weeks over the summer studying in Surrey. Students would benefit from housing, food and board, free transportation, and free excursions/cultural activities.

Each student would receive pedagogical evaluation and feedback on their work, which would be sent back to their institute.

Total cost: 50,320 GBP, paid for by the Tunisia Partner.

1993c

Tunisia Partner: 9 Avril, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: University of Aberystwyth

Terms of Agreement: 30 students from Tunisia would spend eight weeks over the summer studying in Surrey. Students would benefit from housing, food and board, free transportation, and free excursions/cultural activities.

Each student would receive pedagogical evaluation and feedback on their work, which would be sent back to their institute.

Total cost: 1600 GBP per student, paid for by the Tunisia Partner.

1993e

Tunisia Partner: 9 Avril, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: University of Bristol

Terms of Agreement: 30 students from Tunisia would spend eight weeks over the summer studying in Surrey. Students would benefit from housing, food and board, free transportation, and free excursions/cultural activities.

Each student would receive pedagogical evaluation and feedback on their work, which would be sent back to their institute.

Total cost: 1640 GBP per student, paid for by the Tunisia Partner.

1993d

Tunisia Partner: El Manar, Faculty of Science, Department of Geology, University of Tunis II

UK Partner: Kingston University, Faculty of Science, School of Geological Sciences

Terms of Agreement: To encourage and develop exchange of research, researchers and research students; To promote the exchange of professors, lecturers and assistants for limited periods (e.g. between 1 week – 3 months); To encourage joint research projects; To seek sponsorship and support for undertaking of complementary analysis in El Manar and Kingston University.

Examples of projects that came under the agreement:

1. Amina Mabrouk, Professor of Geology at El Manar. Began her PhD in geology in 1993. Through this program she received joint supervision, with both El Manar and Kingston University professors supervising her work. She completed her viva in

2003. She recently published her PhD as a book: Chemostratigraphy of Upper Cretaceous Chalk, with Tunisia Scholars Press. Amina Mabrouk received financial support from the British Council as well as British Gas.

2. Medjerda Valley Project: Water Quality in the Medjerda Valley, Tunisia. Part 1 and 2 were carried out in 1992. The project was prepared with the support of the British Council, and was carried out by J. Macmillan, R. Manly and J. Weaire and R. Mood (Kingston) and Professor Habib Belayouni (El Manar).

2004

Tunisia Partner: 9 Avril, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University of Tunis

UK Partner: University of Aberystwyth

Terms of Agreement: 82 students from Tunisia, broken into 2 groups, would spend 4 weeks each over the summer studying in Aberystwyth. British and American Literature and Civilisation students would receive training in writing and oral English skills, as well as IT training. Students would benefit from housing, food and board, free transportation, and free excursions/cultural activities.

Total cost: 68,880 GBP, covered by UK partners. Tunisia partners would cover plane tickets.

2006

The Language Village at Nabeul (LVN) was established. The LVN is a summer language camp organized by the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education. Since 2006 it has hosted over 600 undergraduate students in partnership with AMIDEAST Tunisia and the British Council Tunisia. The main objective of LVN is to expose students to English in order to enhance their communication skills.

LVN also provides for cross-cultural exchanges, with 15 departments of English from all over the country taking part in the program (Greater Tunis area, Sousse, Sfax, Kairouan, Jendouba, Béja, Gafsa, Moknine, Nabeul, Gabes, etc.), in addition to native English speakers from the US and the UK.

2010a

Tunisia Partner: University of Tunis El Manar, University of Tunis

UK Partner: University of Chester

Aims: To improve teacher and student qualifications; To exchange of teachers and students in the field of pedagogy; To facilitate: joint research activities, participation in conferences and seminars, exchange of teaching materials and scientific publications, exchange of technical and scientific information in various fields of specialization; To develop libraries and joint tutorship of post-graduate training.

The agreement would last five years, subject to renewal

2010b

Tunisian partner: Tunisian Institut National du Patrimoine (INP)

UK Partner: University of Oxford

Project Aims: To investigate the ancient city of Utica's urban development and economy, while developing new technologies, training archaeologists and helping to preserve the site. This is done through a combination of topographic survey, geophysics, coring, excavation, pottery studies, structural survey and conservation.

Two-week pilot season, April 2010: an extensive program of magnetometry, established a Digital Elevation Model by DGPS, began a topographical survey of the site, tested the northern margins of the site close to the ancient shoreline with limited sondages, excavated in the area of the basilica and forum in the town centre (revealing early Islamic occupation for the first time), and cleaned and carried out limited excavation in the 'House of the Grand Oecus', the largest in the city.

September 2012: four-week excavation. Work continued in the centre of the city on the early Islamic levels exposed in 2010 and the Roman structures beneath them, as well as in the 'House of the Grand Oecus'.

Tunisian-British Utica Team: Directed by Elizabeth Fentress (AIAC), Josephine Quinn (Oxford), Andrew Wilson (Oxford), Nabil Kallala (INP, 2009-2011), and FaouziGhozzi (INP). The team is made up of specialists and students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, and has involved people from the universities of Tunis, Sousse, Manouba, Aix-en-Provence, Siena, Cambridge, Southampton, Leicester and Oxford, the INP and the British School at Rome, as well as professional archaeologists.

Funded by Baron Lorne Thyssen, the Society of Antiquaries, the John Fell Oxford University Press (OUP) Research Fund, All Souls College, and Oxford University's Institute of Archaeology,

A.2 Post-Revolution Cooperation Agreements

2013- July 2017

ERASMUS Mundus³⁰ Project number 2013-2442/001-001-EM Action 2 partnership: "EU-Morocco-Egypt-Tunisia-Algeria-Libya International Cooperation Agreement (EU-METALIC II)"

Tunisia Partner: 9 Avril, University of Tunis, with the Tunisian Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency and Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

UK Partner: Cardiff Metropolitan University (along with various EU universities)

Project Aims: To improve leadership in Higher Education and identify problems and create sustainable development through research, debates and engaging HE administration and directors, including Presidents, Deans, Secretary Generals as well as the relevant Ministries.

³⁰Note: The Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-2013) aims to enhance the quality of higher education and promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through mobility and academic cooperation. It was replaced in 2014 the Erasmus + programme.

Tunisian participants who travel to UK: 6 Undergraduate students; 4 MA students; 4 PhD students, 1 Postdoctoral students; 6 Staff. Total: 22.

2014

Tunisia Partner: Tunis Business School (TBS), University of Tunis

UK Partner: LSE Middle East Centre, Emirates Foundation Collaboration Project

Project Aims:³¹ The purpose of this project is to enhance the didactic capacity of TBS on the level of International Relations teaching. To do so, this project entails knowledge transfer as well as capacity building components. It aims to strengthen the teaching, assessment and course development capacities of International Relations courses at TBS. It also aims to enhance the overall academic experience of TBS students and to contribute to developing their intellectual and critical thinking skills.

A.3 Examples of Tunisian MA Students Currently Based in the UK

- AchrafAyad: civil society activist; one of the founders of I-Watch, currently studying International Relations, Birmingham University
- Habib Sayah: Tunisian Lawyer, Political Risk Analyst & Consultant / Chevening Scholar at King's College London, Dept. of War Studies

Examples of Tunisian academics currently based in the UK

- Mohamed-Salah Omri, Associate Professor of Modern Arabic Language and Literature, Oriental Institute / St John's College, Oxford
Research interests: modern and pre-modern Arabic literature; Francophone literature of the Maghreb; Comparative and world Literatures; Arab cinema; literature and history; Tunisia.
- LarbiSadiki, Tunisian writer, political scientist and former senior lecturer at the University of Exeter.
Research interests: democratization of the Arab world as well as human rights studies and dialogue between the Western and Islamic civilizations.

A.4 Example of UK academics currently working on Tunisia

Below is a by no means exhaustive list of UK-based scholars currently doing research in Tunisia:

- Dr.CharisBoutieri, Lecturer in the Social Anthropology of the Middle East, the School of Arts and Humanities, King's College London.
Research interests: 'The Social Lives of Tunisian Democracy: a Pilot Study'.
- Professor Emma Murphy, Head of School in the School of Government and International Affairs at Exeter University.
Research interests: Tunisian political economy, democratization, women, youth.
- Dr. Michael Willis, Research Lecturer and King Mohamed VI Fellow in Moroccan and Mediterranean Studies, Oriental Institute / St Antony's College, Oxford.

³¹ Note: Project funding has yet to be approved. Principle Investigators waiting for decision in early July. Response so far from funders has been positive.

Research interests: Politics, modern history and international relations of the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia)

- Monica Marks, PhD student, University of Oxford, Middle East Centre,
Research interests: Islamism, Youth, Tunisia, Youth Politics, Salafism, and Jihadi Salafism in Tunisia.
- Alexis Artaud de La Ferriere, Research Associate (Field) University of Cambridge, Centre for International Relations in the Middle East and North Africa
Research interests: media sector within the context of the political transition in Tunisia.
- Professor Charles R H Tripp, Department of Politics and International Studies, Politics with reference to the Middle East
Research interests: Middle East and North Africa politics, states and ideologies, war and resistance, Islamic and comparative political thought, the nature of autocracy and the sociology of power Art and Power. Most recently has been awarded a British Academy grant for research in Tunisia.
- Roxane Farmanfarmanian, Affiliated Lecturer at the Centre of International Studies (now part of POLIS) at the University of Cambridge- where she is now a Affiliated Lecturer, teaching international politics and energy security, She is a founding member of the POLIS- affiliated Centre for the International Relations of the Middle East and North Africa (CIRMENA).
Research interests: liberated media in developing political narrative in transitional Tunisia.
- Salwa Ismail, Head of Department, Politics and International Studies, SOAS
Research interests: political Islam in Tunisia, political economy of North Africa and the Middle East, political society of North Africa and the Middle East.
- George Joffe, Research Fellow at the Centre of International Studies, Robinson College, Cambridge and Visiting Professor of Geography at Kings College, London University.
Research interests: Middle East and North Africa politics, connections between migrant communities and trans/national violence in Europe.
- Josephine Quinn, Associate Professor in Ancient History, Faculty of Classics, Worcester College, Oxford.
Research interests: Focuses on Greek and Roman history, Phoenician world, as well as the cultural history of North Africa and Tunisia in particular.
- Corinna Mullin, Visiting Assistant Professor in International Relations, University of Tunis, Research Associate, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).
Research interests: Politics of national security and transitional justice in Tunisia, political economy of the Middle East and North Africa, international relations of the Middle East and North Africa.
- Anne-Marie Murray, Visiting Professor in British and American History, Faculty of Letters and Arts Manouba.
- Neil Jones, Visiting Professor in Literature, Faculty of Letters and Arts Manouba

A.5 British HE Associations Focusing on the Middle East and North Africa

There are several long-standing as well as recently formed HE associations in the UK that could serve as platforms for launching and facilitating HEI cooperation between Tunisian and British academics. In particular, it is envisioned that these associations might facilitate cooperation in the areas of: research/researchers exchange, joint research opportunities, student and faculty mobility, conferences, networking, shared funding opportunities. The

three most prominent associations include the Maghreb Academic Network, the British Institute for Middle East Studies (BRISMES) and the London Middle East Institute (LMEI). See Appendix A.5 for further details on these associations.

Maghreb Academic Network³²

The Maghreb Academic Network is the first academic forum focused on the Maghreb region in the UK. It was founded in 2013 by KarimaLaachir from SOAS and Michael Willis from Oxford University, CharisBoutieri from King's College.

British Institute for Middle East Studies (BRISMES)³³

The British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) was established in 1973 to encourage and promote the study of the Middle East and North Africa in the United Kingdom.

The Society brings together teachers, researchers, students, diplomats, journalists and others who deal professionally with the Middle East and North African region. Membership is open to all the above, regardless of nationality - indeed regardless of where in the world they are based

The London Middle East Institute (LMEI)³⁴

The London Middle East Institute was founded in 2002. It is a registered charity governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board is chaired by the Director of SOAS, and includes four representatives from the academic staff of SOAS, one each from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the University of London and the British Academy, and one member who has relevant business/professional interests.

The LMEI has become the focal point of Middle Eastern scholarly and outreach activities at SOAS and a principal venue for such activities in London. It draws upon the resources of London and SOAS to provide teaching, training, research, publication, consultancy, outreach and other services related to the Middle East.

The LMEI serves as a neutral forum for the consideration of issues concerning that region and helps to create links between individuals and institutions with academic, commercial, diplomatic, media or other specialisations

A. 6 Scorecard on HE cooperation

1. The number of UK scholars working on Tunisia: Around 50-60
2. The number of UK students and scholars currently based in Tunisia: Around 15-20
3. The number of Tunisian scholars currently working on the UK: Around 30

³² <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/trs/people/staff/academic/boutieri.aspx>

³³ <http://www.brismes.ac.uk/>

³⁴ <http://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/>

4. The numbers of Tunisian academics and scholars currently based in the UK: Unknown
5. The number of Tunisian HE that currently have a formal partnership with a UK university: 5
6. The number of UK HE courses available in Tunisia: 0
7. The number of UK HE branch campuses in Tunisia: 0
8. The number of HE programmes taught in English: 2 public- TBS and Ibn Charaf (Al Manar), 5-7 private universities, including MSB and University of Carthage.