

PRESS RELEASE

**Graduate employment a key challenge for higher education in Africa**

Graduate employment ranks alongside access and quality as one of the three key challenges for African universities, delegates at a conference in Accra, Ghana, heard this week.

The conference, organised by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the British Council, brought together 150 delegates from 14 countries to discuss practical measures to better utilise the growing supply of university and college graduates now available throughout the continent. The programme also featured case study presentations from the successful African Knowledge Partnerships Scheme, managed by the British Council, which supports new graduates to work on specific strategic needs in commercial organisations.

According to ACU Deputy Secretary General Dr John Kirkland, delegates at the conference had taken a realistic and practical approach to the issues. 'It's important to realise that tertiary education alone can't do everything,' he said. 'In particular, universities can't prepare graduates for jobs that don't exist. The conference showed that much can be done, however, and that many initiatives are already underway. Replicating these more widely represents a major challenge.'

In the final conference session, delegates discussed a ten-point plan for addressing the issue, including better communication with employers and government, more attention to employment needs in curriculum planning, and better record-keeping on graduate destinations.

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Notes to editors:

1. The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) was established in 1913 and is the oldest inter-university network in the world, with over 500 members in six continents. Its mission is to strengthen the higher education institutions within its membership through international co-operation and understanding. The ACU operates a series of professional networks for staff in key roles, undertakes research and policy analysis on key issues in international higher education, and has active programmes in libraries and information, research management, gender and university governance. Her Majesty the Queen, the Head of the Commonwealth, is Patron of the ACU. For further information, visit [www.acu.ac.uk](http://www.acu.ac.uk)
2. The ACU operates a Graduate Employment Network, which aims to provide an interface between education and employment, enabling careers personnel to discuss best practice in the light of current realities such as the economic recession, global employment markets, and the prominence of digital communications technologies.
3. The British Council is the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. It works in over 100 countries worldwide to build opportunity and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people. For further information, visit [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)
4. The Africa Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (AKTP) are partnerships between private sector organisations and higher education institutions in sub-Saharan Africa and the UK. They leverage research, scientific knowledge and skills through innovation. AKTP is a British Council programme built on a very successful UK model, and is currently being piloted in Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya.
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