

**Participant Information Sheet:**  
**International Student Recruitment Forecasting Expert Survey**

**Name of Department:**

MBA Unit

**Title of Project:**

Lessons from Macroeconomics for International Student Recruitment Forecasting: Quantifying Uncertainty and the Role of Expert Judgement

**Researcher:**

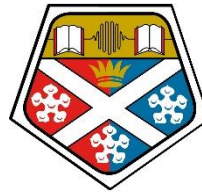
Jennifer Gazzard

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**University Logo:**



**University of**  
**Strathclyde**  
**Business**  
**School**

**Research Sponsor:**

University of Strathclyde

**Researcher Role:**

MBA Student

**What is the purpose of this investigation?**

This investigation is an individual MBA research project that seeks to explore what can be learned from studies of the use of expert judgement in macroeconomic forecasting that may be applied in the international student recruitment context.

The current higher education funding model in Scotland is reliant on tuition fee income from international students to cross-subsidise both research and other teaching activities (London Economics, 2023), meaning that the ability to predict overseas student enrolments has assumed a strategic significance for universities. Flows of internationally mobile students are determined by complex interactions of global economic, political and social drivers, however, and have been subject to considerable volatility in recent years, making the forecasting task increasingly complex and challenging.

The primary aim of the investigation is to integrate expert judgement and statistical approaches in order to develop and test a new methodology for a) quantifying the role of contextual factors and b) measuring uncertainty when forecasting new international student enrolments in Scotland. It is hoped that the project's findings will provide useable insights for individuals and organisations involved in predicting the future direction of overseas student intakes in Scotland, whilst also contributing to a better understanding of forecasting in international higher education more generally.

**Do you have to take part?**

This investigation comprises a survey of Scottish international higher of education professionals, followed by an iterative process of model building, testing and refinement that will be supported by interviews with HE forecasting professionals/consultants. You are being asked to participate in the survey phase of the project.

Participation in the investigation is entirely voluntary. It is your decision whether to take part or not, and you have the right to withdraw without detriment, meaning that refusing to participate or withdrawing participation in the project will not affect any other aspects of the way you are treated.

### **What will you do in the project?**

Participants in this phase of the investigation will complete an online survey asking them to:

- predict new student enrolments in Scotland in 2023/24 (full-year), 2024/25 and beyond.
- rate the importance of major contextual/environmental factors affecting international student enrolments in Scotland
- provide information on current forecasting processes and practice at their institution.

The survey will be conducted in December 2023 and January 2024, and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Access will be via an anonymous hyperlink, and participants can take the survey at a time of their choosing (during the window for response collection).

### **Why have you been invited to take part?**

Participation is sought from professionals working in any aspect of international recruitment, partnerships, admissions and/or student support at universities and HEIs in Scotland.

Although this is framed as an 'expert' survey, there are no restrictions on participation in terms of seniority of role or length of relevant experience. In order to participate, you should simply be working in international higher education in Scotland and willing to express your opinion on the future direction of student enrolments in the sector. In certain questions, there are options to tailor your responses to specific geographical regions and also to answer 'Don't Know' if desired.

### **What are the potential risks to you in taking part?**

Participants are not asked to directly identify themselves or the university/HEI they work for at any point during the survey, and are only invited to predict forthcoming international student enrolments in Scotland as a whole (not for individual institutions). As such, there should not be any risk of divulging confidential or commercially-sensitive information about your own institution as a result of you taking part in the survey.

### **What happens to the information in the project?**

Identifying information (participant name) captured in the survey consent form will be removed before any data analysis occurs. The vast majority of data from the survey that is used in the final project report will be presented in an aggregated format for the purposes of a) statistical analysis and/or b) model building. In cases where an individual response is included in the submitted study (for example, comments on additional important contextual factors, or local forecasting practice) this will be done anonymously, with any potentially identifying details removed or replaced with pseudonyms, unless express permission has been given otherwise.

Individual survey responses will be stored securely in password-protected files/online software, will be used for the purpose of this investigation only and will be deleted upon submission of the final project.

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

### **What happens next?**

If, having read this information, you are happy to be involved in the project, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm this when you complete the survey online.

If you decide not to take part in the survey, thank you for your attention and consideration.

Participants will not typically receive any feedback or further contact after completing the survey. There are currently no plans to publish the results of this project publically; however, if you are interested in this investigation you are welcome to contact me to request a copy of the final project report once completed.

### **Research Ethics**

This investigation was granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde MBA Unit ethics committee.

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or from whom further information may be sought please contact:

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## Reference List

London Economics (2023) *The benefits and costs of international higher education students to the UK economy : summary report*. Available at: <https://londoneconomics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/LE-Benefits-and-costs-of-international-HE-students-Summary-Report-2.pdf> (Accessed: 25 June 2023).