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Why do English universities really franchise degrees to overseas providers?

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Abstract

Franchising degrees to overseas providers, normally for-profit private companies, has become big business for English universities. The latest data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency reveal that there are now more international students registered for the awards of English higher education institutions that are studying wholly offshore than are on campus. There is an extensive economic literature exploring the role of franchising (or licensing) in the internationalisation of multinational companies. There are, however, few studies that have attempted to understand the reasons why so many English universities have moved beyond exporting (educating foreign students on campus) to franchising their degrees to overseas partners. This study uses an exploratory research methodology to get 'inside the black box'. It investigates the motivations of decision-makers entering and maintaining franchising operations at four English universities, revealing that financial considerations are less dominant than widely believed within the sector and are overshadowed by other, non-commercial considerations. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)