

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

The strength of this year's field of shortlisted universities demonstrates the "maturity of the UK sector in its international engagement", according to judges. Entries covered everything from capacity-building and partnership in Iraq, to new transnational opportunities in India.

But the University of Westminster was judged the winner because of the "pioneering nature" of its leadership of a consortium of six institutions in the South Caucasus region and two universities in the European Union.

Partnering with universities in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, Westminster has created an international collaborative MSc programme in medical molecular biology that uses flexible learning and virtual education to make the course possible across such a wide area.

The judges said that the project "overcame a number of obstacles across political and geographical boundaries to deliver teaching and research through e-resources" and that it is "also encouraging new collaborations across the region and with European partners".

To circumvent political tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the regional centre for the collaboration was located in Tbilisi, Georgia. The EU's Tempus programme granted money to build IT facilities and research laboratories. The collaboration was commended by the EU as the best regional project in Tempus' 20-year history.

The university now has a firm presence in the South Caucasus, and research, teaching and knowledge exchange partnerships with the leading universities in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia are flourishing.