UKGCC TELECOMMUNICATIONS/IT/EDUCATION SECTOR POSITION PAPER

1. Introduction

The telecommunications, IT, and education sectors are foundational pillars for Ghana's digital economy and future-ready workforce.

At the UKGCC we have grouped member companies from each of these sectors based on their common challenges. These interconnected sectors drive innovation, enhance productivity, and create inclusive opportunities for youth, businesses, and underserved communities. While Ghana has made notable strides in broadband expansion, ICT policy, and digital learning, persistent gaps in infrastructure, regulatory coherence, and financing continue to impede growth.

This position paper, prepared by the UK-Ghana Chamber of Commerce (UKGCC) Telecommunications, IT, and Education Sector Committee, outlines key sector challenges and proposes actionable recommendations to support private sector investment, policy engagement, and sector resilience.

2. Key Issues Identified by Member Companies

2.1 Local Content Policy Uncertainty for Telecommunications sector

There is concern about the direction and implications of a new local content policy under the Ministry of Communications. Members noted the importance of early engagement to influence policy design and avoid unintended restrictions on investment and partnerships.

2.2 High Cost of Doing Business for Telecommunications sector

Rising energy costs and macroeconomic conditions are affecting the viability of infrastructure and service delivery in the telecom sector. Members seek UKGCC's support in advocating for special industry tariffs and cost-reduction strategies.

2.3 Withholding Tax on Cloud Services

The introduction of a new tax on cloud services and the inability to reclaim withholding tax on services like Amazon Web Services (AWS) is affecting the operational efficiency of Ghanaian IT companies. Members expressed a need for collective industry engagement to seek clarity and relief.

2.4 Weak Local IT Industry Collaboration

Local IT firms face difficulty competing with larger international providers. There is a strong need for coordination and coalition-building to better represent the sector and promote local content.

2.5   Delayed Government payments

Delays in payments for completed government contracts, particularly in the education sector, are affecting cash flow and service continuity. This issue cuts across sectors and requires broader advocacy on public financial management.

2.6   Lack of Clarity on Government Direction

Members expressed a need to better understand the policy focus of the new administration on telecom, IT, and education to align offerings and partnerships effectively.

2.7   Education-Specific Challenges

2.7.1   IELTS Requirements for English-Proficient Students

Despite Ghana being an English-speaking country and many students completing internationally recognised qualifications such as A-Levels, International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSEs), or even undergraduate degrees taught in English, some are still required to write the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam when applying to UK institutions. This creates unnecessary financial and procedural burdens, especially for high-achieving students who have demonstrated language proficiency.

2.7.2 Limited Recognition of A-Level and AS Qualifications in Ghana

Students who have undertaken AS-Level programmes often find these qualifications under-recognised by local universities. In many cases, they are compelled to retake modules during their undergraduate studies that were already covered at the pre-university level.

3.   Recommendations

3.1 Proactive Engagement on Local Content Policy

UKGCC should facilitate dialogue with the Ministry of Communications to ensure the local content framework is inclusive, investment-friendly, and aligned with sector realities.

3.2 Advocacy for Utility Cost Relief

Collaborate with regulators and energy authorities to explore sector-specific reliefs or special tariffs for telecom infrastructure operators.

3.3 Engage GRA on Cloud Service Taxation

UKGCC to convene stakeholders for a meeting with the Ghana Revenue Authority to seek guidance and possible exemptions or offsets for digital service taxation.

3.3 Strengthen Public Sector Payment Systems

Engage Ministry of Finance and relevant Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) to advocate for predictable, timely payments to private contractors.

3.4 Foster IT Industry Collaboration

Create a UKGCC-supported working group for IT firms to share insights, collaborate, and jointly engage with regulators and policymakers.

3.5 Facilitate Strategic Dialogue with Government

Organise periodic roundtables with relevant ministries to keep members informed on policy direction and create feedback loops for private sector input.
Ghana's digital and educational transformation requires inclusive policymaking, infrastructure investment, and robust partnerships between government, the private sector, and development partners.

The UKGCC remains committed to strengthening dialogue, collaboration, and advocacy that supports a competitive, innovative, and digitally empowered Ghana.

3.6 Review UK and Ghana Higher Education Alignment

Work with education stakeholders and UK institutions to review the relevance and necessity of IELTS requirements for English-proficient students from Ghana. UKGCC should also advocate for broader recognition of AS-Level qualifications in Ghana's tertiary institutions to minimise duplication and encourage curriculum alignment with global standards.

About the UK-Ghana Chamber of Commerce (UKGCC)

The UKGCC, established in 2016 with the support of the UK's Department for Business and Trade, is the leading private sector organisation promoting trade and investment between the UK and Ghana. UKGCC champions business growth through trade facilitation, capacity building, policy advocacy, and strategic networking.

Economic Importance of the sector

About the UKGCC Telecommunications, IT, and Education Sector Committee
Members include: Helios Towers Ghana, IT Consortium, Winmat, KGL Group, Telecel, Mark Brooks Education, Zeepay, and Audiovisual Systems.
The Committee serves as a platform for collective advocacy and engagement on key industry challenges and opportunities across the digital and education landscapes.