All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration

Inquiry into the closure of the Post Study Work (PSW) route
Written evidence from the British Council

30 September 2014

Content

1 Summary

1.1 The UK has historically been a leading destination for international students looking to undertake taught courses and research, especially in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM subjects). However, the UK's market share is being challenged as never before. The number of students choosing the UK has increased year on year from the 1990s to 2011/12. In 2012-13 for the first time the numbers coming to the UK declined, even as our competitors continued to enjoy strong growth. While the number of students coming to the UK fell by 1%, the USA showed a 7% increase and Germany saw a 12% increase. If the UK is to sustain its market leading position in the face of the growing competition from both established and new competitor destinations, it is critically important that we avoid complacency or worse actually undermine our attractiveness as a destination.

1.2 While the pool of international students continues to grow, especially in India and South Asia, the UK's market share is contracting. A significant fall in the numbers of international students coming to the UK will have implications for our higher education institutions (HEIs). The impact beyond campuses could also be substantial - the UK's economic success owes much to our world beating research and development base that is underpinned by our universities. International students also make a significant economic contribution to the local communities where they live.

1.3 There are complex reasons for the changes in the number of students choosing to come to the UK. Isolating the impact of visa policy changes from the range of factors affecting the flow of students to the UK is not straightforward. Cost for example is a key concern for students - tuition fees, living costs and fluctuations in the currency exchange rate between a student's home country and the UK are important considerations for students comparing destinations. Our research and on the ground intelligence suggests that the closure of the Post Study Work (PSW) route, as well as the perceptions of UK attitudes to international students are significant factors when a student is considering whether to choose the UK or a competitor like Canada, Australia, the USA, or one of the growing number of highly regarded alternative study destinations.

1.4 This Inquiry by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration is a timely intervention and an opportunity to take stock of the impact of policy on the UK's HEIs. In this paper we will explore the impact of the changes to the PSW route within the broader context of the evolving international student market.

2 The British Council

2.1 The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. We are on the ground in six continents and over 100 countries bringing international opportunity to life, every day. Each year we work with millions of people, connecting them with the UK, sharing our cultures and the UK's most attractive assets: English, the Arts, Education and our ways of living and organising society. We have 80 years' experience of doing this. For further details on the British Council's work in higher education see section 6.

3 The importance of international students to the UK

3.1 The UK higher education sector is one of the most internationalised in the world: 18% of our student-base is international, over 25% of faculty are non-EU, and more than 80% of UK institutions have international partnerships. BIS estimates that in 2011-12, overseas students studying at higher education institutions in the UK paid £3.66bn in tuition fees and £6.15bn in living expenses.

3.2 International STEM students are critical to the UK's research base, they are underpinning the viability of pioneering research programmes in engineering, medicine and science that are essential to the UK's success in the global economy. About 90 per cent of full-time postgraduate taught students in biotech and some engineering programmes are international. Any fall in the numbers of these students pose a threat to the UK's long-term research base both in terms of reduced income from fees but also from the loss of innovative thinking, intellectual challenge and experience of different methodologies these students bring to academic departments.

3.3 The UK currently leads the world in research productivity (number of citations relative to Gross Expenditure on Research and Development - UUK 2011, *Driving Economic Growth*). The UK punches above its weight as a research nation. While the UK represents just 0.9% of global population, 3.2% of R&D expenditure, and 4.1% of researchers, it accounts for 9.5% of downloads, 11.6% of citations and 15.9% of the world's most highly-cited articles (BIS, *International Comparative Performance of the UK Research Base – 2013*). The UK needs to remain innovative to be globally competitive and that requires drawing on global rather than just national resources.

3.4 In 2012/13, students from outside the EU outnumbered UK students enrolled full time on postgraduate STEM courses. Non-EU students constituted 46% of all full time students with UK students forming 42% and other EU students 12% of the student body. For engineering 67% of students were from outside the EU. In computer science the figure was 66% and even for maths courses the proportion of non-EU students was 59%. The students taking some individual programmes in engineering and biotech for example are 90% international in origin. If the international students who are filling these programmes choose instead to study in Australia or Canada their continuing viability will of course be put under pressure, with those most dependent on international students the most vulnerable. A reduction in the numbers of international students taking taught courses will affect the diversity and plurality of the UK's academic offer, reducing the attractiveness of the sector and potentially creating a cycle of decline. Any reduction in the range of courses on offer also restricts the choices on offer to UK students with potential implications to the skills base for the UK economy in key industrial sectors.

3.5 However, arguably more important to the continuing economic success of the UK than the implications for individual courses is the reliance of UK HEIs on their postgraduate taught courses to support their research programmes. The income from these courses are in many cases what keeps an academic department as a whole viable, if that income falls significantly a department will simply not be able to sustain the same number of academic staff, research students and postdoctoral researchers. The UK's research and development base in crucially important sectors will be undermined with far wider implications for the UK economy than the billions that international students already inject into the UK economy through fees and associated spend.

3.6 Restricting the flow of genuine students coming to the UK is not in the interests of the UK economy. Our university towns and cities derive huge economic benefit from the additional spending and employment generated by these students. The UK's world leading position in research depends on the income from fees our universities raise from taught postgraduate programmes and the skills and experience of international research students bring to academic departments. A significant reduction in the numbers of international students coming to the UK would severely impact the viability UK's institutes of science and engineering damaging UK industries and businesses.

3.7 Together with the majority of the higher education sector, we believe that students should be excluded from the net migration figures and that, subject to appropriate checks, institutions should be trusted to be the best judges of whether a student is genuine and eligible to come and study in the UK

Soft power

3.8 The UK's higher education sector is one of our strongest soft power assets. The reputation of the UK's HEIs is a powerful attractor to potential students both in terms of the quality of the education on offer but also the cachet it brings to CVs. The UK benefits significantly from the fees and associated spend of students – BIS estimated that in 2011-12 the total value to the UK economy was £9.81bn in tuition fees and living expenses alone.

3.9 However, although less obvious, it is important to also recognise that those who have studied in the UK are much more likely to be well disposed to the UK on their return home. Sometimes they become leaders in their chosen fields, perhaps even the leaders of their home nation like Bill Clinton, Hassan Rouhani and Manmohan Singh. Our research has found that of 245 current heads of state, 26 attended a UK university. A recent report by ExEdUk found that 13% of non-British Nobel Prize winners have been educated in the UK or held a position at a British university, 32 of the world's 177 central bankers have attended UK universities, and 407 non-Britons listed in Who's Who had been educated in the UK, the vast majority as undergraduates.

3.10 Our *Trust Pays* research found that there is a significant trust dividend for the UK from people engaging in cultural relations activities such as studying in UK universities. This means that on their return home, international students are significantly more likely to trust people from the UK, to want to visit the UK, to want to do business with UK companies and to encourage others to consider the UK as a place to study or work.

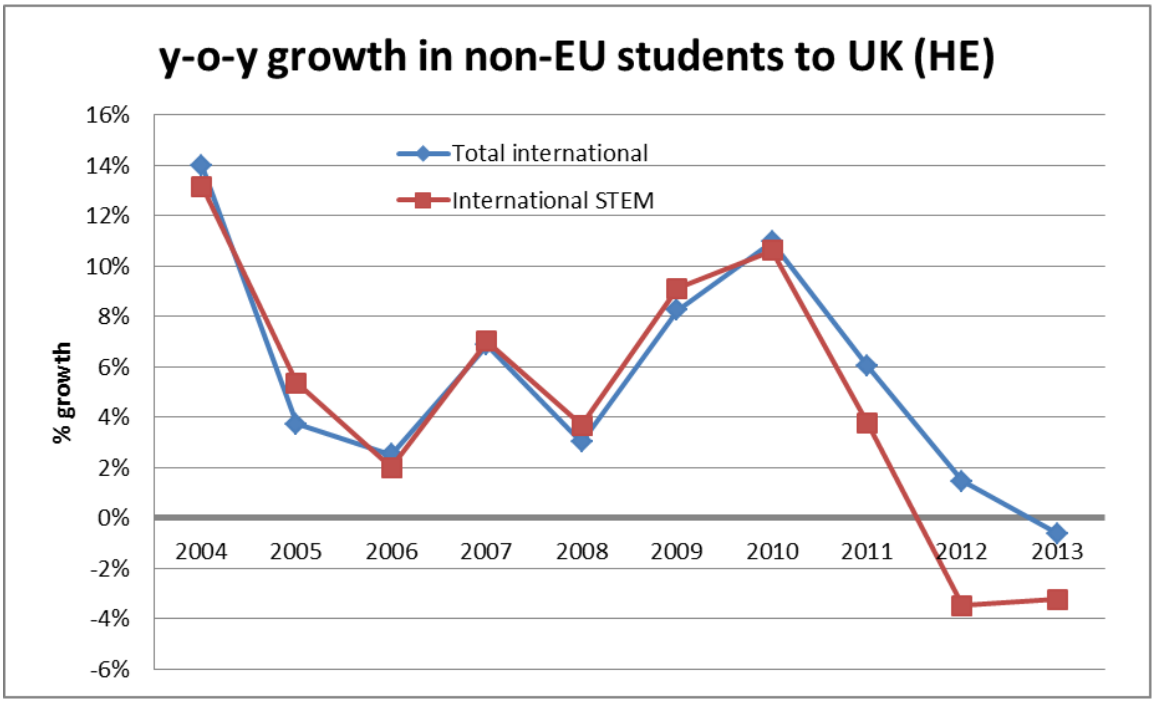
4 The UK's position in the market for international students

4.1 International (non-EU domiciled) student numbers to the UK increased year on year from the 1990s to 2011/12. In 2012-13 international numbers to the UK declined with a drop of 1%. This is a very significant fall from the double digit growth rates of 2010 and the first contraction in numbers coming to the UK. Chart 1 sets the trends out graphically.

4.2 Table 1 gives a more detailed picture, showing the decline in 2012-13 in students coming to the UK from 8 of the top 20 sending non-EU countries. Five of these countries have been in decline from 2011-12 onwards. PSW was removed in April 2011and so would begin to affect students enrolling in academic year 2011-12.

4.3 The choices made by prospective international students can be influenced in many ways and are based on a variety of factors. Looking at the numbers choosing the UK is a crude guide, for example the drop in the number of Indian students coming to the UK will reflect the deprecation of the Rupee on currency markets as well as the widely publicised tightening of the UK visa regime. However, by comparing international trends we can draw some correlations on the impact of visa changes on the UK's competitiveness in the international student market.

Chart 1



(Source: British Council analysis of HESA data)

Table 1

Table 1: Top 20 non-EU sending countries to UK HE institutions in 2012/13 and how these numbers have changed

	2010/11 all subjects	2011/12 all subjects	2012/13 all subjects	11/12 to 12/13	10/11 to 12/13
Total	313720	318270	316265	-1%	1%
China	70035	81480	86720	6%	24%
India	40765	31470	23645	-25%	-42%
Nigeria	18305	18405	18280	-1%	0%
United States	16745	17445	17430	0%	4%
Malaysia	14770	15505	15780	2%	7%
Hong Kong (SAR)	10615	11490	13265	15%	25%
Saudi Arabia	10840	10470	10155	-3%	-6%
Pakistan	10825	9450	7800	-17%	-28%
Thailand	6450	6765	6680	-1%	4%
Canada	6320	6555	6670	2%	6%
Singapore	4565	5405	6155	14%	35%
Norway	3955	4510	4995	11%	26%
Korea (South)	4880	4835	4920	2%	1%
Taiwan	5115	4825	4575	-5%	-11%
Bangladesh	4215	3945	4355	10%	3%
Vietnam	3310	3885	4195	8%	27%
Russia	3515	3760	3855	3%	10%
Turkey	3555	3580	3630	1%	2%
Japan	3595	3460	3370	-3%	-6%
United Arab Emirates	3135	3215	3165	-2%	1%

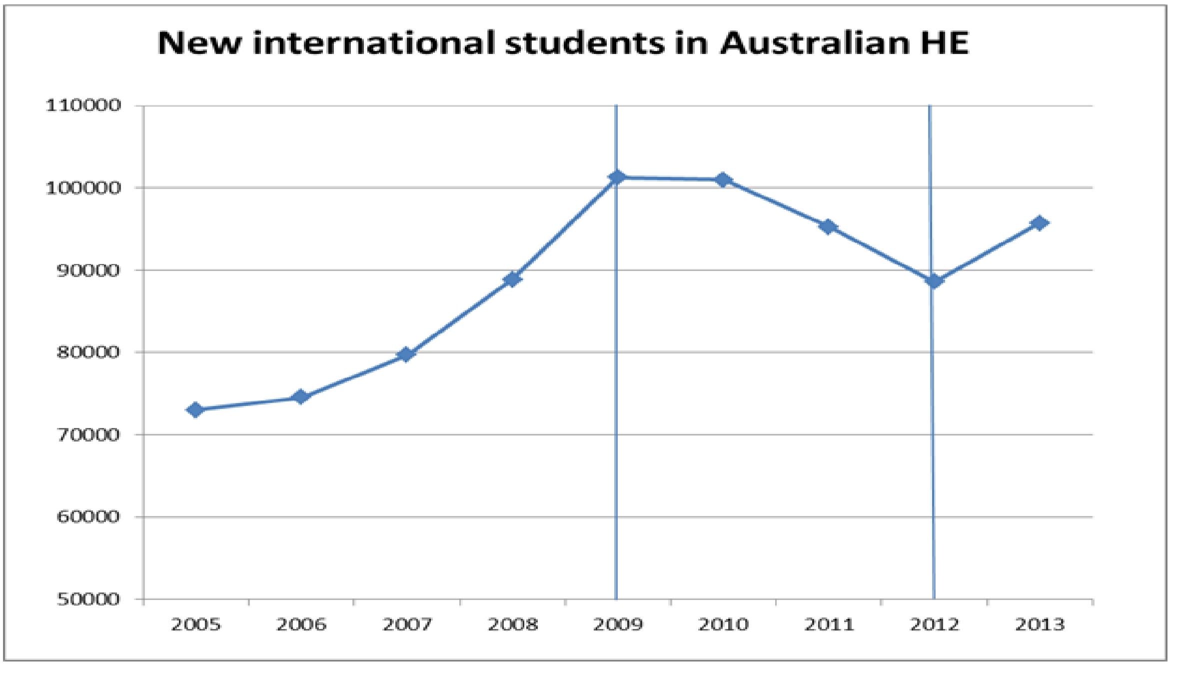
(Source: British Council analysis of HESA data)

4.4 Data from national sources (AEI in Australia; IIE in USA; DAAD in Germany) shows that many key 'competitor' study destinations have not experienced the same recent down turn in student enrolments as UK. 2012-13 data for USA showed a 7% increase in international student numbers to USA; Australia experienced an increase of 0.4%; Germany saw a 12% increase.

Australia

4.5 International student enrolments in Australia increased rapidly throughout the late 1990s and 2000s. From 2009 they began to drop sharply following the introduction of tighter visa controls. In December 2010 the Hon Michael Knight was appointed to conduct a strategic review of the student visa programme (http://www.immi.gov.au/students/_pdf/2011-knight-review.pdf). Knight made 41 recommendations which focussed on the need for a holistic approach, the streamlining of the visa process, treating qualifying students as low risk and recognising universities and other education providers as 'high quality' sponsors, lessening the burden on the student, and providing students with an opportunity to gain practical work experience following their studies. The recommendations were accepted by the government. Implementation began in 2012 and continued into 2013. Chart 2 shows international student commencements (new students) in Australian HE institutions from 2005 to 2013. The most recent figures (up to December 2013) show that following the implementation of the Knight review recommendations overall international enrolment numbers are increasing again, including increases in numbers from countries which are declining in number to the UK (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Iran).

Chart 2



USA

4.6 International enrolments to the USA continue to grow with the current figure standing at 819,644 (2012/13). Around 301,000 of these study STEM. After China, India is the 2nd largest provider of international students to the USA. The number of Indian students choosing the USA has declined - by 3.5% in each of the last two years but this decline contrasts with the decline of 23-25% per year in Indian students to the UK. In 2012/13 over

96,000 Indian students were enrolled in US institutions. Around 36% of Indian students in the US are enrolled in engineering programmes.

4.7 International students in the USA have the option of engaging in practical training in the USA after graduation to “provide valuable work experience by sharpening and adding to the skills” learnt at university. Occupational Practical Training (OPT) is available for 12 months post study at bachelors and at master’s level. For students in STEM subject areas there is the option to engage in this form of post study employment for a total of 29 months.

Canada

4.8 From the latest available data (OECD 2014) Canada hosted 221,406 international students. Although the US, UK, Australia, Germany, and France each currently attract more international students than Canada, the number of international students in Canada is rising at a faster rate than any of these countries. The number of international students in Canada has risen by 51% since 2007, when the Government’s pilot international education promotion programme began. In their International Education Strategy (unveiled January 2014) Canada recognises the value of incoming international students and has a stated aim to attract 450,000 by 2022. Canada offers international students the ‘Post Graduation Work Permit’ (PGWPP) which allows students who have graduated from a participating Canadian post-secondary institution to gain valuable Canadian work experience for up to three years. In addition, the government has pledged CAN$42million to improve visa processing times.

International perceptions of the UK as a destination

4.9 The British Council runs a survey of prospective international students – The Student Insight Survey. Respondents to the survey in 2012 who stated an interest in studying outside of their home country were asked a series of questions about their perceptions of different study destinations.

4.10 About 8% of respondents believed that the UK was ‘worse than last year [(2011]’ with regard to their perceptions of the country being ‘A friendly and welcoming study destination’, 28% believed it to be ‘Better than last year’. About 10% believed the USA to be worse than last year and 21% better than last year. 86% of STEM students interested in studying in the UK agreed or strongly agreed that the UK has an energetic and creative youth culture and offers an innovative study experience, but 36% agreed or strongly agreed that it was difficult to apply for courses at UK institutions.

4.11 However, the perceptions of Australia and Canada contrast with attitudes towards the UK. There has been a marked improvement in the image of these study destinations – only 0.5% had the view that Australia was now worse than last year, and 0.3% had a negative view of Canada with 34% holding the view that their perception of Canada as a friendly and welcoming study destination had improved since 2011.

4.12 The survey data shows that a major motivation for prospective students to seek an international education is to enhance their career prospects. Of 3,172 respondents who stated an interest in taking a STEM course outside their home country, 949 (30%) believed they would enhance their employability most through working whilst studying, and 861 (27%) believed they would enhance their employability most by working in their study country upon graduation.

4.13 Parents of prospective international students from China tell us that they are really keen for their children to be able to stay and gain work experience after their studies. Whilst it is not entirely impossible to stay on in the UK after graduation, with the closure of the PSW route there is no direct guarantee – which partially explains the popularity of rivals like Australia, Canada and the USA that offer much more easily accessible options for post-study work.

4.14 A survey conducted by the British Council with education agents soon after the closure of the PSW route revealed that 75% of agent respondents expressed concerns that the closure of PSW would affect students and parents' perceptions of employability upon graduation from the UK. Following this, in May 2013, four national key agents in China including EIC, New Oriental, Shinyway and Chi-vast, (which each deliver more than 1500 students per year to the UK) all raised pessimism over the ability to find a job or internship in the UK after the closure of PSW as an issue for students.

4.15 A review of blog content in China shows that the audience in China consider the return of investment of studying in the UK as being low compared to USA, Canada and Australia, primarily due to the lack of opportunities for career development. According to a recent survey hosted by Xinquan Overseas Education (http://www.xinquanedu.com/zt/2014/zh/0206shuj/#qushi), career development and immigration opportunities are top 5 reasons for study abroad. The intention of studying in the UK decreased by 3.9% compared to 2012 according to this survey.

4.16 In India, Pakistan and South Asia, the majority of students are looking to complete higher education abroad for two main reasons: To recover the expense incurred on their education; and to gain international work experience to enhance job prospects back home. The combination of increasing fees and the closure of the PSW route has led to the growth in popularity of increasingly visible options in Australia, Canada, USA, New Zealand and Singapore among others. In the case of Australia, Pakistan has become the top market for vocational training. Competitors have increased the frequency and visibility of their marketing efforts, with the messaging being around providing more economic and easier options for international study available in other countries.

4.17 Changes to the UK's immigration rules, particularly proposals for the introduction of student bonds, were debated heavily on Nigerian radio for many weeks. The underlying message received by prospective Nigerian students was that the UK was closing its doors to them. We subsequently saw a significant dip in the number of prospective students visiting Education UK fairs across the country. When we visited several other fairs organised by other agencies, UK exhibitors' stands had reduced numbers of visitors with prospective students heading straight for Canadian and US universities. The perception that it is now difficult to secure post study work visas in the UK after graduation makes Canada a much more attractive destination to Nigerian students. Our offices in Nigeria have also observed that a number of visible new players are entering the local market offering cheaper and easier visa destinations - Ghana and Turkey for example are all actively pursuing Nigerian students.

4.18 A recent study of prospective students in India reported that 'high cost' was the greatest deterrent to study overseas for most, followed by lack of scholarships, then difficulties getting a visa, and not being able to work. The restrictions on the criteria for the right to work after study also impacted negatively on prospective students from India.

However, also important is the perception that there are now more - and sometimes better - opportunities for Indian students to advance their careers at home rather than in the UK.

4.19 The pace of change has been issue for some applicants. The number of changes in quick succession has led to uncertainty in the market of what the rules are. Students considering the UK as a destination can be confused and put off by the rapid changes in immigration processes and guidance with some left in doubt as to whether they can even complete their studies. This can have a significant effect on the attitude of applicants, especially if there is a period of English training required before the student can take up their place. A period of calm and stability in the visa system would be invaluable.

4.20 Too often, regardless of the efficacy and intention of policy measures themselves, the nature of the national political and media debate regarding immigration and visa policy, and particularly the coverage it receives abroad can have an adverse impact on attitudes towards the UK as a study destination; creating an impression the UK is unwelcoming to international students. Given the enormous long term economic, soft power and other short and longer term benefits international students bring to the UK, we believe that there should be a much greater awareness of the impact of the domestic debate of immigration policy on international perceptions of the UK as a study destination.

The importance of Post Study Work options

4.21 Globally the number of internationally mobile students continues to grow and other major hosts of international students have observed significant increases in their international enrolment figures. New entrants to the international student market are offering attractive options for prospective international students, in recognition of the significant economic and soft power benefits they bring. Our research predicts that internationally mobile student numbers will continue to increase to 2020 and beyond (although at a slower rate than in the last decade).

4.22 Yet the UK's share of the international student community has contracted. In some cases, like India, the fall is in dramatic contrast with the experience of our international competitors. Although there are a number of factors impacting on this and the visa changes are only one part of the picture, it is true to say the PSW changes are having a significant impact on the UK HE sector's ability to compete and are a drag on what should be a fast growing UK export.

4.23 Our evidence is that following the closure of the PSW route some graduates are finding it difficult to pursue employment for the crucial 6 – 18 month period post study. Our teams in Nigeria and India have reported that prospective students consider the employment options available both in other study destinations but also at home are now better than those afforded by the UK and as a result are disregarding the UK as a study destination.

4.24 In meetings with Ministry of Education officials in China, and with the Chinese Embassy, regrets have been expressed that the UK have abolished PSW. Chinese policy makers and officials recognise that a year or 18 months of post study work experience in the UK offers Chinese students with a higher return on their investments and provides an opportunity to develop competitive skills which would be useful on their return to China.

4.25 Both the USA and Canada have continued to enjoy significant growth in the numbers of students while the UK's market share declines. It is no coincidence that both offer more pragmatic post study options to students. The USA has specific programmes like OPT to gain the work experience many consider vital to success when they return home. Canada offers work visas for international graduates and their spouse/common law partner, and highlight the fact that this will be viewed as a step to potential immigration to Canada. http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/study.asp#other.

4.26 The Australian experience is especially relevant to the UK's own policy approach. Following three years of declining applications from international students after the authorities tightened visa requirements, enrolments showed an immediate and sharp upturn when Australia streamlined the visa system, reduced the financial requirements on prospective students and offered post-study work visa options to graduates.

4.27 Ironically, while the option of working post-graduation was a real attraction for students considering the UK, in the majority of cases prior to the changes to the PSW route the opportunity was not even taken up - most students simply chose to return home to work after completing their studies. It is the flexibility open to prospective students via post study work options that can make a destination like Canada more attractive than the UK even if it is option that ultimately is not actually exercised. Of the graduates that did take up post-study work prior to the PSW changes, the majority did so for a short time to gain experience that they can take home with them.

4.28 The work graduates undertake post study in the UK and the long term links they forge are a significant contribution to the UK's research base and should be recognised as such. Further in key sectors like engineering where there is significant shortage of skilled UK graduates, international graduates have a potentially vital role to play in ensuring UK HEIs and businesses have the professionals they need to support innovation and economic development.

4.29 We would welcome a review of whether the current post-study provisions are an appropriate response in the face of that offered by our competitors and the needs of the UK economy. More could be done to evaluate the impact of the new visa regulations, preferably before further changes to the visa regime. There are valuable lessons to be learned from the experience of our international competitors, particularly other Anglophone countries. Detailed consideration of the experience of Australia would likely be especially informative to UK policy makers. We would also like to see a much better understanding of the impact the domestic debate in the UK has in our key international markets.

5 Conclusion

5.1 The UK is a leading destination for international students. Our universities and research institutes depend on the flow of income and ideas these students bring. Some programmes would simply not exist were it not for the international students that choose the UK. If the reduction in the numbers of international students the UK experienced last year is allowed to turn into a long term trend there will be serious ramifications for the UK's research and development base in crucial sectors of the national economy.

5.2 That the number of international students choosing the UK has fallen when the pool of students has continued to grow and our competitors have experienced an upturn in applications suggests the UK has become a comparatively less attractive destination. The strongest growth in international student numbers is in India and South Asia, precisely the markets where the UK is experiencing the biggest falls in applications. The UK's world leading institutes and research centres should be showing the same strong growth in student numbers as our competitors with all the positive implications for the economic success of the country that entails. We should not being seeing signs of stagnation and decline.

5.3 For the UK to maintain its leading position in the international student market there need to be some positive refinements to the student visa regime. There is evidence that reforms to the PSW route have had an adverse impact on the attractiveness of the UK to international students. We believe that in the highly competitive market we should analyse the role of the post-study work offer as an attractor to talented international students. Useful parallels can and should be drawn with the approach of our competitors, both old and new. Competition for students is growing, especially for the most ambitious and capable students and the market will only become more challenging for the UK as our competitors offer simpler, more attractive and cheaper visa choices for students. The Australian experience, including the quick recovery in student numbers following the refinements the Australian Government made to policy in the face of falling applications, is of particular relevance to the UK.

5.4 The British Council fully supports the government's declared intention to attract genuine students to the UK. The British Council is a member of the Government's International Education Council and works in partnership with BIS, UKTI and the FCO and through the cross-government GREAT campaign to promote the UK as a destination of choice for international students. Through the GREAT campaign and resources like the Education UK website we are pushing hard to promote the UK in our key overseas markets. Countering the negative international press coverage of issues such as the closure of the Post Study Work route, or the withdrawal of Highly Trusted Sponsor Status from high profile UK institutions in India, Nigeria and other target countries is a real challenge but we have enjoyed some success in countries like China. We will continue this important work to support the UK's HEIs.

Annex

6 The British Council and International Higher Education

6.1 The British Council supports the exchange and mobility of students, scholars and academics into and from the UK, and plays a leading role in promoting UK HEIs to international students. Through our international network of offices, teaching centres and libraries, and digital platforms like the Education UK website, we present the UK as an attractive destination to prospective students. We provide international students with guidance on preparing their visa applications, preparing for coming to the UK and settling in safely once they arrive. We also support UK education providers with their international marketing work, through market intelligence, direct marketing services, delivering Education UK exhibitions and offering consultancy. Our extensive network of international education agents - and the training we provide for these agents - also supports the international marketing efforts of UK institutions.

Education UK

6.2 The Education UK website attracts over 2 million unique visitors each year, making it the website of choice for international students and agents. It lists over 150,000 UK courses and 3,000 UK scholarships at 2,600 educational institutions. It also presents practical advice to prospective students, covering a host of issues like pre-departure briefings, visas, scholarships, accommodation, travel and other critical concerns. Advice such as our Entry Clearance and Immigration brochure (http://www.britishcouncil.org/entry-clearance-and-immigration.pdf) helps signpost prospective students through the visa system. As well as the website, we also run global e-newsletters, and provide education marketing materials for use around the world. This year, one of our areas of focus is to show audiences worldwide that the UK is a leader in research, creativity and innovation. For this, we are gathering facts and statistics which demonstrate the UK's strengths, and exciting stories which bring these statistics to life. These stories, published online, look at how UK universities and colleges are breaking new ground and making discoveries that are changing the world.

Education Exhibitions

6.3 Education exhibitions are the number one international recruitment tool that the HE sector uses to recruit students and to raise brand awareness. The British Council runs over 120 education exhibitions in more than 50 countries annually, attracting over 250,000 visitors a year. The British Council draws on GREAT campaign collateral at these exhibitions to highlight the breadth of the UK offer to potential students. We work with almost all UK universities and a growing number of FE colleges and schools. The numbers of exhibitions are growing and the British Council is expanding into new markets. We support UK education institutions to realise their international ambitions, providing services for international student recruitment, market intelligence and the development of working relationships with institutions in countries.

The GREAT Campaign

6.4 The GREAT campaign is making a major contribution to the promotion of the UK as a destination for tourism, study and as a place to do business. The British Council manages the 'Education is GREAT' strand of the campaign. This programme aims to deliver measurable economic benefits in terms of student recruitment, whilst also supporting the UK's long-term interests and enhancing UK influence within target markets. In 2014/15 The British Council is focussing particularly on strengthening the UK's attractiveness as a destination for study in the high volume markets of China, India and the US.

6.5 There are particular challenges in India. There has been a well-documented decline in student numbers over the last two years. In 2010/11 there were 40,890 Indian students in the UK but by 2012/13 that number had reduced to around 23,000. At the same time there have been increases in the number of Indians choosing to study in Australia, Germany and Canada. The British Council, working closely with the British High Commission, is working to reverse this trend through a major campaign including PR, digital, outreach and scholarships. The campaign is focusing particularly on the benefits of a UK education for career advancement.

6.6 The British Council works closely with UKVI; BIS; the FCO; the Home Office; UKTI: UKCISA; HEIs; and other sponsors and partners to ensure that visa and entry arrangements are made more user-friendly for international students and to make their stay in the UK a positive experience. Around the world, we work closely with UKVI on the ground to communicate the message that the UK is open for business to manage negative comments and perceptions of the UK.