

1. International students bring huge academic, cultural and economic benefits to the UK.
2. The British Council is concerned that the UK is losing 'market share' and that perceptions of the UK's visa policy are having an impact in key markets.

International students bring huge benefits to the UK

- International students bring significant financial benefits to the UK's further and higher education institutions in tuition fees, as well as the wider economy. International students' expenditure in the UK, directly attributable to the British Council, stands at £1.3bn.
- International students are critical to the UK's research base – many take up courses in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects underpinning the viability of pioneering research programmes in engineering, medicine and science that are essential to the UK's success in the global economy.
- By studying in the UK, international students learn about the UK and build relationships that last long after they return home. The trust that develops through immersion in student life in the UK is a unique connection and important to the UK's soft power - international students are the future leaders of their countries.
- International students enrich student life, bringing fresh perspectives and different thinking to seminar rooms and research laboratories. They make our campuses more cosmopolitan and vibrant places, benefitting the whole student body.

The British Council is concerned about the current perceptions of the UK's visa policy in key markets

- The British Council supports the government's intention to attract genuine students to the UK. We have been working very hard with the UK government to get the right messages out. But we believe that students should be excluded from the net migration figures.
- We believe universities and colleges should be trusted to be the best judges of whether a student is genuine and eligible to come and study in the UK.
- The two aspects of the visa regulations that have the potential to do the most damage to the UK's reputation, to the economy, and cost the largest number of UK jobs are the restrictions to 'pathway' visas and the post-study work visas. We would support a review of these policies.

Facts

- The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills estimates that in 2011 education exports were worth £17.5bn to the UK economy. International students at HE institutions in 2011/12 were estimated to contribute £10.2bn in tuition fees and living expenses.
- A 2015 study found that 55 current world leaders, representing 1 in 4 countries globally, had been educated in the UK.
- In a highly competitive market, the UK is the second most attractive destination (behind the USA) for international students worldwide.
- Each year, more than 500,000 non-UK students study in the UK for an educational qualification.
- In 2014/15, 665,995 students were studying for a UK HE qualification outside of the UK, a 4% increase on the previous year.
- In 2014/15, UK domiciled students accounted for 79 per cent of all enrolments at UK higher education institutions (HEIs), six per cent were European Union (EU) domiciled, and the remaining 15 per cent came from countries outside the EU.
- The number of student enrolments from outside the EU rose by 1.8% in the undergraduate sector from 2013/14 to 2014/15 (174,730 students in total), and increased slightly in the postgraduate sector by 0.4%.
- However, in 2014/15 there was overall a 0.6% **decline** in EU students studying in the UK compared to 2013/14, but a 1.1% **increase** in non EU students studying in the UK (over the same time period).
- The UK's global leadership in research and innovation relies heavily on international talent, for example fully 44.6% of early career researchers in the UK are from abroad

Impact of visa changes

- Following the introduction of new visa requirements in 2011 there has been a drop of over 50% in the number of students coming to the UK from India and a 39% drop from Pakistan.
- While some of the fall in enrolments has been offset by growth in the numbers of students coming to the UK from other countries including China, the UK's overall growth in international (non-UK) student numbers of 3,120 in 2014–15 (0.6 % growth) is tiny compared to recent US figures showing growth of 88,874 students (10%) over the same period.
- Where competitor countries are continuing to show strong growth in the numbers of international student applications, the UK's market share is slowing. The reasons for the slowdown are complex but actual and perceived differences in the UK visa system for international students compared to competing destinations is a critical factor. For example in contrast with the UK, Australia, Canada, USA, and New Zealand all offer at least 12 months post-study employment.
- Only 39% of full time students in postgraduate taught programmes are UK nationals. For some STEM courses (including biotech and engineering) international students account for nearly 90%. These courses would not be viable without the contribution of international students, and opportunities would be closed for UK students to study these crucial subjects.
- Furthermore, reduction of international enrolments on these courses would threaten the UK's long-term research base as the loss of talent and revenue would have a significant impact on the capacity of university departments to support academics and researchers.
- In the longer term a fall in international student numbers could have significant costs to the UK's economy by reducing the capacity of our world leading research institutions to innovate and invest in R&D.
- The UK currently leads the world in research productivity (number of citations relative to Gross Expenditure on Research and Development; source: UUK, 2011 'Driving Economic Growth'). The UK needs to remain innovative to be globally competitive.
- In Australia, around £2 billion went out of the national economy within a year of increased restrictions on student visas. The value of fees, goods and services purchased by foreign students dropped to AUD15.8 billion (£10.5 billion) in 2010–11 from AUD18.5 billion the previous year, according to the International Education Association of Australia. Following the [Knight Review](#) into the visa programme, Australian policy makers introduced reforms designed to restore competitiveness to the Australian tertiary education sector. As a result in 2014/15 international students contributed AUD17.5 billion to the Australian economy – a 14% increase on the previous year but in real terms still significantly below the previous peak.