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2011 Global Forum: Leveling the International Playing Field
Vancouver, Canada

UK universities welcome international students with clarification of new visa system

UK universities will continue to be able to attract and retain the best and brightest international student talent following yesterday's announcement of the result of the UK Home Office consultation on the Tier 4 visa route.

The announcement has been welcomed by the UK higher education sector as it follows months of concern (and international speculation) that the resulting changes would cripple the UK's international competitive advantage and limit the ability of institutions to attract international students.

International students are academic, cultural and economic assets to the UK. Our world-class university system is enriched and enhanced by its international activity, and it depends on the international mobility of its students and staff to deliver teaching, research and knowledge exchange of the highest quality.

One of the main changes announced yesterday, the post-study work route, will bring the UK student visa system into line with that of the United States of America and Australia.

International students graduating from a UK institution will still be able to stay and work in the UK under Tier 2 (General) if they have a job offer and meet the other requirements. Students will have four months at the end of their course to move from student status to that of a skilled worker.

Key changes to the system:

- International students entering university pathways will remain able to enter at intermediate English language level;
- Post-study work provision has been retained for international students who secure a job offer;
- Students will no longer be required to return to their home country between courses; and
- Universities will be able to vouch for the language capability of international students entering degree courses without the need for secure English language tests.

There will be no restrictions on the numbers of students who can switch to Tier 2 visa status following their studies. And in a further concession to international students pursuing this route, the Resident Labour Market test will not be applied. This means that international students will be treated on an equal footing with UK residents when applying for jobs.

International students will continue to be able to bring family members with them when they are studying a postgraduate level course of 12 months or more, and family members will have the right to work.

In another positive move, the Home Office has recognised the difficulty and expense that international students currently incur by having to return to their country of origin to apply for the next student visa when progressing from undergraduate studies to postgraduate. International students will no longer be required to return home between courses and will still be able to support themselves during their period of study by working up to 20 hours per week.

Changes to the system will require UK higher education institutions to achieve Highly Trusted Status as a visa sponsor by April 2012.

Students will be assured that institutions with this status have public confidence and are legitimate, educational institutions, a measure supported by UK universities which support the aim of minimising abuse of the student visa system by bogus colleges. This will further reinforce the UK higher education brand internationally.

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UK universities welcome international students with clarification of new visa system

There has been a change to the level of English language skills, with students entering at degree level requiring skills at the upper-intermediate level (B2). However, UK institutions will be able to vouch for the student's language ability without the requirement for a secure English language test.

Fears that the pre-degree pathway route for international students would be changed for the worse have proved unfounded. Private providers will still be able to provide pre-degree and pathway courses by working in partnership with a Highly Trusted Sponsor when that institution takes responsibility for sponsoring the student directly. International students will remain able to enter these programmes at intermediate English language level.

Whilst the details of the changes to the student visa system will require fine tuning and testing prior to implementation, yesterday's announcement addressed many of the concerns voiced by the UK higher education sector, and the more than 30,000 responses to the initial Home Office consultation.

The announcement has been welcomed by Universities UK and the UK Higher Education International and Europe Unit (IEU).

Dr Joanna Newman, Director of the IEU said that the changes are much more positive than previously anticipated.

"The challenge now for the UK higher education sector, and the IEU, is to ensure the message - that the UK continues to welcome international students - is understood and received overseas by prospective students.

"At the same time, it is equally important that prospective students understand that changes to domestic student fees in England, and across the UK does not affect them.

"International students are vital to the health and strength of the UK university sector, and to the future growth of the UK economy. They contribute to export earnings, skills growth, and job creation in both the private and the public sectors. The sector is pleased that the announcements yesterday acknowledge the importance of international students".

In the coming months, the IEU will be working with the sector to give greater clarity internationally to the changes around both the student visa and higher education system.

Click [HERE](#) to read the Universities UK press release in response to the visa changes.

Click [HERE](#) for a summary of the changes from the UK Home Office.



*Still open for business:
Changes announced yesterday reflect the importance of international students*

Opinion

A work in progress

Dr Christine Humfrey, Special Professor of International Higher Education, University of Nottingham and Visiting Fellow, Edge Hill University, responds to Dr Jane Knight's article in last week's *International Focus* on the 'five myths of internationalisation'.

Few colleagues involved in international higher education are unfamiliar with Professor Knight's definition of internationalisation as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the university".

For the thirty years since the introduction of international fees, the UK higher education sector has grown more sophisticated, sensitive and professional in its approach to first "foreign", then "overseas", and now "international" students. It needed to - since these potential students were becoming increasingly aware of their importance as contributors to the finances and intellectual capacity of the host institutions.

We began internationalisation with the imperative of overseas student recruitment. Initially, there was a belief that overseas students restricted the places available to home students, that when coming to the host country the overseas visitors needed to adapt, ("when in Rome..."), and that maximum advantage should be wrung from "the golden goose" which was providing unfettered finance.

In addition, internationalisation activity was seen as separate from the mainstream life of the institution, conducted by a new breed of employee housed in the "secret garden" of the International Office, but found mostly flying around Asia and the Middle East. If a myth can be defined as "a widely held but false belief or idea..... generally explaining the early history of a social phenomenon" then most of these beliefs were indeed myths!

In due course international recruitment developed into responsible recruitment which evolved into internationalisation. Today we are aware not only of how far we have come, but also of the distance yet to cover.

Embedding internationalisation is a tall order and success cannot be correlated simply to numbers of international students, but it is difficult to imagine an international university without an appropriate proportion of diverse international participants. We should never distance ourselves absolutely from awareness of the impact that the fee income makes on the broad spectrum of our higher education institutions, and we should use such income to help provide the best experience for all students. The fees may secure the fuel for the HE caravan, but our internationalisation vision is the sat nav! We seek to assist integration - and the scope is increasing. This is helped considerably when outward mobility allows domestic students themselves to experience being "strangers in a strange land", developing empathy with other cultures.

It is questionable whether League Tables measure internationalisation in the true sense, but then there is much debate as to how well such tables measure other aspects of university endeavour. Of course the adage of valuing what we measure, as opposed to measuring what we value has some truth, but economic advice suggests that what we measure we can improve.

We are learning how better to value our partners and sustain our relationships. A deepening knowledge of a few institutions should help to encourage collaboration. Already there is an increase in joint and double degree programmes which indicates a better understanding and an increased trust in international arrangements.

The existence and growth of transnational education with its many co-operative arrangements, culminating in 162 full-overseas campuses around the world (currently 10% of these with UK partners) indicates a greater willingness to select and sustain partnerships. World university networks, research groups, exchanges, conferences, collaborations, TNE activity and interaction between our national agencies, all add to our knowledge, experience and confidence.

If we had believed 30 years ago that our institutions could secure international status simply by clever international marketing then we were indeed naive.....but such naivety stemmed in the main from inexperience. Over a decade ago Sir Peter Scott exposed the myth of "high octane internationalist rhetoric" being synonymous with quality.

Each university makes the journey at its own pace. We now have an interest in comparative pedagogy; Teaching International Students and similar initiatives provide a platform for evaluation and innovation. We have a commitment through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to understand and research internationalisation, not simply to be smart at recruitment. Surveys of our international students help us to assess the experience that we offer on qualitative as well as quantitative grounds. That is an occasion on which we measure what we value and consequently improve it!

Of course we have made mistakes, shown ourselves vulnerable through overdependence on recruitment, valued what was less than valuable, taken comfort from what was not worth counting, and been complacent when we should have been questioning. I do believe, however, that we are now ready for the fourth phase, when we come to terms with the concepts of international and intercultural competences and with the need to measure those "intangibles" to which Jane Knight referred. We can succeed if vision remains the inspiration for all we do.

In Focus: UK-Hong Kong Pearl River Delta Mission

UK Vice-Chancellor Mission to Hong Kong encourages greater collaboration

A delegation of 15 UK university Vice-Chancellors and education leaders visited Hong Kong and Shenzhen in the run-up to the British Council's Going Global conference, to explore new partnership opportunities.

Led by Professor Steve Smith, President of Universities UK and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Exeter, the group participated in a policy forum hosted by the Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM) at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), travelled across the border to Shenzhen Virtual University Park in China and participated in several round-table discussions on collaborative opportunities.

The delegation were updated on policy developments in Hong Kong, including the recently completed University Grants Commission (UGC) review of higher education, by Cherry Tse, Permanent Secretary for Education, and Michael Stone, Secretary General of the UGC. The Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions also hosted a breakfast meeting to share developments in the self-financed sector.

The visit to Shenzhen included a viewing of the Chinese University of Hong Kong's new research facility, due to open this summer in the Shenzhen Virtual University Park, and a round-table on the development of higher education in the Pearl River Delta.

Viewing the Shenzhen facilities, the group saw first-hand the scale of investment in research and development and the opportunities for tripartite collaboration.

Tony Chan Fan-cheong, President of HKUST and convenor of HUCOM, said Hong Kong offered a smooth gateway to mainland partnerships. He pointed out that where Hong Kong does not have the capacity to undertake major research projects, mainland partners could offer the scale that is needed.

During the meetings, delegates from both sides said they hoped to see an increase in the number of UK students studying in Hong Kong. Currently, the UK sends just 240 students to study in Hong Kong, a figure described by Professor Smith as "embarrassingly small". Delegates were also keen to develop research collaboration, and suggested a visit to the UK by HUCOM members before the Going Global conference in 2012.

Queen's Hill site, Fanling: call for Expressions of Interest (EOI).

A key part of the visit was to encourage UK universities to respond to the Hong Kong Education Bureau's invitation to establish higher education institutions on the 100,000 square metre site at the Queen's Hill barracks near Fanling.

The development of a UK presence on the site could potentially form a base from which to build strong bilateral links between Hong Kong and UK institutions. The aim is to initiate and develop tripartite relations which also include higher education and industry in mainland China.

The UK's Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts MP, encouraged universities to put forward EOIs for this initiative in his address to delegates at the UK-Hong Policy Forum. He emphasised the potential benefits of a consortia approach, which in turn would provide opportunities to harness Hong Kong expertise to expedite tripartite relations and strengthen exchange in both directions. This approach is supported by the UK Higher Education International and Europe Unit which is tasked with taking this initiative forward.

It is expected the site will provide approximately 8,000 self-financing degree places and institutions operating at the site would be non-profit making. The conditions for establishing a presence appear favourable:

- It is anticipated interest-free loans would be offered for the first ten years; the second ten years at government cost of capital.
- Means tested assistance would be offered to students from poorer economies.

There is particular interest in attracting universities with expertise in niche areas such as metrology, arts and humanities, environmental science, design and technology, creative industries.

Click [HERE](#) to download the Queen's Hill site expression of interest form. Questions and a copy of your completed EOI should be directed to: Elizabeth Farnell, UK HE International and Europe Unit: elizabeth.farnell@international.ac.uk.



The UK Mission delegates visit the Chinese University of Hong Kong's new research facility at Shenzhen Virtual University Park, China

In Focus: Sri Lanka - a new education hub?

Sri Lanka - South Asia's new international higher education hub?

Tony Reilly, OBE, Country Director, British Council Sri Lanka

It is always good to be at the centre of things and reap the rewards of being in that position. In the field of international higher education, the desire to become a central "hub" for a particular region of the world has emerged in a growing number of countries.



Post conflict Sri Lanka is one such country with clear and legitimate aspirations to establish itself as a higher education hub for the South and East Asia region. The government of Sri Lanka is currently developing strategies, action plans and systems to achieve this vision.

The advantages are clear: being a hub helps attract the brightest students from nearby countries, brings in expertise from further afield, and helps to establish a reputation for knowledge and innovation. But the reality is that efforts to become a hub can be difficult to manage, making the goal harder to achieve than might be expected.

The issues raised by the regional hub phenomenon were explored recently by international higher education experts at 'Going Global 5', the UK's annual international education conference organised by the British Council. Going Global 'went global' for the first time this year, moving from its traditional location in London to the smart Hong Kong Convention Centre. The theme for this year's conference was 'World Education: the new powerhouse?' At the conference, international experts examined examples of established and emerging higher education regional hubs from around the world - sharing lessons, strategies and experience.

Malaysia, for instance, has a clear strategy to become an international hub for postgraduates, but there have been concerns expressed by some international students and researchers over the quality of support available to them. Questions have been raised over whether Malaysia's education system has reached the necessary standards to become a hub, while its geographical position next to Singapore means that competition for students is particularly intense. However, the Malaysian government is committed to consolidating their position as a regional education hub and are investing in research on how to improve the student experience at the same time as streamlining visa requirements for overseas students.

Hong Kong is experiencing similar difficulties in its own desire to consolidate its position as a regional hub. While its universities have expanded their numbers of international students significantly over the past ten years, limits under existing policy on the proportion of first year students that can come from overseas, combined with immigration constraints, will not allow them to expand in this direction much further. They may have reached a saturation point. There are also some concerns that the current level of accommodation and support available for international students may not be enough to support continued growth. One conclusion from the discussion on Hong Kong at Going Global was that their overall strength may be as a niche market with quality rather than quantity taking precedence.

A more optimistic and potentially quite exciting picture was painted for post-conflict Sri Lanka. The high-quality of its education, safe environment, low cost of living and diverse culture, combined with clear government initiatives and a new Education Bill going through parliament to encourage foreign universities to set up campuses, means it is well-placed as a potential regional hub. More than 25 Transnational Educational Partnerships offering UK undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes under franchised arrangements with partner institutions are already available in Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Higher Education presented a bold and compelling vision for Sri Lanka to follow in the footsteps of more established hubs at Going Global.

What is becoming clear is that to succeed, countries and their universities and colleges must first establish strong overseas networks and partnerships with existing international and transnational programmes. The more links with other countries they have, the larger their pool of potential students. They should try to make it easy for students to travel to them, and ensure they feel welcome once they are there as part of a lively, international student body. Meticulous market research is essential to ensure that institutions are providing the courses that international students will be interested in studying. And they need to have robust systems of student support so that overseas students have somewhere to live, feel safe and know where to go if they need help.

At the same time, prospective regional hubs need to balance their desire to be internationally recognised with maintaining their national and regional identity. This includes the need to maintain and invest in the quality of national state universities, as international providers arrive in the market place, in order to avoid the emergence of a two tier, public-private or international-local divide.

The good news is that success breeds success. Students who enjoy their time studying in another country tend to return and recommend it to their friends and family, who also spread the word. The bad news is that news of a poor experience travels equally fast – if not faster. Competition to be a higher education hub is likely to intensify over the next few years. For those that succeed it can certainly bring rewards. But it is important to remember that not everyone can be at the centre.

Interesting times lie ahead as Sri Lanka sets out to put flesh on its legitimate aspirations to attract student traffic from the region, while at the same time, increasing choice and options for thousands of talented young Sri Lankans who wish to stay at home to further their higher education studies.

Markets & Intelligence

China continues to attract more international students

Both the number of Chinese students studying abroad and the number of international students choosing China as a study destination has increased, according to data released by the Ministry of Education earlier this month.

In 2010, the total number of Chinese students studying abroad was 284,700. But perhaps more interesting to the UK audience is the growing ability of China to attract more international students than ever before, with 265,090 choosing to study in the country. Those students come from 194 countries and attend 620 colleges, research institutes and other educational organisations in 31 provincial regions in China.

Students from neighbouring Asian countries accounted for 66% of the total, followed by European, American and African students. More than 22,000 international students received Chinese government scholarships in 2010, representing a 23% increase.

South Korea, the United States, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Russia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Pakistan were the top 10 countries that sent the most students to China.

The Ministry of Education reportedly has plans to attract 500,000 international students by 2020, which would make China the top destination for international students in Asia.

The Observatory's Global Forum 2011

The 2011 Global Forum from the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education takes place in beautiful downtown Vancouver on 25-27 May (just prior to NAFSA) and the programme is nearing completion. Core themes for the meetings are private provision and partnerships with the public sector, the international student experience, immigration policy, the challenges of TNE, and the uses of technology. Laureate, Manipal, INTO and IDP will be represented, and the Qatar Foundation will host a post-Forum workshop on operating branch campuses.



The draft programme and links to speakers and registration are [HERE](#).

Further information is available from Veronica Lasanowski at: v.lasanowski@obhe.ac.uk, tel: +44-20-7222 7890.

Eversheds adds to legal series with new profile on Taiwan

Eversheds LLP have added a new country profile on Taiwan to the International Unit Legal Series. These profiles give an overview of the current status and legal background of higher education systems. Other profiles available include Australia, Malaysia, China, India, Bahrain, Hong Kong, UAE, Qatar, South Africa, the United States and Singapore.

All documents are available to download from the Secure Area of the website (UK universities only). Login and password details have been supplied to Heads of International Offices at UK universities. Please contact your Head of Office to obtain access.

For further information regarding the Legal Series, contact:

Glynn Stanfield, Partner, Eversheds at: glynnstanfield@eversheds.com / tel: 0845 497 3806

Opportunities at City University of Hong Kong

City University invites applications to join its 'CityU International Transition Team'. These opportunities arise from the reorganisation of Hong Kong's universities from a three- to a four-year undergraduate curriculum in 2012.

Current graduate students can participate in a paid semester or academic year teaching through its 'Discovery-Enriched Curriculum' (DEC), while enrolled in classes at the university.

Opportunities for both early-stage and established scholars are available in the form of a paid semester or year, to collaborate on research projects with City University scholars and to teach in interdisciplinary areas of expertise and in the DEC. In addition, there are faculty positions available at Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor, and Chair Professor level.

For recent PhDs, a limited number of two-year Visiting Assistant Professor (VAP) positions will be offered to outstanding scholars wishing to launch their independent academic careers. This contract can be renewed for an additional two years. VAPs are mentored by an interdisciplinary group of senior City University professors.

Interested individuals (must be fluent in English) should visit www.cityu.edu.hk for more information.

Markets & Intelligence

Bangor opens office in Beijing

Bangor University has officially opened an office in Beijing, China and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chinese Services Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE).

Partnership and cooperation were the key themes at the opening. The University has a current strategy to recruit 20% of its students from overseas, however, Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Hughes who led the event, said the underlying theme was not about recruitment, but partnership.

He said the UK Education sector has a lot to learn from Chinese counterparts.

The UK's Ambassador to China, Sebastian Wood CMG, talked of China moving into the next phase and the UK being a valuable ally in the development of the Chinese service sector.

Adding to the theme of partnerships he said, 'The Prime Ministers of both China and the UK have recently confirmed their commitment to a 'Partnership for Growth' in which they contribute to each other's development strategies.'

There are currently more than 700 Chinese students studying at Bangor University.



Bangor University Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Hughes at the opening with the British Ambassador to China, Sebastian Wood

Association of Commonwealth Universities - new scholarship opportunities

Postgraduate students in Commonwealth countries can apply to study in new destinations from 2011, following the launch last week of a range of international scholarships by the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

The first set of scholarships, to start between September 2011 and February 2012, are for Master's degree study in Kenya, Mauritius, Tanzania, and the South Pacific. A three-month Commonwealth Fellowship for an established academic at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria is also available. In addition, two Commonwealth Scholarships for PhD and postdoctoral study are also currently available at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

These scholarships have been made available by the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan endowment fund.

The above opportunities are open to citizens of all Commonwealth countries (except the host country).

Further details are available at: www.csfp-online.org.

Speakers needed for international higher education conference in China

An international conference is being organised by the British Council China, which operate as the Cultural and Education Section of the British Embassy/Consulate-General in China. The conference, 'Quality Enhancement and Striving for Global Excellence in Higher Education' will take place on 22-23 October in Chongqing and will run in partnership with the Chinese Higher Education Association, Chongqing Municipal People's Government, Chongqing Education Commission and the OECD Education Committee.

Expressions of interest are invited from UK higher education institutions, government and staff involved in quality assurance. Two experts are sought to present on the following topics:

- How to ensure regions with varying levels of development can achieve the same high standard of higher education.
- How to ensure different students have the opportunity to receive higher education relevant to their individual development needs.

The talks should cover the development of relevant policies and their effectiveness, the evaluation and judgement of these policies by social and intermediate organisations, adoption of the main policies by universities, analysis of their effectiveness and the view of students and employers. Both English and Chinese will be used and translation will be provided. Conference speaker costs **while in China** will be covered by the British Council China.

Contact Zhang Jing, Director, Higher Education China, at the British Council Beijing by the end of April 2011: zhang.jing@britishcouncil.org.cn.

The UK HE International and Europe Unit
Woburn House
20 Tavistock Square
London
WC1H 9HQ

Joanna Newman
Director

Callista Thillou
Manager (Europe)
Adviser (International)

Christian Yeomans
Policy Officer (Europe)

Alexandra Jenkins
Policy Officer (Europe)

Elizabeth Farnell
Communications and Public Affairs
Officer

Kristy Kenny
Administrative Officer

www.international.ac.uk

www.europeunit.ac.uk

If you have any feedback or suggestions regarding this newsletter and its contents or would like to bring to our attention news from the international higher education sector, please email info@international.ac.uk

The UK Higher Education International and Europe Unit is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland), GuildHE, the Quality Assurance Agency and Universities UK.

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Research & Collaboration

Report signals little change in student fees

Despite the economic downturn of the past couple of years, a new study from the Toronto-based consultancy Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) has found that a significant number of countries neither increased tuition nor reduced student financial aid for higher education in 2010 or early 2011.

'Tuition Fees and Student Financial Assistance: 2010 Global Year in Review', provides an overview of policy trends in 40 countries, looking primarily at domestic fees and aid provision.

This group of nations, referred to as the "G-40" in the report, represents around 90% of global higher education enrolment and 90% of global research, providing a picture of worldwide tuition fee and student assistance developments.

Nearly 75% of those G-40 countries that already charged tuition fees kept their fee rates the same in the period under discussion (although this figure drops to 65% if the two countries that introduced fees applicable only to international students are included in the analysis).

Meanwhile, more than half of the countries examined in the study kept the same levels of financial assistance for students, and some 35% increased their aid or introduced new programmes perceived to reduce financial barriers to higher education.

Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand all registered 'major cuts to student financial assistance' (although no increases in tuition), while the Netherlands and the Canadian province of Alberta showed small increases in tuition and decreases in student aid.

Chile, China, Germany, India, Japan, Nigeria, Russia, and Spain all saw small increases in student aid. In Australia there was a 'significant expansion of... student aid programs'.

The data represent a snapshot from 2010 and early 2011 and does not examine the effects of inflation or the cost of living in each country looked at in the study.

The overall conclusion though is that domestic fees are generally on the rise, and the trend towards more private investment in higher education continues unabated.

Click [HERE](#) for the full report.

