



National Indian Students Union (UK)

# Student Migration

Immigration – Next Steps for Policy

Westminster Legal Policy Forum

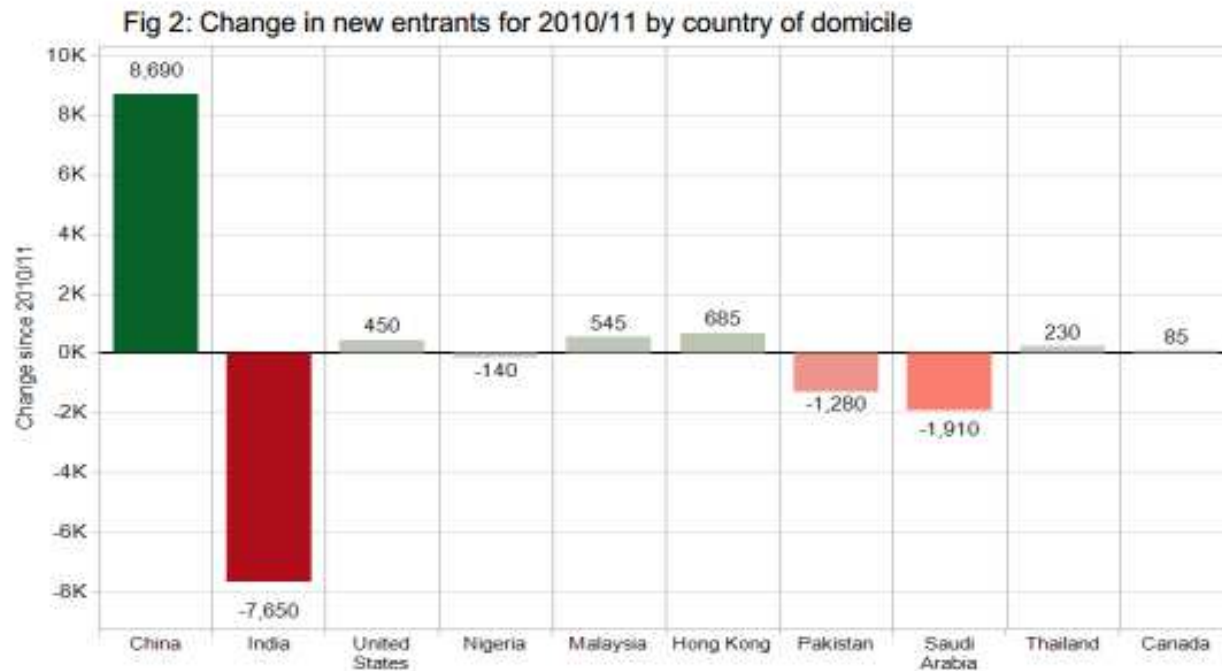
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# Landscape

- Britain has been one of the most preferred destinations for international students
- However this position is now under threat
- The number of first-year non-EU students at universities decreased by 0.4% in 2011–12. This is largely the result of a decrease amongst postgraduates (Source: HESA)
- Non-EU entrants to postgraduate taught degrees fell by 2.6% between 2010 and 2011–12 (Source: HESA)
- Downward trend continued in 2012 (Source: Universities UK)
- The total number of non-EU students enrolled on postgraduate courses has dropped for the first time in ten years (Source: Universities UK)

# Landscape

- Overall demand has been sustained by Chinese students, but **demand from India has plummeted**

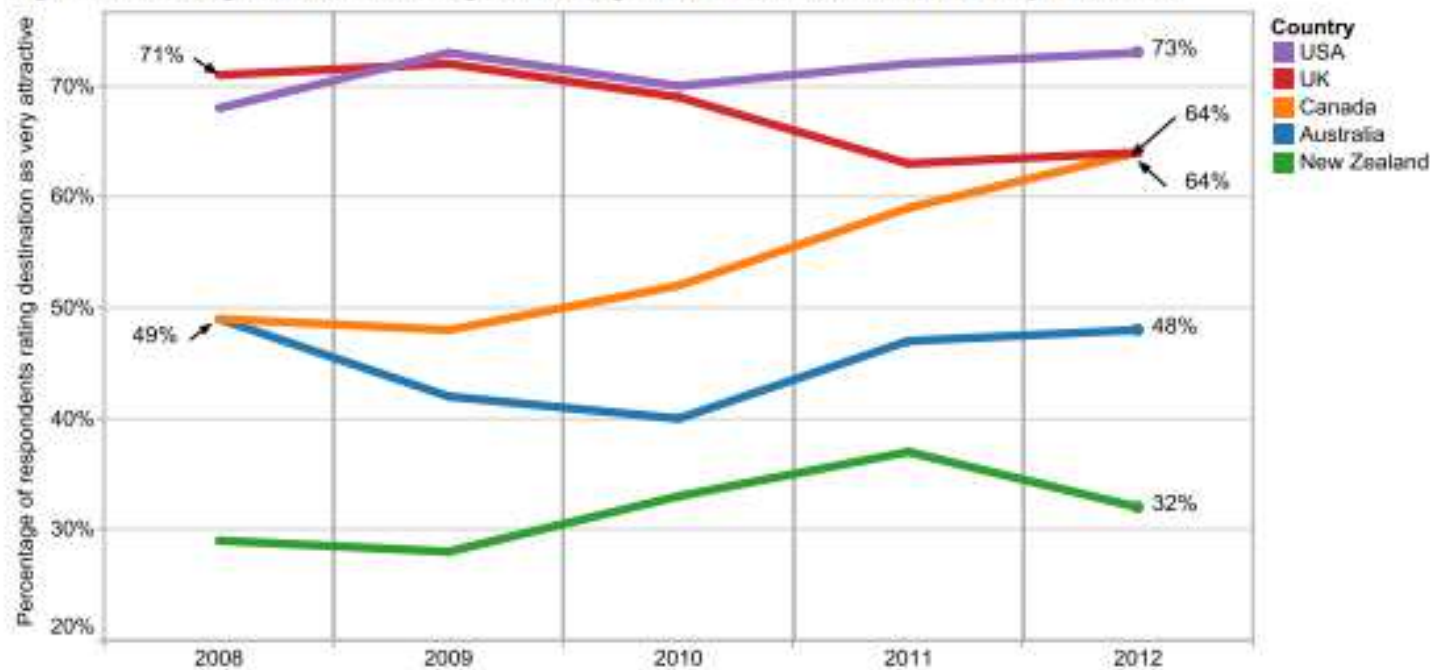


Source: HESA

# Landscape

- UK is becoming less attractive as a destination of study. A recent survey showed a steady fall in the percentage of overseas education agents saying the UK is a 'very attractive' study destination, down from 71% in 2008 to 64% in 2012.

Fig 4: Percentage of education agents rating destination countries as 'very attractive'



Source: ICEF i-graduate Agent Barometer

# The Student Perspective

- International Students are an Opportunity, not a Burden
- Treatment of Students in the System

# The Student Perspective

## International Students are an Opportunity, not a Burden

- International students bring a host of benefits to UK:
  - Economic
    - ✓ Higher education exports (EU and non-EU) contributed £8 billion to the UK economy in 2009. Estimated to increase to £16.9 billion by 2025 (Source: Department for Innovation & Skills, London Economics)
    - ✓ Education exports have been identified as a key priority for the government in its industrial strategy
    - ✓ Net contribution to Sheffield's GDP: £120.3 million
    - ✓ GDP generated by international students at Uni of Exeter directly supported 2480 jobs in the city
    - ✓ Home students benefit from international exposure on campus, helping them to prepare for an increasingly international labour market

# The Student Perspective

## International Students are an Opportunity, not a Burden

- International students bring a host of benefits to UK:
  - Cultural Richness
    - ✓ International Students are ‘Friends of UK’
    - ✓ Leverage alumni networks to develop trade ties with UK in the future
    - ✓ Cement long term economic growth for UK
  - STEM Sector
    - ✓ “Overseas students contribute enormously to the academic STEM community in the UK. Sir Andre Geim, the Russian-born Nobel Prize-winner from the University of Manchester, said the identification of graphene would ‘probably not have happened if I had been unable to employ great non-EU PhD and post-doctoral students’.” (Source: Universities UK)
    - ✓ A thriving postgraduate STEM sector, supported by overseas students, is vital for ensuring that the UK remains at the forefront of international research.

# The Student Perspective

## International Students are an Opportunity, not a Burden

- What do International Students want?
  - Practical International Exposure
  - Training and Employment Opportunities
  - Majority wish to return to country of origin (India) – only 3% wish to settle abroad permanently (Source: British Council)
  - Desire to network and understand the systems of international nations and subsequently deploy these in home country



# The Student Perspective

## International Students are an Opportunity, not a Burden

- The call for some form of practical work experience has never been stronger
- Britain can't rely on quality of education as sole competitive advantage
- Must bring its industrial engagement to the fore
- Must make the 'package' unique – students place high emphasis on work experience opportunity

# The Student Perspective

International Students are an Opportunity, not a Burden

## The Problem

- **Receiving country, UK:** Need to reduce net migration, ensure students aren't a drain on the taxpayer, economic and other advantages brought by overseas students
- **Exporting country, e.g. India:** Brain Drain of some of the brightest brains who it would want to retain in the domestic labour market
- **Students:** Various options e.g. UK vs USA vs Canada; key is international exposure and opportunities for career development

# The Student Perspective

## International Students are an Opportunity, not a Burden

- The **Problem** is unidirectional for both countries
- **Solution:** Develop a 2 year employment or internship scheme conditional on return to Home Country. Students not able to switch into any other category, route does not lead to settlement. No recourse to public funds.
- **Result:** International students enrolled at British universities are able to gain practical training and work experience in the UK, while there is no strain on the taxpayer. The Home government should create specific schemes to encourage these returning professionals to public sector jobs to maximise their impact. Once employed in the public and private sectors, these highly educated workers will drive their country's development as well as trade with the UK.

# The Student Perspective

Perception & Message – Treatment of students within the system

- Students feeling ‘unwelcome’
- Perception that Britain does not want International Students
- 2 major reasons:
  - A. *Policy changes themselves* – restrictive, much less opportunity and chance of finding suitable work experience
  - B. *Treatment of students within the system*
    - Mid-Cycle changes cause real anxiety – students come in on one basis and find themselves in another position
    - Shutting down of 500 bogus colleges – not a student’s mistake!
    - 2000 students currently waiting for a decision on Post Study Work visas: *Khatel (& ors) v Secretary of State*
    - Message sent out: ‘Policies keep changing’, ‘Immigration Laws make life difficult’, ‘Anything can happen’, ‘Can’t find jobs post study’

# Conclusion

- Britain was and continues to be amongst the most preferred destinations for international students but it must move in line with changing needs to do justice to its world class universities and its own long term growth.
- International students are key in this context, and must be treated like an opportunity and not a burden.
- Britain should work with countries like India that are of strategic importance to develop bespoke student policy solutions that will ultimately be to both countries' advantage.