

**THE IMPACT OF EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
INQUIRY
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 2016**

SUBMISSION BY THE DESTINATION FOR EDUCATION, PATHWAY PROVIDERS

I. OVERVIEW

ii. Destination for Education is a coalition of pathway providers consisting of Cambridge Education Group (CEG), INTO, Kaplan, Navitas, and Study Group.

iii. Pathway providers prepare international students for study at British universities, helping them to develop the study and language skills they need to succeed at degree level and which they have not had the opportunity to attain in their local education systems.

iv. Given pathway providers' role as a bridge between international students' home education systems and British universities any change to the status of international students would have a significant effect on their businesses, and on the tertiary education sector as a whole.

v. Access to British universities for overseas students has been called into question since the referendum to leave the European Union. The debate around language requirements, visa restrictions and the inclusion of international students in net migration figures could soon extend to EU students as well as non-EU students.

vi. We welcome this consultation and hope to ensure that the value of international students to our economy, soft power and tertiary education sector will be taken into account as the UK negotiates its exit from the European Union and in any future policy changes.

VII. CONTEXT - BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

viii. International students bring substantial economic benefits to the UK economy:

- The Home Affairs Committee's 2011 report on Student Visas found that education was the UK's seventh largest export industry.

- The same report suggested education was the second biggest contributor to the UK's net balance of payments.

- ExEdUK's 2016 report into international education in the UK found the total value of education exports in 2011 (including training, equipment and English language) was £17.5bn.

- Parthenon and EY's report, Economic Impact of International Students, found that international students support around 230,000 jobs across the country.

- Education makes a significant contribution to Britain's 'soft power': 55 current heads of state (over 25%/a quarter of all the world's countries) benefited from an education in the UK .
- ix. International students bring particular benefits to schools and universities:
- International students contribute 37% of total university income from fees despite making up just 19% of overall student numbers at UK universities .
 - Universities UK calculated international students contributed £7bn in income to the university sector in 2012 , a contribution that is likely to have grown since then.
 - The Independent Schools Council estimates international students contribute £890m to the independent school sector in the UK economy, supporting 22,700 jobs.
- x. The overwhelming majority of the public welcome international students to the UK. A recent YouGov survey for The Times found five times more people think that international students at British universities have a positive impact than think they have a negative effect, while almost half of voters want the government to encourage more overseas students to study at British universities, while fewer than a third say they should be deterred.

XI. GOVERNMENT POLICY AND INACCURATE HOME OFFICE DATA

- xii. On two previous occasions – in 2011 and 2015 – the then-Home Secretary, Theresa May, attempted to restrict the number of non-EU international students able to study in the UK. Mrs. May has claimed that 90,000 international students over-stay their visas in the UK, based on data found in the International Passenger Survey (IPS) by the ONS .
- xiii. However, research produced by the IPPR has found that the IPS is at odds with a number of other studies which show far fewer international students overstaying. Notably, the Annual Population Survey suggests that only around 30,000–40,000 non-EU migrants who arrived in the country as students are still in the UK after five years , [the majority of whom are engaged in full-time employment].
- xiv. The Times recently reported that a Home Office-commissioned report suggests only 1 per cent of international students over-stay their visas . The Times' research has been corroborated by Max Chambers, David Cameron's speech writer and home affairs adviser during his tenure as Prime Minister, who confirmed in a recent Telegraph column, that the government was aware that the number of international students who remained beyond their visas' expiry date was "a tiny, tiny fraction of the erroneous official figure" .
- xv. It is clear that ONS statistics based on the flawed International Passenger Survey have inflated the number of students remaining in the UK illegally. We have launched a formal inquiry into the ONS figures on international students.

XVI. CONSEQUENCES

- xvii. These revelations suggest the government has been basing policy on inaccurate data, leading to harmful attempts to reduce net migration by limiting the number of international students coming to the UK over the last six years.

xviii. This agenda has seen Britain fall behind in the race to attract students from around the world:

- International student numbers in the UK have fallen 6% since their 2010 peak while the global market demand has grown 7% annually .
- ExEdUK and EY estimate the UK's falling status as a higher-education provider has come at a cumulative cost of £9bn to GDP .
- This decline has been limited to non-EU students until now, but the Britain's departure from the EU is likely to have a similar effect on EU student numbers unless measures are taken to arrest this decline. The number of EU student applications in 2016 has already decreased by 9% according to the latest UCAS figures .

xix. A further decrease in the number of international students coming to the UK would cause significant harm to universities and the education sector as a whole. We could see a reduction in the availability of expensive courses, such as STEM studies, that are currently subsidised by international students, while student fees may also have to rise to make up any shortfall.

XX. RECOMMENDATIONS

xxi. We urge this committee to carefully review the ONS's data-gathering methods. An accurate understanding of the numbers and status of international students in the UK is essential to ensure effective policy-making and to avoid further damage to the UK economy and the health of its education institutions.

xxii. We also urge this committee to consider ways of ensuring EU students, who make up over 25% of the overall international student cohort , continue to see the UK as a leading destination to continue their education despite the UK's departure from the European Union.