



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Parliamentary Briefing

Briefing for Commons' Backbench debate on Student Visas: Thursday 6th June.

- **The University of Oxford, like other global universities, operates in an international student market, and relies on attracting the best students from around the world.**
- **We already compete in a market where the best students are attracted by funding to other, normally US, universities.**
- **Our competitor countries do not include students in their migration targets.**
- **Institutional diversity, the extent to which universities succeed in recruiting internationally, is recognised around the world as a measure of excellence and is reflected in league tables.**

The University of Oxford welcomes and supports the recommendations of the Commons' BIS, Home Affairs and Public Accounts Committees, as well as the Lords' Science and Technology and EU Committees.

Oxford has a large proportion of international students; with nearly 4,000 students studying on a student visa issued through a CAS number and approximately another 500 students on old style student visas which together represent 20% of our total student body. A large number of our undergraduate and graduate applicants are also currently studying at other UK institutions (either below or at degree level) so we are concerned about measures that may affect the sector as a whole and potentially reduce the pool of exceptional applicants to Oxford from within the UK.

The cumulative and frequent changes to the Tier 4 policy guidance over the last few years have created increased anxiety amongst our current and prospective student body especially when some of the rule changes were applied retrospectively. This has included rule changes such as the 5/6 year maximum time limit for a student visa, the academic progression requirement, the English language requirement, restrictions on dependants accompanying students, tightened financial requirements and more recently changes to the number of times we must confirm student attendance per year (from three to ten contact points).

We have received feedback and comments from prospective students and institutions overseas about the numerous UKBA rule changes over the last few years that indicate it may be a determining factor in students choosing to study elsewhere. Oxford has had to work strenuously to reassure potential applicants that they are still warmly welcomed and encouraged to come and study in the UK and that it will strive to support them in the visa application process where frequent, and at times ambiguous, rule changes may cause the student to question their eligibility for a visa. In addition, a proposal to interview

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visa students would cause considerable difficulties to students from countries such as India or China; who would have a long way to travel for these interviews.

The new doctorate extension scheme for students to look for work after completion of their DPhil studies and the Graduate Entrepreneur scheme are valuable additions and appreciated. However, they are a small and complex replacement for the previous universal post study work scheme, which has caused major concern to some applicants.

The University of Oxford's Migration Observatory produced a report¹ in 2011, which showed that the issue of international students was considered the least important when people were asked their views on immigration. **For further information contact as below:**

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¹ <http://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Report%20-%20Public%20Opinion.pdf>