



Time to admit that international students are not the target

The contribution that international students make to our institutions, economy, local communities and global standing is clear. It's time to take them out of the government's net migration target.

The government is right to clamp down on any bogus activity and the steps they've already taken mean we can be confident that over 97% of international students play by the rules, coming here to learn and returning home after their studies.

Now it is time to move the debate on and focus on growing one of our most successful exports. The government has been clear there is no cap on the number of international students who can come to study in the UK. But continuing to include them in the net migration target sends the opposite message.

Reporting better data would provide clarity and build trust in how the government is managing migration.

The next step should then be to build on the government's welcome recent move to give international masters students more time to find a graduate job in the UK, and to reintroduce a post-study work visa. British educated overseas talent is an asset and this would make our country more competitive as we seek to make the best of life outside the EU.

It's time for the Prime Minister to accept that international students are not the target, commit to smarter data and protect one of our major export sectors, sending a strong message that the UK is serious in its ambition to invest in international education.

Signed 19 January 2018 by:

Jasmine Whitbread, CEO of London First

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London

Martin Brok, EMEA President at Starbucks

Shakira Martin, President, and Yinbo Yu, International Students' Officer, at the National Union of Students

Mark Reynolds, CEO of Mace

Jon Skewes, Director of Policy, Employment Relations and Communications at the Royal College of Midwives

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