



International Students: The Brightest and the Best?

Summary

1. Students are by far the largest category of migrant to the UK. Non-EU students have roughly trebled in the past ten years, especially following the introduction of the Points Based System in 2008. Genuine students are of economic value to the UK – they are an asset to both campus life and their local economies – provided that they go home at the end of their studies.

2. Students coming to the UK are often portrayed as the brightest and the best. However, closer study of the Higher Education statistics shows that only two thirds (64%) of non- EU arrivals went to a university.

3. Of all student arrivals only one in eight studied at a Russell Group university and about one in twenty students went to study at a top ten university.

4. There has been a rapid growth in graduate students at less well known universities, perhaps attracted by a scheme, now tightened up somewhat, that offered virtually free access to the British labour market.

Introduction

5. This paper sets out the number of students that come to the UK to study and examines the nature of the student population by origin, institution, and level of study.

Increase in Student Numbers

6. Students are by far the largest category of immigrants to the UK. There are two broad categories – Tier 4 for those coming for more than one year and “student visitor” for those coming for less than a year. There are three ways of measuring student migration to the UK: Home Office visa data; arrivals data; and the International Passenger Survey (IPS) – but there is still no measure of student departures and no check on individuals as they leave.

(a) Visas

The Home Office statistics for the last calendar year show that in 2011 323,000 people were granted these two kinds of student visa (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Student Visas Issued 2011, (Home Office)

PBS Tier 4 Main	236,961
PBS Tier 4 Dependant	24,373
Student Visitor	61,319
TOTAL	322,653

(b) Arrivals

Students are by far the largest category of immigrants arriving in the UK. In 2010, the latest full year for which statistics are available, over half a million non-EU students and their dependants arrived in the UK, including those who wished to study for up to a year on the student visitor route. The number of arrivals (Table 2 below) is higher than the number of visas issued as not all students require a visa to study. For example non-visa nationals such as Australian and New Zealand citizens do not require a student visitor visa prior to entry. Nor are EU students included as they do not need a visa.

Table 2. Student Arrivals to the UK, 2010 (Home Office)

PBS Tier 4 main	271,500
PBS Tier 4 Dependant	23,500
Student Visitor	240,000
TOTAL	535,000

(c) IPS

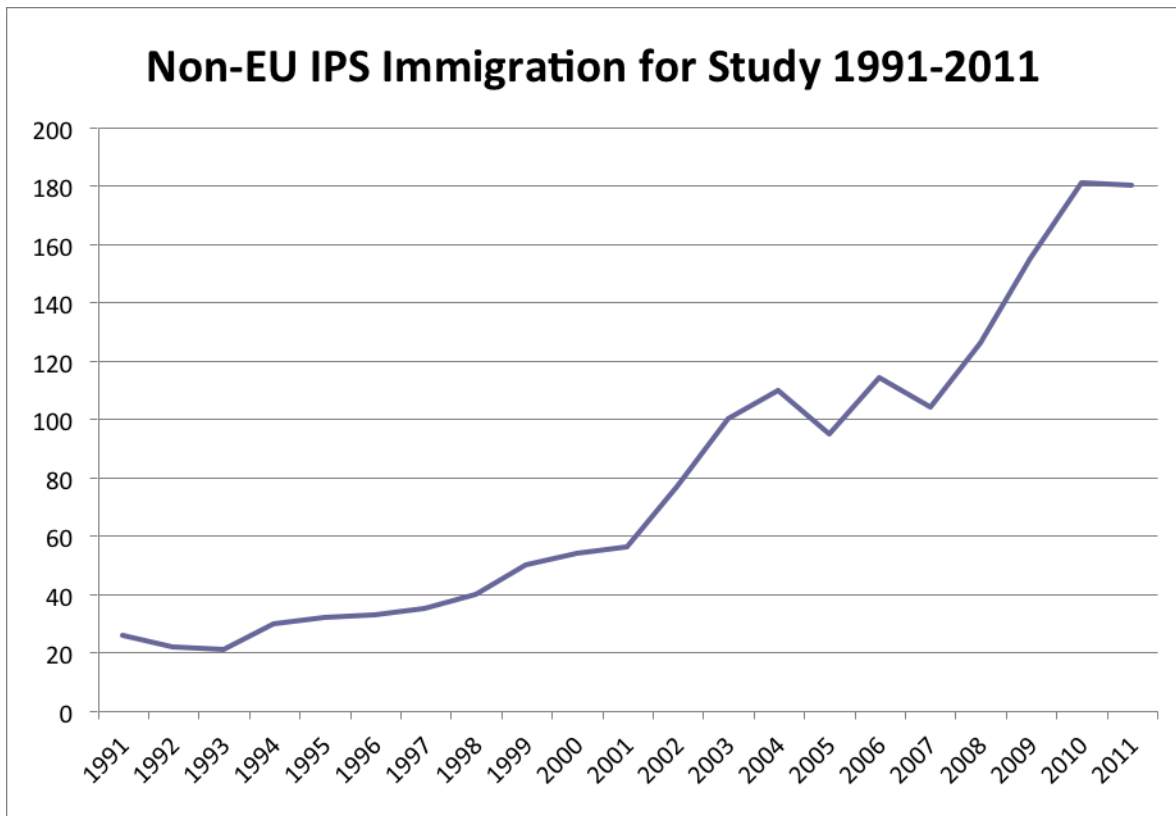
Not all of those granted Tier 4 visas appear in the migration statistics which are based on the International Passenger Survey; this measures, on a sample basis, those who say that they are coming to study for more than a year. On this measure 180,000 non-EU students came to the UK for study in 2011. Some may have decided not to come, others may have been missed by the survey.

7. According to the IPS, non-EU student numbers have more than trebled since 2000 when the total was 54,000.

8. This period included a dramatic increase following the introduction of the Points Based System in 2008. In 2007 about 104,000 students were recorded as coming to the UK from outside the EU for the purposes of study. This figure rose to 180,000 in 2011, a rise of 73% in four years.¹

1 ONS, International Passenger Survey estimates of long-term international migration, Table 3 Citizenship by main reason for migration. URL: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/august-2012/provisional-long-term-international-migration--ltim--estimates.xls>

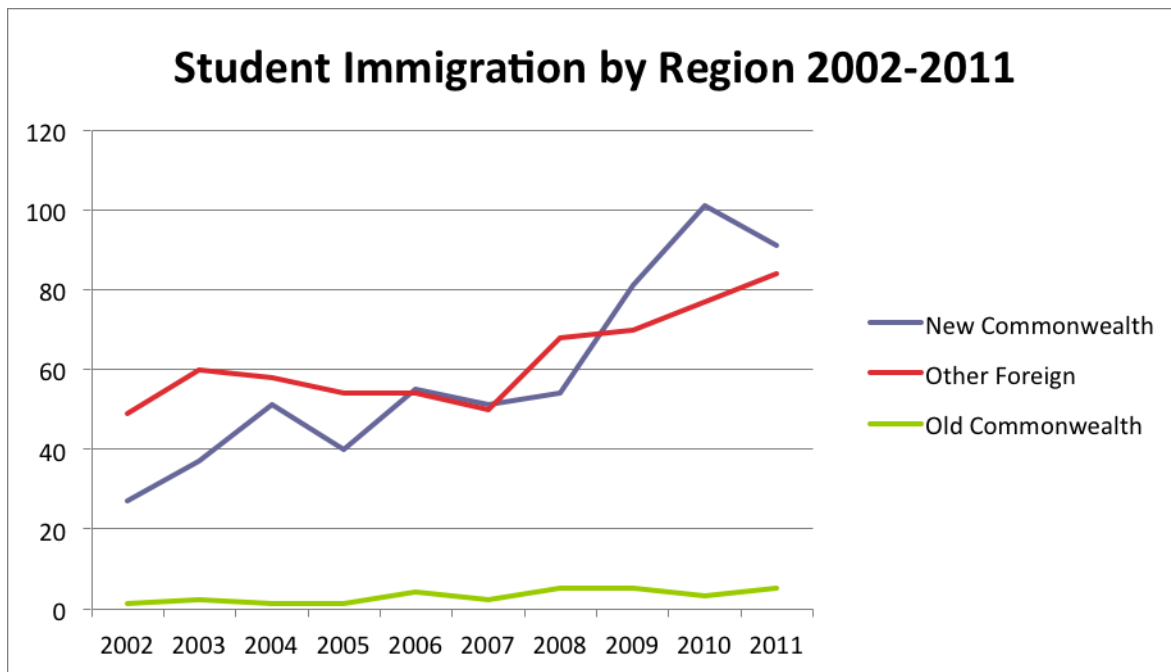
Figure 1. Non-EU IPS Immigration for Study, 1991- 2011, ONS



Increase in Students by Region of Origin, 2008 to Present

9. According to the IPS, student immigration from the New Commonwealth² has increased almost fivefold from 19,000 in 2001 to 91,000 in 2011, including a sharp increase following the introduction of the PBS in 2008, increasing by 78% between 2007 and 2011.³ Students from the rest of the world (“other foreign”) have also increased significantly since the beginning of the decade while numbers from the Old Commonwealth have remained static, as figure 2 below demonstrates.

Figure 2. IPS Immigration by region, 2002-11



2 New Commonwealth is the Commonwealth excluding Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada.

3 Figure for 2011 relates to YE September 2011 and therefore there is some overlap between 2010 and 2011. These are not comparable figures however the point remains that the numbers from the New Commonwealth increased substantially following the introduction of the PBS.

Students by Country of Birth- Tier 4 Visa Grants

10. Large numbers of student visa holders to the UK are from China, Pakistan and India and they predominantly arrive on a Tier 4 visa rather than a student visitor visa; they comprised 42% of the total number of student visas issued in 2011.

Table 3. Tier 4 Student Visas Issued, 2011 (Home Office)

Tier 4 Visas, 2011		
	Country	Visas Issues
1	China	52,485
2	Pakistan	35,664
3	India	34,826
4	United States	14,475
5	Nigeria	12,115
6	Saudi Arabia	10,087
7	Malaysia	7,418
8	Hong Kong	7,237
9	Bangladesh	6,450
10	South Korea	5,341
11	Sri Lanka	4,929
12	Thailand	4,903

Tier 4 Visa Holders by Type of Institution

11. There are no official data on the number of students who go to universities as opposed to colleges since the same Tier 4 visa is granted for all types of study longer than 11 months. However there are other sources of information that help to understand the student population better in terms of their place of study.

a) Universities

12. Data from the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) shows that in the academic year 2010/11 there were 298,000 non-EU students at universities, 164,000 of whom were studying at postgraduate level and 134,000 at undergraduate level. This is an increase of 61% from 2002/03 when there were 185,000 non-EU students enrolled at UK universities.

13. There are no Home Office statistics on the number or proportion of Tier 4 students who enter the country to study at universities rather than colleges. However, HESA data on first year enrolments suggests that 174,000 non-EU first year students enrolled at a University in 2010/11, comprising 105,000 at postgraduate level and 69,000 at undergraduate level.⁴ This compares to 271,500 student arrivals in 2010. University enrolments therefore made up about two thirds of student arrivals. This however, can only be an approximation as it assumes that all first year postgraduate enrolments arrived in that year. In reality a number will already be in the country having progressed from undergraduate study. Likewise, some undergraduate students would have entered in a previous year in order to study a pathway course.

b) Colleges

14. No reliable figures exist for the number of students enrolled in colleges. However, the Home Office have advised that, of the current inflow, 130,000 went to study at a university and 90,000 to colleges. The first of these two figures is lower than the number of enrolments (paragraph 12 above) because some students will have transferred from

4 HESA, Students and Qualifies Statistics, Table 2 – First year student enrolments on HE courses by level of study, mode of study and domicile 2006/07 – 2010/11.

foundation courses. Likewise some postgraduates would have progressed from an undergraduate course having arrived in some previous year.

Students at Universities – Russell and Non Russell Group Institutions

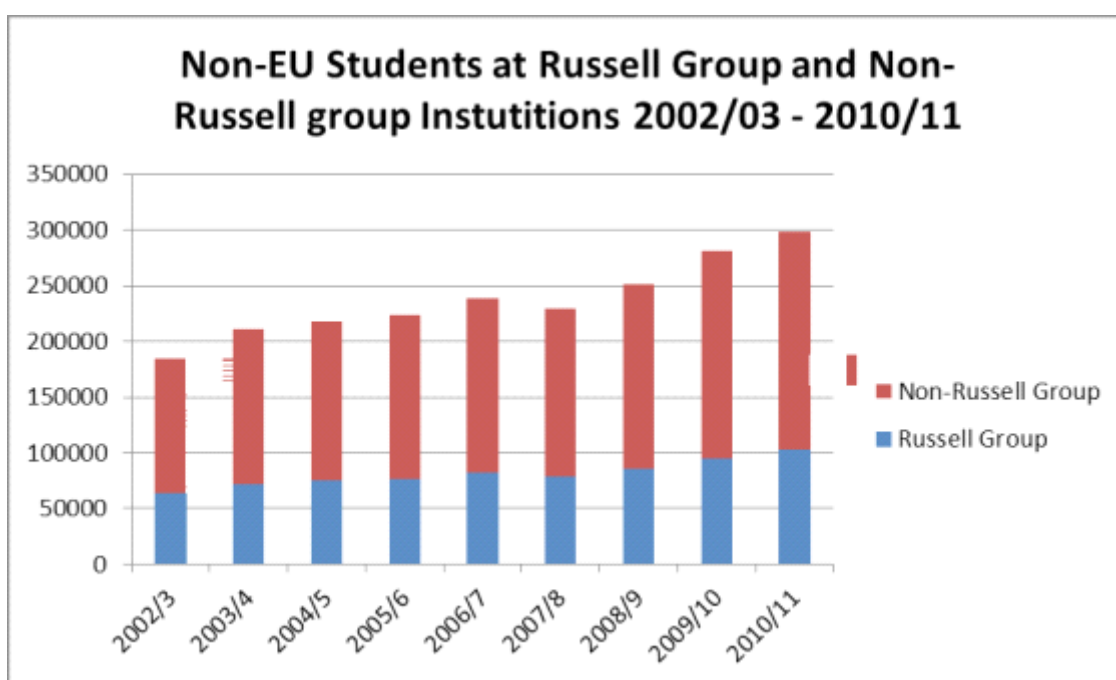
15. In 2010/11 just one third of the stock of non-EU students studying at university were studying at Russell Group universities⁵ – 103,000 of the total 298,000 enrolled at all UK universities (See Annex A) This proportion has remained roughly constant over the last nine academic years. In 2010/11 the stock of non-EU students at top ten universities was 40,755.

16. There are no available statistics on the breakdown of first year enrolments by university. We have therefore had to assume that undergraduates spend on average three years at university. For postgraduates, we have assumed the same average. This would result in an annual inflow to the Russell Group of 34,300 and 13,600 to the top ten. Thus only approximately 12.5% of new arrivals went to a Russell Group university while 5% went to a top ten university.

Growth of University Students

17. In 2002/3 there were 185,000 non-EU students studying at UK universities. By 2010/11 this had increased by 61% to 298,000. Taking undergraduate and post graduate together, the rise occurred in similar proportions at both Russell Group and non-Russell Group institutions. See figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Non-EU Students at Russell Group and Non-Russell group Institutions 2002/03 - 2010/11



18. The pattern was different, however, when postgraduates and undergraduates were looked at separately. In 2002/03 there were 41,000 postgraduates at Russell Group universities. In 2010/11 there were 59,000 – an increase of 46%. The number of non-EU undergraduates at the Russell Group has increased by 90% over this period, from 23,000 to 43,000.

⁵ The Russell Group Universities are the 24 leading UK universities comprising the University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, Durham University, University of Edinburgh, University of Exeter, University of Glasgow, Imperial College London, King’s College London, University of Leeds, University of Liverpool, London School of Economics, University of Manchester, Newcastle University, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford, Queen Mary University, Queen’s University Belfast, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, University College London, University of Warwick and the University of York.

19. At non Russell Group institutions the reverse has occurred. Non-EU undergraduate students have increased by 45% from 63,000 in 2002/03 to 91,000 in 2010/11 whereas non-EU postgraduates have increased by 78% from 59,000 in 2002/03 to 104,000 in 2010/11. Indeed some non Russell Group institutions have a very large number of non-EU postgraduate students who constitute the vast majority of their postgraduate population. For example, 72% of postgraduate students at Cardiff Metropolitan University are from outside the EU, and in numbers terms – 3,660 – amount to more than those at the London School of Economics (3,125) or Oxford University (3,410). See Annex B for a full list of universities with the highest proportion of non-EU undergraduates and postgraduates.

20. This is perhaps explained by the introduction of the post study work (PSW) route which allowed students to study any subject at any higher education institution for one year, and then switch to a post study work visa, allowing the individual to work in any job at any level for two years while seeking long term employment. This route may have attracted students to the less prestigious universities. In its first year, 2008, 20,000 students were granted PSW visas, rising to 34,000 the following year. In 2011, the latest full calendar year available, 44,000 PSW visas were issued.⁶ Since April 2012, the Post Study Work route has been closed to new applicants. However students on a PBS Tier 4 Visa are still able to switch into a Tier 2 Work Permit if they find employment with a sponsor paying a minimum of £20,000 p. a. There is no limit on the number of students who can switch into this category.

Conclusion

21. The student population has grown significantly in recent years – the IPS shows that it has trebled in the last ten years. This growth has come largely from New Commonwealth and “other foreign” countries. Growth has occurred at both Russell Group Universities and non-Russell Group, but there is a striking difference in their intake of non-EU students. The Russell Group have increased their postgraduate numbers by 46% and their undergraduates by 90% in the last eight years. The non-Russell Group has done the opposite; postgraduates have increased by 78% and undergraduates by 45%. Some less well known universities now have a very high proportion of non-EU graduates. The availability of post study work permits could well have been a major factor attracting those seeking entry to the UK labour market (and eventual settlement) rather than “the brightest and the best”. Indeed only one in eight non-EU student arrivals attended a Russell Group University and less than one in twenty attended one of the top ten universities.

18th September 2012

6 Home Office Statistics, Extensions of Stay, Table ex.02.w, Grants of an extension of stay by category and country of nationality: Work. URL: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/immigration-tabs-q2-2012/extensions-q2-2012-tabs?view=Binary>

Annex A

Non-EU undergraduates and postgraduates at Russell Group institutions

	2010/2011		
	UG	PG	Total
University of Birmingham	1410	3670	5080
University of Bristol	1315	1895	3210
University of Cambridge	1215	2660	3875
Cardiff University	1775	2540	4315
Durham University	875	1640	2515
University of Edinburgh	2195	2485	4680
University of Exeter	2200	1340	3540
University of Glasgow	805	1940	2745
Imperial College London	2285	1630	3915
King's College London	1690	2165	3855
University of Leeds	1545	2840	4385
University of Liverpool	1835	1450	3285
London School of Economics	1440	3125	4565
University of Manchester	4000	4160	8160
Newcastle University	1675	2410	4085
University of Nottingham	3050	3705	6755
University of Oxford	1090	3410	4500
Queen Mary University	1580	1330	2910
Queen's University Belfast	480	680	1160
University of Sheffield	1925	3770	5695
University of Southampton	1470	2435	3905
University College London	3435	2815	6250
University of Warwick	2980	3370	6350
University of York	905	2010	2915
Total Russell Group Students	43175	59475	102650

Annex B

Universities with highest proportion of undergraduate students from outside the EU, 2010/11

		Undergraduate				
	Institution	UK	EU	Non-EU	Total	% Non-EU
1	Buckingham University	400	100	475	975	49%
2	London School of Economics	2215	325	1440	3975	36%
3	Royal Academy of Music	195	50	90	335	27%
4	St Andrews University	4700	715	1955	7370	27%
5	Imperial College London	5645	935	2285	8865	26%
6	University College London	8780	1185	3435	13405	26%
7	University of the Arts, London	8680	1500	3440	13620	25%
8	SOAS	1810	425	710	2940	24%
9	Heriot-Watt University	4495	590	1190	6275	19%
10	Royal College of Music	225	75	70	375	19%
11	Glyndŵr University	4775	1445	1350	7570	18%
12	L'pool Institute for Performing Arts	540	25	120	685	18%
13	Aston University	6240	490	1405	8130	17%
14	The City University	7265	755	1605	9625	17%
15	Warwick University	13825	1165	2980	17970	17%
16	Exeter University	10685	520	2200	13405	16%
17	Glasgow School of Art	1100	140	230	1475	16%

Universities with the highest proportion of postgraduate students from outside the EU, 2010/11

	Institution	Postgraduate				
		UK	EU	Non-EU	Total	% Non-EU
1	Cardiff Metropolitan University	1345	95	3660	5100	72%
2	University College Birmingham	95	45	315	460	68%
3	University of Bedfordshire	1955	200	3225	5380	60%
4	London School of Economics	1010	1415	3125	5550	56%
5	London Business School	555	360	1155	2070	56%
6	The University of Greenwich	2360	245	3220	5825	55%
7	Glyndŵr University	635	45	710	1390	51%
8	Aston University	1340	285	1565	3190	49%
9	Coventry University	2230	425	2485	5145	48%
10	Sunderland University	1345	140	1375	2860	48%
11	Brunel University	2380	525	2675	5580	48%
12	St Andrews University	775	410	985	2170	45%
13	Hull University	1955	255	1625	3840	42%
14	Robert Gordon University	2095	225	1700	4020	42%
15	Sheffield University	4525	660	3770	8950	42%
16	University of Wales Trinity Saint David	805	80	640	1520	42%
17	Edinburgh College of Art	180	55	170	405	42%
18	Surrey University	2405	890	2285	5580	41%
19	University of Abertay Dundee	220	50	185	455	41%
20	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	630	130	515	1275	40%
21	Oxford University	3730	1385	3410	8525	40%
22	York University	2610	425	2010	5045	40%
23	University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	3245	445	2410	6095	40%

Top 10 Universities (Sunday Times Guide) and the proportion of non-EU students enrolled in each institution at undergraduate and postgraduate level, 2010/11

Institution	Undergraduate				Postgraduate				All students		
	UK	Non-EU	% Non-EU	Total	UK	Non-EU	% Non-EU	Total	Non-EU	Total	% Non-EU
Cambridge Uni	10200	1215	10%	12300	4110	2660	33%	8095	3875	20395	19%
Oxford Uni	14565	1090	7%	16390	3730	3410	40%	8525	4500	24915	18%
Durham Uni	10220	875	8%	11450	2780	1640	33%	4905	2515	16355	15%
LSE	2215	1440	36%	3975	1010	3125	56%	5550	4565	9525	48%
Bath Uni	7915	1290	13%	10075	2950	1720	33%	5245	3010	15320	20%
St Andrews Uni	4700	1955	27%	7370	775	985	45%	2170	2940	9540	31%
UCL	8780	3435	26%	13405	6550	2815	25%	11275	6250	24680	25%
Warwick Uni	13825	2980	17%	17970	5770	3370	33%	10195	6350	28165	23%
Exeter Uni	10685	2200	16%	13405	2875	1340	29%	4630	3540	18035	20%
Bristol Uni	12355	1315	9%	14070	3435	1895	32%	5920	3210	19990	16%