

POST-STUDY WORK PROPOSAL



UNIVERSITIES UK PROPOSAL FOR AN IMPROVED POST-STUDY WORK SYSTEM FOR INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES



Universities UK has worked with its members, employers and other key stakeholders to develop a proposal for an improved post-study work offer for international students. Our proposal ensures that the UK's post-study work offer:

- is comparable to international competitors
- supports the government's £30 billion education export target
- enables universities to contribute to the UK's Industrial Strategy
- supports regional economic development through the retention of talented graduates in all regions of the UK
- addresses gender inequalities in the current Tier 2 arrangements
- contributes to increased productivity by addressing current and future skills gaps



We are proposing that the UK introduces a new, temporary Global Graduate Talent Visa. Under this visa, all higher education institutions registered as Tier 4 sponsors would be able to sponsor their graduates to search for and gain work experience in the UK for up to two years on a more flexible basis than currently permitted by the Tier 2 visa, without restrictions on job level or salary, and without an employer sponsorship requirement.

This new visa would give international graduates a longer period to search for a Tier 2 eligible role and allow a wider range of employers to benefit from access to talented graduates from around the world including small and medium employers who do not have Tier 2 sponsorship licences. In line with competitor economies (USA, Canada, Australia), this visa category would permit graduates to search for work and report all changes in their employment or address to their university using an online system similar to that [*used in the USA for the F-1 OPT migration route*](#). Time spent on the new visa would not count towards settlement in the UK. Once a graduate has found a job which enables them to switch into Tier 2 as a ‘new entrant’, they would be expected to do so, and those who did not find a job offer sufficient to move into Tier 2 would be required to leave at the end of the period covered by the visa. Graduates of any programme of study at an eligible UK university lasting longer than 11 months would be eligible to remain on this visa for up to two years. Universities would have the flexibility to manage the licence for the new visa system separately from their Tier 4 licence, through a new but linked corporate entity to remove the risk of disruption if the Home Office has concerns about either licence.

Alongside the proposed new visa, Universities UK will work with member universities to support local SMEs to hire international graduates under the existing Tier 2 route by informing them about the Tier 2 sponsorship system and the process for applying to be a Tier 2 sponsor. This will help to increase the number of Tier 2 sponsoring employers across the UK. Together these measures will enable more regional SMEs to benefit from the skills of international graduates, including in shortage areas like engineering and business services.



CHANGES TO TIER 2 SALARY THRESHOLDS

We are also calling for the current £20,800 Tier 2 ‘new entrant’ salary threshold to be nuanced, in light of differences between this threshold average in UK/EU graduate salaries across different regions of the UK, and for female graduates. The Destination of Leavers of Higher Education Survey (DLHE), which surveys all UK graduates six months after graduating, found that first (bachelors) degree graduates only achieve the required salary level in six regions of the UK, while female graduates only achieve the required level in London, the South East, and Scotland. We are proposing £19,500 as a reasonable level. This is higher than the salary threshold required for a UK citizen to bring over a non-EU spouse (£18,600) and in line with graduate starting salaries across the UK as reported in the DLHE.



Universities UK is the collective voice of 137 universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our mission is to create the conditions for UK universities to be the best in the world; maximising their positive impact locally, nationally and globally. Universities UK acts on behalf of universities, represented by their heads of institution.



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