



International Students in the UK and Italy: latest evidence and policy perspectives

**Workshop organised by the European Migration Network UK and Italy
and Middlesex University
6th July 2012**

Event Report – July 2012

The workshop organised on July 6 2012 by the European Migration Network (EMN) National Contact Points (NCPs) from the UK and Italy in co-operation with Middlesex University¹ aimed to capture, compare and contrast the latest evidence and policy perspectives on international students in the UK and Italy so as to inform ongoing policy development in this important area of migration policy which has been attracting increased interest.

The event brought together a diverse group of attendees: academics and researchers from universities, private companies and public bodies; advisors and support staff dealing with international students from universities; policy-makers and practitioners, as well as a representative of the EMN Service provider on behalf of the European Commission. Delegates came from the UK, Italy and the Slovak Republic. The papers examined data and policies on student migration from two very different countries in terms of their history of student migration, current patterns of migration and student attitudes towards such migration. This was set in the context of the internationalisation of higher education to which institutions have sought to respond. The strategies and responses of students to immigration policies were also addressed.

This report summarises the key points of the presentations and workshops from the conference.

International students in the European Union - Background

In 2010, 3.7 million international students were registered in the OECD area, of whom 1.2 million were in the EU, where the proportion of international students² on average is 8.6% of the total number of post-secondary students. In the same year, according to Eurostat data, 510,000 permits were issued to non-EU nationals for study purposes by the 27 Member States, which amounts to one-fifth of total permits issued. This proportion varies significantly between Member States, from 61.4% in Ireland to 3.9% in Greece. In terms of total numbers, more than half of residence permits for study were issued by the UK (271,000); France (66,000); Germany (30,000) and Italy (26,000).

¹ The workshop was organised by Chris Attwood and Tim Angus from Home Office Science, and Professor Eleonore Kofman and Alessio D'Angelo from Middlesex University, with the support of Magdolna Lorinc.

²Including non-national students from both EU and non-EU countries.

International Students in the UK³

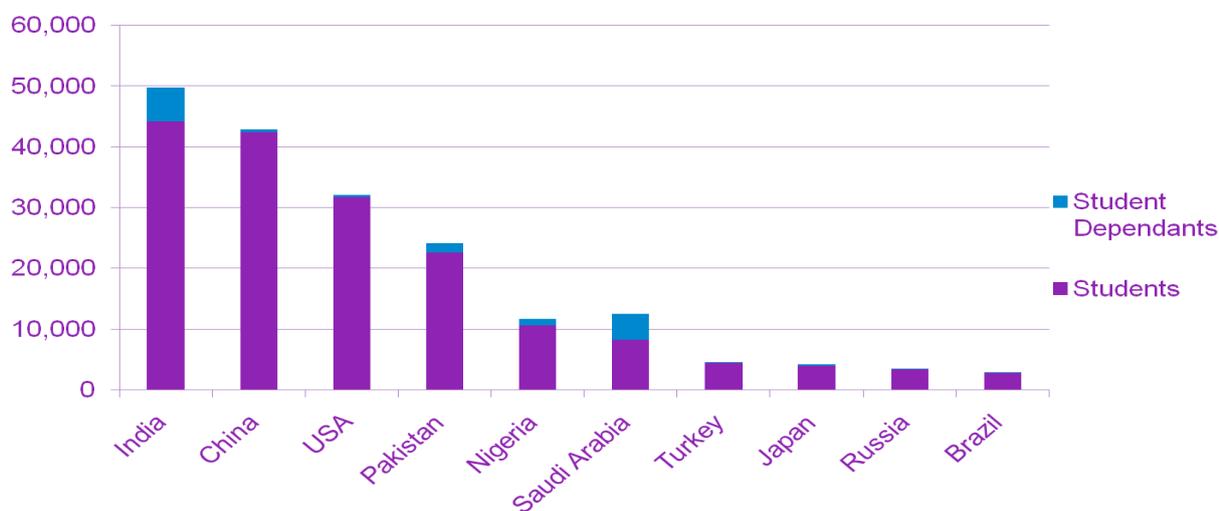
Jon Simmons, Head of Migration and Border Analysis, Home Office Science

This presentation set the context for subsequent sessions by outlining the latest data on student migration into the UK. It described both EU and non-EU student migrants, the types of educational institutions they attend and the levels at which they study, as well as the evidence on what they do once they finish their courses.

The number of student migrants in the UK has been rising continuously from 2001, with a sharp increase starting in 2007 and peaking in September 2010 with around 250,000 visas issued for study⁴. While both EU and non-EU student migration has been rising, this increase is much more pronounced among non-EU students. In 2005, there were approximately 21,000 students from the EU studying in the UK, their numbers reaching around 45,000 in 2010. The figures for non-EU students are much higher: 85,000 in 2005 rising to 180,000 in 2010.

The countries outside the EU that supply most of the students to the UK (see Figure 1 below) are India (approximately 45,000 students in 2010), China (42,000), the USA (32,000), Pakistan (43,000), Nigeria (about 10,000). The number of dependants varies according to nationalities. There were for example 5,000 dependants from India and 1,000 from Pakistan in 2010.

Figure 1: Non-EU student (and student dependant) arrivals in 2010



Source: Home Office, Immigration Statistics, January – March 2012)

According to Home Office statistics (UKBA, 2010), about half of the non-EU students in the UK study at universities; one third of them at privately funded higher and further education institutions; and the rest are enrolled in other publicly funded higher and further education institutions (6%), English language schools (8%) and independent schools (3%). While the majority of those who are studying at universities are postgraduate (57%) and to a lesser

³ For presentation slides, visit: <http://sprc.info/events/past-events/international-students-in-the-uk-and-italy-latest-evidence-and-policy-perspectives/>

⁴ Please note that the number of visas is not the same as the number of residence permits presented in the previous section. This is probably due to a combination of factors, such as non take-up of visas and the time lag between the issuing of the visa, entry into the country and issuing of the residence permit.

extent undergraduates (30%), 72% of those at privately funded HE/FE institutions are studying below degree level.

Regarding national differences, China has the highest number of students in publicly funded higher education institutions (67,325 students in 2010-11), as well as being the fastest growing group (HESA, 2012). While the overwhelming majority (85%) of Indian students are postgraduates, Chinese students are more evenly split between degree levels. However around three-quarters of Hong Kong and Malaysian students are undergraduates.

The [Migrant Journey analysis](#) undertaken by the Home Office (Achato et al, 2011) revealed that about one in five non-EEA students remain in the immigration system five years after being granted a student visa. Out of the 185,600 foreign students who obtained student visas in 2004, 79% left the immigration system by 2009, 15% transferred to other routes (mainly work), 3% obtained settlement, whilst 6% were still studying. Of the 6% who were still students after 5 years, a third were studying at undergraduate level or below, suggesting low levels of progression through the education system.

However, the proportions varied widely among different nationalities: while the majority of students from Russia, USA and China left the immigration system (95%, 89% and 78%, respectively); nearly half of the Nigerian, Pakistani and Indian students were settled in the country or had valid leave to remain (49%, 48% and 44% respectively).

The [International Graduate Outcomes](#) survey⁵ revealed that nearly half of the graduates from 2010 (45%) reported seeking long-term employment in the UK, with 29% of them intending to apply for permanent residence in the UK. By nationality, Pakistani, Indian and Nigerian graduates are the most likely to consider seeking long-term employment in the UK, and Pakistan and Nigeria having the highest percentage of graduates who reported considering applying for permanent residency too. In contrast, students from Canada are the least likely to plan staying permanently; and only a third of Chinese and Canadian graduates reported intending to seek long-term UK employment.

Migration Policy for Students

Christian Delaney, Student Policy team, Strategy, Immigration and International Group, Home Office

This presentation covered the reforms to the student visa system that have been implemented following the general election and formation of the Coalition Government in May 2010.

Reducing net migration was a key pledge in the Conservative Party manifesto and has been carried through to the Coalition's programme for Government. Accordingly, all immigration routes have undergone significant reforms. Policymakers were concerned that some migrants are using the student route to work and live in the UK, rather than genuinely study. Therefore, the declared aim of these reforms is to reduce student non-compliance, but retain the brightest and best students, academics and researchers, who will help drive growth in the economy.

In order to achieve this, work rights to some extent were maintained for universities and a graduate entrepreneur route was introduced whilst placing greater restrictions on private

⁵ Source: Tracking International Graduate Outcomes 2011, i-graduate

colleges, which (according to statistical evidence) are more prone to student non-compliance.

The student visa system has been significantly reformed in three areas:

- tighter sponsorship standards: ensuring all institutions meet the highest standards of education quality and immigration compliance;
- tougher rules for students: better English language skills, restricting permission to work outside of the public sector colleges and universities, and restricting dependants, with only post-graduates at an HEI studying a course of 12 months or longer and government sponsored students studying a course of six months or longer able to bring family members; and
- encouraging students to leave at the end of the course: maximum time limits for study and for total time in the UK, requirement for academic progression, closing the post-study work but keeping a route to skilled employment through the Points Based System Tier 2 route and the Graduate Entrepreneur route.

In addition, maintenance requirements were raised to reflect a general increase in the cost of living since the last threshold was established in 2008.

As mentioned, the Post Study Work route was closed from April 2012. However, graduates may still stay on after studies by switching into the Tier 2 skilled work route if they receive a suitable job offer. Those switching from Tier 4 into Tier 2 will not be subject to the Resident Labour Market Test or the Tier 2 limit on numbers. They must, however, earn over £20,000 or the appropriate rate for the job according to the Tier 2 Codes of Practice. In addition, the Home Office has been working to establish sector specific Government Authorised Exchange schemes in Tier 5 to facilitate pre-registration training.

Closing the Post Study Work route has met with opposition from the sector but the government is satisfied that it is an appropriate measure. Home Office research found that one third of those who were utilising this route were working in low skilled jobs or did not have a job. The expectation is for overseas students to apply to the UK in order to study, and not to use the system as an easy route into employment. However, a route into high-skilled employment was still maintained through switching into Tier 2, as well as the Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur route.

Another change was the introduction of a Graduate Entrepreneurs route for students who have an innovative business idea and wish to develop their business in the UK. Applicants need to be sponsored by a Tier 4 Highly Trusted Sponsor. There are 1,000 places in the first year divided equally between participating HEIs. Leave will be granted for twelve months initially which may be extended up to a maximum of twenty four months. The funds required to switch into Tier 1 Entrepreneur route for this group were lowered from £200,000 to £50,000.

Universities were prioritised during these policy changes: university students at degree level or higher retained the right to work 20 hours per week during term time and of any duration during vacations; postgraduates studying courses of 12 months or longer at HEIs are still allowed to bring dependants; no interim or permanent limits were established on CAS; there is flexibility on time limits for those studying a 4 year degree course and then progressing to a masters and for those studying towards a PhD; no additional restrictions were introduced on work placements; there is flexibility on language testing, (including B1 for pre-sessionals); the application process for low risk applicants was streamlined; a route to remain in the UK through skilled employment or the new Graduate Entrepreneur scheme was left in.

The government estimates that these reforms will reduce the number of visas issued by around 70,000 from 2013, with most of the reductions coming from the privately funded

sector. Early findings suggest that the number of visas has started to decrease, and yet university application numbers for non-EEA students seem to be holding up.

International Students in Italy: Data and Interpretation Guidelines

Antonio Ricci, Project Manager of the Italian National Contact Point of the European Migration Network; editor of Statistical Dossier on Immigration; researcher on migration and asylum at IDOS Study and Research Centre

Marta Giuliani, member of the Italian National Contact Point of the European Migration Network, editor of the annual Statistical Dossier on Immigration; researcher on migration and asylum at IDOS Study and Research Centre

This session presented data about international students in Italy. In 2010, the percentage of international students on the total of those enrolled in Italy was 3.8% vs. the EU average of 8.6%⁶. In terms of total numbers, Italy is the fourth Member State with 26,000 migrant students, after the UK (271,000), France (66,000) and Germany (30,000).

	Non-EU	EU	Italian
2004/2005	22.951	9.521	1.285.931
2005/2006	27.660	10.824	1.447.825
2006/2007	32.434	11.836	1.544.465
2007/2008	37.498	12.731	1.609.846
2008/2009	42.145	13.259	1.637.580
2009/2010	46.386	13.742	1.660.327
2010/2011	49.494	14.079	1.648.949
2011/2012*	50.818	13.592	1.695.323

*Provisional data (3.8% incidence of which 3.0% non-EU)

(Source: National Students Registry - MIUR)

Between 2003 and 2012, partly as a result of the introduction of the triennial degree or “Laurea Breve” (academic year 2001-2002), the presence of international students in Italy increased by 160% (from 25,246 to 64,704). The majority of foreign students come from European and Asian countries, such as Albania (11,668), China (5,102), Romania (4,642), Greece (3,068), Cameroon (2,410) and Morocco (1,656); for all these communities, with the exception of China, Italy represents the preferred destination for studies within the EU. According to the Ministry of Education (MIUR) provisional data on university student enrollments in Italy during the AY 2011-2012, 12,860 foreign students newly enrolled in Italian universities - a figure that has been constant in the last five years. These are the proportions: 1 foreign citizen out of 22 newly enrolled university students, 1 out of 26 total enrolled students, and 1 out of 37 graduates (more than 7000 in total).

By analyzing the figures regarding university students in Italy, we may identify a few key factors:

- Student mobility does not match labour mobility:
 - 1 out of 3 foreign students is actually represented by a second generation migrant, whose parents are in Italy for work or family reunification reasons;

⁶ Data source: Eurostat

- notwithstanding the presence of second generations, immigrant communities are poorly represented (except for Albanians);
- one-third of foreign students are based in Central Italy, due to specific national pull factors.

- Studying in Italy does not seem to be used as a way to circumvent immigration laws by entering the country as students to remain as workers, mostly because being a student first does not make it easier to gain a work permit. In 2011, there were 825 conversions from study to work permits, whereas in 2008, 2009 and 2010 they amounted to 27, 44 and 46 respectively.
- Many students come from asylum applicant areas of origin, such as Iran and the Middle East.
- Concerning US students, regular stayers (2,842 in 2011) are just over one-third of new residence permit holders (6,273 new permits): their stay in the 200 American “colleges” does not exceed a semester.
- Students enrolled at Roman pontifical universities amount to about 10,000; they are mainly priests and nuns in possession of residence permits for religious reasons.
- In those countries where significant Italian communities are settled, emigrants’ descendants are increasingly interested in studying in Italy.
- In Italy, internationalisation strategies are increasing, but the impact is limited due to various factors:
 - difficulties linked to flow planning and issuance of residence permits for study reasons, uncertain residence permit renewal;
 - complex procedure for the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad;
 - low number of grants and available student accommodation facilities;
 - admission difficulties concerning postgraduate studies;
 - limited offer of courses delivered in English language.

Nevertheless, the Consolidated Act on Immigration affirms equal right to grants, student accommodation facilities, eventual reduction of tuition fees and other supporting measures.

The presence of international students and skilled migrants leads to an emphasis on the need to promote a steady movement, avoiding losses and promoting benefits for Italy as well as for their countries of origin.

Current Policy on Student Migration to Italy

Stefania Giannini, Full Professor of General Linguistics and President of the University for Foreigners of Perugia, Italy; President of the Italian Association of Historical Linguistics and member of the National Commission for the Promotion of the Italian Culture Abroad for the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

This presentation outlined the Italian context amongst OECD countries regarding international student mobility and migration. As demonstrated by statistical data, the number

of migrant students has been increasing in Europe and Italy as well, but undoubtedly there is still potential for growth.

Language is an essential factor for international students choosing their destination country. It is not an accident that English language countries such as the USA, UK, Australia and Canada are among the top destinations. In this regard, the Italian language can be seen either as an obstacle or an attraction with potential to build on. Hence, the country could improve its attraction to international students in two ways: by increasing English language courses, thus becoming a second level Anglophone country; and by strengthening the presence and position of the Italian language, culture and lifestyle in the international arena. This latter approach can build on the long tradition and embeddedness of Italian language in arts and humanities.

The current scenario of global competition calls for an effective action plan that includes:

- the assessment of students' motivation to move abroad and improve the efficiency of policies based on the findings;
- the strengthening of bilateral initiatives and a tighter collaboration between universities and governments.

Recent years have seen a sizeable increase in initiatives exploring the above ideas. For example, Milan Polytechnic announced that from 2014 all post-graduate courses will be taught in English. On the other hand, the Marco Polo Programme enables Chinese students without prior knowledge of Italian language to study in Italy and acquire Italian language skills in the country. The University of Perugia promotes a number of initiatives, such as a project for teaching Italian language and culture at John Paul II Foundation in Bethlehem and the HELDA programme (Higher Education in Legal Disciplines for Afghanistan), among others.

The strategy described above could represent a feasible approach to the current key issues: political and economic harmonisation, international migrations, security and growing intercultural processes.

The Value of Students in the UK

Rachel Brooks, Professor of Sociology at the University of Surrey and co-editor of *Sociological Research Online*

The workshop led by Rachel Brooks considered how international students are valued by host institutions and nations, and by the domestic students they come into contact with. It was argued that while the language of diversity is often drawn upon by universities when celebrating their international student body, other imperatives frequently drive the internationalisation agenda. These include: financial motives; the incentives to 'internationalise' provided by international league tables; and a desire to inculcate inter-cultural skills on the part of immobile domestic students. These various imperatives are not always well-aligned, and the presentation and following discussion explored some of the consequences of this.

The most quoted values attached to international students is that they bring diversity to the classroom and the campus and develop the inter-cultural skills of immobile students. Some universities build ethical projects around them, emphasising the cultural capital provided.

In terms of revenue, it is worth mentioning that the UK gains around £2.4 billion annually from tuition fees of international students, while the fees paid by overseas student constitute a significant proportion of revenue for universities in many countries of the world.

International rankings are becoming increasingly important. Since universities are assessed on the proportion of their international staff and students, universities are enticed to improve their figures. In addition to the pressure from international league tables, various policy measures by international organizations, the EU bodies and the UK demand universities to internationalise. Receiving migrant students offers an 'easy' form of internationalisation as it does not require any structural changes to the degree programmes while providing high external visibility.

However, some tensions have surfaced regarding the experience of having international students attending UK universities. Many argue that this route offers limited opportunities for inter-cultural learning, because western bodies of knowledge still dominate the teaching. Also, there is evidence of segregation between students of different nationalities outside the classroom. Therefore, international students might experience racism and discrimination and their presence could even exacerbate inequalities between students and nations.

International Students in the UK: individual decision-making and negotiation of the visa application process

Adam Warren, Department of Geography, Loughborough University

This workshop investigated how non-EEA international postgraduate students - Masters and Doctoral - deal with, and are affected by, UK labour immigration policies.

Although academic research has considered the importance of the state and public policy in defining skilled/ highly skilled mobility, surprisingly little work has been conducted on the relationships between labour immigration policy and migrant decisions. With reference to the work of leading migration scholars, it was argued that international students form an important part of the broadly defined category of 'highly skilled' migrants. As such, they make a significant contribution to UK national and local economies. At the same time, caution needs to be exercised in relation to the decision-making processes they go through when electing to study in the UK, and their long-term intentions.

The research carried out at Loughborough University aimed to investigate how UK labour immigration policy impacts on the highly skilled non-EEA migrants, using experiences of academic staff and PG students as a case study. Between April 2010 and July 2011 semi-structured interviews were completed with Masters and PhD students, academic staff who came through Tier 1 and Tier 2, student advisors, policymakers and migrant's rights groups.

It was found that the vast majority of students did not consider immigration policy when choosing the UK; academic, personal and economic factors came first. However, the interviewees expressed criticism of the UK immigration policy reforms, which they perceived as being characterised by repeated changes, such as the cap on numbers (not including students), closure of the Post Study Work visa and the classification of students as migrants.

Students perceive themselves to be mobile yet their mobility is constrained by immigration policy in dynamic and complex ways.

Misuse of the student route in the UK - Student compliance and non-compliance

Chris Attwood, *Home Office Science: Migration and Border Analysis*

This interactive workshop highlighted the evidence on compliance and non-compliance for student visas. It debated evidence on non-compliance by education sponsors and students and sought evidence of compliance and non-compliance from workshop participants to inform policy development. It also examined how compliance data has fed into policy development so far and considered how evolving evidence can contribute to future development of student policy.

The presenter suggested that it is important to act on the misuse of the student visa system in order to protect the credibility of the education sector and the legitimacy of student qualifications, as well as to eliminate non-compliance. The system can be open to non-compliance by sponsors, the so called 'bogus' colleges, as well as by the students themselves, by for example, giving false information or falsifying application documents, not attending the course they enrolled on, working in breach of their visa and by overstaying the visa.

Document fraud is an important issue for student visas: Tier 4 applications were responsible for 41% of all forgery detections in applications for visas made in 2010, compared to 27% for visit visas and 3% for Tier 1 applications. The vast majority of forgeries related to supporting documents, mainly bank statements submitted as evidence of funds (UKBA, 2011b).

Non-attendance is an issue at privately funded colleges, notably for Indian and Pakistani students, with 21% and 25% non-attendance rates, respectively (UKBA, 2011a). Compliance generally appears to be more of an issue in privately funded HEI's but is less of an issue in universities. 8% of the students attending publicly funded HE/FE institutions did not have a valid reason to remain and had no record of leaving the country, while 26% of those who were enrolled in privately funded HE/FE institutions were in this potentially 'non-compliant' category (UKBA, 2010).

UK Border Agency enforcement arrests of student visa holders increased significantly between September 2009 and November 2010, from 3 arrests per month to 27 per month (UKBA, 2011b). In the same year, 13.5% of asylum claims matched to a visa were made by student visa holders: 14 per month in the last quarter of 2009, rising to 64 by the end of 2010 (UKBA, 2011b).

Finally, the presentation highlighted a recent Home Office pilot study⁷ into the credibility of international students' intentions to study. Credibility in this case refers to intentions to study the proposed course, intentions to leave the UK at the end of the course and the ability to maintain themselves and their dependants. The study investigated the potential role of using interviewing powers for entry clearance officers (ECOs) to the Tier 4 route. The research indicated that ECOs could have potentially refused around one-third of those granted visas, with the largest potential grounds for refusal on credibility being:

- applicants' intentions to study – indicators included poor academic knowledge and lack of knowledge about the course; and
- applicants' intentions to leave the UK at end of course.

⁷ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/occ104/occ104>

Reports on UK international students

Home Office Research and statistics publications available at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/>

Achato, L., Eaton, M. And Jones, C. (2011) The Migrant Journey Second Report, Research Report 57, available at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/horr57/>

BIS, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (2012) Tracking International Graduate Outcomes 2011, BIS Research Paper Number 62, available at:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/higher-education/docs/t/12-540-tracking-international-graduate-outcomes-2011.pdf>

HESA (2012) Press release 172 – Non-UK domicile students, available at:

http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2371&Itemid=161

UKBA (2010) Overseas students in the immigration system: Types of institutions and levels of study, Occasional Paper 90, available at:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/reports/pbs-tier-4/>

UKBA (2011a) Points-Based System Tier 4. Attendance at Privately Funded Colleges,

available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/occ93/>

UKBA (2011b) Points-Based System Tier 4. Attendance at Privately Funded Colleges Annex: Background Information, available at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/occ93/>

Resources on international students in Italy:

*Statistical data on international students: <http://statistica.miur.it/>

*Legislation and procedures: www.study-in-italy.it

*Skilled migrations: www.irpps.cnr.it

Resources on international students' statistical data:

Eurostat: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/themes>

OECD: www.oecd.org

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