

More Kuwaitis studying in the UK than ever before: op-ed by Michael Davenport

More Kuwaitis are studying in the UK than ever before. I am delighted that during the academic year just ending we welcomed over 6,000 Kuwaitis at British universities and colleges in a wide range of different disciplines. I would like to congratulate Kuwaiti graduates from UK universities for this academic year. The UK offers prestigious and high quality education, which is recognised all over the world and enables graduates to get ahead in their careers. There are long standing connections between Kuwait and the UK, and for many Kuwaiti families the UK is very much their second home. Kuwaitis are an integral part of local communities all over Britain, including in cities where they have studied, often to PhD level, and developed deep connections, both professional and personal.

The UK is a highly tolerant, multicultural society, with a rich diversity of cultures, languages, and faiths. International students contribute significantly to this enriching environment, which makes the UK such a stimulating place to study. UK higher education providers consistently do their utmost to ensure international students feel welcome on university campuses; they are clear that everyone with the talent and potential to succeed in higher education should have the opportunity to do so, regardless of nationality or ethnicity.

The UK is a global powerhouse of science and research. With so many universities at the cutting edge of global discoveries and emerging technology, our students graduate with insights and experience that are in high demand around the world. Oxford University and Imperial college research into COVID-19 vaccines is a topical example of UK universities' remarkable capabilities in science and research. Most UK universities are intimately connected with business and industry in the UK and around the world and pursue research projects in a wide range of subjects.

UK degrees are of a high standard and enjoy international renown whether they are delivered in person or online. Their quality is guaranteed by UK quality assurance agencies. There are some fantastic and innovative examples of high-quality online learning being delivered by institutions across the UK, and the sector is already working hard to prepare learning materials for the summer and autumn terms.

International students studying at British universities will from Summer 2021 be able to benefit from two years' work experience in the UK upon graduation via the new graduate immigration route. This means that graduates from the summer of 2021 can stay and work, or look for work, in the UK at any skill level for a period of two years.

Admissions processes and modes of teaching might look slightly different this

year, taking account of the challenges of COVID-19. However, the UK's world-class universities are continuing to recruit international students, who are encouraged to apply even if they are unable to travel to the UK to meet the usual timelines.

We are delighted to announce that the UK Visa Application Centre in Kuwait will re-open in Kuwait on Sunday 28 June. So, now is the time for students to familiarise themselves with UK visa requirements and talk to their chosen university about English language evidence they will need to supply for a visa application. The UK has a high visa acceptance rate for students: 98% of Tier 4 (General) student visa applications were granted to international students in the last year.

The UK is a safe place to study, and UK universities are prioritising students' safety and wellbeing. The national and global response to the spread of COVID-19 continues to develop quickly and our collective knowledge of the virus is growing. The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) regularly publishes papers outlining the scientific advice provided to the government. Her Majesty's Government and the governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are adhering closely to this guidance, and our advice will change to match the level of the threat. In doing so, the UK's top priority remains the health and safety of all UK and overseas nationals in the UK, including international higher education students studying at our universities and colleges.