

# PM sets out vision to cement UK as a science superpower

Boris Johnson has instructed the Home Office and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to work with the scientific community to develop a new fast-track visa route for the brightest and best, with a view to launching it later this year.

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said:

Britain has a proud history of innovation, with home-grown inventions spanning from the humble bicycle to the lightbulb.

We were home to the world's first national DNA database, we discovered graphene, and our cutting-edge scientists should be proud to follow in the footsteps of titans like Ada Lovelace and Nobel Laureates Francis Crick and Peter Higgs.

But to ensure we continue to lead the way in the advancement of knowledge, we have to not only support the talent that we already have here, but also ensure our immigration system attracts the very best minds from around the world.

The fast-track immigration route will be designed to attract elite researchers and specialists in science, engineering and technology, from maths Olympiads at the very start of their careers to the winners of internationally recognised prizes and fellowships.

To ensure the UK is the most attractive country to live in and develop new ideas, options which could be discussed with leading institutions and universities include:

- abolishing the cap on numbers under the Tier 1 Exceptional Talent Visas
- expanding the pool of UK research institutes and universities able to endorse candidates
- creating criteria that confer automatic endorsement, subject to immigration checks
- ensuring dependents have full access to the labour market
- removing the need to hold an offer of employment before arriving
- accelerated path to settlement

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

We want Britain to be the most prosperous economy in Europe with an immigration system that attracts the brightest and best global talent.

Our new fast-track visa route will be a key part of this – encouraging the world’s top scientists and researchers to our shores.

These gifted minds will bolster the UK’s standing as a hub for science and innovation as we look to introduce a points-based immigration system centred on what people will contribute to our great country.

David Williams, Executive Chairman of leading quantum technology company Arqit, said:

As a British business pioneering the science of Quantum Cyber Security, it is crucial that Britain welcomes scientific talent from around the World so we strongly support the Prime Minister’s initiative.

These changes will complement plans for an Australian-style points-based immigration system, as set out by the Prime Minister when he came into office.

In recognition of the huge value of science to the UK, particularly post-Brexit, in addition to immigration changes to support a reinvigorated research economy, the Government will also provide additional funding for scientists and researchers who have sought EU funding before we leave. This includes schemes delivered by the European Research Council to ensure no-one is disadvantaged.

In the event we leave without a deal, the Government will ensure any Horizon 2020 applications stuck in the approval process when the UK leaves, will instead be automatically reviewed by UKRI – with successful applications provided with funding.

The Prime Minister said:

I want the UK to continue to be a global science superpower, and when we leave the EU we will support science and research and ensure that, far from losing out, the scientific community has a huge opportunity to develop and export our innovation around the world.

Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

The UK has a well-earned reputation for world-class research and innovation. From the invention of the World Wide Web to graphene, our scientists have helped to transform the world for the better.

We are at the forefront of international collaborations tackling

some of humanity's greatest challenges, from climate change to critical health and societal issues. And as we prepare to leave the EU on 31 October we will make sure we continue to attract the best talent, reflecting our commitment to making the UK a science powerhouse while creating jobs and growth across the whole country.