

News story: Government to commission assessment of international students

The government will today commission its independent advisers on migration to complete a detailed assessment of the social and economic impact of international students in the UK.

The commission is part of a series of publications coming out today which will feed into a robust and comprehensive evidence base on the impact of international students.

Alongside the commission, the UK's first publication of exit checks data will provide a comprehensive account of the compliance of international students. In addition, the Office of National Statistics is releasing a report as part of its ongoing programme of work looking at the impact of students on net migration.

Taking action

The government has been clear that it is committed to keeping the doors open to genuine students, while at the same time taking action to crack down on immigration abuse from poor quality institutions that were damaging the UK's reputation as a provider of world-leading education. Since 2010, this has included taking away the ability of more than 900 – often bogus or low quality – colleges to bring in international students.

The [Migration Advisory Committee \(MAC\)](#) will be asked to examine the impact both EU and non-EU students have on the labour market and economy whilst in the UK.

Issues the MAC will be asked to consider will include:

- the impact of tuition fees and other spending by international students on the national, regional, and local economy and on the education sector
- the role students play in contributing to local economic growth
- the impact their recruitment has on the provision and quality of education provided to domestic students

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

There is no limit to the number of genuine international students who can come to the UK to study and the fact that we remain the second most popular global destination for those seeking higher education is something to be proud of.

We understand how important students from around the world are to our higher education sector, which is a key export for our country, and that's why we want to have a robust and independent evidence

base of their value and the impact they have.

Popular destination

The UK is the second most popular destination for international students, with 4 UK universities in the world's top 10, 16 in the top 100 and international student satisfaction in the UK at 91 per cent for undergraduates.

Last year the UK saw an increase of 6 per cent in visa applications for Russell Group universities while visa applications sponsored by universities are 17 per cent higher than they were in 2010.

This has driven in part by an effective and user-friendly visa system which sees 99 per cent of entry clearance applications decided within the target of 15 days and the grant rate for Tier 4 (General) visa entry clearance applications having increased every year since 2010, with 96 per cent of applications granted in 2016.

Immigration Minister Brandon Lewis said:

We have always been clear that our commitment to reducing net migration to sustainable levels does not detract from our determination to attract international students from around the world.

Since 2010 we have clamped down on abuse, while increasing the number of genuine students that come to the UK from around the world.

The MAC, which comprises of a group of internationally recognised experts in their field, is responsible for providing transparent, independent and evidence-based advice to the government on migration issues. They have been asked to report back by September 2018.

[News story: 'Momentum must be maintained' as pound coin changeover enters final weeks](#)

On a visit today (24 August) to one of the UK's largest coin storage facilities, Vaultex UK Ltd, in Dagenham, the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Andrew Jones MP, thanked businesses for their efforts so far in the

transition, but urged them to maintain momentum.

Citing findings from the cash centres, the minister warned that businesses must be vigilant when returning coins to centres such as the Dagenham storage facility for sorting. Currently half of the £1 coins being returned are the new 12-sided £1 coin – not the soon-to-be discontinued old one. This confusion slows the process down by removing new pound coins from entering circulation and keeping the old round pounds in our tills and purses.

Speaking at the coin centre, Mr Jones said:

There has been a fantastic effort from both the public and businesses in returning more than 1 billion old round pounds, and I thank everybody involved in this process so far. But there is still more to do before the October 15 deadline.

Businesses must remain vigilant when returning coins and ensure old and new coins are organised in separate packaging to make the sorting process quicker and easier.

We also want cashiers and shopkeepers working at till points, who are truly on the front line of the changeover, to play their part to ensure only new pound coins are given to shoppers in their change.

The government has been working hard with businesses over the last three years to help make the changeover as smooth as possible. Key to this has been reminding business to check all types of equipment that may still be holding old coins alongside regular tills and cash drawers.

Press release: HMRC reminds parents to update their children's educational details

As exams results are revealed across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, HMRC are urging parents to inform them if any of their children are aged 16+ and continuing in full-time education or are undertaking an apprenticeship otherwise their payments will stop. Alternatively, if a young person leaves education or training – for example to start full-time work or because their course has ended – claimants must report this change straight away to prevent the build-up of overpayments which they will have to pay back.

Parents can use their Personal Tax Account (PTA) to update both their Child

Benefit and Child Tax Credit information online in a matter of minutes; it's quick and easy, and more than 12 million customers have registered for the PTA so far.

Angela MacDonald, Director General of Customer Services, said:

Congratulations to all students getting their results today. Once parents or guardians know what their child has decided to do it's really important they let us know as soon as possible, so they continue to get the right benefits and credits.

This can be done quickly and simply using the Personal Tax Account, which is available 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week. That means that parents can let us know their child's education status, at a time that suits them ahead of the 31 August deadline.

1. Customers can access their Personal Tax Account on any device – PC, tablet or smartphone. It is secure and takes just a few minutes to get started. Those doing it for the first time will need:
 - their National Insurance number
 - either a recent payslip or P60 (a passport can be used if you don't have these)
 - a phone to receive a security access code.
2. There are three simple steps for customers to get started:
 - Go to gov.uk/personal-tax-account and click 'start now'.
 - Set up a Government Gateway account (if not already held) by answering a few simple questions – this is where a payslip or P60 is needed. A security access code will then be sent to the customer's phone.
 - Enter the access code on their phone when prompted, which will take them straight to their account.
3. People can continue to claim for teenagers aged between the ages of 16 and 19 years old if they are in qualifying full-time education or training. Online information about what counts as education and training can be found on GOV.UK.
4. Young people must be accepted onto qualifying education or training before their 19th birthday to be eligible. Child Tax Credit claimants need to confirm their continued eligibility annually for 16, 18 and 19 year olds.
5. Those unable to access the internet can also inform HMRC of changes on the phone by calling 0300 200 3100 or sending a letter to: Child Tax Credits: Tax Credits Office, Preston, PR1 4AT and/or Child Benefit:

Child Benefit Office, PO Box 1, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE88 1AA.

6. Claimants could be given a penalty for failing to report a change, or even prosecuted for benefit fraud if they are found to have deliberately claimed money they were not entitled to.
7. If customers need help defining what counts as education, the government's website contains information to help them. Some of the educational options available to 16 year olds include GCSEs, A/AS levels, national diplomas and NVQs up to level 3, as well as apprenticeships or traineeships. The qualifying education level is non-advanced, so studying for a degree at university or a BTEC Higher National Certificate does not count.
8. HMRC's Flickr channel can be found [here](#)
9. Follow HMRC's press office on Twitter [@HMRCpressoffice](#)

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Press release: Metropolitan Police's use of Facial Recognition Technology at the Notting Hill Carnival, 2017

Paul Wiles, Biometrics Commissioner writes about the use of Facial Recognition Technology at the Notting Hill Carnival.

This kind of biometric technology (Facial Recognition Technology) has the potential to be a really useful crime fighting tool but we are not there yet. It needs to be properly tested and evaluated if it is going to be effective and it will need to be handled carefully by the police and the government if it is going to be trusted by the public.

Key messages

1. There is a public benefit in the use of such technology if it can be shown to help prevent the problems that there have been at previous carnivals by assisting the police to catch offenders or prevent crime.
2. Tests of facial matching for spotting individuals in large crowds have so far had very poor success – hence the Metropolitan Police’s trial. It is good that they have made their trial public but they must carry out a proper evaluation and publish the results.
3. The police already hold over 20 million facial images but there is as yet no single, shared policing system for storing and searching police held images nor an evaluation of its accuracy and usefulness.
4. Police forces need to work together to agree on a single facial recognition system that has been proved to work in the field and government needs to create a legislative framework for its use, with independent oversight to provide public assurance, as it has done for DNA and fingerprints.
5. The previous Biometrics Commissioner made similar points as have others, such as the Science and Technology Select Committee, and we have yet to see what the government proposes as their Biometrics Strategy has been delayed for some time.

Broader explanation

1. Police already hold over 20 million facial images on both the Police National Database and in separate force systems. Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary (Scotland) recently commented unfavourably on this situation since it means that different standards are being applied across the UK. Most of these facial images are custody images. The courts held in 2012 that these holdings were unlawful and the Home Office responded to that judgment in 2017. I have [commented on this response elsewhere](#).
2. Current police interest in facial matching has moved on from custody images to whether it can be used to identify individual offenders in public places. The capability to do this is still unproven since tests in such situations have shown very poor match rates unlike match rates in controlled environments.[1]
3. The police are conducting a number of trials to see if facial searching

and matching technology can be employed effectively in crowded public places. Such experiments should be properly designed and evaluated, preferably involving external experts, and the results published. The police should also evaluate their use of facial images generally in order to demonstrate that they have a useful and cost-effective purpose, based on adequate matching quality. They also need to explain how they will deal with potential false matches.

4. There is limited research on this area and most of it has been conducted in the USA. Evaluations should include not just the behaviour of the matching algorithms but how they work in the total criminal justice system and how human decision making in such systems affects the accuracy of match rates.[2]
5. Facial matching systems have improved significantly recently and the use being explored by the Metropolitan Police may, at some point, reach acceptable quality for operational use but presently that remains to be demonstrated.
6. The use of facial images, especially in public places, is very intrusive of individual freedom, especially because images can be captured without the subject being aware. The public benefit of the use of such an intrusive technology must outweigh the interference in individual privacy. Such a difficult balance between public benefit and individual privacy should not be decided by the police but is best decided by Parliament through informed debate and legislation. As is currently the case for DNA and fingerprints the legislation should include independent oversight to reassure the public that their privacy is being properly protected.

Paul Wiles, Biometrics Commissioner

[1] The most extensive evaluations of the facial matching capabilities of different systems have been carried out by the [US National Institute of Standards and Technology \(NIST\)](#).

[2] See e.g. [D. White et al: Error Rates in Users of Automatic Facial Recognition Software, Plos One, 2015, 10 \(10\): eo 139827](#), showing how human error can reduce further the effectiveness of facial recognition systems.

[News story: Bogota speech: Secretary](#)

of State for International Trade

Good morning everyone,

It is a pleasure to be here today in Bogota.

More than two centuries ago Simón Bolívar came to London to seek British support for Colombian independence; he returned with seven thousand British soldiers, who fought for Colombia, along with substantial financial and technological support for the cause.

British engineers constructed Colombia's network of railways and other heavy industry, stimulating economic development.

The United Kingdom supported Colombia from its very first days as a fledgling nation, and it is from these bonds of friendship that the UK and Colombia have built a great partnership that endures to this day, as our two nations remain key partners on the world stage.

Last year, soon after I was appointed Secretary of State, I had the honour to speak alongside President Santos during his very successful state visit to the United Kingdom.

I talked then about how the bonds of history have continued to unite our two countries.

We have remained close partners on defence and security. According to your own official figures, the UK has been Colombia's third largest foreign investor over the past decade, and our trading relationship was worth over one billion pounds in 2015.

But it is also fair to say that British business has not developed and nurtured this relationship as well as we might have done.

Our trade in goods with Colombia is behind the likes of France, Germany and Spain.

So today my message to British business is this; we need to redouble our efforts to re-forge this close bond, for Colombia is in the process of implementing an historic peace agreement which could transform its economic performance.

At our country our own painful experiences of the troubles in Northern Ireland have taught us that peace processes are never easy. They take courage and resilience, but that the rewards that come for a lasting and sustainable peace are worth the years of negotiations and reconciliation.

I am here today because the United Kingdom wants to partner Colombia, helping your nation to realize the dividends of peace, and working to transform the country.

We are supporting Colombia reach its full potential and generate prosperity. During last year's state visit we announced the creation of a £25m Prosperity Fund to promote prosperity and economic development in the areas affected by the conflict, and to support Colombia in reaching the full benefits of peace.

The programme will focus on urban development, transport infrastructure, capacity building, anti-corruption and increasing the agricultural competitiveness.

Our trading relationship continues to expand. Total trade in goods and services between the UK and Colombia totalled £1.3bn in 2015 – an 11.8% increase from the year before.

Like the UK, Colombia is committed to fiscal prudence, sound governance, and a commitment to free trade. With 16 free trade agreements already in place, your economy is among the most open in Latin America.

Combined with a 4% average growth rate over the past decade, and it is easy to see why Colombia is widely seen as one of the brightest prospects in the Americas.

When British companies arrive in Colombia, they can be transformational. KPMG has recently been awarded a contract to undertake financial structuring of the new Metro here in Bogota, a project that will have a very real impact on the lives of 10 million Colombians.

Holtrade have recently reached an agreement with Fenoco, the central rail concession, to become the first private operator in recent history to transport freight across the Central and Caribbean regions, revolutionising Colombian freight capacity.

Red Leopard and Cerromatoso, a subsidiary of the UK company South 32, have both announced major new expansions in their coal and nickel mining projects.

And Currie & Brown have been awarded the contract to undertake the technical structuring of Bogota's largest and most ambitious health project – the regeneration and construction of 6 hospitals through Public Private Partnership. This is the first project of its kind in Colombia.

And it is not just the physical infrastructure of Colombia that UK companies are investing in. For more than 80 years, the British Council Colombia has supported the development of quality education, and promoted English language proficiency across the country.

Moreover, the British Council it's currently working with young people across Colombia to build upon the opportunities brought by peace.

These examples are only the tip of the iceberg, yet they illustrate how some of the UK's strongest areas of expertise – financial services, transport, mineral extraction, healthcare, and education – have the capacity to rapidly transform the lives of Colombian citizens.

Despite all this, we want to maintain and expand such relationships, the

United Kingdom itself must continue to be a sure and stable commercial partner to Colombia.

As I'm sure you will all be aware, the United Kingdom is currently negotiating our withdrawal from the European Union.

There has been speculation in some sections of the media, here in Colombia as well as in the United Kingdom, that last year's vote to leave was a symptom of insularity, and that the United Kingdom would be withdrawing from the world stage, abdicating our international responsibilities and severing ties with Europe and the world.

I am here to tell you that nothing, absolutely nothing, could be further from the truth.

Last year's vote was about looking beyond the boundaries of Europe to the wider world. The government's ambition is not to create a 'little England', but a truly Global Britain.

Our country will become, once again, the greatest champion of global free trade, renewing our partnerships with new friends and new allies alike to spread prosperity to every corner of the world.

What lies at the heart of this vision? Why have we made it our mission to champion global free trade?

There are, of course, the macroeconomic benefits of free trade. Making it easier for UK businesses to sell overseas, and for foreign companies to operate in the UK, stimulates the economy.

Analysis by the OECD has indicated that a 10% increase in economic openness is associated with a 4% increase in output per head of the working population.

Yet the case for free trade is much wider. A better availability of products has brought cheaper goods and services to consumers across the world, raising living standards and making incomes go further.

Economic interdependence reduces the risk of conflict, as prosperity weakens the grip of authoritarian leaders and commercial ties remove the incentives to have conflicts with one another.

And, perhaps most importantly, liberalised trade practices have lifted millions from poverty across the globe. There has been no greater liberator of the world's poor than free and open international trade.

It is perhaps true that businesses have been more adept at seeing the inherent opportunities of free trade, while governments have tended to see the risks.

That is why the UK intends to lead by example in promoting free trade from the highest levels of government. For those countries like the UK who have grown rich from global trade, there is a moral duty to ensure that those same

freedoms are extended to developing nations.

Soon, the UK will be in a unique position to influence the spread of global free trade.

For the first time in more than four decades, we will have a fully independent trade policy.

Crucially, this will allow us to negotiate free trade agreements with new partners across the world, including those rapidly developing and expanding economies that will drive the global economy and global growth in the 21st Century.

The UK will become a global trade hub, leading by example to ensure that the world economy remains open and interconnected.

We will also regain our independent seat at the World Trade Organisation in Geneva.

As one of the world's largest economies, this will not only allow us a new forum in which to promote and protect free trade, but gives Britain a role in safeguarding the rules-based international order which drives global prosperity.

My own department for International Trade is a symbol of these ambitions.

Created mere weeks after last year's referendum, our task is to build these relationships, and to ensure that the United Kingdom remains open, outward-looking, and internationalist.

Yet this vision for Britain does not mean turning our back on Europe. Indeed, we want nothing more than to be the closest partners of a successful and prosperous European Union, maintaining those mutually beneficial commercial relationships upon which many international companies, including those from Colombia, rely.

Throughout the period of our withdrawal, our watchwords will be stability, continuity and transparency. We know how important certainty is to the global trading environment, and we will strive to ensure that consistency is maintained at all times.

That is why, as we leave the European Union, it is our strongest desire to maintain the same privileged relationship that our countries currently enjoy under the EU FTA, replicating as far as possible our existing trading terms. If Britain is to be a global leader in free trade, then we cannot, and will not, begin by erecting barriers that do not exist today.

So I am here today to reassure you that the UK will continue to be prosperous. The UK will continue to be at the heart of global trade. And the UK will continue to be the premier destination for Colombian investment.

The Department for International Trade is taking steps to ensure that these ambitions that we have are supported by our actions.

I am pleased to announce that support from UK Export Finance for trade with Colombia will increase to £4.5 billion.

This makes billions of pounds of additional financial support available to both UK exporters, and buyers of UK goods and services in Colombia, opening vast opportunities for British and Colombian businesses alike.

As globalisation and new technology continue to eliminate the barriers of distance and time, the UK stands ready to help Colombia harness this power.

Technology, Data, FinTech and Scientific Research are areas in which the UK excels. Firms across Britain are ready to bring their expertise to bear, expanding new industries across Colombia and South America.

IT services company Endava has just opened a new Software Development and Innovation Centre in Bogota, with plans to grow to at least 500 staff over the next few years, a training programme that invests in Colombia's future.

And Genius Sports, one of the fastest growing sports data and technology companies in the world, have decided to establish their South American Tech Hub in Medellín, to capitalise, they say, "on the enormous wealth of highly qualified tech workers available there".

They also freely admit that "the inspiration behind this investment came from President Santos's 'Legacy of Peace' Speech in 2016".

Across almost every industry, UK companies stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Colombia. Yet there is always more for us to do.

So I am here this morning not only to celebrate the past strength of the UK-Colombia relationship, but also to embrace the opportunities of the future.

As Colombia marks the transition to peace, the United Kingdom too is opening a new chapter in our future, one that will be founded upon economic openness, free trade, and a firm embrace of global opportunities.

It is an ambition for Britain which cannot be realised without the support and friendship of our allies. Those nations who recognise and embrace the importance of free trade must work tirelessly to strengthen the argument, leading by example and showing a world a path to prosperity that lies not in the protectionism, but in economic openness.

In this, the UK and Colombia are natural partners.

There may be challenges ahead, but if we remain true to these principles then we can build a safe and prosperous future for Britain, Colombia, and the rest of the world.

Thank you.