**Supporting Document A: Summary of Key Policies**

Table A. Summary of Key Policy Instruments and Implications for International Students

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| **Policy instrument** | **Description** | **Implications** |
| Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) | First legislated in UK Borders Act 2007, formerly Identity Cards for Foreign Nationals (ICFNs). Most foreign nationals staying over six months require a BRP which displays a migrant's name, place and date of birth, fingerprints, facial photograph, immigration status, conditions of stay, access to public funds and health services, and National Insurance Number, if relevant. | Can be useful for international students to access services, but applying for and using cards can be burdensome, delayed, and error-ridden, deterring students and researchers from coming to the UK. Constructs tensions/differences between UK citizens and internationals due to restriction of BRPs to internationals (Warren & Mavroudi, 2011a; Warren & Mavroudi, 2011b). |
| Bordering | Describes the increased implication of non-state actors in policing the border, including landlords, healthcare providers, banks, and universities. E.g., universities must comply with legal obligations to check students' immigration statuses, monitor attendance and engagement, and share information with the Home Office if they wish to obtain Highly Trusted Sponsor status and take international students. | Monitoring and information sharing by universities makes the classroom a border site, and staff become border agents. Divides between unmonitored domestic and monitored international students. Shifts power from educational to administrative staff integral for the monitoring systems, potentially undermining intra-institutional solidarity. Involving banks and landlords can increase difficulties accessing financial services and housing, respectively (Dear, 2018; Jenkins, 2014; Murray & Gray, 2021). |
| Brexit | The UK voted in a 2016 referendum to leave the European Union (EU), taking effect after transitionary arrangements in January 2021. Brexit changed the UK's relationship to the EU on trade, security, social policy, and migration. | Pre-Brexit, EU/EEA students had 'home fee status', and could live/work in the UK before/after studies. EU/EEA citizens (except Irish citizens) who did not arrive before 2021 and apply for the EU Settlement Scheme are treated like non-EU students, losing these rights. Amuendo-Dorantes and Romiti (2021) evidence a decrease of EU applications to study in the UK post-Brexit. Fidler, Clarke, and Wang (2022) found Brexit contributed to a growing sense that foreigners are unwelcome in the UK. |
| Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 | Imposed a legal duty on public bodies (including universities) and their staff to survey the public for the purposes of countering terrorism and improving security. | Builds on the Prevent programme in increasing the responsibility of universities to monitor students and exacerbates related concerns around monitoring and freedom of speech. |
| COVID-19 restrictions | Government-imposed restrictions to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. These varied between the UK’s constituent nations, but generally involved periods of lockdown (where individuals could not leave their homes except for essential purposes), lesser/targeted restrictions (limits to socialising in larger groups, restrictions on public events and gatherings…), the closure of schools and university campuses, and international travel restrictions. | Students arriving in the UK during the pandemic had to self-isolate for 14 days, causing difficulties settling (setting up bank accounts, obtaining university cards, getting food and medicine). Without established social connections, some students broke isolation to meet basic needs. Students described difficulties in adapting to online learning, and inconsistent communication and practical support from the university, such as about work placements. Loneliness, isolation, and other mental health difficulties were common (Al-Oraibi, et al., 2022; Liu, Li, & Zhang, 2022). |
| Cultural Awareness and Knowledge Exchange Scheme (CAKES) | A small university-based programme which sought to support international students with linguistic, cultural, pedagogical, social, and psychological transition challenges. Student-driven scheme delivered across the academic year to new international students by three learning development staff, in weekly lunchtime workshops. Workshops blended academic (academic writing, critical thinking...) and sociocultural (trips, intercultural learning experiences, local dialect sessions) activities. | Highlights potential for universities to holistically address international students’ needs as they transition of British higher education. McKay and colleagues’ (2018) evaluation reported promising findings regarding the academic transition, the learning and teaching environment, and the social transition. |
| Health Surcharge | Those on Student Visas pay a Health Surcharge to access the NHS (Brotherhood, 2023). The standard rate at time of writing is £470 per year for students and £624 for most other immigration applications. The surcharge must be paid for any dependants and partners and can amount to thousands of pounds over a degree. This notionally provides comparable access to NHS services for international students on Student Visas. | Poses a financial barrier to accessing healthcare, although the fee’s integration into the visa system means that all visa-holding international students should have access to the NHS (Brotherhood, 2023; Doyle, Loveridge, & Faamanatu-Eteuati, 2016). Like most UK citizens, these students still must pay directly for some types of care (dentistry, prescriptions, etc.). |
| Highly Trusted Status | Universities admitting international students on Student Visas require Highly Trusted Sponsor status. For this, they must monitor students' attendance and engagement. If a student misses 10 expected consecutive contacts universities are typically expected to withdraw sponsorship, and if they do they must inform the Home Office. If sponsorship is not withdrawn (which guidance states should be rare) universities must keep evidence of their decisions as compliance officers monitor these exceptions (Home Office, 2023). | Highly Trusted Status and related obligations for universities enhance monitoring of international students and opportunities for falling afoul of Home Office regulations. |
| Home fee status | The status of paying the university tuition fees typically charged of domestic students (e.g., £9,250 per year for English undergraduates, free for Scottish undergraduates). | Most international students do not have home fee status. They pay inflated international tuition fees (can be as much as three times what domestic students pay), do not have access to Student Finance loans in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and cannot have fees paid by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) as an undergraduate in Scotland (Lewis, 2023). |
| Hostile environment | Describes efforts to make policy so unwelcoming and unpleasant for illegal (and to a lesser but still substantial extent, legal) immigrants, that they opt to leave the country or not come initially. Has been accomplished through changes to the visa system and social policy (Brotherhood, 2023; Dear, 2018; Griffiths & Yeo, 2021). | International students face expanded engagement with Home Office bureaucracy, increasingly demanding entry criteria, restricted in-country rights, limits to paid work, and additional (and more expensive) visa fees. Harsh punishments are administered for non-compliance, including deportation and barring from re-entry (Brotherhood, 2023; Dear, 2018; Griffiths & Yeo, 2021). |
| Immigration Act 2014, 2016 | The Immigration Act 2014 changed the removals and appeals act, to make it easier to remove 'illegal immigrants’, restrict access of such people to public services and the labour market. The 2016 Act introduced new sanctions on those working illegally and their employers, coordinate regulators that enforce workers right, prevent 'illegal immigrants' from accessing housing, driving licences and banking, and  introduced measures enforce migration laws and remove individuals from the country. | Expanded bordering and the hostile environment in the UK, including by increasing barriers to accessing public services, banking, housing, etc. |
| International Education Strategy | Published in 2019 and updated in 2021 and 2022. Outlined government goals for internationalisation. By 2030, the 2019 strategy set out to increase the value of education exports to £35bn per year and to increase the total number of international students in the UK higher education system to 600,000 each year (Department for Education & Department for International Trade, 2022). | Represents efforts by the UK government to expand internationalisation in UK higher education. Coincided with reintroduction of the Graduate Visa route which allows international students permission to stay two years in the UK after graduation. |
| Minimum English requirements | Since 2009, Student Visas require proof of English language skills equivalent to the B2 standard in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), proved through Secure English Language Testing (SELT) from a list of approved providers, including the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) consortium (UK Visas and Immigration, 2020; Pearson, 2021). | Expansion and standardisation in English language testing aims to ensure prospective students have a good level of English before coming to study. Has been criticised because it gives excessive power to organisations like IELTS and that English should be assessed within the context of the subject being studied (Pilcher & Richards, 2017). |
| No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) | A status barring most visa holders from benefits for low-income individuals and housing support (UK Visas and Immigration, 2014). Not included in this are benefits based on National Insurance (NI) contributions, which are paid in the same way as income tax and is based on earnings. | Applies to international students on a Student Visa, limiting access to financial and in-kind support from the UK government. |
| Points-Based System | Introduced 2008, a five-tiered system for non-EEA nationals to live in the UK, with a different number of points required for different applications. Tier 1 applied to 'high value' migrants including investors, entrepreneurs, or those with 'exceptional talent'. Tier 2 applied to 'skilled workers' with a job offer in the UK. Tier 3 applied to 'low-skilled workers' who could enter the UK to fill temporary labour shortages. Tier 4 applied to students. Tier 5 was a temporary working visa with sub tiers including charity workers. The migration system no longer explicitly mentions tiers but the types of visas outlined broadly remain. Post Brexit, visas apply to EU/EEA citizens too. | Lays the groundwork for the rights and restrictions for international students while in the UK, during and after their studies, for example around working limits. |
| Post-Study Work Visa / Graduate Visa | The Tier 1 Post-Study Work Visa allowed international graduates to remain and seek work in the UK for two years post-graduation. In 2012 the graduate route was removed with a view to stopping higher education being pursued as a route to immigration (Lomer, 2018). A Graduate Visa was reintroduced in 2020, lasting two years or three years for doctoral graduates (UK Government, n.d.). | Provides students with a path into living and working in the UK after studies, with time to find suitable work. Changes, closures, and reopening of this visa route, however, mean students' capacity to stay in the UK post studies is subject to change. |
| Prevent | A statutory legal instrument introduced in 2002, after 9/11, which pre-emptively targets activities, beliefs, behaviours, ideological positions, and emotions which are not criminal but indicative of intent and which contradict British values. | Dear (2018) describes this as a manifestation of border control, and notes concerns raised by the 2016 UN Special Rapporteur, academics, and the Russell group around threats to freedom of speech. Because Prevent covers non-violent extremism, it may silence, or drive underground, those with more radical viewpoints. Dear (2018) notes the programme's disproportionate impact on Muslim international (and domestic) students, given the programme's emphasis on Islamic Terrorism. |
| Sanctuary scholarships | Higher education institutions exhibit solidarity with asylum seekers through ‘sanctuary scholarships’, including in-kind support, financial assistance, and fee waivers. | These can expand opportunities for students fleeing from hardship and persecution to access higher education. However, solidarity from institutions is hampered by other elements of the social policy framework, like banks being hesitant to provide bank accounts to forced migrants (Murray & Gray, 2021). |
| Science and Engineering Graduate Scheme | The Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme (SEGS), introduced in 2004, allowed 12 months job search for international graduates in relevant fields, and this was extended to all postgraduates in 2006 and all graduates in 2007 in the form of the Post-Study Work Visa. | Introduced a more flexible routes into living and working in the UK after studies for Science and Engineering graduates. |
| Student Visa / Tier 4 Visa | The Student Visa (previously Tier 4) is the visa most international students come to the UK through. It requires students to have been offered a place by a higher education with valid sponsor status, have enough money to support themselves and pay for their course, and demonstrate English ability. | Establishes the rights and responsibilities of most international students (NRPF, working limits, etc.). |
| Skilled Worker Visa | Replaced the Tier 2 (General) work Visa and allows individuals to come to/remain in the UK to do an eligible job for an approved employer. Holders must work for a UK employer that’s been approved by the Home Office, obtain a ‘certificate of sponsorship’ from their employer with information about the role, do a job that’s on the list of eligible occupations (e.g., civil engineers), and be paid a minimum salary (typically £26,200/year in 2023, depending on the type of work). Skilled Worker Visas can be extended indefinitely, and after five years living and working in the UK immigrants can apply for ‘indefinite leave to remain’ in the country. All visa applications require fees, including the Health Surcharge. | After, the expiration of their Student/Graduate Visa, individuals may be able to switch to the Skilled Worker Visa. Between 2012 and 2020, when the Graduate route was closed, this was the only route to remaining in the UK post studies. Researchers found students/graduates experienced difficulties in securing working visas, finding Home Office-approved sponsoring employers, etc. and noted implications for recruitment, especially for prospective students from certain countries like India, where it is common for students to come, study, then work for a period (James, 2020; Moskal, 2017; Moskal, 2020). |
| Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) | TEF assesses UK universities on criteria related to teaching excellence, assigning a Gold, Silver, or Bronze rating. Controversially, using the TEF to selectively allow institutions to charge higher fees, and linking university performance with visa-sponsoring powers for HEIs, has been discussed. TEF metrics include student employment and earnings data, student retention and continuation, and student satisfaction. | The data used for the earnings and employment data restricts this indicator to home students, so international students are not fully represented in this indicator or overall scores. Some split indicators include domicile, although Hayes (Hayes, 2017a; Hayes, 2017b) maintains that this does not equally and respectfully engagement with international students' views and perspectives. |
| Tony Blair's Prime Minster's Initiatives (PMIs) | Two programmes aimed at expanding internationalisation in UK higher education. The first (1999-2004) involved marketing, streamlining entry and admission procedures and work rules, promoting collaboration between and beyond government departments, and expanding Chevening scholarships aimed at international postgraduates. The second (2006-2011) aimed to enhance international student experiences through funding for small projects, promote international partnerships and transnational education, diversify sending countries, and internationalise curricula. | The PMIs coincided with unprecedented growth in international student numbers over the 2000s. Represented a drive to expand internationalisation in UK higher education and came alongside various policy changes (Lomer, 2018). |
| UK Borders Act 2007 | Introduced BRPs, allowed automatic deportation of some foreign nationals, equipped immigration officers with police-like powers (for increased detention, entry, search, and seizure), and allowed additional reporting and residency conditions to be imposed on immigrants. | Laid groundwork for subsequent migration policy like the Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 and the hostile environment/bordering. Established various requirements for international students including the necessity of the BRP. |
| University support | The various support offered by universities to international students in the form of social events, training, workshops, mental health support, library services, etc. | Provides students with support to deal with the challenges they face during their studies. For instance, libraries provide orientation/induction activities, training (on IT, information literacy, plagiarism, and referencing), specialist book collections, subject or resource guides, and non-English newspapers/magazines, one-to-one training sessions, and pre-sessional English language packs (Nzomo, 2019). |
| Voting rights | Voting in General elections to the UK Parliament is restricted to those aged 18+ with British, Irish, or qualifying Commonwealth citizenship (those who do not require leave to remain in the UK). Local elections in England carry the same restrictions. Local and regional elections in Scotland, Wales, London, and Northern Ireland differ. For instance, citizens of other countries can vote in Scottish Parliament if they have leave to remain in the UK or do not need it. EU citizens may vote in London and Northern Irish Assembly elections (Johnston, 2023). | International students are barred from full and equitable voting rights, and may exercise only restricted engagement in UK elections (e.g., some regional and local elections). |
| Working hours limit | Student Visa holders on a full-time degree level course short-term exchange programme can work 20 hours per week during term time, and full-time outside of term. Those on a full-time course below degree level can work 10 hours per week. All other students cannot work in the UK under a Student Visa (Home Office, 2016). Breaking restrictions is a criminal offense punishable by a £5000 fine and/or up to six months in prison, and deportation. Convicted students face automatic refusal of re-entry to the UK for 1-10 years, depending on whether they left the UK voluntarily and at their own expense or were deported, and can be refused future leave to remain in the UK (Howe, 2018). | Working hours limits, and the administration of deportation as a punishment for visa condition violation, render international students a legally constructed underclass of workers (Howe, 2018). They constrain job market access, increases the power of employers, and facilitate exploitative work. This compounds the other forms of vulnerability for international students (youth, limited education and employment experience, lack of local networks and support), especially for non-English speaking and poorer students, the latter of whom have greater financial imperative for seeking work. |