



## Universities Scotland's submission to the Science and Technology Committee inquiry into 'an immigration system that works for science and innovation'

June 2018

As the representative body of Scotland's 19 higher education institutions, Universities Scotland welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Science and Technology Committee's inquiry into 'An immigration system that works for science and innovation'.

We would like to highlight the evidence that we provided to the Committee's 'Brexit: Science and Innovation Summit'<sup>1</sup>, particularly:

- We strongly support effort to facilitate researcher mobility – including short term mobility – as 'research collaboration that is grown out of informal discussions and information sharing accounts for as much as half of all collaborations';
- International collaboration is associated with high quality research; and,
- Scotland has the second highest international collaboration share in the UK (67%, behind Wales at 69%) but this is associated with the highest field weighted citation impact for the four nations<sup>2</sup>.

We set out the importance of non-UK staff to universities' science and innovation success in our previous submission to the Committee and in our submission to the Migration Advisory Committee consideration of EEA workers in the UK<sup>3</sup>. In 2016/17 non-UK staff account for 32.7% (6,615 FPE) of all academic staff working in Scotland, of which 63.9% (4,225 FPE) were working in science fields compared to 55.8% of UK staff. Non-UK academic staff in Scotland are overwhelmingly involved in innovative activities, with 83.1% (5,500 FPE) conducting research as a part of their role compared to 74.2 % of UK staff.

We were pleased to see that the recent vision for the UK-EU partnership on science, research and innovation<sup>4</sup> recognised the importance of researcher mobility as part of the 'far reaching Science and Innovation Pact' and the Prime Minister's recent statement<sup>5</sup> that:

*"today over half the UK's resident researcher population were born overseas. When we leave the EU, I will ensure that does not change. Indeed the Britain we build together in the decades*

<sup>1</sup> <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/science-and-technology-committee/brexit-science-and-innovation/written/77899.html>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.elsevier.com/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/507321/ELS-BEIS-Web.pdf](https://www.elsevier.com/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/507321/ELS-BEIS-Web.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/693449/Universities\\_Scotland.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693449/Universities_Scotland.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/710268/SCIENCE\\_-\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/710268/SCIENCE_-_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-science-and-modern-industrial-strategy-21-may-2018>



*ahead must be on in which scientific collaboration and the free exchange of ideas is increased and extended, both between the UK and the EU and with partners around the world.”*

In all we see this as an important opportunity to build a future immigration structure to allow universities to recruit research and innovation talent globally with minimal bureaucracy and cost to both applicants and employer.

Universities UK’s submission to this inquiry sets out the key aspects of a future immigration system, as it affects academic staff and postgraduate students, that the sector across the UK would wish to see, which include:

- Support the recruitment of PhD-level staff;
- Protect the pipeline from study to work, as this is an important route for early career academics and researchers;
- Facilitate the recruitment of a broader range of workers and skills than the current system for non-EEA migration allows, including those working as technicians;
- Facilitate short-term staff mobility and collaboration visits as well as longer-term migration;
- Minimise bureaucracy and cost to employers and applicants;
- Include an appropriate transition/implementation period to give employers and applicants time to adjust to any new system; and,
- Address negative perceptions and send the message that the UK remains an attractive destination.

We add our support to Universities UK’s submission and offer two additional observations:

1. Alongside the importance of academic and technical staff, the effective operation of departments rests on key professionals in non-academic professional roles. In our evidence to the Migration Advisory Committee we noted how very high proportions of non UK EEA non-academic staff are highly qualified and in such highly skilled roles. In 2016/17, non-UK non-academic staff hold doctorates at double the rate of UK non-academic staff (7.7% of non-UK non-academic staff as opposed to 3.8% of UK non-academic staff). Yet, non-academic roles do not always meet the requirements and salary threshold for Tier 2 applications. It is important that any new system must allow for the effective recruitment of such staff internationally.
2. In common with some other parts of the UK, Scotland faces a profound demographic challenge. To detail:
  - In Scotland, immigration is projected to account for 90% of population growth in the next decade;
  - Scotland’s dependency ration (dependents to workers) is expected to increase from 58 dependents per 100 working population in 2014, to 67 dependents per 100 workers in 2039. This is much higher than the UK as a whole; and,



- Scotland is also predicted to have a lower population increase than projected for the UK to 2039 (7% for Scotland compared to 15% for the UK)<sup>6</sup>.

Measures that attract and retain highly qualified, economically active staff at the beginning of their careers assist with meeting that challenge.  
Consideration should be given to supporting opportunities for the visa system to support post study work.

**ENDS**

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[http://www.parliament.scot/S5\\_European/General%20Documents/CTEER\\_Dr\\_Hepburn\\_report\\_2017.04.24.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/S5_European/General%20Documents/CTEER_Dr_Hepburn_report_2017.04.24.pdf)

