



All MPs

23 May 2024

Dear Colleague,

Re: Legal Migration and the response to the Migration Advisory Committee

The latest estimates of net migration from the Office for National Statistics, published this morning, show that net migration in the year to December 2023 fell by 10% compared with the previous year.

Crucially, these figures do not reflect previous policy measures implemented at the start of 2024 which include:

- 1 January – Restricted most overseas students from bringing family members to the UK.
- 11 March – Restricted the ability for care workers and senior care workers from bringing dependants with them and require all care providers sponsoring migrants to register with the Care Quality Commission.
- 4 April – Increased the general salary threshold for those arriving on Skilled Worker visas by 48% from £26,200 to £38,700.
- 4 April – Replaced the Shortage Occupation List with a new Immigration Salary List and abolished the 20% going rate discount so that employers can no longer pay migrants less than UK workers in shortage occupations.
- 11 April – Increased the minimum income requirement to sponsor someone for a family visa by 55% from £18,600 to £29,000. By early 2025, this will have increased two more times, rising to £38,700.

These measures mean that around 300,000 people who would have been eligible to come to the UK last year would now not be able to.

Home Office statistics covering the first four months of 2024 show that visa applications across key routes have fallen by 25% compared to the same period in 2023. Following our measures to tighten rules on international students bringing family members, there were 79% fewer student dependent applications in the first four months of 2024. We have also seen a 12% fall in main applicants for study over the same period, so impacts on the Higher Education sector seem to be much more modest. The Home Office will continue to publish this data on a monthly basis, but the initial data is very encouraging.

Alongside the measures announced in December, the Government also commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee to conduct a rapid review of the graduate route. They published their conclusions on the 14 May, and I can confirm that we are accepting all of the Committee's recommendations, in particular:

- Establishing a mandatory registration scheme for agents - we will require all higher education institutions who recruit international students to work within the Agent Quality Framework, ensuring it is mandatory, and regularising the work of International Education Agents.
- Compelling universities to publish information on the extent to which they use international agents and the number of international students recruited.
- Introducing a requirement for universities to provide the Home Office with confirmation of the course outcome on the student route.

However, we are going further than the Committee's recommendations by bringing forward further changes to the student route to reduce abuse. These changes include:

- By Autumn 2024, we will apply a tougher sponsorship standard to higher education institutions who wish to recruit international students.
- For the January 2025 intake of students, we will raise the financial maintenance requirements, in line with domestic maintenance loans, so that students prove that they can financially support themselves whilst studying.
- In Summer 2024, we will review with the sector how they assess English Language standards for international students, with the objective of standardising independent assessment.
- In September 2024, we will ensure overseas students are doing courses where face to face teaching is the predominant method of delivery.
- In Summer 2024, we will carry out a rapid consultation to ensure that international students currently at franchised providers are at well-managed institutions which meet the requirements of the Office for Students.

These measures I have set out above on the student route will help clamp down on those who would seek to abuse the UK's generous offer to international students, and ensure the immigration system continues to support the economy and priorities of the British public. Taken together, our plan to cut legal migration sustainably is clearly working, keeping the promises we made.

I will place a copy of this letter in the libraries of both Houses.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove', is positioned above the printed name.

Tom Pursglove MP
Minister of State for Legal Migration and the Border