

### **Union stance on Immigration Bill proposals**

A paper by David Goldsmith, Union President

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#### **Background**

- Bill was announced on 10th October 2013 (1) and had its second reading in parliament on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014
- High likelihood of achieving royal assent in early 2014 and being implemented from Summer 2014 onwards
- Last year 29.9% of the Imperial College Student population was International (not home/EU). This figure is rising substantially each year (2).
- The proposals most relevant to international students are the:
  - Introduction of a charge of £200 per person per year of study to use the NHS (a) for all non-EEA (b) migrants
  - Introduction of fines for any private landlord who does not ensure their tenants have the right to remain in the UK

Why the introduction of an NHS fee is perceived as being unfair on international students

- The introduction of a £200 annual fee would be an even greater burden to international students on top of high tuition fees (in many cases more than £20,000 per year), between £298-£781 for a tier 4 visa (and one for each of their dependents) and 6-12 months rent paid in advance due to the high likelihood of not having a UK-based referee. For a postgraduate research student with a family the NHS fee could incur an additional fee of over £3000 before even stepping foot in the UK. However there is no evidence to suggest that the amount that international students cost the NHS is not made up by their economic contribution.
- International students contribute £7.9 billion (BIS 2012) to the UK economy. Government estimates of the cost of their healthcare range from £200million to £2billion. However NHS figures put the cost at £33million- this is as small as a rounding error.
- The government wants to reduce net immigration and illegal immigration whilst still welcoming ‘...the brightest and best migrants who want to contribute to our economy and society and play by the rules.’(3) However the group most affected by the bill will be international students whom are classed in this regard.
- The bill appears to be aimed at the group of immigrants who come to the UK for other reasons but inadvertently affects the much larger group, composed of international students, which make up 75% of those subject to visa controls (4).

How the introduction of immigration-status checking by landlords will impact on international students

- It is highly probable that many landlords will turn away anyone they think might be international to avoid having to undertake the required checks. This would make it even more difficult for international students to rent private accommodation.
- Landlord checks may lead to racial profiling by those seeking to avoid the complicated nature of checking someone's immigration status, a requirement left until now to certified and trained individuals.
- There is a danger that the proposals could have the effect of turning certain students over to a dangerous and illegal sub sector of non-law abiding landlords, many of whom already engage with those who are unable to find accommodation elsewhere.

#### How the bill will impact on Imperial College London

- International student fees contribute a vast amount to supporting the UK higher education system. This bill would contribute toward damaging perceptions of the UK as a welcoming destination. This would discourage international students from applying to institutions such as Imperial College.

#### **Imperial College Union Believes**

- It is not fair for international students to have to pay a £200 annual charge for use of the NHS
- Putting the onus on landlords to check tenants' immigration status is impractical and will incur unfair bias against international students

#### **Imperial College Union Resolves**

- To oppose the above proposals set out in the immigration bill by arranging meetings with local representatives and campaigning with the student body

#### Abbreviations

- a) NHS: National Health Service
- b) EEA: European Economic Area

#### Sources

- 1) <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-bill>
- 2) [https://workspace.imperial.ac.uk/planning/Public/stats\\_card/Stats%20Guide%202012-13.pdf](https://workspace.imperial.ac.uk/planning/Public/stats_card/Stats%20Guide%202012-13.pdf)
- 3) [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/249251/Overview\\_Immigration\\_Bill\\_Factsheet.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/249251/Overview_Immigration_Bill_Factsheet.pdf)
- 4) <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/get-involved/welfare-and-student-rights/dont-shut-the-door-on-international-students/>