

## **The Post Study Route to working in the UK**

### **Summary**

1. The number of people coming to the UK to study has grown dramatically in the last twenty years. Since the introduction of the Points Based System (PBS) this growth has accelerated to nearly one thousand a day, including dependants; there is still no check on departures. Non-EU graduates from a British institution of any subject or grade can stay on for two years and compete with UK graduates for work. This post-study visa now accounts for 35% of the supposedly "Highly Skilled" Tier 1 visas granted; including extensions and dependants it amounted to 47,000 persons in the year to June 2010. Given that 9% of British graduates are unemployed, and "Post Study Route" Tier 1 visa holders are resorting to unskilled work, this visa route should be suspended until graduate unemployment has been substantially reduced.

### **Student Visas**

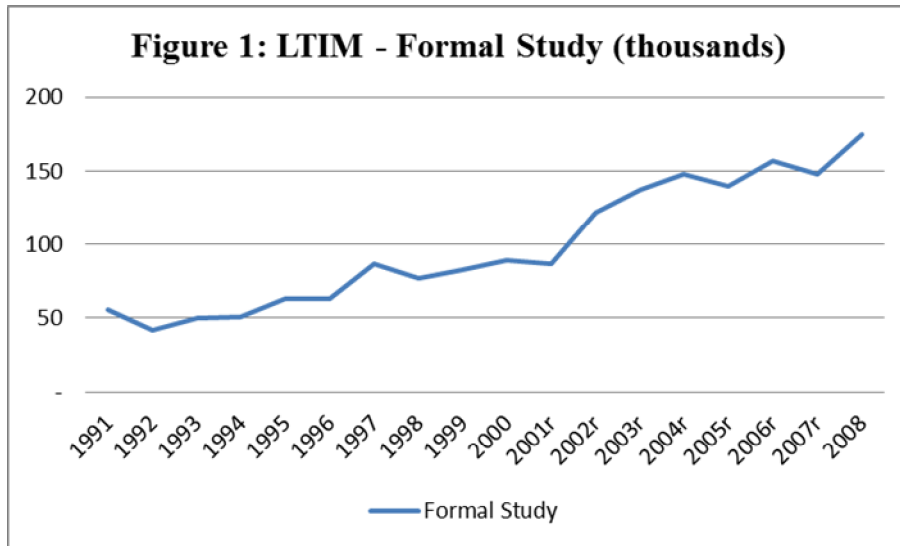
2. Previously the "Student" visa was used to cover all study from short English language courses to undergraduate or postgraduate degrees. This has now been phased out for new applicants and replaced with two visas categories: Student Visitor and PBS Tier 4.

3. The Student Visitor category was introduced in September 2007 for courses of less than six months. Such students are not entitled to bring dependants, nor to work, and they cannot extend their stay.

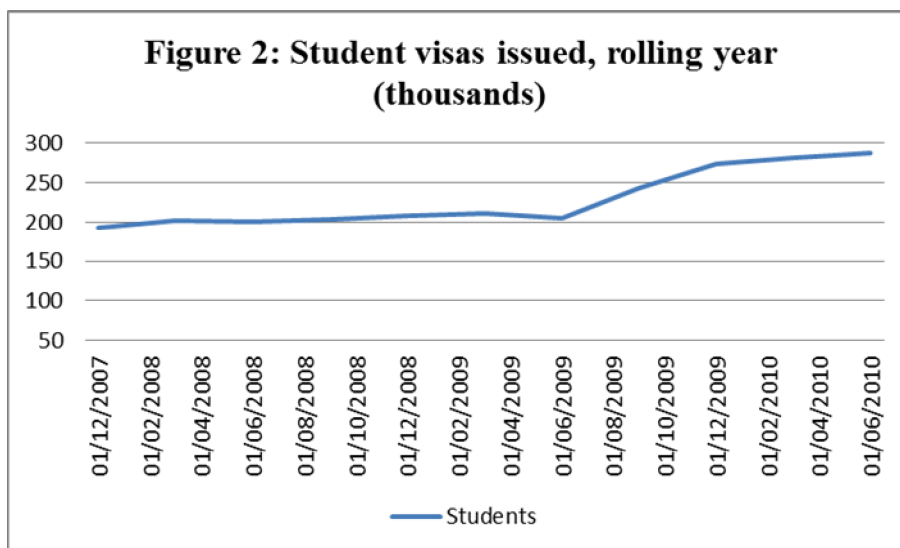
3. PBS Tier 4 is for students on courses of over six months either at university level or in Higher Education of some kind. It started to operate in 2009. These students can bring in dependants. Students can only study a course below university level if the course provider is on the list of highly trusted sponsors. Students at degree level can work 20 hours a week and students below degree level can work 10 hours a week. The dependants of students at degree level are allowed to work without restriction on hours, those below degree level cannot work. For more detail on eligible courses and English language requirements see Annex A.

## Growth in Student Numbers

4. The Long Term International Migration data are based on the International Passenger Survey ó a sample survey which records the main reason for migration. This shows that the number arriving for study has doubled between 2001 and 2008 rising from 87,000 to 175,000 (see figure 1 below).



5. The introduction of the PBS has seen a dramatic increase in student numbers. Figure 2 shows the year ending (or rolling year) figures for the number of student visas granted.



The year to the end of 2008 saw 209,000 main entry student visas issued (excluding student visitors). By the end of 2009 this had risen to 273,000 and the year ending June 2010 saw 288,000 student visas issued. When dependents are included this number, for the year ending 2010, rises to a massive 320,000.

### **Post Study Tier 1 visa**

6. After studying here a foreign graduate of a British institution can be granted a Post Study Tier 1 work visa. This allows them to stay on for two years looking for a job in competition with British graduates. If they find one paying £24,000 a year or more, they can then stay on further by switching to a work permit under Tier 2. The Tier 1 visa route is described as being for highly skilled worker but this Post Study Route, which is part of it, applies to students irrespective of the class of their degree or the subject studied and £24,000 is about the average salary for a graduate.

7. The growth in students has led to a large growth in Tier 1 visas being granted; up from 10,055 (main entry) at the end of 2007 to 18,780 at the end of 2009. By the year ending June 2010 post study visas made up 35% of all Tier 1 visas granted (main entry only).

8. The numbers become even more significant when dependants and extensions are included. In the year ending June 2010 there were 7,700 Post Study Tier 1 visas granted (main and dependents) and there were over 39,000 extensions, meaning nearly 47,000 visas connected to the Post Study route had been granted.

9. Given the very large increase in student numbers from 2008 onwards, the numbers qualifying for the Post Study Work visa will greatly increase and will contribute to even higher unemployment among British graduates.

10. A recent study by the UKBA of a sample of Tier 1 visas holders found that less than 10% of Post Study visa holders were in skilled employment. 60% were in unskilled work such as supermarket cashiers and shop assistants. The employment status of the remaining holders was not clear.

### **Recommendations**

11. The Post Study Tier One visa route should be suspended until graduate unemployment has been brought down to well below the present 10%.

## **References**

1 Higher Education Statistics Agency

[http://www.hesa.ac.uk/dox/pressOffice/sfr148/sfr148\\_table\\_1.pdf](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/dox/pressOffice/sfr148/sfr148_table_1.pdf)

2 LTIM Reason for Migration 1991-2008

3 Control of immigration: Quarterly Statistical Summary, April 6 June 2010

4 Points Based System Tier 1: An Operational Assessment, UKBA

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/2010/oct/79-highly-skilled-jobs>

## **Annex A: Study level and English Language requirement**

1. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) sets out the levels against which a qualification can be recognised in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are nine levels: the lowest level being 'entry' followed by levels one to eight. The lowest level that a non-EU level student can study is level 3 (e.g. A-levels or a NVQ level 3). A Bachelor degree is level 6, a Masters level 7 and a PhD level 8.

2. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is used across Europe to describe language ability. It divides learners into three broad divisions, each with two levels (see table 1). UKBA approved English language tests have been mapped to a CEFR level.

3. For courses at level 6 and above there is no English language requirement.

4. For courses below level 6 English is required at B1

5. The lowest level English course now available for study in the UK is at B2 level

6. Table 1 below describes the different levels.

Table 1: CEFR description of competence

Proficient	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.