Home Office

Student visitors

Research Report 71

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office (nor do they represent Government policy).

Contents

Executive summary

Background

The student visitor route was introduced in 2007 and allows people to visit the UK to undertake a short course of study for up to six months.

The Government has recently reformed the Tier 4 student route to attract and retain the brightest and the best students, whilst also reducing abuse. In the context of these changes, there has been debate on the student visitor route. The aim of this study is to develop the evidence base on student visitors and establish if this short term study route is being used as intended. This report will inform future decisions taken by the Home Office in relation to the route.

The study examines non-visa national and visa national student visitors, as well as those who applied for a student visit visa but were unsuccessful. Key areas of interest covered in the report include the characteristics of courses student visitors are undertaking, the type of the institutions they are attending, and their immigration histories.

Unlike students seeking entry under Tier 4 of the Points-Based System, student visitors do not have to be formally sponsored by an educational institution, but they must attend an institution that is accredited to provide education. Student visitors may take any course of six months or less in duration but cannot undertake work or work experience placements, bring dependants or switch to another immigration category whilst in the UK.

Visa nationals require entry clearance while non-visa nationals can apply for entry at the port in the UK. Entry Clearance Officers and Border Force Officers have discretionary powers to refuse a visa and/or entry if they are not satisfied that the applicant is a genuine student visitor.

The most recent statistics on entry to the UK show that during 2011, 262,000 student visitors came to the UK. Most of these student visitors were from non-visa countries (186,150), including 115,000 from the US. More recent statistics on visas issued show 68,372 student visit visas were issued during 2012. This included Russians (10,246), Chinese (9,190) and Turkish nationals (7,621). The number of student visitor arrivals has been increasing each year, and increased by 9 per cent from 2010 to 2011.

These figures include the extended student visitor route (permitting entry for up to 11 months for the study of English language courses) introduced in January 2011 and for which both visa and non-visa nationals are required to gain prior entry clearance. This route, however, is not covered in the scope of the report.

Method

Visa nationals – A sample of 750 successful and 306 unsuccessful student visit visa applications was drawn from the Central Reference System (the database where visa applications are recorded and processed) for the period 1 June 2011 to 31 May 2012. A systematic random sampling method was used to ensure the sample was representative.

Non-visa nationals – A sample of 947 student visitor arrivals was surveyed at Heathrow in November 2012 in a pilot exercise. Border Force Officers were asked to complete a pro forma for each non-visa national arrival answering questions about the applicant's intentions for their stay in the UK. Due to the nature of the sample design, the sample is not representative of the population as a whole but gives an indication of the usage of the route.

Findings

The evidence suggests the student visitor route is being used as intended and abuse is minimal.

Non-visa national student visitors and successful applicants for a student visit visa

- **Around two-thirds of both visa and non-visa national student visitors (64% and 62% respectively) were coming to the UK to study an English language course**. Other popular courses included exchange programmes – this applied to 85 per cent of US nationals in the non-visa sample.

- **The majority of student visitors in the sample were coming to study at institutions on the Tier 4 Register** (87% of non-visa nationals and 90% of visa nationals). No student visitors were admitted to attend institutions where the Tier 4 licence had been revoked due to a breach of sponsorship obligations.

- **Most student visitors were studying for less than three months.** The median length of courses studied was eight weeks in length for non-visa nationals and four weeks for visa nationals. In both samples, students reported staying in the UK for a similar time as the length of their course.

- **Nationalities:** The majority of sampled non-visa national student visitors were Brazilian (35%) or US nationals (27%), with a further 17 per cent of the sample being Japanese, and 7 per cent Korean. For visa nationals, around two-thirds of successful applicants were from the top five nationalities (Russians, Chinese, Turkish, Saudi Arabians and Indians).

- **Course fees:** The median course fee for sampled non-visa national student visitors was £2,308. Visa nationals on average paid less (median of £1,457). Most (72%) of the successful applicants for a student visit visa paid some costs towards their course before applying for a visa.

- **Qualifications studied for:** The majority of courses taken by both visa and non-visa national student visitors did not lead to a qualification with equivalence to the National Qualification Framework (NQF). However, almost one-third of the non-visa sample, including 89 per cent of US national student visitors were studying courses leading to qualifications equivalent to degree level (NQF levels 6–8).

- **Previous visits:** A minority (7%) of non-visa nationals reported previous dates they had come to the UK as a student visitor. Of visa nationals, 19 per cent of successful applicants reported having studied in the UK previously.

- **Immigration histories:** Less than one per cent of successful applicants for student visit visas had been refused entry to the UK in the previous ten years.

Unsuccessful applicants for a student visit visa

- **Background and intentions:** The unsuccessful visa applicants were more than twice as likely to be unemployed as successful visa applicants (17% compared with 7%), and those in employment had a lower net monthly income than successful applicants (median £610 compared with £1,000). Additionally, the intended length of course and stay in the UK were considerably longer for unsuccessful applicants (median course length 58 days and trip length 77 days compared with medians of 27 days and 29 days for successful applicants).

- **Courses and institutions:** Unsuccessful applicants were more likely to propose studying English language courses (74% compared with 64% for successful visa applicants) and less likely to propose to attend institutions on the Tier 4 Register (79% compared with 90% for successful visa applicants).

- **Reasons for refusal:** In around one-half of all cases each of the following reasons were given (where each case may have been given more than one reason): insufficient documents or information submitted with the application; doubt over the applicant's intention to leave at the end

of their studies; doubt over the applicant genuinely coming to the UK to study and belief they may be coming to seek work; and doubt over the availability of funds to cover the costs related to coming to the UK to study.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview of student visitor route

The student visitor route was introduced in 2007 to enable people to visit the UK to undertake a short course of study for up to six months. Unlike students seeking entry under Tier 4 of the Points-Based System, student visitors do not have to be sponsored by an educational institution, but they must attend an institution that is accredited to provide education. Student visitors may take any course of six months or less in duration but cannot undertake work or work experience placements, bring dependents or switch to another immigration category whilst in the UK.

Visa nationals require entry clearance while non-visa nationals can receive entry clearance at the port in the UK. Entry Clearance Officers and Border Force Officers have discretionary powers to refuse a visa and/or entry if they are not satisfied about the credibility of the student visitor's intentions.

The extended student visitor route allows entry for up to 11 months for those studying English language courses. Entering the UK on this route requires entry clearance prior to arrival for both visa and non-visa nationals. This route is included in the population statistics, however, it is not covered by the samples analysed in this report.

1.2 Aim of the study

The Government has recently reformed the Tier 4 student route to attract and retain the brightest and the best students, whilst also reducing abuse. In the context of these changes, there has been debate on the student visitor route. The aim of this study is to develop the evidence base on student visitors and establish if this short term study route is being used as intended. This report will inform future decisions taken by the Home Office in relation to the route.

The study examines non-visa national and visa national student visitors, as well as those who applied for a student visit visa but were unsuccessful. The similarities and differences between these groups are analysed.

Key areas of interest covered in the report include:

- the characteristics of courses student visitors are undertaking;

- the nature of the institutions they are attending; and

- their immigration histories.

1.3 Overview of the student visitor population

The most recent data on passenger arrivals show that in 2011, 262,000 people were admitted to the UK under the student visitor route. The majority of these (186,150) were non-visa nationals, including (115,000) from the US. During 2012, 68,372 people were issued student visit visas. This included Russian (10,246), Chinese (9,190) and Turkish nationals (7,621).
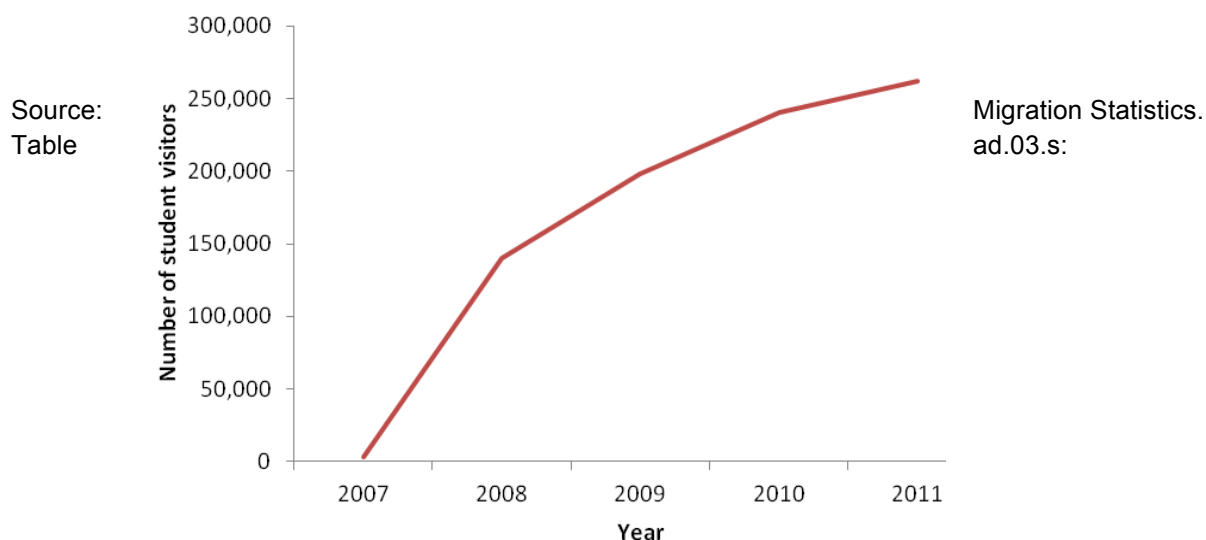
Table 1: Student arrivals in the UK, 2011

Country of nationality	Tier 4 students 2011	Student visitors 2010	Student visitors 2011
United States (US)*	12,400	126,000	115,000
Brazil*	1,410	10,500	19,300
Russia	3,240	13,900	17,200
Japan*	3,230	13,400	15,800
China	48,000	9,240	11,500
Turkey	2,990	8,040	11,000
Saudi Arabia	5,490	5,310	5,920
Taiwan*	2,970	4,750	5,570
Korea (South)*	4,710	4,210	5,510
Mexico*	945	2,550	3,890
Canada*	3,230	3,330	3,750
India	29,700	3,580	3,610
Hong Kong*	6,070	3,360	2,940
Thailand	4,730	2,010	2,700
Australia*	1,220	1,490	2,670
Argentina*	95	1,810	2,430
Ukraine	955	1,650	2,270
Colombia	2,510	1,120	2,100
Nigeria	10,400	1,950	1,830
Rest	81,380	21,800	26,575
Total	226,000	218,000	262,000

*Represents those countries for which a visa is not required.

Source: Migration Statistics. Table ad.03.s: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/immigration-tabs-q3-2012/admissions-q3-2012-tabs

The number of student visitor arrivals in 2011 represents a 9 per cent increase on 2010 arrivals. This increase was higher for some nationalities and particularly high (84%) for Brazilians. Additionally, visa statistics suggest the number of student visitors has continued to increase since 2011; in the year ending March 2013, 69,542 people were issued student visitor visas, a 6% increase on the previous year.

Figure 1: Trends in student visitor entries, 2007–2011

Source:
Table

Migration Statistics.
ad.03.s:

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/immigration-tabs-q3-2012/admissions-q3-2012-tabs

1.4 Methods

1.4.1 Non-visa nationals

A four-week period (6 November–2 December 2012) was spent collecting a pilot sample of non-visa national student visitors at Heathrow (Terminals 1, 3, 4 and 5). Heathrow was chosen for the collection of the sample as it receives more student visitors than any other port. Border Force Officers captured information on every non-visa national student visitor coming through the port. This is the only point at which non-visa nationals give their details to the Home Office and therefore this was the most appropriate method for capturing the sample. Although Border Force officers routinely record details of each student visitor on landing cards, specially designed pro-formas were used in the exercise for ease of data collection.

Due to the untested nature of this method of data collection, the sample is not representative. Therefore whilst it can give helpful indications about the people who use the route, caution should be taken when generalising sample findings to the population of non-visa national student visitors as a whole.

Due to the nature of the sample design, the information provided on non-visa nationals is more limited than for visa nationals; however it still covers the key areas of interest.

The tables from the analysis are included in Appendix A.

1.4.2 Visa nationals

Student visitor visa application forms[1] were used to provide this sample. The information obtained for each person in the sample is the same information provided in the visa application.

To select the sample, a list of all applicants for a student visit visa for a one year period between 1 June 2011 and 31 May 2012 was drawn from the Central Reference System (CRS), the database

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[1] Application form available to download here: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/visiting/student/apply/

used to record and process visa applications. There were 67,998 cases: 60,492 successful applicants, 7,506 unsuccessful applicants. Unresolved cases were excluded.

Samples of successful and unsuccessful applicants were drawn separately. For successful applicants, a simple random sample using systematic selection was drawn. Cases were ordered by nationality, visa-issuing post, age and date of application and a systematic random sample was drawn. This ensured that the sample represented a spread of nationalities, visa-issuing posts, ages and application dates. For unsuccessful cases, a systematic random sample from a random start was also drawn, but four of the top five nationalities (Russians, Nigerians, Indians, Chinese) were oversampled to maximise the possibility of analysis by nationality.[2] In all, 750 successful applicants were selected and 306 unsuccessful applicants.

Weighting was used to compensate for the oversampling to ensure the correct representation.

Only statistically significant findings (to 95% level) are reported in the text. A difference that appears in a table but not in the text is not statistically significant and could have resulted by chance.

The tables from the analysis are included in Appendix B (successful visa applicants) and Appendix C (unsuccessful visa applicants).

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[2] There were enough Turkish cases included in the sample without oversampling.

Chapter 2: Student visitors not requiring a visa

2.1 About the sample

The top four nationalities in the non-visa sample were Brazilians, US nationals, Japanese and Koreans. All other nationalities each made up less than two per cent of the sample, and were therefore grouped. The category of 'Other Americas' consists of nationals from Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and Salvador. 'Other Asia' consists of nationals from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The 'All Others' category consists of nationals from Israel, New Zealand and Australia.

Table 2: Nationalities of non-visa student visitors in the population and sample compared

Nationality	Number in sample (2012)	% in sample (2012)	Number in non-visa population (2011)	% in non-visa population (2011)
Brazilian	325	34.5	19,300	10.4
US national	254	27.0	115,000	61.8
Japanese	164	17.4	15,800	8.5
Korean	68	7.2	5,510	3.0
Rest	131	13.9	30,540	16.4
Total	**942***	**100**	**186,150**	**100**

*Please note the total number of cases may be less than the sample size as for some cases, data entry fields have been left blank and therefore excluded from the analysis.

The distribution of nationalities in the sample (2012) differs from the distribution of nationalities in the population (2011). It is possible that population characteristics have changed during this time, however, the sample may not be representative and so can only be taken to give an indication of the population.

The majority of sampled student visitors were aged between 18 and 25 (56%), with a further 26 per cent aged between 26 and 35. The median age was 23. At the other end of the scale, the proportion of sampled student visitors aged over 46 was five per cent.

The majority of those in the sample were female (61%).

2.2 Proposed visit to the UK (Tables A4 and A5)

The median length of stay was seven weeks.[3] Less than one-quarter of the sample (23%) were staying for more than 12 weeks, showing the majority of the sampled student visitors came for less than one-half of the time allowed. There were some differences by nationality: 57 per cent of Koreans were staying longer than 12 weeks. However, this applied to only 11 per cent of Brazilians (Table A4).

Most student visitors sampled reported they intended to stay in the UK for a similar length of time as their course length. Only 10 per cent of the sample reported staying for at least two weeks longer than the duration of their course, with only one per cent (seven cases) staying eight weeks or longer than their course duration. US nationals were the least likely to stay longer, with four per cent staying at least two weeks longer than their course duration. Koreans were most likely to stay for at least two weeks longer than the length of their course (16%, Table A5).

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[3] The data for length of stay were collected in weeks. In instances where data were recorded in days, the length was coded to the nearest half week.

2.3 Courses studied

2.3.1 Length of courses

Course length was distributed in a similar fashion to the length of stay but on average was longer. This reflects the fact that some students were re-entering the UK part way through a course, and so not staying for the full duration of the course. Additionally, a small minority of students were studying part-time courses of several years in length, and so not making visits for the entire duration of the course.

The median value for the length of courses studied was eight weeks. The most common value was 4 weeks (19%) and another common value was 12 weeks (13%). These values are likely to reflect common English language course and university term lengths respectively (Table A9).

2.3.2 Types of courses

Around two-thirds of student visitors in the sample came to study English language courses (62%). Aside from differences arising from comparison of English and non-English speaking countries, whilst between 85 per cent and 95 per cent of Japanese, Brazilian and Korean student visitors were studying English language, for nationals of countries in the 'Other Asian' category this was only 48 per cent (Table A6). Instead these student visitors were more likely to report studying business-related or other skilled courses (14% for both).

Exchange courses (often in conjunction with a university in the student visitor's country of nationality) were also popular (26%) particularly for US nationals, 85 per cent of whom were taking part in one. A small proportion of student visitors were studying courses classed as 'other skilled' and 'recreational' (3% for each). Examples of the former include military vehicle propulsion and parliamentary reporting, whereas examples of the latter include fashion design and French pastry making (Table A7).

Table 3: Courses to be studied, by non-visa national sample

| Course type	All %
Standard English	44.9
Exchange programme	26.2
Intensive English	11.1
Other skilled	3.4
Recreational	3.4
Postgraduate programme based in UK	2.9
Business English	2.2
Business-related	2.2
Vacation English	1.8
Teaching English as a foreign language	1.8
Total	**942***

*Please note the total number of cases may be less than the sample size as for some cases, data entry fields have been left blank and therefore excluded from the analysis.

2.4 Qualifications

Limited information was reported on the qualifications that the sampled student visitors would attain, in many cases making it impossible to determine the corresponding National Qualifications

Framework (NQF) level[4]. Some respondents reported that their course led to a certificate, of which the level was unknown. Additionally, some respondents (those studying English language courses in particular) reported that they would receive a qualification, the level of which would depend on the level of fluency attained during the course and thus was unknown before the start.

Figure 2: Level of course studied (according to National Qualifications Framework) recorded by non-visa national student visitors in the sample (See Table A8).
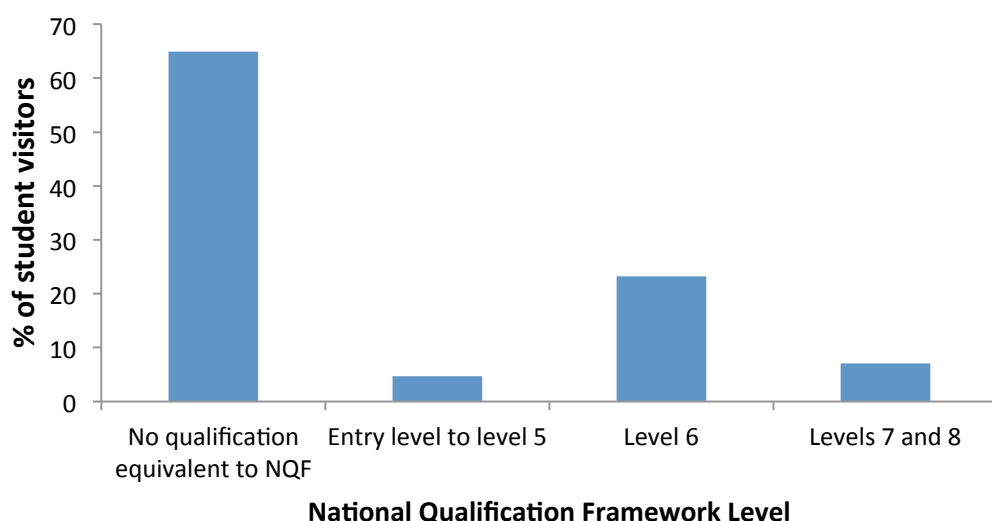
Just under two- thirds (65%) reported that they would receive no qualification, or one without equivalence to the NQF. This was particularly prevalent among the sampled student visitors from countries in the 'Other Americas' group (93%), Brazilians (92%) and Japanese (88%), (Table A8).

Just under one-third (30%) of the sample were studying courses equivalent to degree level. This represents 23 per cent taking courses equivalent to undergraduate degree level (NQF level 6) and 7 per cent taking courses equivalent to postgraduate degree level (NQF levels 7 and 8).

Whilst 72 per cent of US nationals were taking level 6 qualifications, only 1 per cent of the Japanese nationals and none of the Brazilians in the sample were studying at this level. This can largely be attributed to the majority of US nationals visiting as part of an exchange programme, usually in partnership with a host university in the US.

Additionally, whilst 25 per cent of nationals of countries within the category of 'All Others' were studying qualifications at levels 7 or 8, only 2 per cent of Japanese and 4 per cent of Brazilians were studying for qualifications at these levels.
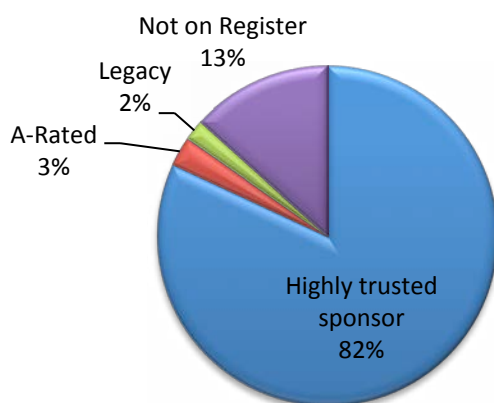
2.5 Institutions, sponsorship and accreditation

The majority of student visitors (87%), were coming to study at institutions on the Tier 4 Register (Figure 3 and Table A15). This included 82 per cent studying at institutions with highly trusted sponsor (HTS) status. This status is given by the Home Office to institutions with at least a 12 month proven track record of satisfactory compliance with immigration requirements. An additional 3 per cent were

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[4] For more information see: http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/qualification-frameworks/

studying at A-Rated institutions[5], and 2 per cent were studying at 'legacy'[6] institutions. Of those sampled, 27 per cent were attending universities.

Figure 3: Tier 4 Register status of institutions attended by non-visa national student visitors in the sample (Table A14).

Of those institutions not listed on the Tier 4 Register, eight per cent of institutions were accredited by the British Accreditation Council or Accreditation UK (Table A16). A small minority (5%) were attending institutions whose sponsorship or accreditation status could not be determined.

Additionally, five per cent of student visitors were attending institutions that had their Tier 4 sponsor licences revoked. However, none of these had their licences revoked for a breach of sponsorship duties.

Students attending institutions with HTS status were also attending longer courses – a median of ten weeks, in comparison with a median of four weeks for those attending institutions without HTS status.

2.6 Costs related to study in the UK

In many cases no information was provided for fees or an explanation was given that the student's parents or government had paid. Additionally, many of the sampled student visitors from the US had already paid fees to the home institution in the US, which included the cost of exchange. Cases were excluded from the analysis where this was evident.

The median fee value in the sample was £2,308 (Table A10). Fees ranged in value from £0 to £94,000. Values above £30,000 were examined to see if they may be errors. However, all corresponded to long courses at NQF levels 7 or 8, (with the £94,000 representing a PhD in education research) and so were deemed likely to be accurate and left in the analysis.

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[5] A-Rated status is a probationary status given to institutions gaining a new Tier 4 licence for 12 months, after which time they must successfully apply for HTS status. While they are A-rated, there are some limitations on the numbers and types of non-EU students the institution may sponsor.

[6] Legacy sponsor – A sponsor who has not gained educational oversight, or who has scored a 'near miss' in two applications for HTS status. Legacy sponsors may continue to sponsor existing international students but may not recruit any new non-EU students.

The US nationals in the sample had paid the highest fees by far, with a median of £9,000. However, this figure may in some cases still represent the amount paid annually to the host institution, rather than just the cost of exchange. The next highest median was for Koreans, who had paid £2,503. Brazilian and Japanese student visitors had paid the least (median £1,500 for both groups).

Fees varied by the institutions' accreditation status. Those on the Tier 4 Register that had HTS status were the most expensive (median £2,500), while the least expensive (3% of cases) were those with 'A-Rated' status (median £580). Those that were not on the Tier 4 Register at all were much less expensive than those with HTS status, with a median of £1,862 (Table A12). Amongst all courses in the sample, postgraduate courses based in the UK (18 cases) were the most expensive with a median of £12,875. Exchange programmes were also expensive, with a median of £8,686. Recreational courses cost much less, with a median of £490. Among English language courses, all were less expensive than the median fee but intensive English courses cost the most (median £1,969). Business English courses (19 cases) were least expensive, with a median of £1,100.

2.7 Previous trips (Table A16)

A minority (7%) of the sampled student visitors reported having previously come to the UK as a student visitor. Table 4 shows the number of times sampled student visitors have visited previously. These repeat visits have been examined by the number of times visited and by whether the visits were prior to or during 2012.

Table 4: Previous visits made by sampled non-visa national student visitors

Description of previous visits	Number
One previous visit before 2012	31
Multiple visits before 2012	10
One previous visit during 2012	6
Multiple visits, including during 2012	7
Total	**54**

Where multiple visits had been made, the number of visits ranged from 2 to 14 previous times, with the most common number of previous visits being 3. An additional eight cases could be identified where multiple visits had been made, but the student was studying a long part-time course and the visits appeared to be linked to this same course. This may have also been the case for some other of the repeat visits identified, but it was not possible to tell from the data collected.

Chapter 3: Student visitors requiring a visa: Successful applicants

3.1 About successful applicants

The top five nationalities in the study period were Russian, Chinese, Turkish, Saudi Arabian, and Indian, making up around two-thirds of successful applicants.

 Analysis of visa nationals is based on visa application data rather than arrivals data, therefore a minority of successful applicants may have been granted a visa but have not then used it to enter the UK.

Table 5: Nationalities of successful applicants for a student visit visa, 1 June 2011–31 May 2012

Nationality	Number in sample	% in sample	Number in population	% in population
Russian	143	19.1	11,395	18.8
Chinese	117	15.6	9,353	15.5
Turkish	96	12.8	7,687	12.7
Saudi Arabian	71	9.5	5,665	9.4
Indian	49	6.6	3,864	6.4
Rest	272	36.4	22,528	37.2
Total	**748***	**100**	**60,492**	**100**

*Please note the total number of cases may be less than the sample size as for some cases, data entry fields have been left blank and therefore excluded from the analysis.

The sample was designed so the nationalities of applicants in the sample were representative of the population as a whole.

One-quarter of successful applicants were married or in a civil partnership, almost one in five (19%) had dependent children and almost one-half (44%) were employed in their country of nationality. Around one-half (49%) of successful applicants in the study period were students in their country of nationality. Just seven per cent were not working or unemployed in their country of nationality (Tables B1 to B4).

Turkish successful applicants were more likely to be single (87%) and to be unemployed (16%), and less likely to have dependent children (8%) than successful applicants of other nationalities.

Saudi Arabian successful applicants were also more likely to be unemployed (18%) than successful applicants overall. Chinese applicants were more likely to be students in their country of nationality (70%) than successful applicants overall (49%) and were more likely to be single (87%).

The majority (91%) did not have family or friends in the UK and hardly any had a UK National Insurance number (<1%). Saudi Arabian applicants (12%) were slightly more likely than successful applicants overall to have family or friends in the UK (Tables B5 and B6).

The employed applicants reported a wide range of occupations but almost one-quarter (23%) were teachers (Table B7). Net monthly income for employed applicants ranged from £27 to £14,982 a month.[7] The median income was £1,000 a month, but 17 per cent of applicants earned more than £3,000 a month.

Most Chinese (71%) and Russian (68%) successful applicants were women and most Saudi Arabian (80%) and Indian (74%) applicants were men.

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[7] Large incomes were checked. Two cases were excluded as they were very likely a mistake on the application form (£120,000 and £46,000 a month) but otherwise large incomes were left in.

3.2 Proposed visit to the UK

Successful applicants reported their intended travel dates to and from the UK on their application forms. The median length was 29 days. Around 11 per cent of applicants proposed to stay between five and six months (Tables B10 and B11).

3.3 Courses studied

3.3.1 Length of courses

The median course length was 27 days, consistent with the reported median intended length of stay in the UK of 29 days (Table B15).

Saudi Arabian and Turkish applicants were proposing to take longer courses than other successful applicants (median 57 days and 53 days respectively, compared with 27 days for applicants overall). Their proposed length of stay in the UK was also longer (68 and 55 days respectively, compared with 29 days for applicants overall). Russian applicants' median trip length was shorter than successful applicants overall (20 days compared with 29 days).

A few applicants (11 cases) reported course lengths of more than six months. Some of these applicants were undertaking longer courses for which only part of their studies were in the UK.

3.3.2 Types of courses

Almost two-thirds of successful applicants proposed to study English language (64%), a similar proportion as the non-visa sample (62%). Around seven per cent were coming for summer school or exchange programmes, with seven per cent studying degree programmes. Around six per cent were studying business courses and nine per cent were studying other skilled courses or maritime training. A further four per cent were studying recreational courses, e.g French pastry making (Table B13).

Whilst the majority of Saudi Arabian, Chinese and Russian applicants were coming to study English language (93%, 87% and 86% respectively), less than one-half of Chinese applicants (49%) and hardly any Indians (2%) were coming for this reason. Chinese applicants were the most likely to be attending summer school or exchange programmes (23%), whilst Indians were the most likely to be studying degrees (23%) or maritime courses (21%).

Over two-thirds (69%) were attending courses where accommodation was provided (Table B18).

Table 6: Courses studied by visa nationals

Course Type	Total
English – general	44.9
English – intensive	11.4
Degree	6.7
Other skilled	6.5
Business course	5.6
Summer school	4.8
Recreational	4.4
English – specialist	3.2
Teacher training	3
English – IELTS	2.8
Exchange	2.8
Maritime	2.2
Teaching English as a foreign language	1
Seminar	0.4
Total	**682**

3.4 Qualifications

In a similar fashion to non-visa nationals, only limited information was available on the qualifications the courses would lead to. Most successful applicants stated on their visa application form they would get a certificate or would improve their English rather than the qualification or level of course they were proposing to study. In addition, it was not always clear whether the certificate was for attending the course or for meeting a required level at the end of the course. From the limited information available it was found that 10 per cent were proposing to come to the UK for a degree level course (NQF levels 6 to 8). This included three per cent studying at postgraduate level (NQF level 7).

Figure 4: Level of course (according to the National Qualifications Framework) recorded by successful visa applicants (See Table B14).
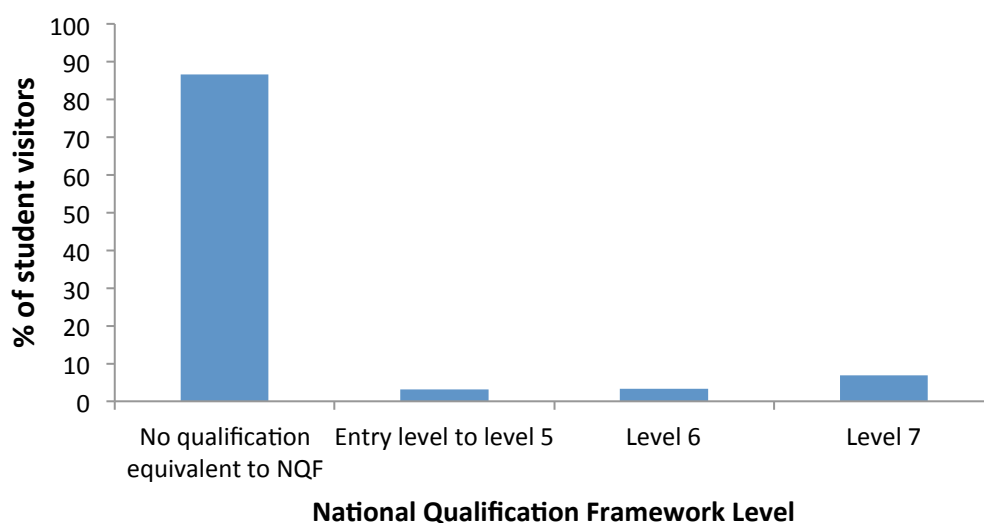
3.5 Institutions, sponsorship and accreditation

The majority of successful applicants (90%) proposed to study at an institution on the Tier 4 Register. This included two per cent proposing to study at legacy institutions and eight per cent at A-Rated institutions (Figure 5 and Table B12).

Figure 5: Tier 4 Register status of institutions attended by successful visa national student visitors (Table B12).
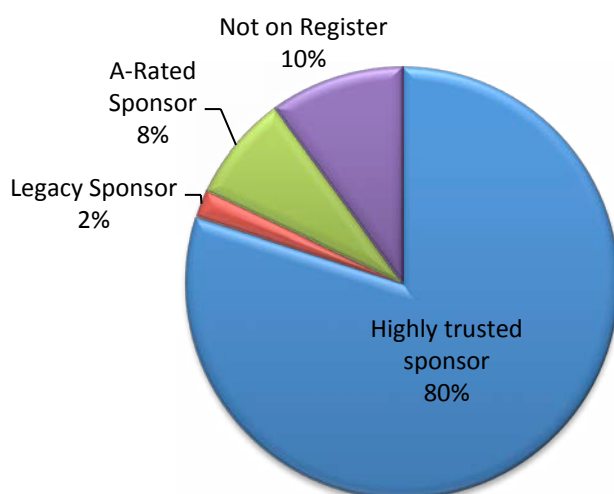
A further nine per cent proposed to study at institutions that were not on the Tier 4 Register but were accredited by Home Office approved organisations. Less than one per cent were attending institutions that had a status which could not be not determined.

The median course length and trip length was longer for successful applicants who proposed to study at institutions with HTS status than for applicants who proposed to study at institutions without HTS status (trip length of 29.5 days compared with 20 days, course length 28 days compared with 20 days).

There were no differences between successful applicants proposing to study at institutions with HTS status and those proposing to study at institutions without HTS status when looking at type of course (English language course compared with other type of course), course fees, or having been refused a visa before.

Additionally, one per cent of student visitors were attending institutions that had their Tier 4 status revoked prior to the time of application. A further five per cent were attending institutions that have since had their Tier 4 status revoked. However, in none of these instances was the sponsor licence revoked for a breach of sponsorship obligations.

3.6 Costs related to study in the UK

The median course fee for successful applicants was £1,457 (range £0 to £57,378, Table B19). Almost 14 per cent of applicants were paying over £4,000 in fees.

The median course fees reported by Russian (£1,120) and Chinese (£1,002) successful applicants were lower than for successful applicants overall (£1,457). The fees reported by Saudi Arabians (£2,465) were higher, but this is likely to reflect the longer length of their proposed courses.

Over one-half (57%) of applicants stated that their course fees included accommodation. Russian (74%) and Chinese (68%) applicants were more likely to be on courses where accommodation was included in the fees, but this was less likely to be the case for Indians (23%). Almost one-half of courses being studied included some or all living expenses (such as meals). Russian applicants (55%) were slightly more likely than all successful applicants (45%) to have living expenses included in the fees (Tables B20 and B21).

Most (72%) of the successful applicants had paid some costs towards their course before submitting their visa application (median £553). Chinese (65%), Turkish (55%) and Saudi Arabian (55%) applicants were less likely than other applicants (72%) to have paid some costs already at the visa application stage, and Russians (87%) more likely to have done so (Tables B23 and B24).

Applicants were also asked what the cost of coming to the UK was to them personally. The median cost was £1,400 (range £0 to £34,000). Over one-fifth (22%) stated it would not cost them anything, because someone else was paying the costs, e.g. a family member or employer (Tables B25 and B26).

3.7 Previous trips

Less than 1 in 5 (19%) successful applicants reported having studied in the UK before (Table B27).

However, many applicants had visited the UK or other countries before. Almost one-third (31%) reported having travelled to the UK within the previous 10 years. Just under three-quarters of these trips (72%) were for study purposes (Tables B28 and B29).

Turkish (12%) and Chinese (5%) successful applicants were much less likely than successful applicants overall (19%) to have studied in the UK before. They were also less likely to have travelled to the UK in the past 10 years (Turkish 16% and Chinese 12%, compared with 31% of successful applicants overall).

One-quarter of successful applicants indicated they had been issued a visa to the UK in the past 10 years. Just over three-quarters of these visas (76%) were for study (Tables B32 and B33). Indian successful applicants were almost twice as likely to have been granted a visa to the UK in the past 10 years than successful applicants overall (47% compared with 25%).

Just under one-quarter (23%) of successful applicants had a previous successful visa application recorded on the Central Reference System (CRS). Of those who had a previous successful application recorded, most had just one application recorded (14%), but a small proportion had between 3 and 10 successful applications recorded (4%). Around 59 per cent of these linked applications were for study purposes (Tables B34 and B35).

Few successful applicants had adverse immigration histories:

- less than one per cent reported having been refused entry to the UK in the past ten years;

- seven per cent reported having been refused a visa (for travel to any country); and

- less than one per cent reported having been deported from any country in the past ten years.

Applicants from three of the top five countries of nationality (Turkey 4%, China 3%, Saudi Arabia 3%) were less likely than successful applicants overall (7%) to have been refused a visa for travel to any country (Tables B36 to B38).

Chapter 4: Student visitors requiring a visa: Unsuccessful applicants

4.1 About unsuccessful applicants

The population of unsuccessful applicants is dominated by applicants from Turkey (18%). Almost one-half of unsuccessful applicants (44%) are from the top five nationalities (Chinese, Indian, Nigerian, Russia and Turkish)

Table 7: Nationalities of unsuccessful visa applicants in sample and population compared

Nationality	Number in sample	% in sample	Number in population	% in population
Chinese	30	9.9	608	8.1
Indian	30	9.9	390	5.2
Nigerian	30	9.9	593	7.9
Russian	30	9.9	360	4.8
Turkish	46	15.1	1,371	18.3
Rest	138	45.4	4,184	55.8
Total	304*	100	7,506	100

*Please note the total number of cases may be less than the sample size as for some cases, data entry fields have been left blank and therefore excluded from the analysis.

The sample was designed to be representative of the population. Weighting was used to adjust for oversampling of some nationalities (Chinese, Indians, Nigerians and Russians).

Analysis of refused applicants by nationality was only possible for Turkish applicants. The majority of Chinese, Nigerian and Indian refused applicants did not have an on-line application form and only limited information was available on the Central Reference System (CRS) for Russian applicants.

Unsuccessful applicants (13%) were less likely than successful applicants (19%) to have dependent children and more than twice as likely to be unemployed as successful visa applicants (17% compared with 7%). Unsuccessful Turkish applicants were less likely to have dependent children (2%) than unsuccessful applicants overall (Tables C3 and C4).

Unsuccessful applicants employed in their country of nationality had a lower median net monthly income than successful applicants (median £610 compared with £1,000, Table C6).

More unsuccessful applicants (16%) had family and friends in the UK than successful applicants (9%) (Table C5).

Unsuccessful applicants were more likely to be male (67%) than successful applicants for which the gender split was roughly equal (48% male, Table C1).

4.2 Courses proposed

In total, 79 per cent of unsuccessful applicants proposed to attend institutions on the Tier 4 Register, a lower proportion than successful applicants (90%, Table C7).

Unsuccessful applicants were more likely to propose studying English language (73%) than successful applicants (64%, Table C8). Turkish unsuccessful applicants were less likely to be proposing to study English language (93%) than unsuccessful applicants overall.

The proposed length of course and intended length of stay in the UK were considerably longer for unsuccessful applicants than successful applicants (median course length 58 days and median trip length 77 days, compared with a median course length of 27 days and trip length of 29 days for successful applicants, Tables C10 and C11).

A slightly smaller proportion of unsuccessful applicants (91%) than successful applicants (96%) had enrolled or been accepted on a course in the UK when they applied for a visa (Table C13).

4.3 Costs related to study in the UK

The data suggest that unsuccessful applicants proposed to attend cheaper courses than successful applicants. The median course fee for unsuccessful applicants (£1,432) was similar to successful applicants (£1,457) but it was more likely to include accommodation and/or living costs (Tables C14, C15 and C16).

A similar proportion of unsuccessful applicants (76%) to successful applicants (72%) had paid some costs towards their course before submitting their visa application (Table C17).

However, costs to the applicant personally were higher for unsuccessful applicants (median £1,985) compared with successful applicants (median £1,400, Table C19). The costs of studying in the UK for Turkish applicants personally (median £2,873) was higher than for unsuccessful applicants overall.

However, Turkish unsuccessful applicants had paid considerably less before submitting their application (median £265) than unsuccessful applicants overall (median £845).

4.4 Previous trips to the UK and immigration history

Unsuccessful applicants were less likely than successful applicants to have travelled to the UK or to other countries before and were more likely than successful applicants to have been refused a visa or refused entry at the border (Tables C20 to C30).

Unsuccessful applicants were less likely than successful applicants to have:

- studied in the UK before (11% compared with 19%);
- travelled to the UK in the last 10 years (17% compared with 31%);
- travelled elsewhere in the last 10 years (58% compared with 72%); or
- been granted a visa to the UK in the last 10 years (15% compared with 25%).

They were more likely than successful applicants to have been:

- refused entry to the UK in the last 10 years (3% compared with 1%); or
- refused a visa for any country (25% compared with 7%).

4.5 Reasons for refusal

The reasons for refusal outlined in the applicants' refusal letter were coded (Table 8 below). Each refused case may have been given more than one reason for refusal. Each of the following reasons were given in around one-half of all cases;

- insufficient documents/information submitted;
- no intention to leave UK after studies;
- no intention to study/seeking employment; and
- funds not genuinely available.

Table 8: Reasons for refusal

	Applicants	% of all reasons given	% of cases with this reason
Insufficient documents/information submitted	151	19.0	50.4
No intention to leave UK after studies	138	17.4	46.2
No intention to study/seeking employment	136	17.2	45.7
Funds not genuinely available	125	15.9	42.2
Studies are inconsistent with student/employment history	79	10.1	26.8
Inconsistencies in the evidence/information provided	46	5.8	15.2
Photocopied/unofficial documents not accepted	28	3.2	8.5
Deception – false representations/documents	24	3.0	8.1
Sponsor not licensed/accredited	17	1.9	5.1
Adverse immigration history	13	1.5	4.1
Studies fall under Tier 4 not Student Visitor	11	1.1	2.9
Not enrolled on a course of study	9	0.9	2.5
Other reasons for refusal	22	2.8	7.2
Total	799	100.0	