

## **FIE submission to APPG for International Students Inquiry**

**FIE: Foundation for International Education** is a London-based non-profit educational organization, providing customized partnership programs and individual student enrolment programs in London, Dublin, and Amman for undergraduate students.

Students from over 50 US colleges and universities attend our study abroad programs. As part of their academic undergraduate experience abroad, our students have the option to enrol in Study or Study and Internship programs in London or Dublin for a semester or quarter throughout the academic year. Students can study a variety of academic subjects while with FIE London or Dublin, including Art, Business, Communications, History, Literature, Politics, and Theatre. We also offer a summer Study program exclusively for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Amman, Jordan.

FIE supports students not only academically, but with our dedicated Student Life, Residence Life, and Administration teams who provide guidance and assistance on day-to-day matters while abroad.

### **Written Evidence:**

#### **In the classroom**

Students that come to study with us in London return to their home countries (for us, by and large their home country is the United States) and spread the message that traveling, living, and studying abroad are not only possible, but desirable. In this way they go on to become ambassadors for London, the UK, and Europe.

They actively correct misconceptions and spread messages of global connection. Students who study in London gain a deeper understanding of the place which in turn they communicate more broadly to their home communities.

They gain real-world experience that shapes who they are and their plans for their lives. While these sorts of experiences could technically speaking, happen anywhere, by virtue of happening in London and the broader UK, students who study in the UK are more likely to seek future employment here. Their time in London is formative for them and shapes their future career and life decisions.

#### **In the community**

While they are in London, students on study abroad programs explore and appreciate London and the UK. They inject money into the tourist economy as well as the local economy, as do their families who often come to visit them. They buy clothes, food, and other staples. When they return home, they often leave some of these behind, which we donate in turn.

Many students make friends and enter into relationships that give them lasting connections to the UK.

The students who come to study with our organisation don't just get to experience living and studying in the UK, they actively contribute to the economy through work placements (internships). Most of our placements last just 21 days (3 days per week for 7 weeks). Though it may seem short, we observe incredible student transformations during that time. Students report improvements in their confidence, independence and adaptability. They are better able to negotiate difference and cope with intercultural nuance. When these students return home, they bring fond memories of their time in the UK and plans to return for future tourism or even graduate studies. They also carry home strong ties to their British friends and colleagues. We've seen former interns go on to be brand ambassadors in their home countries, introducing their former internship hosts to new markets and increasing brand awareness.

The companies, charities and other organisation where students are based during their internships also see enormous benefits. The students produce work product during their internship, but also bring new international insights and fresh enthusiasm. Because the placements are so short they do not displace local workers, but they do allow companies to experiment with new ideas, services and roles. We mostly partner with SMEs and start-ups, and have countless stories of successful internship placements leading to new product launches, entry into new markets, and increased hiring. Our students always return to their home country at the end of their programmes, but the benefits to the host placements are lasting.

### **Immigration issues**

As the two main immigration routes for students (Short-Term Study and Tier 4 General) were not designed with study abroad in mind, we often face difficulty with the Home Office in terms to their understanding of our programmes, and how the immigration rules apply to them.

We have faced significant issues over the last few years with visa errors, both from the UKVI and the Border Force; we continually try to address this with those two branches of the Home Office and raise their awareness of how the rules pertain to study abroad. For example:

- Over the last year, the UKVI have a 92% error rate when issuing Tier 4 visas for our students – these errors are predominantly related to work rights, but also frequently with the dates of validity. I believe this may be to do with the fact the UKVI are no longer accustomed to issuing full-length visa vignettes since the advent of BRP collection, however, it still causes substantial disruption and cost to have the errors amended.
- The Border Force Officers often misinterpret the rules as they apply to study abroad in two ways:
  - **Short-Term Study:** They issue Standard Visitor entry stamps for students on short-term programmes, even though the students present letters confirming they intend to register on a study abroad programme and so are requesting Short-Term Student entry permission.
  - **Tier 4 General:** They often see the Tier 4 vignette in the student's passport but decide not to validate it with an entry stamp, choosing instead to give the student a Short-Term Study entry stamp as their programme is less than 6 months. This is incorrect, as our Tier 4 students undertake assessed work placements, which is not permitted under the STSV route.

As the students are extremely low-risk (and in the vast majority of cases not eligible to apply for leave to remain in the UK), it would be extremely beneficial for the Home Office to find a way of improving their experience of obtaining the correct permission to study and intern for short periods. I would suggest that this would involve not putting them through the same process as long-term students who obtain their final qualifications in the UK, especially as this seems to create a significant number of errors for the Home Office to correct.