

APPG for International Students Inquiry: A Sustainable Future for International Students in the UK?

Submission from Kaplan International
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Kaplan International welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the APPG for International Students Inquiry: A Sustainable Future for International Students in the UK.

Kaplan is a leading provider of education for international students, both at our English language schools and university pathway colleges in the UK and in some of the UK's competitor countries (United States, Canada, Ireland, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand).

In the established university pathway sector, Kaplan International Pathways works in partnership with 40 leading universities around the world and 16 in the UK. Pathway courses prepare international students wishing to progress into higher education studies with academic skills, key subject knowledge and English language ability. Together, the five largest pathway providers partner with 64 universities in the UK supporting the higher education sector in achieving its internationalisation and diversity goals. Kaplan International English provides world-class English language education in nine UK cities to students from around the world, helping individuals to gain the skills needed to progress their future careers, the opportunity to meet people from different countries, and the possibility to experience a new culture and way of life.

Kaplan's responses for this inquiry draw largely from our direct experience of recruiting, educating, supporting and providing accommodation for, international students. Our comments come from both English language school and pathway provider perspectives.

In the classroom

Higher Education

Research by Kaplan and the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) ¹ into the views of higher education applicants on studying alongside international students and being taught by international staff revealed that not only do the vast majority applying for higher education expect to study alongside students from other countries, but they are positively attracted by the possibility of learning alongside people from the rest of the world. While not naïve about some of the potential challenges in the classroom, they are international in outlook and see more positives than negatives.

Building on this study, HEPI and the Higher Education Academy explored the views of students with experience of higher education² on studying alongside international students and the results suggest these students recognise the benefits that accrue from studying in a diverse environment. Together, the two pieces of research reveal a positive but nuanced picture of the educational benefits that international students bring to the UK.

¹ "What do prospective students think about international students", HEPI and Kaplan International, HEPI report 74, March 2015.

² "What do home students think of studying with international students?", HEPI and HEA, HEPI report 76, June 2015.

Integration is a key element of university pathway programmes

Embedded pathway colleges integrate international students on the university campuses where they plan to eventually study their degree. Students study and live on the university campus and are registered as university students during their year of pathway programme study, bringing them into contact with UK home students. The following are examples of the integration of international students during their studies at a Kaplan college. They learn and socialise alongside UK students, meet community members, and experience local businesses and culture.

At Kaplan's University of Brighton International College (UBIC), Business Hospitality Tourism and Social Science students (BHTSS) have the opportunity to take part in 'Development Centres' which host team activities for first year university Business School students. In these 'Development Centres' both international and home students work in groups to build a bridge and prepare presentations.

Hospitality students at UBIC work in the Culinary Arts Studio at the Eastbourne campus, serving members of the public in a student-run restaurant as part of their training to become restaurant and hotel managers.

<http://www.culinaryartsstudio.co.uk/facilities/>

UBIC Art, Design and Media students have access to many of the University of Brighton's facilities and have the opportunity to work with University technical staff who guide students through their creative projects. Workshops are often timetabled so that university students use the facilities at the same time as UBIC students. Our pathway students also benefit from regular public-facing exhibitions in the Edward Street campus.

At Kaplan's Liverpool International College (LIC), operated in partnership with the University of Liverpool, Travel and Tourism students from the local Further Education College join the Welcome Week at the College, leading activities and guiding the new students, and the arriving international students share their own experiences and perspectives.

Bournemouth University's "Computing in Business Week" is hosted at Kaplan's pathway college, Bournemouth University International College, and 250 university students studying computing work on a one-week assessed project to design a database. They present back to exhibition stands on the final day. Our pathway college students visit the stands and are able to ask the students questions about the work they've done, as well as get an idea of the kinds of projects, group work and presentations they will be doing when they have progressed to the university. Students also participate in the launch of the Global Buddies scheme for the academic year.

The importance of English language study abroad

The traditional study abroad model for English language learning is changing to incorporate more in-country, self-study tuition, virtual learning and practice opportunities via internet (for receptive practice and exposure to natural, authentic language) and social media (for productive as well as receptive practice). However, we are seeing that students are increasingly frustrated by their inability to activate the language they have acquired in meaningful, purposeful communicative contexts, and this has a damaging effect on their confidence, motivation, and general awareness of the value of English language communicative competence in the world today.

By coming to the UK for a language course, international students have access to a far wider and richer range of communicative practice opportunities than is possible at home. Kaplan is adapting our programmes to our students' changing needs by offering structured and systematic access to integrated linguistic and cultural learning and practice opportunities via our social activity

programmes and accommodation programmes. Previously, these were additional to the tuition programme, but now they increasingly feature prominently in the learning curriculum.

The learning and practice opportunities embedded in the social activity programmes and scaffolded by the tuition programme, the chance to be actively immersed in authentic domestic situations via homestay and residence accommodation provision, and the obvious opportunities which being surrounded by the culture of the language affords them, are of immense value to learners in terms of bridging the gap between mechanical, teacher-led, form-based classroom tuition (which can only ever take them so far) and the growing need for them to be able to employ English as a means of accessing the wider world for professional, social and personal developmental reasons.

In our communities

LOTC

Kaplan schools and colleges offer a range of activities and opportunities referred to as 'Learning Outside the Classroom' (LOTC) aimed at promoting and supporting students' learning, social integration, acculturation and general skills. Some examples are:

At Kaplan's University of Brighton International College (UBIC), LOTC is embedded in Art Design and Media teaching. Many of the ADM staff are practitioners themselves and provide opportunities for UBIC students including group exhibitions that are open to the public at the Phoenix and Community Arts Centre. Students are integrated into Brighton's annual Festival of Arts events and are able to evidence visits to galleries, studios and events outside usual teaching hours as part of their assessment.

Law students at Liverpool International College (LIC) regularly attend networking events in the University's law department. LIC students also take part in the Liverpool Challenge - a competition run by local businesses to pitch business ideas.

Nottingham Trent International College students recently took part in Nottingham Activities Weekend with events across the city including the Nottingham Food Festival, a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream, Nottingham Carnival, Nottingham Caves Tour and activities in Sherwood Forest. Students said they had enjoyed meeting local people and that it had helped their English competence.

LOTC at Bournemouth University International College includes The Big Pitch, a two-week project which involves researching and visiting local high streets, interviewing local residents and business owners and presenting back to a panel of local business leaders and university lecturers. As part of the One World By The Sea international festival, launched by the International Education Forum, the College hosts a World Discovery Event which is open to the public and involves our international students offering 15-minute cultural challenges, running an interactive quiz, and taking part in various workshops. In 2018, attendees will also include three primary schools classes. Our students hand out flyers in the Bournemouth town centre and talk about their national dress on stage during the International Family Day on the last day of the festival.

Our Bournemouth students fund-raise for local charities including the Linwood special school which sends classes of older pupils to regularly visit the College's Compass restaurant as part of their life skills development. The College is currently working to set up links with a home for elderly people with dementia which will give the international students an opportunity to work with a different demographic in the city.

The Compass restaurant is open to the public and students meet members of the community who come to the restaurant. The College is a member of the Dorset Chamber of Commerce and Industry and hosts meetings for the Chamber, as well as for the Bournemouth Tourism Marketing Board, the town centre BID, and charities such as Dorset MIND. These local business links provide invaluable networking and other opportunities to the international students and through these links, the College has been able to invite in a number of guest lecturers.

International students from Kaplan's English school in Manchester volunteer on the International Society's programme to teach British primary school children about different cultures around the world with the aim of raising awareness and reducing racism and prejudice. The society visits schools with a giant inflatable globe and the children "fly" around the globe with imaginary rockets, visiting their volunteers' home countries, learning about their cultures and lifestyles and then receiving a stamp in their mini-passports before "flying" on to the next volunteer's country. Kaplan's international students find this experience invaluable. They see first-hand how open-minded and interested about other cultures the Manchester school children are and they practise their English while teaching the children about their home countries.

At Kaplan's Torquay English school, international students have the opportunity to train and play football along with the local community through a relationship with the Torquay United Football Club. Also, as the birthplace and home of Agatha Christie, the students interact with local actors at the annual Agatha Christie festival and watch local theatre productions of Agatha Christie's plays.

Home stay

A critical element of the successful integration of international students is a positive experience with the home they make in the UK. One of the core elements of an English language programme is to live with a "host" family where the student has a 24/7 classroom continuing to learn and interact with their hosts in English. This helps them understand British social and family culture. These home stays greatly benefit the host families as well as the students. We asked some of our families for their experiences:

"We have had many international students to stay with us each one has greatly enhanced our - and their - understanding of other cultures and ways of living, in really unique and valuable ways that would never have come about without Kaplan."

"Judith from Switzerland stayed with us for four months. After a first couple of days where she cried silent tears at every mealtime, Judith's confidence quickly grew, to the extent that by the end of her time with us, she was partying until late with new friends, taking us out for meals and ordering in English, and playing happily with our two children in the garden. Since her stay, we have hosted her parents, two of her best friends, and her brother and sister, and she has become a great family friend. Our meals with Judith and her family saw us covering diverse international topics and all of us understanding them from different perspectives. Her stay with us has created firm bonds between families in Oxford, Switzerland and the Middle East that would never have otherwise come about. I fully envisage my young children visiting her, wherever she lives in the world, when they're older."

"Hosting international students has been a really important way of us teaching our children about different parts of the world and increasing our world view as well. Long may it continue!"

"I have been hosting international students for over 25 years. My son has grown up understanding the need to understand different cultures worldwide, how despite us all being individual we are all

human with common needs and likes and dislikes. Hosting students has engendered a curiosity about the world and languages which otherwise may not have been.”

“We are still in touch with several of our students who we have visited in their home countries and who have visited us, one still after 25 years! We can honestly say we have loved some of our students as if they were our own and have felt a huge loss when they have left us. This experience can foster a sense of tolerance and understanding of other cultures otherwise not available to some families who cannot travel the world themselves.”

“I stay in regular contact with students I have hosted over the years. We exchange Christmas cards, Skype and are friends on Facebook. I had a student who fell in love with my cooking. She got me to show her how to make some of the dishes I made before she went home. I also had to write out the recipes for her. To this day we still exchange recipes on line.”

“We’ve hosted international students for almost 16 years now and made so many friends on the way. We keep in touch with the majority of and have had a few come back to visit. Our children are so much more confident at meeting new people compared with other kids we know. They have learnt a lot about different languages, food, cultures and currencies. The students themselves have had a great time with us and many have commented on how speaking English at home with us has accelerated their learning. They have celebrated birthdays, Christmas, Eid and even a housewarming party with us and becoming a real member of the household.”

For our regions and nations

A report³ commissioned by Kaplan and HEPI from London Economics in January (2018) on the costs and benefits of international students showed that the benefits of international students are ten times greater than the costs and are worth £310 per every UK resident per annum.

Our study calculated that the benefit to the UK of hosting international students is £22.64 billion for a single cohort (2015/16) of students. After subtracting their costs of £2.30 billion, there is a net benefit of £20.34 billion to the UK economy per cohort over the duration of their studies – an average of £31.3 million per parliamentary constituency.

The analysis shows that international students have an impact across the entire United Kingdom, varying from a £0.2bn net economic contribution from international students in Northern Ireland to £4.6bn generated by international students attending HEIs in London. The net economic contribution generated by international students based in the South East was estimated to be £2.4bn, compared to £1.9bn in the West Midlands, £1.9bn in the North West, £1.6bn in Yorkshire and the Humber, £1.3bn in the East of England, £1.3bn in the East Midlands, £1.2bn in the South West, and £1.0bn in the North East.

Nine of Kaplan’s ten pathway colleges and eight of Kaplan’s ten English language schools are located outside London. We continue to attract an increasing number of students year-on-year to smaller towns and cities which appeal to parents and students for their lower cost, safety and travel accessibility. Tradition, culture, sports and leisure facilities are other factors, including world-ranking football teams. Manchester United has made Manchester a number one choice for many international students. We consistently receive positive feedback on these regional locations, with high scores for student experience and welcome.

³ “*The costs and benefits of international students by parliamentary constituency*”, published by HEPI and Kaplan, undertaken by London Economics, January 2018, <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Economic-benefits-of-international-students-by-constituency-Final-11-01-2018.pdf>

University rankings are a key element in promoting cities outside London and the South East, and international students pay close attention to these rankings when choosing a UK university. There are many highly ranked universities outside of London, and Kaplan partners with a number of them (the universities in Birmingham, Glasgow, Liverpool, Nottingham and York are all ranked within the top 30).

To support the success of universities outside of the Southeast, it is critically important for education providers to work collaboratively with other parts of the education sector, and with local businesses, Chambers of Commerce, local Councils, and tourism boards to promote their region, city or town. One shining example of this is the International Education Forum in Bournemouth, a unique collaborative group including representation from universities, colleges and language schools as well as the Council, with the objective of marketing Bournemouth and Poole as top international education destinations.

For research, trade and soft power

Post-study work

The current UK post-study work offering is very limited and, therefore, there is very little transfer post-study from a Tier 4 to Tier 2 visa. Out of the total number of international students studying in 2016, only 6,000 students made this transfer.

In recent years, our competitor countries have been making their post-study work offerings more attractive for international students which, considering our relatively restrictive regime which includes high minimum salary requirements, poses a serious threat to our ability to attract international students. For example, the US allows students to apply for Optional Practical Training visas of 12 months, or 36 months for STEM graduates; Canada allows students to remain in country for the same duration as their length of study without condition of a specific job offer; New Zealand allows a 12 month job search period post-study; and Australia allows graduates to remain in country for between two and four years, depending on the level of their qualification.⁴

Soft power

International students play perhaps one of the strongest and most effective roles in promoting Britain abroad. Students develop favourable impressions, cherished memories, and brand loyalties during the most formative periods in their lives and these are shared more widely with their friends and family, many of whom visit during a student's association with the UK. International students are more likely to return to the UK throughout their lives on holiday. And, living in the UK for an extended period of time makes international students more familiar with, and loyal to, British products, resulting in a boost to demand for British exports even after international students return home. All of these impacts have potentially considerable impacts on the UK economy and political influence abroad.

⁴"Parliamentary briefing: Lord Hannay amendment to the Higher Education and Research Bill: International students and staff", Universities UK, March, 2017, <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/parliamentary-briefing-herb-lord-hannay-amendment.aspx>

Actions

We need to make our post-study work offer more attractive and relevant to the regional employment needs of the UK. Once an international student has graduated from a UK university, the potential to work here for a period of time in a related field has obvious benefits for the student and also, importantly, for the UK economy as we plan for skills challenges post-Brexit. Different salary thresholds for Tier 2 visas could be applied for different parts of the UK rather than the current threshold of £21,000 across the country which drives many graduates into London.

We need accurate and reliable data with which to develop policy. Robust statistics are required for international students. Policy should not be based on experimental data as it has been in the past.

Parity and equity: The examples above show the extent to which international students are integrated into their colleges, schools and surrounding communities from the time they arrive, contributing to the success of diverse communities. The importance of developing a diverse international student base has been emphasised by the Universities Minister Sam Gyimah as a key element to the success of our higher education sector. And yet, our visa policy employs a risk-based list of countries that skews diversity towards a few. There must be parity in the treatment of institutions in the visa process, and students, once it is shown they meet our essential, basic requirements, must be treated equally regardless of their origin.

International students must come out of the net migration targets. As can be seen from the plethora of examples we have provided related to our pathway colleges and English language schools, not to mention communities across the UK, students are not migrants and are certainly not seen as migrants. They come to the UK to study, not work. And they plan to return home. The message we give to prospective students and their families around the world is proving to have a significant impact on the attractiveness of the UK as a destination for study. And as our competitor countries increase their offers, it is more important than ever to welcome, and be seen to be welcoming, students from every part of the world.