

## **Your request**

You asked: Could you supply all documentation held by the Scottish Government, including correspondence sent and received (including internal), minutes/notes from meetings, briefings, analysis, about the impact on universities of the immigration changes to student visas, from the last three months?

## **Response to your request**

I enclose a copy of the information you requested in Annex [X]. Within the documents requested, some information has been identified as exempt. The exemptions applied are summarised below and are clearly marked on the documents in Annex [X]

Exemptions apply under:

Section 38(1)(b) – personal data

Section 30(b)(i) – free and frank provision of advice

Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation

## **DOCUMENT 1**

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

**Subject:** RE: Topical PQ - 18 November - S6T-02757 - University of Edinburgh - Known supplementaries

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

Apologies but we now have updated text to the answer to the first supp. from policy leads. Both questions and answers are copied below again for ease and sections in highlight where additions have been made by [redacted s.38(1)(b)], copied.

*“The Minister will be aware that some of the pressures on Edinburgh university, indeed on all our universities, are external. What does he consider are the most challenging and urgent pressures, and what role is a hostile immigration policy playing?”*

- There a number of factors impacting the financial position of universities across the UK, including the increase to employer national insurance contributions, which is estimated to cost Scottish universities over £48 million. The UK Government has not provided financial support for this increase.
- Recent hostile changes to the immigration system, including restrictions on dependent visas for most international students, the increased salary threshold for the Skilled Worker visa, and the planned reduction to the Graduate Visa route from 24 months to 18 months, will significantly hamper the ability of universities to welcome the brightest and best talent from across the world to Scotland. The drop in international student numbers revealed in the most recent HESA publication clearly demonstrated the impact of the ban on dependant visas.
- The Scottish Government has repeatedly called on UK Government Ministers to take a more collaborative approach to migration to ensure that the system meets Scotland’s needs. It is disappointing that the Home Office have reduced the length of the Graduate Visa Route despite our asks for a specific Scottish Graduate Visa which would give international graduates of Scottish Universities an additional two years to gain the professional experience required to qualify for roles on the Skilled Worker Visa route

*“Both Labour and Conservatives have implemented tuition fees for students and might argue that this source of revenue would help Scotland’s universities to address their cost pressures. What is the Minister’s view?”*

- The Scottish Government continues to engage with the university sector to ensure the long-term sustainability of funding and success for Scottish universities - from the very clear starting point that we will not introduce tuition fees.
- Access to university must remain based on the ability to learn, and not the ability to pay. As a consequence of our free tuition policy, average student loan debt for

Scottish students is the lowest in the UK, ensuring that they do not incur additional debt of up to £28,605 a year.

Thanks

[redacted s.38(1)(b)],

[redacted s.38(1)(b)],

**University Governance & Engagement / Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills / Scottish Government**

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**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

**Subject:** RE: Topical PQ - 18 November - S6T-02757 - University of Edinburgh - Known supplementaries

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

Draft answers below for each of the known supplementaries:

*“The Minister will be aware that some of the pressures on Edinburgh university, indeed on all our universities, are external. What does he consider are the most challenging and urgent pressures, and what role is a hostile immigration policy playing?”*

- There a number of factors impacting the financial position of universities across the UK, including the increase to employer national insurance contributions, which is estimated to cost Scottish universities over £48 million. The UK Government has not provided financial support for this increase.
- Recent hostile changes to the immigration system, including restrictions on dependent visas for most international students and the significant increase to the Skilled Worker visa salary threshold, have significantly hampered the ability of universities to welcome the brightest and best talent from across the world to Scotland. The drop in international student numbers revealed in the most recent HESA publication clearly demonstrated the impact of this.
- The Scottish Government has repeatedly called on UK Government Ministers to take a more collaborative approach to migration to ensure that the system meets Scotland’s needs.

*“Both Labour and Conservatives have implemented tuition fees for students and might argue that this source of revenue would help Scotland’s universities to address their cost pressures. What is the Minister’s view?”*

- The Scottish Government continues to engage with the university sector to ensure the long-term sustainability of funding and success for Scottish universities - from the very clear starting point that we will not introduce tuition fees.
- Access to university must remain based on the ability to learn, and not the ability to pay. As a consequence of our free tuition policy, average student loan debt for Scottish students is the lowest in the UK, ensuring that they do not incur additional debt of up to £28,605 a year.

Thanks,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

[[redacted s.38(1)(b)], **Senior Policy Officer | University Governance | Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills | Scottish Government**

5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

## **DOCUMENT 2 (EXTRACT)**

### **SG INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY**

**The Scottish Government is clear that international students, academics and research staff in our world-class universities make a vital contribution to Scotland's prosperity. We therefore welcome international students who come to Scotland to study, contributing to our economy and our communities.**

- We need an immigration system that supports our higher education sector to deliver the best learning, the best research and the best experience for the most able students, anywhere in the world, who choose to study in Scotland.
- Our International Education Strategy's first annual report, published on 28 March, sets out the progress we are making alongside sector partners to attract students, staff, and researchers from outside the UK; help diversify our international student population, and support them to maximise their contribution to Scotland.
- We have announced proposals for a Scottish Graduate Visa, to support a clear pathway for international students to build their careers in Scotland and contribute to our economy and wider society.
- The Scottish Graduate Visa would act as bridge between the existing Graduate Visa and a Skilled Worker Visa. This would give international graduates who studied in Scotland an additional 2 years to develop their career to meet the salary threshold.
- The Home Office's intention to *reduce* the duration of the existing UK-wide Graduate Visa from 24 months to 18 months is wrong and demonstrates that the policy approach to migration is not reflective of the needs of Scotland or the Higher Education sector.
- The Home Office have committed to consult with the devolved governments on the implementation of the international student income levy, with more details expected in the Autumn Budget.
- Scottish Ministers have been clear that they do not intend to introduce such a levy in Scotland.

## **DOCUMENT 3 (EXTRACT)**

### **University of Edinburgh – Industrial dispute and UCU strike action - Background**

1. On 25 February the Principal of Edinburgh University issued a message to staff confirming plans to proceed with a cost-savings programme to secure a sustainable surplus position by 2026-27 and close a £140m gap in its finances (c.10% of annual turnover), noting that the University's running costs are c.£120m per month.
2. Beyond staff savings, including potential redundancies, the programme will also review capital expenditure on estates, seek to lower other operational costs, and review both teaching & learning and research & innovation. The University have stressed to Ministers that the £140m savings they are seeking should not be interpreted as a deficit, despite media reports, and that the University is still generating an operational surplus.
3. In setting out its rationale for this cost-saving programme to staff, the University set out a number of factors:
  - a. "flat cash (at best) government funding and longstanding inadequate funding of home undergraduate places";
  - b. "inflation";
  - c. Increasing staff costs due to "cost of living pay awards" and "a significant increase to employers' national insurance contributions";
  - d. "post-Covid supply-chain issues";
  - e. "steeply rising utilities costs at least partly attributable to war in Europe";
  - f. "reduction in the attractiveness of the UK as a destination for international students, due to: inclusion of students in net migration numbers; new legislation especially around dependent visa; geo-politics and economic factors, including the currency crisis in Nigeria; increasing competition amongst UK providers".
4. At an appearance before the Education, Children and Young People (ECYP) Committee on 4 June, the Principal of the University of Edinburgh, Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, advised that, although the UK Government's increase in tuition fees announced last year would provide an additional £3.5m of additional income, this would be offset by an additional cost of £14.5m arising from the increase to employer national insurance contributions.
5. As the same ECYP Committee appearance, Professor Mathieson advised that, although "international student application numbers remain high", "we have not achieved the budget that we had set in the past two years", and "the competition is much stiffer, as many more people are seeking to recruit those students"....."we are trying to have more recruitment from India, but it is very visa dependent".

## **DOCUMENT 4 (EXTRACT)**

### **UKG Immigration White Paper**

[Section 30(b)(i)]

#### ***Lines to take:***

- The Scottish Government has been clear in engagement with the Home Office that, whilst we are seeking a reform and redesign of the immigration system to meet Scotland's needs, including through the introduction of tailored migration route, our policy position to date has not been to seek devolution of immigration powers.
- I understand that my officials are working with US and SFC officials to identify any measures that may help mitigate the impacts of the White Paper proposals.

## **DOCUMENT 5 (EXTRACT)**

### **TRIENNIAL MEETING WITH UNIVERSITIES SCOTLAND – 17 SEPTEMBER 2025 – NOTE**

#### **Attendees:**

- Graeme Dey MSP, Minister for Higher and Further Education
- Section 38(1)(b), Head of Sector Outcomes and Assurance, Scottish Government
- Section 38(1)(b), Senior Policy Officer, Institutional Governance and Reform, Scottish Government
- Professor James Miller, Convener, Universities Scotland
- Claire McPherson, Director, Universities Scotland
- Section 38(1)(b), Head of Public Affairs and Communications, Universities Scotland

#### **Student mobility**

Section 30(b)(ii)

**DOCUMENT 6 (EXTRACT)**

**UNIVERSITIES TRIPARTITE GROUP ON 21 MAY 2025 – NOTE**

**UKG Immigration White Paper**

Section 30(b)(ii)

**ANNEX G**

## Document 7

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 13 October 2025 17:43  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: Graduate route implementation  
[redacted out of scope]

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

Thanks for your email [redacted s.30(b)(ii)]. I'll make sure to follow up with any questions that I or Higher Education colleagues have following tomorrow's update meeting.

I'm sure you'll be aware that in January we published a proposal to increase the graduate route length for those looking to stay in Scotland after graduating from a Scottish institution, and that this proposal was also included in our contribution to the development of the White Paper in March. The move to shorten the length of the route is therefore likely to be received with disappointment in Scotland. [redacted s.28(1)]

Thanks and kindest,  
[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

*Please direct migration queries to the Migration Strategy Team inbox, [migration@gov.scot](mailto:migration@gov.scot)*

[redacted s.38(1)(b)] | Migration Strategy Team Leader | Population and Migration Division | Directorate for Culture and External Affairs | Scottish Government

[redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot



**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @[redacted s.28(1)]  
**Sent:** 13 October 2025 16:49  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @[redacted s.28(1)] >  
**Subject:** Graduate route implementation

[redacted s.38(1)(b)] [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

I hope you are both well, and it was good to speak to you last week.

[redacted s.28(1)] The Graduate route currently allows eligible graduates who have successfully completed a UK bachelor's degree, master's degree, or other relevant qualification to remain in the UK for two years, and PhD graduates for three years. The change to 18 months will apply to applications submitted on or after 1 January 2027, with PhD graduates continuing to receive

three years of permission. There is an update meeting tomorrow that I believe you are both attending to discuss this and other updates[redacted s.28(1)]

Thank you

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

[redacted s.28(1)]

[redacted s.28(1)]

## **DOCUMENT 8**

**From**[redacted s.38(1)(b)] on behalf of Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills 2024  
**Sent:** 20 October 2025 12:22  
**Subject:** RE: ROUTINE - Submission - Minister for Equalities - Cabinet Secretaries - Immigration White Paper engagement  
**Attachments:** ROUTINE - Submission - Minister for Equalities - Cabinet Secretaries - Immigration White Paper engagement - October 2025.docx  
[redacted out of scope]

**This email is for the official record and confirms a Ministerial Decision. This email must be placed in the official record (eRDM) by your team in line with SG records management policy.**

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Ms Gilruth is content with Option 2 for her interests [redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

Many thanks,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

[redacted s.38(1)(b)] | **Deputy Private Secretary | Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills**  
(: [redacted s.38(1)(b)] | St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

Ms Gilruth's Ministerial Preferences can be found here

Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>

**Sent:** 15 October 2025 12:59

**To:** First Minister <FirstMinister@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Gaelic <DFMCSEG@gov.scot>; Minister for Equalities <MinisterforEqualities@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice 2024 <CabSecforSJ@gov.scot>; Communications Justice and Home Affairs <CommunicationsJusticeAndHomeAffairs@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills 2024 <CabSecES2024@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture 2024 <CabSecCEAC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care 2024 <CabSecHSC@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands 2024 <CabSecforRALRI@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Finance & Local Government <CabSecFLG@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy <CabSecforCAE@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Transport <CabSecfortransport@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Housing <CabSecHousing@gov.scot>; Spads Admin <Spads\_Admin@gov.scot>; David Hutchison <David.Hutchison@gov.scot>; Jeanette Campbell <Jeanette.Campbell@gov.scot>; Kate Higgins <Kate.Higgins@gov.scot>; Emily Mackintosh <Emily.Mackintosh@gov.scot>; Sean McGivern <Sean.McGivern@gov.scot>; Erin Mckee <Erin.Mckee@gov.scot>; Jack Middleton <Jack.Middleton@gov.scot>; Emilie-Louise Purdie <Emilie-Louise.Purdie@gov.scot>; Ian Muirhead <Ian.Muirhead@gov.scot>; Social Justice Mailbox <SocialJusticeMailbox@gov.scot>; Shona Riach <Shona.Riach@gov.scot>; Neil Rennick <Neil.Rennick@gov.scot>; Gregor Irwin <Gregor.Irwin@gov.scot>; Caroline Lamb <Caroline.Lamb@gov.scot>; Roy Brannen <Roy.Brannen@gov.scot>; Aidan Grisewood <Aidan.Grisewood@gov.scot>; Kenneth Hogg <Kenneth.Hogg@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]



**DOCUMENT 9**

**From:** [redacted s.28(1)]  
**Sent:** 22 October 2025 16:17  
**Subject:** [redacted s.28(1)]  
**Attachments:** [redacted s.28(1)]

[redacted out of scope]  
[redacted s.28(1)]

Please find attached [redacted s.28(1)] Q&A document, which outlines key changes introduced as part of the Autumn 2025 Immigration Rules laid before Parliament on 14 November. This resource is intended to support understanding across the sector so please feel free to share.

We hope you find it helpful.

Kind regards  
[redacted s.28(1)]

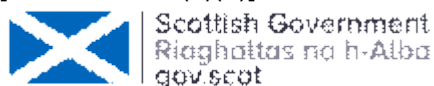
## **Document 10**

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 31 October 2025 13:27  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]; Migration Mailbox  
**Subject:** RE: Line request - [redacted out of scope]

Thanks [redacted s.38(1)(b)] greatly appreciated !

[redacted s.38(1)(b)] | Policy Official  
Economic Strategy and Delivery  
Directorate for Jobs and Wellbeing Economy  
DG Economy | Scottish Government  
5 Atlantic Quay | 150 Broomielaw | Glasgow | G2 8LU

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]



**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 31 October 2025 13:13  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; Migration Mailbox <Migration@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Line request - COP Today - [redacted out of scope]

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

Thanks for getting in touch. Hopefully, the following lines are helpful but let me know if you need anything different:

[redacted out of scope]

### UK GOVERNMENT'S IMMIGRATION WHITE PAPER

- The UK Government's Immigration White Paper published in May fails to reflect our distinct requirements of the Immigration System and pose a significant risk to Scotland's economy, communities, and public services.
- A one-size fits all approach to immigration fails to meet the needs of Scotland and much of the UK.
- The changes to the Skilled Worker Visa salary and skills thresholds will only serve to make it harder for Scottish businesses across multiple sectors to fill vacancies
- Stakeholders across Scotland and the rest of the UK have already begun to raise significant concerns with the announced rule changes. These concerns will be reflected in the Scottish Government's engagement with the Home Office.

TAILORED MIGRATION

- Following the publication of the UK Government's Immigration White Paper earlier this year, the need for a tailored approach to migration in Scotland remains urgent.
- Stakeholders tell us that the immigration system already requires significant change to better support Scotland's public services, communities, and economy; the UK Government's proposals will only exacerbate existing challenges.
- Our tailored migration proposals were developed in collaboration with stakeholders across Scotland and would all be deliverable within the existing framework of the UK immigration system.
- We have published three proposal papers since 2020 calling for changes to the existing immigration system.
- Our proposals include a Rural Visa Pilot, a Scottish Graduate Visa and a Scottish Visa linked to a Scottish tax code, that each address the distinct economic and demographic challenges Scotland faces.

#### SCOTTISH GRADUATE VISA

- Scottish ministers have been consistently clear about the devastating consequences that the UK Government's approach to migration has had on Scotland's education sector and our economy to date.
- Planned changes to the Graduate Visa route are short-sighted and will prove damaging to Scotland's Higher Education Institutions.
- The Home Office's intention to reduce the duration of the existing UK-wide Graduate Visa from 24 months to 18 months is wrong and demonstrates that the policy approach to migration is not reflective of the needs of Scotland or the Higher Education sector.
- In January, we announced our proposals for a 'Scottish Graduate Visa', which would give graduates of Scottish institutions a further two years on their visa to work towards qualifying for a Skilled Worker Visa, encouraging and enabling the best international talent to live and work in Scotland.
- International students, academics, and research staff in our world-class universities make a vital contribution to Scotland's prosperity.
- We need an immigration system that supports our higher education sector to deliver the best learning, the best research and the best experience for international students who choose to study in Scotland.
- The Scottish Government remains committed to supporting Scotland's international student and graduates who stay on after their studies, continuing their contribution to our economy and communities

Many thanks,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)] Migration Strategy | Population and Migration Division | Directorate for Culture and External Affairs  
Atlantic Quay, Glasgow - [redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Please direct migration queries to the Migration Strategy Team inbox, [migration@gov.scot](mailto:migration@gov.scot)



**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 31 October 2025 11:48  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Line request - COP Today - [redacted out of scope]

Apologies [redacted s.38(1)(b)] – just to add on, would it be possible to also get some top lines for the accompanying briefing pack on migration if at all possible?

Appreciate the help, especially given the tight turnaround.

Thank you again,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
[redacted s.38(1)(b)] | Policy Official

Economic Strategy and Delivery  
Directorate for Jobs and Wellbeing Economy  
DG Economy | Scottish Government  
5 Atlantic Quay | 150 Broomielaw | Glasgow | G2 8LU

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]



**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 31 October 2025 11:15  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Line request - COP Today - [redacted out of scope]

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

Following on from our chat on teams if you could please provide lines on high skilled migration and FM's calls for a Graduate Visa model, noting our ageing population by COP today that would be very appreciated.

[redacted out of scope]  
[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
[redacted s.38(1)(b)] | Policy Official

Economic Strategy and Delivery  
Directorate for Jobs and Wellbeing Economy  
DG Economy | Scottish Government  
5 Atlantic Quay | 150 Broomielaw | Glasgow | G2 8LU

## **DOCUMENT 11**

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 11 November 2025 13:31  
**To:** Migration Mailbox; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
[redacted s.38(1)(b)] [redacted s.38(1)(b)] ; [redacted s.38(1)(b)] ;  
[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Known PQ - S6F-04452 - Due 2pm Tuesday

Thanks all, really helpful!

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Migration Mailbox

**Sent:** 11 November 2025 13:20

**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)] <[redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)] <[redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)] <[redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; Migration Mailbox <Migration@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Known PQ - S6F-04452 - Due 2pm Tuesday

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)]– thanks [redacted s.38(1)(b)]for cc'ing us.

Please see below lines on the Scottish Graduate Visa:

### **Scottish Graduate Visa**

*“we continue to urge the UK Government to agree to our plans for a ‘Scottish Graduate Visa’, which would allow graduates of Scottish institutions a further two years on their visa to work towards qualifying for a Skilled Worker Visa, encouraging and enabling the best international talent to live and work in Scotland.”*

- In January, we announced our proposals for a ‘Scottish Graduate Visa’, which would give graduates of Scottish institutions a further two years on their visa to work towards qualifying for a Skilled Worker Visa, encouraging and enabling the best international talent to live and work in Scotland.
- The Home Office’s intention to reduce the duration of the existing UK-wide Graduate Visa from 24 months to 18 months is wrong and demonstrates that the policy approach to migration is not reflective of the needs of Scotland or the Higher Education sector.
- International students, academics and research staff in our world-class universities make a vital contribution to Scotland's prosperity.
- We need an immigration system that supports our higher education sector to deliver the best learning, the best research and the best experience for international students who choose to study in Scotland.

[redacted out of scope]

Thanks and kindest,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Please direct migration queries to the Migration Strategy Team inbox, [migration@gov.scot](mailto:migration@gov.scot)

[redacted s.38(1)(b)] | Migration Strategy Team Leader | International Relations, Population, and Migration Division | Directorate for Culture and External Affairs | Scottish Government

[www.scotland.org/move-to-scotland](http://www.scotland.org/move-to-scotland)

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 11 November 2025 12:49

**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot[redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)] <[redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; Migration Mailbox <Migration@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Known PQ - S6F-04452 - Due 2pm Tuesday

Thanks [redacted s.38(1)(b)]

– I've just added our migration strategy team's mailbox to this to consider your query re: the grad visa.

Mig Strat colleagues, see [redacted s.38(1)(b)] ask which I have highlighted in yellow below

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

| Population Team Leader

International Relations, Population and Migration Division | Directorate for Culture and External Affairs | Scottish Government

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 11 November 2025 12:46

**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)] <[redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)] <[redacted s.38(1)(b)] @gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Known PQ - S6F-04452 - Due 2pm Tuesday

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

[redacted out of scope]

Thinking about potential supplementary inputs, here are a few sections that could prompt ideas, along with teams who might provide some lines on their policy:

[redacted out of scope]

**Inward Flows of Skills & Talent** – *“The acceleration of innovation scale-up and growth in turn requires a corresponding, supportive immigration policy to furnish business with the talent it needs, and the skills it wants. The Scottish Government should influence UK counterparts and work with the HE sector to establish opportunities to enable regional economic growth and innovation through immigration levers, including revisiting Start-up Visas. [...]”* [redacted out of scope]

- [redacted s.38(1)(b)]– Is it worth having something on the SG Graduate Visa Route?

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]

Apologies for adding more to the mix. Thanks all, and sorry if I included you when it's not relevant.

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 11 November 2025 12:19

**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Known PQ - S6F-04452 - Due 2pm Tuesday

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

[redacted s.38(1)(b)] shared the below [redacted out of scope]

Nothing to flag in the initial answer, we will provide lines [redacted out of scope] by the deadline.

Thanks,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

**Skills Planning Policy Unit**

**Skills Division – Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills**

---

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** Tuesday, November 11, 2025 9:09:49 AM

**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Stephen O'Neill <Stephen.O'Neill@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; John Primrose <John.Primrose@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Anna Densham <Anna.Densham@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** URGENT - Known PQ - S6F-04452 - Due 2pm Tuesday

Hi all,

We have the following FMQ, [redacted out of scope]

**Kevin Stewart: To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's response is to the report on regional economic growth by former University of Glasgow principal, Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli. (S6F-04452)**

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]

The recommendations for [redacted s.30(b)(ii)] might inspire a supplemental:

*“Were public funding to further decrease (noting also that the main teaching grant to Scottish universities is down 20% in real terms as well) alongside a slowing of international student flows, then deficits will grow. It is far from dramatic to state that this could lead to existential challenges for some organisations. These financial strains and chronic under-funding are*

*compounded by geopolitical uncertainty which impacts on the sector's ability to bring in additional income from non-publicly funded teaching."*

[redacted out of scope]  
[redacted out of scope]  
[redacted out of scope]

Thanks,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
Programme Director, Green Freeports and Investment Zones  
Regional Economic Development  
Directorate for Economic Development  
DG Economy - Scottish Government  
E mail: [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot  
Phone: [redacted s.38(1)(b)]



*If you receive an email from me late in the evening, early in the morning or at the weekend, please do not feel that you need to reply immediately. Working flexibly suits me but I don't expect others to respond outside of their normal office hours.*

[redacted out of scope]

## DOCUMENT 12

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] on behalf of Migration Mailbox  
**Sent:** 18 November 2025 18:02  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]; Migration Mailbox  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)][redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** RE: For Contribution - [redacted s.30(b)(i)] International Student Intake

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

Apologies, I'm travelling at the moment and have been having connection issues so the comment seems to be lost now. All it said really was to outline that the UKG published their immigration White Paper in May this year which set out intentions that Graduate Visa would reduce in length from 24 months to 18 months for undergraduates. PhD students will retain the 36 months. This is set to be implemented for any applications on or after the 1 January 2027. Changes to UK visa and settlement rules after the 2025 immigration white paper - House of Commons Library

[redacted s.30(b)(i)] [redacted s.30(b)(ii)]

Many thanks,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Migration Strategy | Population and Migration Division | Directorate for Culture and External Affairs

Atlantic Quay, Glasgow - [redacted s.38(1)(b)]

*Please direct migration queries to the Migration Strategy Team inbox, [migration@gov.scot](mailto:migration@gov.scot)*



**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 18 November 2025 15:06

**To:** Migration Mailbox <Migration@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: For Contribution - [redacted s.30(b)(i)] International Student Intake

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

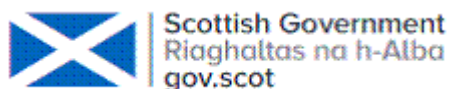
Thank you for this, and it's much appreciated how quickly you turned this around. I think the attachment didn't come through, could you possibly send again?

Kind regards,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]- **Medical Education and Training** | Medical Education & Training Unit | Health Workforce Planning & Delivery Division | Health Workforce Directorate

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]



**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** Migration Mailbox  
**Sent:** 18 November 2025 15:01  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Migration Mailbox <Migration@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: For Contribution - [redacted s.30(b)(i)] International Student Intake

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

I've come back on the sub in the comments to set out the UKG current plans for Graduate visas.  
[redacted s.30(b)(i)]

Happy to discuss if helpful,

Many thanks,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
Migration Strategy | Population and Migration Division | Directorate for Culture and External  
Affairs  
Atlantic Quay, Glasgow - [redacted s.38(1)(b)]

*Please direct migration queries to the Migration Strategy Team inbox, migration@gov.scot*



**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Sent:** 17 November 2025 17:44  
**To:** Migration Mailbox <Migration@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** For Contribution - [redacted s.30(b)(i)] International Student Intake

Good evening [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

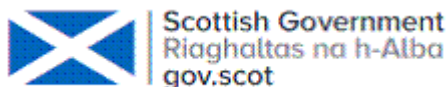
I hope this email finds you well.

Please see attached draft [redacted s.30(b)(i)] Could I ask you or your team to [redacted s.30(b)(i)] and provide any contribution you feel would be necessary? Unfortunately, we are working to a very tight timeline, so I would ask for any comments by **COP tomorrow (18/11/2025)** to allow us enough time to make any edits. Apologies for the extremely tight turn around, if you have any questions or would like to discuss anything please do let me know.

Kind regards,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]

[redacted s.38(1)(b)] **Policy Manager - Medical Education and Training** | Medical Education & Training Unit | Health Workforce Planning & Delivery Division | Health Workforce Directorate  
[redacted s.38(1)(b)]



## DOCUMENT 13

<b>What</b>	[redacted out of scope]
<b>When</b>	[redacted out of scope]
<b>Where</b>	[redacted out of scope]
<b>Who</b>	[redacted out of scope]
<b>Why</b>	This event will explore the implications of recent changes to the UK immigration system, the impact of these changes in Scotland [redacted out of scope]
<b>Key messages</b>	<p>[redacted out of scope]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We need the immigration system, which is reserved, to work for Scotland in order for us to be able to address our economic and demographic challenges now and into the future.</li><li>• The UK Government's Immigration White Paper fails to reflect Scotland's distinct requirements of the Immigration System.</li><li>• The Scottish Government is deeply concerned by many of the policy approaches contained within the Immigration White Paper.</li><li>• The White Paper offers no evidence that the needs of Scotland's economy, public services or communities have been considered in the development of these proposals.</li></ul>
<b>Speech details</b>	[redacted out of scope]
<b>Official support</b>	[redacted s.38(1)(b)] , Team Leader, Migration Strategy
<b>Briefing contents</b>	<p>[redacted out of scope] [redacted out of scope] Annex C Migration Top Lines (Health &amp; Care Worker Visa section, page 5) [redacted out of scope] [redacted out of scope] Annex F Immigration White Paper (information)</p>

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]

## ANNEX C

### MIGRATION KEY MESSAGES

#### TOP LINES

[redacted out of scope]

#### **The UK Government's Immigration White Paper fails to reflect Scotland's distinct requirements of the Immigration System.**

- Policy changes outlined in the UK Immigration White Paper pose a significant risk to Scotland's economy, communities, and public services.
- The Scottish Government issued a comprehensive, evidence-based, and mutually beneficial proposal document to the Home Office during development of the Immigration White Paper. There has been no substantive engagement on any of the policy proposals submitted by the Scottish Government, and the White Paper completely fails to account for Scotland's distinct needs of the immigration system.

- The White Paper offers no evidence that the needs of Scotland's economy, public services or communities have been considered in the development of these proposals.
- A one-size fits all approach to immigration fails to meet the needs of Scotland and much of the UK.

**Scotland needs talented and committed people from across the world to be able to work and study here without excessive barriers.**

- Migration policy should support mobility, collaboration, and innovation and must suitably reflect the skills requirements of all sectors of the economy.
- The evidence shows that those who choose Scotland as their home help grow our economy, increase productivity and innovation and address skills shortages.
- It is clear that Scotland requires a tailored approach to migration to meet our distinct demographic and economic needs.
- I call on the UK Government to urgently work with us to deliver tailored migration solutions for Scotland and prevent the harm to our economy, communities, and public services which the policy decisions in the White Paper will inevitably lead to.

[redacted out of scope]

**CHANGES TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE GRADUATE VISA ROUTE**

**Planned changes to the Graduate Visa route are short-sighted and will prove damaging to Scotland's Higher Education Institutions.**

- In January, we announced our proposals for a 'Scottish Graduate Visa', which would give graduates of Scottish institutions a further two years on their visa to work towards qualifying for a Skilled Worker Visa, encouraging and enabling the best international talent to live and work in Scotland.
- The Home Office's intention to reduce the duration of the existing UK-wide Graduate Visa from 24 months to 18 months is wrong and demonstrates that the policy approach to migration is not reflective of the needs of Scotland or the Higher Education sector.
- Scottish Ministers are clear that we have no intention to apply the University levy proposed in the Immigration White Paper in Scotland, where education is devolved.
- Scottish ministers have been consistently clear about the devastating consequences that the UK Government's approach to migration has had on Scotland's education sector and our economy to date.
- International students, academics and research staff in our world-class universities make a vital contribution to Scotland's prosperity.
- We need an immigration system that supports our higher education sector to deliver the best learning, the best research and the best experience for international students who choose to study in Scotland.
- The Scottish Government remains committed to supporting Scotland's international student and graduates who stay on after their studies, continuing their contribution to our economy and communities.

**SETTLEMENT**

**The Scottish Government does not agree with the Home Office's move to increase the standard qualifying period for settlement from five to ten years.**

- This announcement is unfair to those who have chosen to make Scotland their home, built their lives here, and contributed to our communities and economy.
- We urge the UK Government to provide clarity and reassurance to those impacted by the increase in standard qualifying period and urge that any further consultation is considerate of the huge impact that this change will have on many people's lives and wellbeing.

**DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES**

**Migration is vital for supporting sustainable communities, economies and public services in Scotland**

- Scotland's population is growing but only because of migration. Positive net migration helps boost the size and proportion of our working age population.
- Recent NRS statistics show that Scotland continues to be an attractive country which people from across the world and the rest of the UK are choosing to call home.
- Latest immigration figures from ONS show that more people have chosen to move to Scotland from elsewhere in the UK than to leave Scotland for another UK country.

**Scotland's projected demographic change has significant implications for communities, economies and public service planning and delivery.**

- A key focus of our Population Strategy is ensuring that Scotland continues to be an attractive country for people to live, work, study and settle in.
- National Records of Scotland's population projections highlight the current and future importance of inward migration from the rest of the UK and internationally to supporting a sustainable Scottish population far into the future.
- The number of people of pensionable age is projected to increase significantly, while our overall population growth and that of working age people is slower than the UK as a whole.

[redacted out of scope]

**TAILORED MIGRATION SOLUTIONS**

**Our tailored migration proposals were developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders across Scotland and would all be deliverable within the existing framework of the UK immigration system.**

- We know from stakeholder engagement that the immigration system requires significant change to better support Scotland's public services, communities, and the economy.
- We need vastly improved engagement with the UK Government to make a positive difference and ensure that the immigration system meets Scotland's needs.
- We continue to make the urgent call to the UK Government to introduce a tailored approach to migration to meet Scotland's needs, which is strongly supported by a range of key stakeholders including our universities, businesses, local authorities and community groups.

- We stand ready to deliver these existing proposals, including a Rural Visa Pilot, a Scottish Graduate Visa, and a Scottish Visa linked to the Scottish tax code.
- The UK immigration system is already comprised of a series of tailored migration routes.

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]

## ANNEX F

### UK IMMIGRATION WHITE PAPER

The UK Government published its Immigration White Paper on Monday 12 May 2025. The changes it outlines are extensive and are focused on reducing net migration numbers.

There are significant implications for social care with the ending of the social care visa route; the higher education sector with changes to the Graduate Visa and sponsorship arrangements, and for employers and employees in multiple sectors who will face increased costs and reduced eligibility for roles below 'graduate level'.

The White Paper proposals include:

- Shortening the list of jobs for which employers can sponsor a worker from overseas for a Skilled Worker visa. Jobs assessed as being medium-skilled – RQF level 3 – cannot be filled from overseas unless the Migration Advisory Committee recommends an exemption and the industry is demonstrating efforts to recruit domestically.
- Ending an existing exemption for social care workers: employers will no longer be allowed to recruit them from abroad.
- Making it harder for universities to keep their licence to sponsor student visas by introducing tougher compliance rules.
- Reducing the standard length of the Graduate visa, for international students to stay on and work in the UK, from two years to 18 months.
- Stricter English language rules: higher standards for those already taking language tests, and requiring the partners of people moving to the UK on work visas to have basic English to qualify for a 'dependant' visa.
- Increasing the standard qualifying period for permanent residence (also known as indefinite leave to remain or settlement) from five to ten years, with some people qualifying sooner based on criteria yet to be decided.
- Making it easier for people to come to the UK on certain visas aimed at highly skilled migrants, such as the Global Talent and High Potential routes. This is the only measure of the eight designed to increase immigration.

### Engagement on proposals to date

In March, the Scottish Government was invited to contribute proposals for inclusion in the White Paper. There has been no further engagement to discuss the proposals made by the Scottish Government since they were submitted. On 30 July, the Scottish Government published their policy proposals submitted to the UK Government White Paper commission.

The Home Office reiterated their position that they are not seeking to consider tailored or regional solutions in the development and delivery of the White Paper reforms.

The First Minister held a roundtable with stakeholders from across the Scottish economy to hear their concerns about the White Paper directly.

## DOCUMENT 14

<b>What</b>	[redacted s.28(1)]
<b>When</b>	13 November, 16:00 – 16:30
<b>Where</b>	Teams meeting: link to join in calendars
<b>Who</b>	[redacted s.28(1)] [redacted s.28(1)]
<b>Why</b>	An opportunity to to discuss Scotland's priority requirements of the immigration system[redacted s.28(1)]
<b>Key messages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scotland faces long-term demographic challenges, including an ageing population, falling birth rates and geographical population imbalances.</li><li>• With more deaths than births, migration is essential for population growth.</li><li>• We're using all devolved powers to make Scotland attractive and maintain a strong working-age population to support the economy and public services.</li><li>• Our Ministerial Population Taskforce brings together different parts of government to coordinate our response.</li><li>• This work includes delivering Scotland's Migration Service to support users to navigate the immigration system and the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan, which helps communities facing population decline.</li><li>• Immigration is vital to sustain our economy, public services and reverse projected population decline.</li><li>• A shrinking working-age population threatens the resilience of communities, businesses and public services. Employers across Scotland are struggling to find enough workers and fill skills gaps.</li><li>• The UK Government's Immigration White Paper fails to reflect our distinct requirements of the Immigration System.</li><li>• We continue to call on the UK Government to work with us on tailored migration solutions that reflect Scotland's distinct needs and support our shared objectives</li></ul>
<b>Official support</b>	[redacted s.38(1)(b)] , Population and Migration
<b>Agenda</b>	[redacted s.28(1)]
<b>Main objectives</b>	[redacted s.28(1)]

[redacted out of scope]

<b>ITEM 2</b>	Immigration White Paper and UK immigration system
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The UK Government published its Immigration White Paper on Monday 12 May. The proposed changes to the immigration system are extensive and are focused on reducing net migration numbers.</li> <li>• The most significant proposals include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortening the list of jobs for which employers can sponsor a worker from overseas for a Skilled Worker visa.</li> <li>• Ending an existing exemption for social care workers, so that employers are no longer allowed to recruit them from abroad.</li> <li>• [redacted s.30(b)(i)]</li> <li>• Making it harder for universities to keep their licence to sponsor student visas by introducing tougher compliance rules.</li> <li>• Reducing the standard length of the Graduate visa, for international students to stay on and work in the UK, from two years to 18 months.</li> <li>• Stricter English language rules</li> <li>• Increasing the standard qualifying period for permanent residence (also known as indefinite leave to remain or settlement) from five to ten years, with some people qualifying sooner based on criteria yet to be confirmed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>These proposals pose significant risks for social care with the ending of the international recruitment for social care workers; the higher education sector with reductions to the Graduate Visa and increased sponsor compliance rules; and for multiple sectors and workers who will face increased costs and reduced access to international recruitment for jobs below a certain skill level.</p> <p>In March, the Scottish Government was given a two-week window by the Home Office to contribute proposals for inclusion in the White Paper. There has been no further engagement on the development of the White Paper or invitation to discuss the proposals made by the Scottish Government since they were submitted.</p>
<b>Key message(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immigration is vital to sustain our economy, public services and reverse projected population decline.</li> <li>• A shrinking working-age population threatens the resilience of communities, businesses and public services. Employers across Scotland are struggling to find enough workers and fill skills gaps</li> <li>• The UK Government’s Immigration White Paper fails to reflect Scotland’s distinct requirements of the Immigration System.</li> <li>• Policy changes outlined in the UK Immigration White Paper pose a significant risk to Scotland’s economy, communities, and public services.</li> </ul> <p>[redacted out of scope] [redacted s.28(1)]</p>
<b>Suggested question(s)</b>	[redacted s.28(1)]

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]

- Briefing : BIC

### Lines to take

- Policy changes outlined in the UK Immigration White Paper pose a significant risk to Scotland's economy, communities, and public services.

[redacted out of scope]

- The move to reduce the length of Graduate Visa route and the closure of the Health and Care Worker Visa route are likely to prove damaging to sectors which rely heavily on international talent.

[redacted out of scope]

### Background

[redacted out of scope]

**14 October:** Home Office announced latest immigration rule changes, with the majority coming into effect on various dates from 4 November.

[redacted out of scope]

- 1 January 2027 reducing the length of the Graduate Visa from 24 to 18 months. The PhD graduate route will remain at the 36-month length.

[redacted out of scope]

**12 May:** The Home Office Published the Immigration White Paper

**28 February:** The Scottish Government was invited by the Home Office to contribute proposals for inclusion in the White Paper. The proposal document submitted by the Scottish Government outlined Scotland's distinct economic and demographic requirements of the UK immigration system, problems caused by the current system, and potential solutions which could serve the interests of both Scotland and the rest of the UK. There has been no substantial engagement on the contents of the proposals, and they have been dismissed by the UK Government.

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]

- Briefing: IS

[redacted out of scope]

14 Oct: The Home Office announce latest immigration rule changes including:

- From 8 January 2026, increasing the language requirements for new applicants to various visa routes.
- From 1 January 2027, reducing the length of the Graduate Visa from 24 to 18 months. The PhD graduate route will remain at 36-months.

[redacted out of scope]

12 May: The Home Office Published the Immigration White Paper – None of the Scottish Government’s proposals were included.

- The Scottish Government was invited by the Home Office to contribute proposals for inclusion in the White Paper
- There was no substantial engagement on SG proposals by UKG

[redacted out of scope]

### **IMMIGRATION WHITE PAPER CHANGES**

#### **The UK Government’s Immigration White Paper fails to reflect Scotland’s distinct requirements for the immigration system.**

- The White Paper offers no evidence that the needs of Scotland’s economy, public services or communities have been considered by the UK Government.
- The Scottish Government submitted comprehensive, evidence-based proposals to the Home Office during development of the Immigration White Paper.
- There has been no substantive engagement on any proposals submitted by the Scottish Government.

[redacted out of scope]

### **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND GRADUATES**

#### **Planned changes to the Graduate Visa route will prove damaging to Scotland’s Higher Education Institutions.**

- The Home Office’s intention to reduce the duration of the existing UK-wide Graduate Visa from 24 months to 18 months is wrong.
- Our proposals for a ‘Scottish Graduate Visa’, would give graduates of Scottish institutions a further two years on their visa to work towards qualifying for a Skilled Worker Visa, encouraging and enabling the best international talent to live and work in Scotland.

### **FAMILY MIGRATION**

#### **Restrictions on family migration are having a damaging impact on many Scottish people, their families, their communities, and the economy.**

- The UK Government frames family migration as a burden on society.
- The Scottish Government believes that people who are entitled to live in Scotland should be able to bring their family with them.
- Scotland needs people to live, work and raise their families here, in light of the pronounced demographic challenge ahead.
- There is evidence that the ability to bring family members to Scotland is an important factor which encourages migrants to stay long-term.

## **TAILORED MIGRATION SOLUTIONS**

**Our tailored migration proposals were developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders across Scotland and would all be deliverable within the existing framework of the UK immigration system.**

- A one-size fits all approach to immigration fails to meet the needs of Scotland and much of the UK
- We continue to urgent call to the UK Government to introduce a tailored approach to migration, which is supported stakeholders across Scotland including our universities, businesses, local authorities and community groups.
- We stand ready to deliver these existing proposals, including a Rural Visa Pilot, a Scottish Graduate Visa, and a Scottish Visa linked to the Scottish tax code.

[redacted out of scope]

## **MIGRATION PROPOSALS ANNEX A**

The Scottish Government submitted a paper to the UK Government’s Immigration White Paper commission covering:

- Scotland’s demographic challenges, overarching policy position, and principles underpinning our approach.
- Links to UK Government objectives on net migration, work and skills, fairness, and community cohesion.
- Opportunities for change within the existing reserved immigration system.
- Challenges with the current system and tailored proposals for Scotland.

The Scottish Government’s policy paper published in January 2025, ‘Migration: Meeting Scotland’s Needs’, summarises our three “tailored migration routes”:

### Scottish Visa

- Un-sponsored work visa offering a pathway to permanent residence.
- Residence in Scotland enforced via visa conditions (e.g., Scottish tax code).

### Scottish Rural Visa Pilot

- Pilot scheme to attract migrants to remote and rural communities with declining populations.
- Employers in designated areas could sponsor workers outside the normal visa system.
- Skills and salary requirements tailored to rural needs.
- Migrants required to work in the area for four years before qualifying for permanent residence.

### Scottish Graduate Visa

- Extends stay for graduates of Scottish institutions beyond the UK Graduate visa.

- Allows up to five years in Scotland without sponsorship (two years UK Graduate visa + two years Scottish Graduate visa).
- Linked to Scottish tax code and requires intention to live and work in Scotland.

## **DOCUMENT 15**

### **Population and Migration October 2025**

[redacted s.30(b)(i)]

#### **Purpose**

1. To provide an overview of the latest immigration rule changes laid on 14 October 2025.

[redacted s.30(b)(i)]

#### **Context and Issues**

2. On 14 October, the Home Office briefed officials on planned 'Autumn rule change' reforms to the UK immigration system. These changes were laid in the UK Parliament on the same day.
3. The majority of rule changes come into effect on various dates beginning from November 4<sup>th</sup>. Specific implementation dates for some rule changes, including changes to the Graduate Visa duration and increased language requirements for working visa routes, are detailed in this submission.
4. As was the case with July's immigration rule changes, these reforms form part of the implementation of the policy direction set out in the UK Government's May 2025 Immigration White Paper, with a renewed focus on reducing net migration and restricting 'lower-skilled' migration.
5. A brief outline of each of the changes announced is provided in **Annex A**. The main changes to note which relate to the Immigration White Paper are:

[redacted s.30(b)(i)]

- Reducing the length of the Graduate Visa from 24 months to 18 months from 1 January 2027. The PhD graduate route will remain at the existing 36 - month length.
- Introducing a change to Student work conditions to allow Student Visa Holders to establish a business and transition from the Student Visa to Innovator Founder visa route upon completion of their studies. This replaced the previous 'Start-Up' route which is now closed to new applications.
- Expanding and capping the 'High Potential Individual' visa route to a maximum of 8,000 applications per year from the 100 top ranked global Universities, up from the top 50 Universities.

[redacted s.30(b)(i)]

#### **Additional Background**

6. The Home Office's planned changes to the 'Basic Compliance Assessment' (BCA) process for university visa sponsorships will not require changes to immigration rules.

[redacted s.28(1)]

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted s.30(b)(i)]

[redacted s.30(b)(i)]

### **Next Steps**

[redacted s.30(b)(i)]

7. Migration strategy officials will continue to monitor the impact of these rule changes through engagement with officials and stakeholders. Concerns and feedback raised will be reflected in the Scottish Government's engagement with the Home Office.

[redacted s.30(b)(i)]

[redacted s.38(1)(b)] , Migration Strategy Team Leader, 15 October 2025

[redacted s.30(b)(i)]

[redacted s.30(b)(i), s.38(1)(b)]

**Annex A**

## **Home Office Autumn Immigration Rule Changes – October 2025**

### **'Stricter Immigration Controls'**

- **Graduate visa:** Duration reduced from 2 years to 18 months for most applicants; PhD graduates retain 3 years (effective from 1 January 2027).
- [redacted out of scope]
- [redacted out of scope]

### **'Support for Highly Skilled Migration'**

- **High Potential Individual (HPI) visa:** Expanded to include top 100 international universities; capped at 8,000 applications per year (from 4 November 2025).
- **Global Talent visa:** Broader list of qualifying awards and updated evidence requirements for architects (from 11 November 2025).
- **Innovator Founder visa:** Students who complete their studies can transition to this visa to start a business (from 25 November 2025).

[redacted out of scope]

[redacted out of scope]



**DOCUMENT 16**

**From:** [Section 38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** 03 November 2025 15:56

**To:** [Section 38(1)(b)]

**Subject:** RE: Visa routes for international students to become Scottish solicitors

Thanks [Section 38(1)(b)] – adding our Migration Strategy team’s mailbox for their sight, too.

Mike

[Section 38(1)(b)] Population Team Leader

International Relations, Population and Migration Division | Directorate for Culture and External Affairs | Scottish Government

Working week: Monday to Thursday



**From:** [Section 38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** 03 November 2025 14:38

**To:** [Section 38(1)(b)]

<

**Subject:** FW: Visa routes for international students to become Scottish solicitors

Hi colleagues,

Sharing the below – LSS wrote to all Scottish MPs this morning raising concerns about a proposal to reduce the Graduate visa from 24 months to 18 months.

We can mention it to our contacts at DBT in trade and RPQ teams – but I think it probably fits more with the wider discussion on mobility/migration or retaining graduates rather than trade.

Thanks,

[Section 38(1)(b)]

## DOCUMENT 17

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 13 November 2025 11:13  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** FW: Joining Instructions for Education AG Meeting – 26 November 2025  
**Attachments:** BCA Engagement.pdf; Education AG Agenda 26-11-2025.pdf

Hi [redacted s.38(1)(b)],

That's detail on BCA shared with the EAG (includes US) – might be worth thinking through best way to keep Ministers informed?

Many thanks,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
Migration Strategy | Population and Migration Division | Directorate for Culture and External Affairs  
Atlantic Quay, Glasgow - [redacted s.38(1)(b)]

*Please direct migration queries to the Migration Strategy Team inbox, [migration@gov.scot](mailto:migration@gov.scot)*



**From:** [redacted s.28(1)]  
**Sent:** 13 November 2025 10:42  
**Subject:** Joining Instructions for Education AG Meeting – 26 November 2025

**Good morning,**

Please find attached your joining instructions for the upcoming **Education AG meeting**, scheduled for **26 November 2025**.

Included in this email are:

- The meeting agenda
- The BCA Engagement document
- 

As the primary focus of this meeting will be on **BCA requirements**, we recommend reviewing the attached document in advance. This will help ensure a productive discussion, and we welcome any questions or feedback you may have.

We look forward to your participation in the meeting.

[redacted s.28(1)]

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)][redacted s.28(1)]  
**Sent:** 14 November 2025 14:36  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)] [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Subject:** FW: BCA Sector Engagement  
**Attachments:** BCA Engagement Version 2.0.pdf

Good afternoon,

[redacted s.28(1)] Please find attached an updated version of the document [redacted s.28(1)]  
The EAG meeting will remain in place as scheduled.

Kind regards,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
[redacted s.28(1)]

**From:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 12 November 2025 12:06  
**To:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
**Cc:** [redacted s.38(1)(b)]@[redacted s.28(1)] >  
**Subject:** BCA Sector Engagement

Good Afternoon,

Hope you're both well? Please find the attached document [redacted s.28(1)] for the changes to the Basic Compliance Assessment. Just to let you know, we [redacted s.28(1)] will be scheduling an EAG meeting to discuss the document.

Please could I ask you to refrain from sharing this document more widely for the moment

Kind regards,

[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
[redacted s.38(1)(b)]  
[redacted s.28(1)]

## **DOCUMENT 18 [EXTRACT FROM BRIEFING PACK – 9 DECEMBER]**

### **Migration Policy**

#### **Background:**

The UK Government published its Immigration White Paper on Monday 12 May. The changes it outlines are extensive and are focused on reducing net migration numbers. There are significant implications for the higher education sector including changes to the Graduate Visa, sponsorship responsibilities, and changes to skill levels and salary thresholds making it more challenging for graduates to enter the workforce after their studies.

#### **The changes include:**

- Shortening the list of jobs for which employers can sponsor a worker from overseas for a Skilled Worker visa. Jobs assessed as being medium-skilled – RQF level 3 – cannot be filled from overseas unless the Migration Advisory Committee recommends an exemption and the industry is demonstrating efforts to recruit domestically.
- Exploring a levy on English universities' income from international student fees.
- Making it harder for universities to keep their licence to sponsor student visas by introducing tougher compliance rules.
- Reducing the standard length of the Graduate visa, for international students to stay on and work in the UK, from two years to 18 months.
- Stricter English language rules: higher standards for those already taking language tests, and requiring the partners of people moving to the UK on work visas to have basic English to qualify for a 'dependant' visa.
- Increasing the standard qualifying period for permanent residence (also known as indefinite leave to remain or settlement) from five to ten years, with some people qualifying sooner based on criteria yet to be decided.

#### **Engagement with Scottish Government:**

In March, the Scottish Government was given a two-week window by the Home Office to contribute proposals for inclusion in the White Paper.

The Home Office's request for proposals from Scottish Government made clear that any devolution of immigration powers, or the introduction of regionally tailored migration routes, would not be considered for inclusion in the White Paper.

The Scottish Government has been clear in engagement with the Home Office that whilst we are seeking a reform and redesign of the immigration system to meet Scotland's needs, including through the introduction of tailored migration route, our policy position to date has not been to seek devolution of immigration powers.

- There has been no further engagement on the development of the White Paper or invitation to discuss the proposals made by the Scottish Government since they were submitted. The Scottish Government policy proposals submitted to the UK Government White Paper commission were published on 30 Jul.
- The First Minister held a roundtable on 20 May with stakeholders from across the Scottish economy to hear their concerns about the White Paper directly.

- Officials are currently in the process of exploring further opportunities to engage with key stakeholders on the proposed changes outlined within the UK Government's Immigration White Paper and their impact on Scotland.

### **Top Lines:**

#### **Scottish ministers have been consistently clear about the devastating consequences that the UK Government's approach to migration has had on Scotland's education sector and our economy to date.**

- Planned changes to the Graduate Visa route are short-sighted and will prove damaging to Scotland's Higher Education Institutions.
- The Home Office's intention to reduce the duration of the existing UK-wide Graduate Visa from 24 months to 18 months is wrong and demonstrates that the policy approach to migration is not reflective of the needs of Scotland or the Higher Education sector.
- In January, we announced our proposals for a 'Scottish Graduate Visa', which would give graduates of Scottish institutions a further two years on their visa to work towards qualifying for a Skilled Worker Visa, encouraging and enabling the best international talent to live and work in Scotland.

#### **International students, academics and research staff in our world-class universities make a vital contribution to Scotland's prosperity.**

- We need an immigration system that supports our higher education sector to deliver the best learning, the best research and the best experience for international students who choose to study in Scotland.
- The Scottish Government remains committed to supporting Scotland's international student and graduates who stay on after their studies, continuing their contribution to our economy and communities.

#### **The UK Government's Immigration White Paper fails to reflect Scotland's distinct requirements of the Immigration System.**

- Policy changes outlined in the UK Immigration White Paper pose a significant risk to Scotland's economy, communities, and public services.
- I call on the UK Government to urgently work with us to deliver tailored migration solutions for Scotland and prevent the harm to our economy, communities, and public services which the policy decisions in the White Paper will lead to.

#### **Scotland needs talented and committed people from across the world to be able to work and study here without excessive barriers.**

- Planned changes to the Graduate Visa and the Health and Care Worker Visa route are short-sighted and will prove damaging to sectors which rely heavily on international talent.
- Migration policy should support mobility, collaboration, and innovation and must suitably reflect the skills requirements of all sectors of the economy.
- The evidence shows that those who choose Scotland as their home help grow our economy, increase productivity and innovation and address skills shortages.
- It is clear that Scotland requires a tailored approach to migration to meet our distinct demographic and economic needs.

## **DOCUMENT 19**

**From:** [38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** 31 October 2025 14:43

**To:** [38(1)(b)]

**Cc:** [38(1)(b)]

**Subject:** FW: Correspondence from Mr Macpherson - Minister for Higher and Further Education

Hi, for awareness, the Minister has now responded to the letter from Prof Miller on the international student income levy.

Thanks

[38(1)(b)]

[38(1)(b)] **Head of International Higher Education | Skills Division | Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills | Scottish Government I** [38(1)(b)]

**From:** [38(1)(b)] **On Behalf Of** Minister for Higher and Further Education

**Sent:** 31 October 2025 11:25

**To:** [James.Miller@uws.ac.uk](mailto:James.Miller@uws.ac.uk)

**Cc:** [info@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:info@universities-scotland.ac.uk); Minister for Higher and Further Education

<[MinisterHFE@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterHFE@gov.scot)>

**Subject:** Correspondence from Mr Macpherson - Minister for Higher and Further Education

Dear James,

Please find attached correspondence from Mr Macpherson, Minister for Higher and Further Education.

Kind regards

[38(1)(b)]

**[Minister for Higher and Further Education, Ben Macpherson MSP](#)**

**The Scottish Government**

St Andrew's House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

**Email:** [MinisterHFE@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterHFE@gov.scot)

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Professor James Miller  
Convener of Universities Scotland

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[James.Miller@uws.ac.uk](mailto:James.Miller@uws.ac.uk)

31 October 2025

Dear James

Thank you for your letter dated 16 October and our discussions since my appointment in September. During this time I have welcomed the opportunity to discuss the challenges that universities are currently facing, including at our bi-lateral Meeting on 8 October. I am writing to provide full clarity on one of the matters raised during this meeting.

While institutional sustainability is a complex issue, it is clear that the UK Government's latest immigration proposals, set out in their Immigration White Paper in May, are creating significant concern for the higher education sector in Scotland.

The Scottish Government has been clear that the proposals contained in the Immigration White Paper will be damaging to Scotland's higher and further education sectors and will hamper the ability of our institutions to attract and retain talented international students and graduates. Given the evident impact that the proposals will have on staff, students and institutions, it is disappointing that the UK Government has not engaged effectively with Universities Scotland either before or after the publication of the white paper, including on the imminent changes to the Basic Compliance Assessment rules.

I welcomed the clarification from the UK Government's Secretary of State for Education on the 29 September, that their proposed international student levy will only apply to English universities. The Scottish Government remains committed to supporting universities to attract and diversify our international student population and to promote Scotland as a study destination. This remains in line with Scotland's International Education Strategy (IES), which was developed in collaboration with the sector. Introduction of a levy on international student income would be against the aims of the IES. For clarity, **the Scottish Government will therefore not consider introducing a levy on international student income.**

Further to Universities Scotland's participation in the First Minister's cross-sector roundtable in May, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the impact of the Immigration White Paper proposals with you and University Scotland colleagues in the coming weeks and months, during the next times we meet.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



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Due to existing diary commitments in my capacity as a constituency MSP, I will unfortunately not be able to agree to a university visit on 17 November, however, please keep Ministers updated on activity Universities Scotland are undertaking for International Students Day.

I am hoping to meet with members of our current cohort of international students and alumni at the British Council's Scholars Reception on the evening of the 19 November.

Best regards,



**BEN MACPHERSON**





20 Potterrow  
Edinburgh  
EH9 8BL

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[www.universities-scotland.ac.uk](http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk)

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Sent by email  
Ref: US-25-058

Mr Ben Macpherson MSP  
Minister for Higher and Further Education  
The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh

Thursday, 16 October 2025

Dear Minister,

It was good to meet you last week and discuss the priorities facing Scotland's universities. Thank you for the early engagement.

We touched on the UK Government's intention to introduce a levy on international student fees for institutions in England (with decisions for Scotland and Wales devolved to the Scottish and Welsh Governments). Back in spring, it was helpful to receive early verbal assurances from the Scottish Government that there is no intention to apply the levy in Scotland. However, it would provide further surety for institutional financial planning purposes and for our governing bodies, if the Scottish Government were minded to confirm this position in writing or in a public statement in the coming weeks.

Last week, the Welsh Education Secretary took the opportunity to confirm to the Senedd that the levy will not be introduced in Wales in an unequivocal, public departure from UK Government policy. Statements to the Senedd confirm that decision was reached for many of the same reasons as we have discussed with the First Minister, at a roundtable he convened on 20 May to discuss the Immigration White Paper on a cross-sector basis and with Mr Dey as former Minister for Higher and Further Education. A levy would risk the attractiveness of Scotland to prospective international students in a highly competitive market, it sits at odds with our values as an open, welcoming and inclusive nation and risks undermining the financial sustainability of institutions. We estimate the levy would cost Scotland's universities at least £85 million in lost income, with the impact falling on some institutions more than others. We shared these figures with your officials in the spring. That estimation does not include a loss of income arising from a potential drop in student recruitment in Scotland due to the deterrent effect that a levy could have. At a time of financial instability for institutions and continued volatility in our operating environments, the introduction of a levy on institutions is entirely counterproductive.

International Students Day is an annual day of celebration, falling on the 17 November this year. We would be delighted to arrange a visit for you to coincide with the day in order to meet with Scottish and international students, to hear firsthand about their experiences in Scotland and what it was



about our universities and Scotland as a nation that attracted them to study here. If this provided an opportunity to publicly affirm the Scottish Government's position on the levy, you would have unanimous support from across Scotland's higher education sector.

If you are open to a student-facing engagement on 17 November, my colleagues in Universities Scotland would be very happy to expedite arrangements to suit your availability.

Yours sincerely,

