PRESS RELEASE – THURSDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2015

**Important UK college pathways for international students must be protected
– joint statement by Study UK, English UK, UKCISA and Exporting Education UK**

Changes today to the Tier 4 rules for study visas mean that thousands of hard-working, fee-paying international students who have chosen a UK college or language centre for their education will be denied the opportunity to extend their stay for a higher level course or work experience. The UK will be denied their talent and their continued investment in our cultural and economic future.

Young people who pay thousands of pounds and travel thousands of miles for their education need to feel confident that their host country will offer them stability and security while they are pursuing it. Forcing students to leave the UK in order to apply for their next course will fatally undermine this confidence, while causing them considerable and unnecessary upheaval and expense. When this change is combined with the recent trend of questionable decisions by visa officers on the 'credibility' of applicants, many students will simply choose instead to go to a country with a more reliable visa system. The UK has made more than a hundred rule changes since 2008, which can leave students already here unable to complete the pathway they had originally intended to follow.

International students who choose a college or language centre instead of – or before – university will do so for good reasons: a desire to learn English with specialists, for industry links, smaller class sizes and pastoral support, or a progressive approach to building qualifications. It is the flexibility and diversity of our educational pathways which makes the UK so attractive to students. Today's changes will undermine our ability to deliver these pathways and will diminish the UK's international offer. This is a great shame for those students who could have enjoyed a world-class British education, and a great loss to their colleges, to the universities they would have progressed to, and to the country as a whole – economically, academically, and culturally.

The Government has provided no evidence to support the need for these changes, and no justification except that they will "reduce net migration". That students are included in the migration statistics is a problem in itself. Students are not migrants and research shows 80 per cent of the UK public do not see them as migrants – yet they are caught up in the Government’s attempts to reduce immigration. The result of this is to reduce the UK's international standing, damaging our £18bn international education sector, and hitting our economy.

Changes which do nothing but discourage students from coming to the UK stand in stark contrast to the Government's public commitment that all genuine students are welcome. We call on the Prime Minister to uphold this commitment by seriously considering removing students from his net migration target, and by establishing a working group to review the UK’s full range of educational pathways, to ensure that our offer to genuine students remains internationally competitive. It is essential to both our education sector and economy that we keep the door open to the international talent we need to succeed in the modern, globalised world.

**Notes**

1. On 12 November 2015 the following rules will change for international students:
	1. Tier 4 (General) students studying at colleges (private or public) can no longer extend their stay in Tier 4 or switch into any other points-based route (Such as Tier 2 or Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)), unless they are studying at a college which UKVI classes as an “embedded college”. There is no change for students attending a university.
	2. The length of time that a Tier 4 (General) student may spend studying further education courses (i.e. courses at National Qualifications Framework levels 3-5 and equivalents) will be reduced from three years to two.
	3. All Tier 4 students who are extending their visa or applying for a new visa will need to show they have maintenance funds for the duration of their course or 9 months whichever is shorter. Previously if a student had been in the UK for 6 months or more (i.e. already studying) a reduced rate applied, as they were deemed to have “established presence.”
	4. The area in which Tier 4 students have to demonstrate a higher ‘London’ level of funds is being expanded to include the University of London or institutions wholly or partly within the area comprising the City of London and the Former Metropolitan Police District.
2. A Study UK survey of colleges on the impact of these changes revealed:
	1. 31 institutions had students no longer eligible to re-sit or retake modules as visa extensions will be refused.
	2. 43 institutions had students who intended to study at a higher level after finishing their current course:
		1. For students in 37 institutions this will now mean going home before applying
		2. In 18 institutions over 60% of their students will now need to go home before applying
		3. 39 institutions say some of their prospective students will not study with them due to this rule, for 5 institutions this amounts to over 60 per cent of their regular student intake. Most cite that the uncertainty of the new process means students will turn to other countries.
	3. 34 said they would experience significant financial loss over the next 3 years as a result of these changes:
		1. Together they estimate losses of **£7 million** this year alone with an average loss of over £210,000.
		2. This will rise to **£11 million in 2017** with an average loss of £337,000.
	4. The students from these institutions alone contribute **£252 million in living and study costs** to the local economy **beyond** the fees they pay to institutions.
	5. 12 institutions had students who planned to switch into skilled work-based routes such as Tiers 1, 2, or 5 after study, representing for some as much as 41-60 per cent of the international student body.
	6. These results are expected to be representative of the wider college sector.

**Media availability**Study UK can provide interview subjects and speakers for media opportunities, including:

* our Chief Executive and members of our Board, leading figures in independent education
* students and staff from colleges in our membership
* representatives from English UK, Exporting Education UK and UKCISA

To arrange, please contact Joy Elliott-Bowman, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Study UK, on 020 7608 8453 or joy.elliott-bowman@study-uk.org

**About Study UK**

[www.study-uk.org](http://www.study-uk.org)

Study UK is a membership association and the national representative body for independent providers of higher education, further education and professional training, with 135 quality-assured institutions in membership. The representative body for a sector that covers university-validated higher education, industry-specialist vocational education, university foundation courses and study abroad programmes, Study UK works with a wide range of partners and stakeholders worldwide to represent the interests of the sector and its members.

**About English UK**

[www.englishuk.com](http://www.englishuk.com)

English UK is the world's leading language teaching association, with 470+ accredited centres in membership. It covers university and further education college language departments, international study centres in independent schools, educational trusts and charities, and private sector colleges. English UK is a UK registered charity ([www.englishuk.com](http://www.englishuk.com)).

**About UKCISA**

[www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk)

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) is a registered charity and the UK’s national advisory body serving the interests of international students and those who work with them. It aims: to increase support for international education and raise awareness of its values and benefits; to promote opportunities for - and identify and work to reduce obstacles and barriers to - greater student mobility; and to encourage best practice, professional development and the highest quality of institutional support for international students throughout the education sector.

**About Exporting Education UK**

[www.exeduk.com](http://www.exeduk.com)

Exporting Education UK is a broad-based group of UK-based companies and organisations involved in education as an export (either educating foreign students in the UK or abroad) who have come together to promote the value of the sector to the UK and its contribution to the UK’s long term competitiveness in the global economy. The group is known as ExEd for short. The group currently has over 20 members, who span the full range of education from Pre-preps, Prep schools, High Schools, Sixth Form Colleges, FE & HE colleges, Professional Colleges and Education Publishers, all of whom are exemplars of UK education.

**About BAISIS**

[www.baisis.org.uk](http://www.baisis.org.uk)

The British Association of Independent Schools with International Students is a group of 50 UK boarding schools and 6th Form colleges. BAISIS exists to share best practice in academic and pastoral provision for young international students and provides training and development in these areas to its members and others. BAISIS membership also acts as a quality assurance mechanism for parents selecting a UK school for their child.

**Background information**

The Study UK Manifesto 2015 with our 10 recommendations to Government – including our call for a fundamental review of the student visa system and a clear, consistent and attractive offer to international students – can be downloaded in full here: <http://bit.ly/studyukmanifesto>

UKCISA’s ‘A Manifesto for International Students’ is also available to download here: <http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Info-for-universities-colleges--schools/Publications--research/resources/77/A-Manifesto-for-International-Students>