



The All Party Parliamentary University Group

Rt Hon Liam Fox MP
Secretary of State for International Trade
Department for International Trade
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

CC: Mark Garnier MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Trade)

Dear Dr Fox,

I am writing to make you aware that the all-party parliamentary university group (APPUG) held a meeting on 28 November on the topic of 'higher education as an export'. The meeting was well attended by university vice-chancellors and parliamentarians who all expressed that more could be done but the Department for International Trade in advancing the value of higher education as an export.

A July 2017 Department for Education report estimated the total value of all UK education exports to be £18.76 billion; two thirds of this is contributed by universities. Further, it is estimated that international students – the largest contributor to higher education exports, bring in £25.8 billion in gross output for the UK economy. It is therefore incredibly important for both the future prosperity of the sector, and the country's economic success as a whole, that the higher education sector is consulted with, and then taken into account during the negotiation of trade deals.

The government's £30 billion export target by 2020 was a welcome announcement, however there are concerns across the higher education sector that this will not be achieved. I would be grateful if you could update us on what has been done so far to reach this ambitious target, and what the government's next steps are to ensure we can get as close as possible to the £30 billion figure.

One barrier to progress on supporting higher education as an export identified at the meeting was lack of policy co-ordination across Whitehall. We hope that the new Education Advisory Group convened by DIT will prioritise bringing together the various government departments involved in international higher education to improve policy coherence, establish ways to improve UK education export data and look at establishing a national strategy for international higher education.

We welcome the extension of the Tier 4 visa pilot as a small step towards liberalising the country's post-study work regime, but encourage further action to enable more international graduates to remain in the country and contribute to economic and cultural fabric of the economy. Currently the UK is losing out to competitor countries such as Australia due to their more generous post-study work offerings. According to the CBI the greatest demand for skills over the next 3 to 5 years will be for higher level skills, and international graduates can help to meet this need.

We would be delighted to welcome you to a future meeting of the group to give an update on the progress that has been made on ensuring the UK's higher education offering to international students stays competitive and robust.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Roberta C. Blackman-Woods

Roberta Blackman-Woods MP
Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Universities Group