

MAYOR OF LONDON

Professor Alan Manning

Chair

Migration Advisory Committee

3rd Floor, Seacole Building

Home Office

2 Marsham Street

London SW1P 4DF

Date: 26 January 2018

Dear Alan,

I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) Call for Evidence on the economic and social impacts of international students in London and the UK.

The UK has a strong reputation for learning and research. This is especially the case for London which attracts more international students and has more world-leading universities and specialist institutions than any other city on the planet. In terms of trade, this is a great UK export. In the capital, it is estimated that international students contribute over £1.5 billion directly in fees and a gross overall contribution of £3.4 billion.

Before outlining the main themes of my response, I want to address the Government's position on international students – namely, that they should remain included in its annual net migration target. I am clear that this does not make economic sense – the Government is, in effect, choosing to impose a limit on the export growth of a key sector. It is also reputationally damaging to the UK: we are viewed as being cautious and politicising international students; employers remain concerned that a supply of skills and talent could come under pressure. Furthermore, it sends a very negative message to young people around the world about the kind of country we want to be. I believe the Government should remove students from the net migration target. I also believe it is essential that a post-study work visa route be reintroduced.

The focus of my response is on higher education. This is largely due to the public data available but also because of the sector's importance to London. The key themes identified in my response are:

International students benefit the country

- International students have a positive economic impact and, given their age profile, do not impose significant costs on the public purse. They are also an established part of our higher education institutions' strategic approach, academic community and financing.
- The social impacts of international students are largely positive. Polling suggests that the (UK) public want to see the same number or more coming to the UK ([ComRes 2017](#)).

Clear post-study work opportunities benefit international students, London and the UK

- The international student market is becoming increasingly competitive. A number of our competitor countries have identified the growth of their international education sector as a strategic priority and already have dedicated post-study work routes.

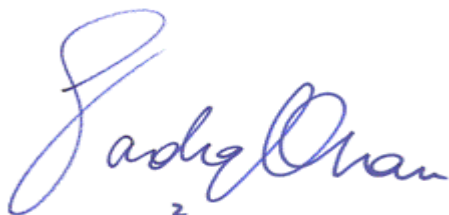
- Surveys have found that many international students found it difficult to secure work in the UK after graduating. ([London First/PwC 2015](#)) and that these opportunities are increasingly part of an international students' decision-making on where to study. ([UUK 2014](#)) I have called on the Government to introduce a clear post-study work route for international students to complement the Graduate Entrepreneur visa.
- Introducing clear post-study work opportunities will allow the UK to benefit from the higher - level skills and talent of international students, often in shortage areas and innovative sectors, in the years after graduation. Increasing this supply further incentivises investment and economic activity.

International students are part of the UK's long-term global strategy, post-Brexit

- The importance of international students extends much further than their economic, social and academic contribution. Studying in London establishes ties to the city and UK that last a life time.
- The value of this cultural or soft power is difficult to quantify but is recognised as a significant asset for the UK and cannot be built up overnight by our competitors. As we leave the European Union, these relationships and global networks will become even more important over the coming century. In my discussions with higher education institutions in London, there is clearly potential to use alumni networks more effectively to promote the capital and UK.

The UK is at a crossroads as we renegotiate our relationship with the European Union and the rest of the world. I am clear that the UK needs to remain in the Single Market and maintain our direct involvement in European research programmes. However, international students remain an important litmus test of the country's openness to people, trade and ideas. At this time, adopting a more strategic approach to supporting the export growth of our education sector, and making it clear that we continue to welcome talented students from around the world, would send a clear and positive message that London and the UK remain open.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sadiq Khan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small number "2" written below the name.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London