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Compliant International Student Recruitment in an Adverse Climate

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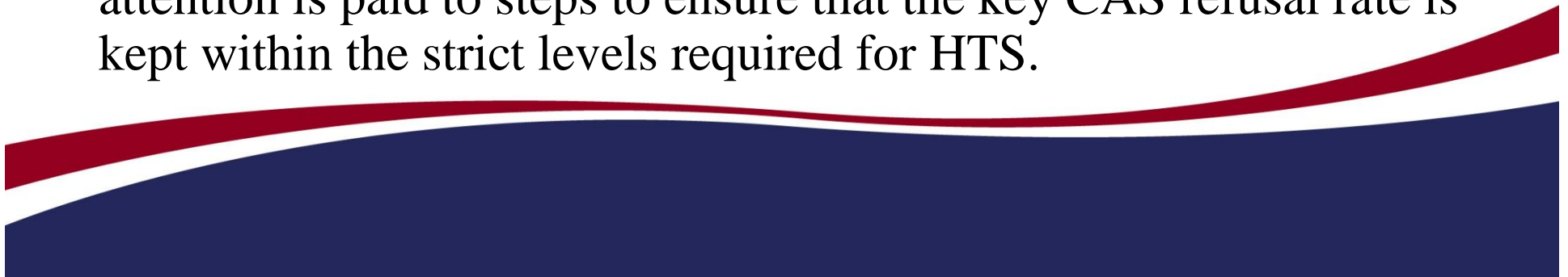


Compliant International Student Recruitment in an Adverse Climate

Numerous changes have been introduced by the Coalition Administration to the rules governing Tier 4 of the Points Based System. The most recent of these concern the criteria for acquiring and maintaining Highly Trusted Sponsor status.

We look at the impact of this raft of changes on both the public and private sectors and the ways the sectors work together.

Our focus is on practical measures to ensure compliant and successful recruitment within the new environment. Particular attention is paid to steps to ensure that the key CAS refusal rate is kept within the strict levels required for HTS.



Impact of Tier 4 Reforms

Private Sector Colleges and the Triple Whammy

- total removal of permission to work part-time (not in the December 2010 consultation),
- phasing out of PSW,
- introduction of Educational Oversight.

By late September 2011, it was estimated that around 800 private sector colleges had decided not to continue as Tier 4 sponsors.



Impact of Tier 4 Reforms (Cont.)

Damage to the Public Sector

- PSW and students from developing economies,
- HTS and the ‘brightest and best’ myth,
- Loss of private sector ‘feeder’ partners



New Opportunities for the Public Sector

FE Colleges and Private Sector Providers of Courses with Work-Based Components

- split responsibility for course provision and placement management,
- access to recruitment base of private providers

Universities and Private Sector Branch Campuses

- buy-outs versus the shared identity model



Pressure on the Public Sector

Consequences of legal challenges to the reforms

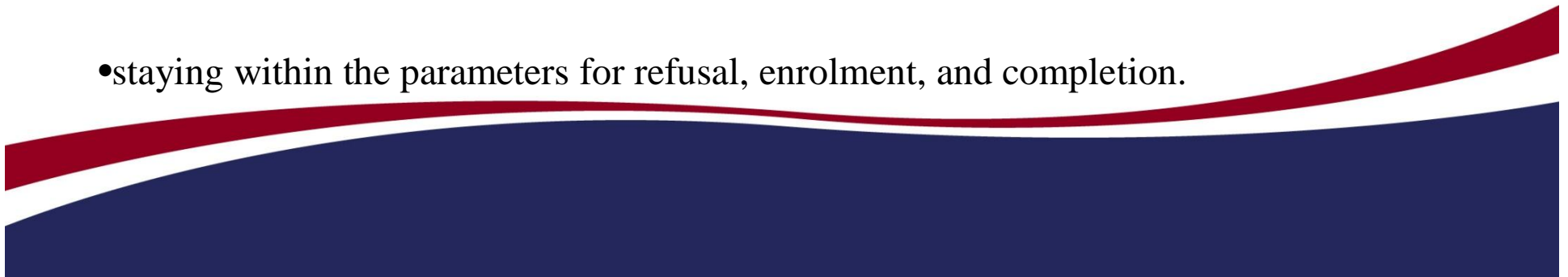
- demands for the 'level playing field',
- increased random inspections.

Non-compliance by public sector institutions

- illegal working by overseas students remains a real problem,
- non-existent attendance monitoring.

HTS and the new constraints

- staying within the parameters for refusal, enrolment, and completion.



Living with the HTS Requirements – 1

Robust recruitment practices

- selecting candidates,
- preparing applicants,
- training staff,
- choosing, monitoring and training agents.



Living with the HTS Requirements – 2

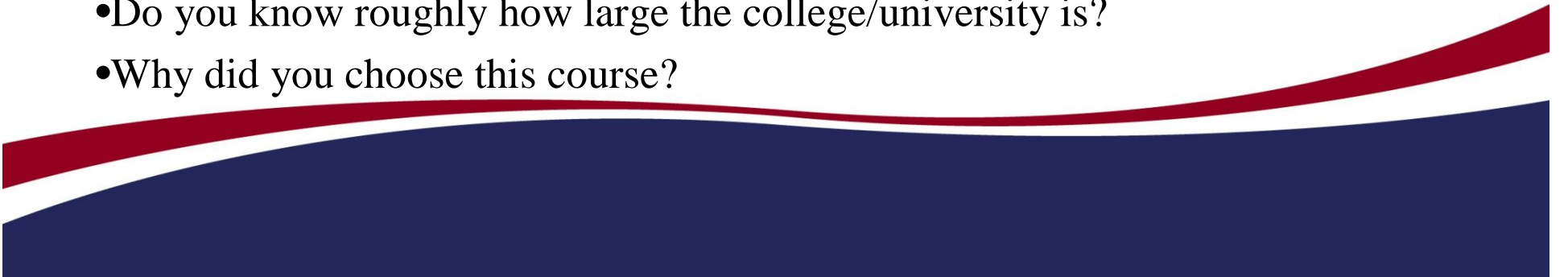
Selecting candidates

- the introduction of Secure English Language Tests does not replace the need for interview screening, whether face-to-face or by Skype, for courses below Level 6,
- for all institutions, interviewing helps to establish academic suitability, genuineness of intention to study, and financial viability,
- for HEIs, it may also be part of the English testing regime for courses above Level 6.



Living with the HTS Requirements – 3

Screening candidates for intention to study

- Why do you want to study in the UK?
 - What are the benefits of studying in the UK compared to your home country or USA/Canada/Australia etc?
 - Why did you choose this university/college?
 - How did you find out about it?
 - Which other colleges/universities have you considered?
 - Where is the college/university?
 - Do you know anyone who has already studied there?
 - Do you know roughly how large the college/university is?
 - Why did you choose this course?
- 

Living with the HTS Requirements – 3 (Cont.)

Screening candidates for intention to study

- What is the relevance of the course to your future career path?
- What qualification will you receive?
- How long does your course last?
- How is your chosen course assessed?
- Do you know what level your course is at?
- Did you consider any other course?
- Does this course offer any professional recognition?
- Are you planning to stay in the UK on completion to study for a higher award?



Living with the HTS Requirements – 3 (Cont.)

Screening candidates for intention to study

- Are you thinking of transferring to another institution on completion?
- What facilities are you expecting at the college/university?
- Will you need help finding accommodation?
- Do you need a meet and greet service?
- Do you understand the responsibilities of students entering the UK under Tier 4 of the PBS?



Living with the HTS Requirements – 4

Screening for financial viability

- What is your current occupation?
- Do you have relatives who have studied at a similar level or studied overseas?
- Do you think your course is appropriate for someone your age?
- Who is financing your studies?
- What is the profession of your financial sponsor and what relationship are they to you?
- Do you have evidence of the financial status of your financial sponsor, e.g.
 - bank statements for last 6 months, bonds, investments etc.
- Are you able to verify the genuineness of these documents?



Living with the HTS Requirements – 4 (Cont.)

Screening for financial viability

- Can you prove the money is available for study?
- Would you be able to pay your tuition fees in full up front?
- Have you checked the refund policy?
- Do you know what your accommodation will cost in the UK?
- Do you know how much your living expenses will be?
- Do you know whether you are entitled to work part-time in the UK?
- Do you know how many hours you are allowed to work?
- Do you know the likely hourly rate of pay?
- How reliant are you on being able to work?



Living with the HTS Requirements – 5

Preparing Applicants

An interventionist stance is needed to assist applicants with all three key stages:

- the visa application
- possible in-country visa interview
- possible questioning by immigration on entry to the UK (applicants should be told never to accept the offer of the services of an interpreter!)

The questions used for the original screening of candidates can be recast for use as rehearsals for visa or immigration interviews.



Living with the HTS Requirements – 6

Training Staff

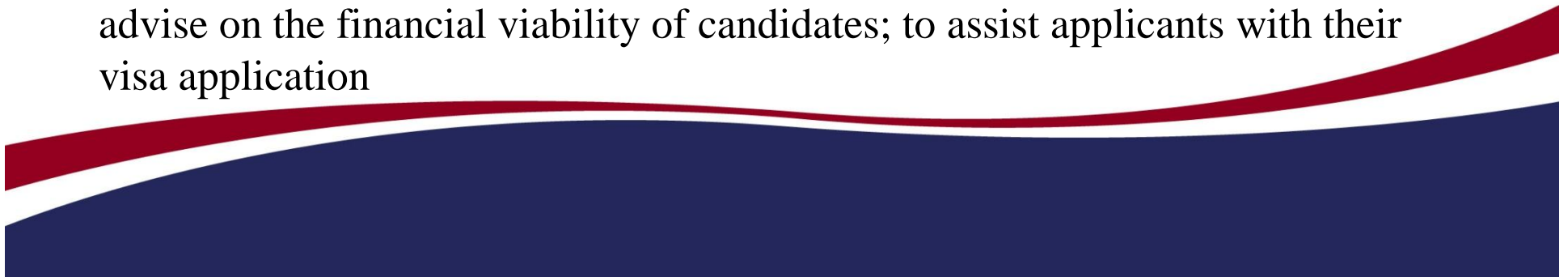
- remember that a prime cause of visa refusals is the enthusiasm of academic staff recruiting overseas anxious to find students for under-subscribed courses...
- take advantage of training programmes from UK NARIC, UKCISA, ASIC etc, that will enable academic and administrative staff to assist applicants with their visa applications and also to pre-empt problems by assessing the appropriateness/genuineness of documents



Living with the HTS Requirements – 7

Choosing, Monitoring and Training Agents

- use proven agent workshops such as ICEF (www.icef.com) or WEBA (www.webafairs.com) to get to know potential agents
- refer to established networks of vetted agents such as QISAN (Quality International Study Abroad Network www.qisan.com)
- use agents who have undertaken recognised training: PIER, British Council, ASIC, etc
- choose agents whom you trust to submit planned activities and promotional materials for prior approval; to understand the place of your institution in the UK system; to understand the entry requirements of your programmes; to advise on the financial viability of candidates; to assist applicants with their visa application



Living with the HTS Requirements – 7 (Cont.)

Choosing, Monitoring and Training Agents

- monitor agents via student feedback gathered at induction, through an analysis of the ratio of applications to enrolment, through the outcome of CAS submissions, and, eventually, through checks on performance and payment history of students
- train agents via institutional workshops, visits to your institution, and visits by your staff to agents, and online support
- avoid sub-agents
- be careful agents do not use titles suggesting they are employees
- remember it is a Tier 4 sponsor's duty to keep full files on agents they use



HTS – Scope for Lobbying

Refusal Rate

Is it fair that an initial CAS refusal should be counted when a second submission succeeds?

The argument, in the HTS FAQs, that successful second CAS submissions will balance out the refusals in the percentages is mathematically unsound. For some institutions, this could prove to be crucial.

The fact that an applicant needs a second CAS does not necessarily indicate poor selection by the institution, simply that a missing or inadequate item invalidated the first attempt.



HTS – Scope for Lobbying (Cont.)

Completion Rate

Is it fair that students who have to abandon their course and return home for reasons such as ill-health or changed domestic circumstances should count as non-completers, even when an institution carefully maintains evidence of the reason and of travel home?

Enrolment Rate

Is it the institution's fault if there is a natural disaster or political upheaval in a country making it untenable for students to take up their studies in the UK?





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