

# **How might a future government reduce bogus immigration without undermining UK competitiveness?**

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# Objectives for (student) migration policy

1. Make sure that everyone plays by the rules (reduce abuse)
2. Attract migrants who can make the greatest contribution to the UK
3. Manage the impacts of migration
  - These objectives can be separated to a certain extent, but not entirely – measures to reduce abuse affect genuine students, changes to ‘raise the bar’ can help reduce abuse



## How much abuse is there in the student visa system?

- Data is poor – lack of exit controls, abuse concealed
- Government has tended to overstate the scale of abuse:

*“The announcement follows a major public consultation on reforming Tier 4 of the points-based system, after a Home Office review revealed widespread abuse. A sample of Tier 4 students studying at private institutions revealed that 26 per cent of them could not be accounted for.”*

*(UKBA website)*

- **Overseas Students in the Immigration System (Home Office 2010)**
- A sample of universities *from the Highly Trusted Sponsor list* suggested that <2% of their students were potentially non-compliant
- A separate sample was taken *from institutions that had been subject to investigation by UKBA* suggested that <26% of students awarded CASs by private HE/FE institutions, <8% by public HE/FE institutions, and <14% by English-language schools were potentially non-compliant.
- Non-compliance in the student visa system is relatively low: probably no more than around 10 per cent on average, and quite possibly substantially less.

## Current Policies

- Much has already been done – register of sponsors (2009) reduced by around half the number of institutions accredited to sponsor student visas, Highly Trusted Sponsor Register (2010, extended 2011)
- Increasingly restrictive student visa regime – ending post-study work, restricting dependents, increased English requirements etc
- Context: net migration target

## What should be done?

- Important to reduce abuse: real problem, public concern
- But imposes costs on education sector and deters genuine students - need better data on problems, and to evaluate recent changes
- Focus on sponsoring institutions is right approach
- Quid pro quo for tougher accreditation should be more freedom for colleges (e.g. admission criteria)
- Need more nimble responses elsewhere – e.g. real-time information about rapid increases in applications
- Public messaging matters – risks of sending the wrong signals internationally or stoking public concerns