

GuildHE response to:

House of Commons Science & Technology Committee Inquiry:

An immigration system that works for science and innovation

June 2018



About GuildHE

1. [GuildHE](#) is an officially recognised representative body for UK Higher Education. Our members include universities, university colleges, further education colleges and specialist institutions from both the traditional and private (“for profit” and “not for profit”) sectors. Member institutions include some major providers in professional subject areas including art, design and media, music and the performing arts; agriculture and food; education; maritime; health and sports.

Opening Comment

1. In GuildHE’s response to the Migration Advisory Committee’s call for evidence in relation to EEA-workers in the UK labour market, we made the following three overarching points which remain central to this Science & Technology inquiry:
 - a. EEA nationals are critical to the success and global competitiveness of UK universities (research, teaching, knowledge exchange). Furthermore, they are strategically important to specific subject areas in a variety of roles - whether as lab technicians or language specialists.
 - b. The impact of EEA nationals extends far beyond the universities and colleges in which they are employed – restricting future flows would have a negative impact on the UK.
 - c. Brexit is an opportunity to rethink the migration system for non-UK migration as a whole rather than just for EEA nationals.
2. You can view our evidence submitted to the MAC on the GuildHE website:
<https://www.guildhe.ac.uk/blog/mac-eea-workers-2017/>

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If an early deal for science and innovation could be negotiated, what specifically should it contain in relation to immigration rules and movement of people involved with science and innovation?

3. We believe that freedom of movement will be a crucial part of any early deal on science and innovation.
4. Any immigration rules that are introduced should be adaptable - the “spirit of the law” rather than the “letter of the law” approach should be taken. Increases in bureaucracy (such as sudden shifts to Tier 2 visas) should be avoided.
5. The burdens involved in the Tier 2 route are particularly challenging for smaller institutions that do not have the resources to support large numbers of visas.
6. If Tier 2 regulations were extended to EU staff, this could pose a significant challenge, particularly to small HEIs with more limited resources. An expansion of Tier 2 would also significantly increase financial burdens for GuildHE member institutions, due to increased staff needs to meet the regulatory burden, sponsorship costs etc. This could result in them being locked out from recruiting from the international talent pool.
7. Due to the complex and interlinked nature of the Brexit negotiations we believe that it is important to consider immigration rules beyond science and innovation alone (for example, immigration policy must also consider families of researchers and professionals as well as researchers and professionals themselves).
8. Therefore, holistic migration policy needs careful consideration rather than short term, “quick fixes”.
9. In relation to this question, we also reference further evidence being submitted by the Russell Group and Universities UK.

What are the specific career needs of scientists in relation to movement of people, both in terms of attracting and retaining the people the UK needs and supporting the research that they do?

10. Many of our institutions have a high percentage of early career researchers within their research departments, for whom developing effective research networks is essential.
11. Increased bureaucracy around movement could more severely impact such researchers especially given the fact that many will be starting their research career later in working life and that there is therefore an increased need to establish research networks quickly.
12. Achieving favourable and adaptable freedom of movement terms therefore provides researchers with the opportunity to build and expand upon relationships not only with EU colleagues but also world colleagues (for example, from Commonwealth countries) in order to carry out the best research possible.

13. Furthermore, we represent many specialist arts institutions. Arts and art working, and much arts research, are inherently collaborative ventures and much of this is currently cross-border. These work areas may face challenges after Brexit if the post-Brexit immigration system is developed without proper consideration and consultation. In this context, we would draw attention to evidence submitted to the MAC by the Creative Industries Federation highlighting the specific challenges that could be created for creative businesses should such 'quick fixes' and non-holistic approaches to the immigration system be implemented.
14. We point to our own response to the MAC for further evidence.
15. In relation to this question, we also reference further evidence being submitted by the Russell Group, Universities UK and UKRI.

What aspects of the 'people' element need to be negotiated with the EU-27, as opposed to being simply decided on by the Government?

16. As mentioned above, it would be very hard for the UK government to decide on immigration rules unilaterally from the EU-27, or indeed without considering other countries.

On what timescale is clarity needed in relation to future immigration rules in order to support science and innovation in the UK?

17. Clarity is needed as soon as possible. However, speed should not result in increased complexity.
18. It is important to provide clear information to EEA nationals as well as non-EEA nationals and this may be best served in considering the whole immigration system.
19. The Brexit negotiations need to happen in a short time. However, it is important to consider the longer term immigration horizon, particularly in relation to skills that the UK will need in the future.
20. As such, it may be necessary to extend immigration rights beyond the transition period in order to ensure some certainty and clarity.
21. In relation to this question, we also reference further evidence being submitted by the Russell Group, Universities UK and UKRI.

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06 June 2018