



How many students have been granted settlement in recent years?

International Students: MW 417



Summary

1. A major analysis of migrants' journeys through the immigration system reveals that in the last seven years (2009-2015) almost 200,000 grants of settlement were made to non-EU migrants who originally arrived through the student route. These findings show that students are not all temporary residents, as is often suggested, but many are in fact remaining in the country permanently. This is therefore compelling evidence to continue to count students in the net migration target, since they undoubtedly add to population growth.

Student Net Migration

2. There have been calls for students to be removed from the net migration statistics for 'policy purposes', which seems to mean that they should be excluded from the government target to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands. However, there is some confusion about the extent to which students are currently adding to net migration.

3. Previously, net migration of non-EU students, as recorded by the International Passenger Survey (IPS) was extremely high (175,000 in the year ending December 2010 when the Coalition government came to power) because the number of students recorded as leaving the country was in single figures. Migration Watch UK raised concerns with the ONS and the Home Office that the IPS was failing to adequately capture departing students and as a result the IPS questionnaire was amended in 2012 to better capture students leaving the country. The data from the new IPS question is now suggesting that net migration of non-EU students has averaged 75,000 in the last five years. It should be a priority for the government to ensure that these statistics are reliable.

4. From April 2015 the Home Office has been collecting the passenger information of those who depart the country. No data has yet been released however a leaked but unconfirmed report has suggested that only 1% of students overstay their visa. Yet the issue is whether or not students add to our population whether they remain legally or otherwise.

The Migrant Journey Reports

5. A major Home Office study carried out over seven years has established migrants' journeys through the immigration system. They have taken those granted settlement and traced their journey back through the system to establish the routes under which they originally arrived.

6. The analysis reveals that over the period 2009-2015, 191,000 non-EU migrants who originally came through the student route were granted settlement. An average of 23,300 non-EU migrants who originally arrived on a student visa and 4,000 who arrived on a student dependant visa were granted settlement in each year. See Table below.

Table 1. Grants of settlement by year of grant, to those who originally arrived as students and student dependants, 2009-2015. Figures rounded. Source: Home Office.¹

Student and Student Dependants Granted Settlement by Year of Grant, 2009-2015

Year of Grant	Main Applications	Dependants	Total
2009	18930	5350	24280
2010	24640	5760	30400
2011	23640	4280	27920
2012	20070	3530	23600
2013	28770	3510	32280
2014	23300	2530	25830
2015	23950	2850	26800
Average 09-15	23300	4000	27300

Changes to Student Rules

7. The student route underwent rapid change under the Coalition government in response to substantial abuse in previous years. More stringent requirements were introduced and students became subject to an interview as part of their application process. In addition over 800 bogus colleges were closed.

8. Secondly, the Post Study Work route which had allowed students two years to remain and find work at any pay and any skill level was closed. Its closure may impact on future student settlement but students can still settle if they switch into graduate level work or into the family category.

1 Table MJ_06 available here: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591320/changes-in-migrants-visa-and-leave-status-2015-tables.ods

Conclusions

9. The Migrant Journey statistics show that settlement was granted to almost 200,000 non-EU citizens who originally arrived in the UK as a student or the dependant of a student. Students have therefore undoubtedly added to population growth and must therefore be included in the net migration statistics.

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