

Press release
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Survey shows Extended Student Visitor Visa a success story which should stay, English UK tells government

A short student visa which can only be used by English language students has been a success in its first year and should continue, ideally on a permanent basis, says English UK.

It has written to immigration minister Damian Green with evidence from member centres showing that the Extended Student Visitor Visa has had a very low refusal rate, a very high return home rate, and that more than 80 per cent of students using it reach the language level required for a points-based visa.

"The results are very positive and indicate, we believe, that not only should this visa be continued, but it should be made rather more permanent by being written into the Immigration Rules," says the letter from chief executive Tony Millns. The ESVV, which is only for English courses lasting 6-11 months and has no prior language requirement, was introduced as a ministerial concession in January 2011 and is currently under review by the UK Border Agency.

Mr Millns goes on to suggest two ways in which the ESVV could be tightened up: that all language schools recruiting students on this type of visa should have to pass Accreditation UK inspections (the rigorous scheme run by the British Council and English UK) and that data from e-Borders be used to give early warnings of any centres where students were over-staying.

The letter says the refusal rate among members for ESVV visas has been just under eight per cent and adds: " Given that the threshold refusal rate for retaining Highly Trusted Sponsor status is 20%, this is a creditable performance."

In addition, says the letter, the return home rate is very high. Members report that 93 per cent of students later applied for another course and returned to the UK on a new visa, indicating that at least that proportion had returned home.

The survey results have shown the ESVV is doing what was expected of it, says the letter. "The average length of course the ESVV students attended was 32 weeks, pretty much as envisaged in the reasoning for its introduction. Around 85% of students reached level B1 in English by the end of their course, again suggesting that this visa is doing what was expected in its conception."

Notes to Editors

1. English UK is the world's leading language teaching association, with more than 450 accredited centres in membership. It covers university and further education college language departments, international study centres in independent schools, educational trusts and charities, and private sector colleges. English UK is a UK registered charity (www.englishuk.com).
2. Students who want an extended SVV (including non-visa nationals) must apply in their own country, showing that they have enrolled on a course lasting 6-11 months. They will have no entitlements to work, bring dependents, switch to another visa category or extend their stay.
3. For more information, please contact Tony Millns, Chief Executive of English UK on Tony@EnglishUK.com or 020 7608 7960 or 07976511439