



Press Release
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Government policies damaging a rare economic success story

The Government's policy of cutting the number of international students risks damaging the economy at a time when growth is flatlining.

Today's figures showing that the UK economy barely grew in the first half of 2011 come at the same time as a report from MPs warning that plans to cut student visas will also cut one of the few growth areas in the economy by at least £3.6bn.

Tony Millns, Chief Executive of English UK which represents more than 450 fully-accredited English Language centres, pressed these points yesterday in a meeting with Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint, Minister of State for Trade and Industry.

He said: "The Government's economic strategy and its immigration policy are completely at odds with each other in the area of international students. We should be making the most of the fact that our international reputation for quality in education is so high that students want to come here to our independent schools and English language centres and go on to take degrees at our universities. Instead, the message which has gone out round the world is that Britain no longer wants students to come here. This is a huge loss to the UK economy at a time when we need export-led growth."

A recent report from the Department of Business, Immigration and Skills ('Estimating the Value to the UK of Education Exports') forecast that international education exports could nearly double from a current £14 billion to over £26 billion by 2025, making it one of the growth sectors that could lead the UK out of recession.

The greatest threat comes from elsewhere in the Government - the Home Office and UKBA - which are committed to reducing net migration 'from the hundreds to the tens of thousands'.

This target, criticised by the Parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee in its report this week, is unachievable because the Government has no control over two of its main components – the numbers of EU nationals who come to work here, and the number of British people who choose to emigrate.

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 come to the UK to learn or improve their English contribute about £1.5 billion to the UK economy in course fees, accommodation and general spending. Many students go on from English language courses to UK degrees or professional qualifications. There are long-term affinity benefits to Britain as well, since many students go on to be opinion-leaders and senior figures in their own countries.
3. For further comment please contact Tony Millns at English UK on 07976511439