

# #Students4Migrants Campaign Briefing: International Students' Campaign National Day of Solidarity

The immigration debate is shaping British politics and we are increasingly seeing how all migrants are scapegoated as a result of the 'hostile environment' created by the government. International Students are included, as they face barriers at every stage of life in the UK. This is unacceptable, and the student movement wants to stand in solidarity with all migrants, and show opposition to these continued attacks.

## Why is this so important?

International Students make up 20% of the student population. International students have existed as part of the UK education system for hundreds of years and have carved a place on our campuses that cannot be replaced.

This includes countless international researchers and academics that make vital contributions to the world-leading British education system.

International students make up 40% of net migration into the UK, constituting a significant and important proportion of migrant communities. Everything that is felt by migrant communities hits international students too. Their experiences are overlapping and anti-immigration language is interlinked.

Migration is an important part of British society, and makes up the social fabric of our communities.

The current language used around migration is a prime example of how the government is further marginalising and targeting some of the most vulnerable people in our society and our student communities.

## What do I need to know?

### Restrictions and barriers

Over the past 5 years, International Students have had to endure a series of policies that have made them feel under attack and unwelcome. A significant step in this direction was the [scrapping of the post-study work visa](#) in 2012, which had previously allowed students to stay in the UK and work for up to two years after graduation. This took away the right of international students to gain vital work experience after their studies.

International students have also been hit by:

- charges for NHS treatment;
- the introduction of biometric identity cards;
- landlord immigration checks.

On top of that, International Students are expected pay extortionate university tuition fees – [up to four times as much as UK students](#) on some courses – which can [rise without notice](#).

### More Immigration Restrictions

The 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015 the Home Office will be introducing immigration policies which, yet again, a series of attacks on international

students, as they disproportionately impact international students from the most vulnerable backgrounds. These include, but are not limited to:

- restricting the right of international students to change courses;
- preventing spouses and dependants from taking on most types of employment
- removing the right of international students studying in colleges to take up employment

In addition to this, the austerity measures that have hit provisions that are needed by migrants such as [vital English language courses](#). (See FE campaigns kit below)

## Asylum Seekers

Refugees and asylum seekers are facing impossible conditions to access higher education. They are classified as international students, and have to pay overseas fees. Almost all of them are denied the right to work and are not eligible to apply for student loans in or similar government support England, Wales or Northern Ireland. We believe this is unfair, and we call for young refugee and asylum seekers to be able to access student loans and to be classified as home students for fee purposes.

The situation is more positive in Scotland, and if they meet certain requirements refugees and asylum seekers are classified as home students, but it is still really restrictive.

## What are we calling for?

The International Students Campaign has been campaigning on issues impacting the welfare of international students, as well as proactively resisting discriminatory Home Office immigration policies. Ongoing national campaigns are calling for:

- Creation of a Student Protection Scheme
- Giving access to HE for Asylum Seekers
- No more Net-migration targets
- Creating a fair fee system #FixIntFees
- Supporting international students in crisis
- Internationalisation of campuses

The International Students Campaign looks to create strong, influential international student communities.

There are many ways in which the government, universities and others can reduce barriers to higher education for migrants, including young asylum seekers and refugees.

## What can you do?

### Walk-out

On November 17<sup>th</sup> at 10.30 am, all across the UK, at colleges and universities, students will be **walking out** of their classes to show their opposition to these discriminatory policies and to stand in solidarity with all migrants.

### Practicalities

If you do decide to walk-out as part of your Day of Solidarity campaign, there are certain things and questions you should keep in mind – mostly centered on the planning of your walk-out:

1. **Get your team together:** make sure you allocate tasks according to the skills people have.
2. **Ensure that your lecturer/tutor is aware:** They should know what you are doing and why you are doing it
3. **Spread the word:** with your colleagues and ask them to join in
4. **Plan where you will be going:** walk out to somewhere, such as your local council offices or MPs office, or to an open space where you can gather in a big group
5. **Tell others what you are doing and why you are doing it:** use placards or banners as you walk-out to inform others of what you are doing. Talk to passers-by about the issues you are angry about and how they could get involved.
6. **Share your success:** make sure you cover what is happening on your campus on the hashtag [#Students4Migrants](#)

## Other actions

There are many ways you can get involved on this day

1. Tweet on the hashtag [#Students4Migrants](#)
2. Submit a motion in your student council for your students union to support the Day of Solidarity. Click [here](#) for a walk-out sample motion.
3. Host a debate on one or more of above issues.
4. Organise a 'teach-in' and invite international students in your group to talk about their experiences.
5. Raise awareness among students on your campus, working with your **Student Action for Refugees (STAR) group** (if applicable) on campus to support equal access to education for refugees and asylum seekers.
6. Speak to clubs & societies that could be interested about opportunities for their involvement e.g. international societies.
7. Send a letter to your local MP telling them about the actions you have planned and ask them to lobby for the rights of International Students.
  - a. Ask them to sign the pledge to support international students and take a photo of them with it.
8. Arrange a meeting with your VC/Principal, and use this to establish their views on immigration policies and the experiences of international students.
  - a. Ask them to sign the pledge to support international students and take a photo of your VC or Principal signing it with the international students' officer and you.
9. Encourage your student media to advertise your activities.

## Further information?

Below are useful links to more information on the barriers experienced by international students, refugees and asylum seekers, and campaign guides to address these issues.

Some NUS campaigns:

- No more [Net-migration targets](#)
- Creating a [fair fee system](#) #FixIntFees
- Supporting [international students in crisis](#)
- [Removing NHS costs](#) for International Students

## Asylum Seekers and Refugees

- Student Action for Refugees (STAR) – is the national network of student groups working to improve the lives of refugees in the UK
  - Webpage: <http://www.star-network.org.uk/webpage>
  - Equal Access Campaign Guide: [http://www.star-network.org.uk/index.php/campaigns/equal\\_access](http://www.star-network.org.uk/index.php/campaigns/equal_access)
- Refugee Support Network - *I just want to study: Access to Higher Education for Young refugees and Asylum Seekers*. A comprehensive report on barriers to access to higher education for students seeking refugee protection, including case studies.
  - <http://refugeesupportnetwork.org/sites/all/sites/default/files/files/I%20just%20want%20to%20study.pdf>
- UKCISA (UK Council for International Affairs) website. An explanation of access and entitlements broken down by immigration status and country.
  - <http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/>
- NUS Connect briefing on equal access to education for refugees and asylum seekers
  - <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/citizenship/Access-to-education-briefing-on-asylum-seekers-and-refugees/>

For more information contact Mostafa Rajaai, [NUS International Students Officer](#) or Alaa Elaydi, [International Policy Officer](#).