

STUDENTS NOT SUSPECTS

Campaign against the new immigration rules

What is the Points-Based System for Immigration?

The UK Home Office has introduced a new points-based system for immigration. On the basis of perceived desirability (level of skill etc.), points are awarded to workers from outside the European Economic Area (EEA). This system affects higher education by making it more difficult for both students and staff from outside the EEA to obtain visas and subjecting them to discriminatory treatment. Persons applying for student visas must demonstrate they have approximately £17,000 in the bank, continuously for 28 days, and must in some cases register with the police. Any students and staff applying to extend their stay must submit biometric information (fingerprints and photographs) and get ID cards. Also, colleges and universities wishing to recruit students or employ staff from outside the EEA must register themselves as licensed sponsors—which means institutions are now required to monitor students' attendance and report them to the Border Agency when a number of 'interactions' (classes, tutorials, assignments, etc.) are missed or for 'suspicions of breach of conditions'.

Why you should care

More than just a violation of privacy, the rules constitute a serious threat to academic freedom and campus democracy. They treat overseas students as potential suspects who come to the UK with the specific goal of abusing the system. The rules harm the relationship of trust between students and staff and create divisions between overseas and EEA students. Furthermore, the introduction of biometric ID cards for foreign nationals is a backdoor route to their general application. The Home Office rules introduce yet another layer of surveillance and bureaucracy. Bureaucratic complications have already disrupted the education of a number of students in their education and have even forced some to return home. The financial requirements make study in the UK hardly possible for students from less privileged backgrounds and/or countries with low currency exchange rates. All this fosters inequality and suspicion, dampens dialogue and international exchange, and results in a less vibrant campus environment.

Who we are

Students not Suspects are a broad and growing coalition of students, staff and campaigners who are opposed to the new Home Office rules. While we are based at Goldsmiths (University of London), we see ourselves as acting solidarity with anyone affected by the Points-Based System for Immigration, as well as anyone opposed to the rules.

What's happening

Goldsmiths Students' Union has passed a motion requesting that staff not comply with the new rules; the Goldsmiths branch of the University College Union (UCU) has adopted a policy of non-compliance. Several departments at Goldsmiths drafted statements opposing the rules: the Centre for Cultural Studies, Media and Communications and Visual Cultures. We are also organising a public meeting on the 8th of February, at 5PM in the Stretch.

How to get involved

To get involved, more information and/or to sign our statement of opposition: visit the blog at studentsnotsuspects.blogspot.com; join us on Facebook at 'Students not Suspects'; and contact us at studentsnotsuspects@gmail.com, especially if you've been affected and have a personal story to relate. **Come to our open public meeting on the 8th of February at 5PM in the Stretch (Dixon Road, Goldsmiths, New Cross SE14 6NW)**, to learn about the new immigration rules and why they are unwarranted, unfair and undemocratic (check the blog for details of speakers).