

Education and Culture Committee
Scotland's Educational and Cultural Future
Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS)

SCIS welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Education and Culture Committee's call for evidence regarding views on Scotland's Educational and Cultural Future. We have limited our responses to themes one and two as these are the areas that we feel are most relevant to our member independent schools.

Theme 1: Further and Higher Education

How current immigration policies impact on Scottish universities' and colleges' ability to attract and retain international students.

Whilst current UK immigration policy may not appear to actively hinder the entrance of international students to Scottish educational establishments, SCIS believes that there are potentially negative side effects for school aged pupils as a result of the UK Home Office's current immigration policy (which aims to bring net immigration levels down 'from the hundreds of thousands to the tens of thousands'¹). One such side effect is that the UK is perceived as less welcoming international students than it has been previously. This contradicts the message conveyed by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills' (BIS) in their report, '*International Education; Global Growth and Prosperity*'; that the UK "values international students" and will provide "a warm welcome and support while they are here"². SCIS believes that this perception may have a detrimental knock-on effect at school level when families are deciding whether or not to enrol their child in an independent school in Scotland. SCIS would therefore welcome an immigration policy that is seen to be welcoming towards international students and that reflects the needs of Scotland; a flexible post work visa policy that encourages international students to study in Scotland and continue to work here after completion of their studies.

SCIS also supports the statement in the BIS report; that school level education "helps to provide a pipeline of prospective students who will study in the UK."³ SCIS believes that schools could play an important role in helping achieve this aim in Scotland whether there is a "yes or no vote" in September 2014. Currently, SCIS member schools house 1309 international students (456 day pupils and

¹ http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Immigration.aspx

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/229844/bis-13-1081-international-education-global-growth-and-prosperity.pdf

³ [Ibid](#)

853 boarders), accounting for 24.8% of all boarding school pupils in Scotland⁴. These students are likely to continue their education in Scottish institutions, as a survey by the Independent Schools Council (ISC) highlighted that 77% of international pupils at ISC schools go on to study at universities in the UK (this accounts for 24% of international students at universities in the UK according to the same report)⁵. Therefore, SCIS would welcome more coherent and consistent policies that reflect the aforementioned aim of encouraging international students to study in Scotland, whether at school or university level.

SCIS would therefore support the Scottish Government's proposed post-work visa as, it may encourage more students to study in a higher educational institution in Scotland and therefore, also at school level. The allowance of additional time in the country after graduating, in order to search for work, would improve the attractiveness of Scotland to potential students and would hopefully positively influence their decision to study here.

Finally, SCIS therefore supports the Scottish Government's response to SCIS's question regarding their approach to independent schools (including international boarders): Following a potential "yes" vote in September 2014, "*With regard to International pupils' attendance at independent schools this will also continue to be openly encouraged.*"

The social, cultural and financial contribution made by international students

The independent school sector in Scotland has worldwide renown and has been attracting students from all over the world for decades. We would welcome the Scottish Government continuing to expand on this reputation, and on education as an export.

Although the White Paper acknowledges that '*the university sector is one of the main drivers of the Scottish economy*', SCIS believes that independent schools also contribute significantly. Recent research done on behalf of SCIS, estimates that international students contribute £27.8 million to the Scottish economy each year in school fees alone. This figure therefore excludes any other income spent on living costs within the community by international school pupils and consequently, we can assume that the overall figure would be much higher.

Research published by the Scottish Council of Economic Advisers supports this by arguing that the government should not ignore the potential to develop education for export as a valuable sector of the Scottish economy, at both school

⁴ SCIS 2013 census

⁵ http://www.isc.co.uk/Resources/Independent%20Schools%20Council/Research%20Archive/Bulletin%20Articles/2011_06_Bulletin_OverseasPupilsInISCschools_KD.pdf

and university level. This will require that Scotland retain its current reputation for high-quality education in both public and private sectors.⁶

In addition, with 1309 international pupils currently in attendance at member schools SCIS believes they add substantial value to the life of the schools. Great importance is attached to the creation of a friendly, close-knit community in which young people can settle, make firm friendships, feel at home and thrive. As a result of the emphasis placed on this, pupils gain a rich understanding of different cultures at a much earlier age than they may have otherwise been able to outside of these circumstances.

Theme 2: Early Years, Childcare and Employability

While SCIS recognises the economic advantage of creating a suitable environment for woman to re-enter the workforce, one possible concern is that the benefits that this may have to children aren't maximised if it means long hours of early learning and childcare from a young age.

SCIS would be curious to learn how the proposed increase to 1140 hours of free early learning and childcare would affect partner providers. With the recently passed Children and Young People Bill there have been complications in establishing the increase in flexibility of the additional hours, with some partner providers being expected to adopt the same model as their local authority. This has implications for partner providers as they may not be open for the same weeks in the year and perhaps not for the same number of weeks. In addition, with the introduction of looked after and vulnerable 2 year olds in this provision, staff ratios will have to increase. This will require the hiring of additional staff, however the partner provider uprating has not been set to increase in line with these additional costs.

SCIS would therefore expect that a large amount of planning and training would need to be undertaken for this increased provision to work in practice. In addition the Scottish Government would need to ensure that nurseries were adequately resourced to provide a high quality service and not be simply quantitative in nature.

⁶ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/12/09094114/7>