

Position statement

Mobility in the chemical sciences
2020



Summary

The UK immigration system must:

1. Be flexible, mirroring the changing needs of UK chemical sciences.
2. Recognise the essential value of international collaboration to UK science.
3. Recognise that innovation– and the UK economy - will always need timely access to a range of skills and knowledge.
4. Be light-touch in regulation, reflecting the limited resources many employers have to access visa processes.
5. Be welcoming in substance and attitude.
6. Be low cost, reflecting that employers and employees often do not have the resources to deal with high visa costs.

With this in mind the Government should adopt the following:

The new immigration system should always seek to streamline the visa application process as much as possible so that it is accessible for employers of all sizes. It should seek to decrease associated costs and promote a welcoming attitude to attract the best and brightest.

Science is increasingly international and is best done in collaboration across borders so scientists and researchers are able to exchange knowledge and have access to the best facilities. **The UK should seek a**

“We want to make sure the UK continues to be at the forefront of innovation, so we need an immigration system that attracts the sharpest minds from around the globe.”

Patience Patten, UK Home Secretary, December 2019

Background

As well as the introduction of the Global Talent Visa, the Government will implement a points-based system from 1 January 2021, saying it will attract the highly skilled workers we need to contribute to our economy, our communities and our public services. With a clear focus on skilled workers, those applying to work in the UK will be allocated points based on attributes such as job offer, salary and qualifications. This has important ramifications for the progress of scientific research within the UK.

Why is mobility important for science?

Science is a global endeavour. Collaboration between scientists, no matter where in the world, delivers the best answers to global challenges, the most creative innovation and this can only be achieved by the smooth and easy mobility. Scientists themselves have come to expect opportunities to move around in order to collaborate, should they wish to. The past few decades has seen the UK establish itself as a global leader in science and a central node in international collaboration, meaning it has been able to attract the best scientists from around the world to work. This status has helped the UK attract additional inward investment and funding, providing resources for further collaboration and innovation.

In a survey of nearly 5,800 of our chemical sciences community, 84% of UK chemical scientists think that freedom of movement has had a positive impact on UK science and innovation.^{iv}

In the same survey, 71% of all chemical scientists, 63% of UK nationals, believe Freedom of Movement has had a positive impact on their careers.ⁱⁱ

A migration system that meets the needs of UK chemical sciences

Access

UK science and innovation needs long and short-term access to a wide variety of skills and knowledge, often at short notice. To meet this aspiration, a f

