



## Key Political Lessons From the 2019 International Student Survey

### Description

**Brexit uncertainty and a shifting higher education policy agenda means it's vital that the UK higher education sector looks ahead to emerging attitudes and dynamics.**

Last month, QS launched its latest [International Student Survey \(ISS\)](#) to help institutions understand and respond to recent political shifts.

When highlighting the responses from those prospective students seeking to study in the UK, our 2019 report recommends that the UK government should work with the higher education sector to ensure that the immigration system post-Brexit is best prepared to grow global education.

With the UK government pledging to increase the total number of international students studying in the UK higher education system each year to 600,000 by 2030 through its International Education Strategy, the sector must look ahead and think strategically at how best to achieve this.

### Explaining the Brexit effect

Our [2019 International Student Survey](#) recommends that universities look ahead to understand the impact on international student recruitment thanks to shifting political environments. According to our Brexit Sensitivity Index as part of this year's survey, we found that:

- Over a third (36%) of EU students claim to be less likely to study in the UK because of Brexit. This figure suggests the number of EU students at risk of choosing a different study destination than the UK is approximately 20,000. The potential loss of such a pool of students poses a significant financial threat to UK universities and would take the number of EU students in the UK down to their lowest levels for at least five years.
- Prospective students from across North Africa and the Middle East, in addition to those from many Commonwealth countries, are in general more likely to be interested in studying in the UK due to Brexit.

Our research presents a mixed picture. As new attitudes emerge there is potential for UK universities to take advantage of the heightened interest from international students from certain regions coming to

the UK post-Brexit.

### **How aware are EU students of the government's commitment to fee status?**

This year's research also found that EU students are concerned about the financial viability of the UK as a study destination upon the UK leaving the EU. Although the UK government recently committed to honouring domestic fee status and funding options for EU students starting the 2020/2021 academic year, the lack of any long-term agreement on the amount that EU students would have to pay presents a significant barrier to easing financial concerns.

Only six out of 10 prospective EU students are aware that they will be eligible for student loans and tuition fees at the same rate as domestic students in the UK for courses starting in the 2019/2020 academic year (the ISS research took place before the UK government's 2020/2021 extension).

Communicating clearly the post-Brexit fee structure, finance options and any scholarships that are available for EU students could help alleviate long-term concerns about the financial viability of studying in the UK and support growth in student recruitment.

Our report doesn't just cover the results of the survey, it also outlines recommendations to help universities adapt to the changing expectations of international students and harness the opportunities to grow global education.

[Download this year's International Student Survey here](#) to discover more insights into global higher education.