

The value of international staff at Russell Group universities

1. Summary

The strong base of overseas talent at Russell Group universities underpins excellence in research, innovation and education; helping the UK to maintain and develop its position as a world-leading research nation and playing a critical role in educating future generations.

Over 42,000 staff from outside the UK are working at Russell Group universities, making up 25% of the overall workforce. These highly qualified individuals bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise, developed in their home nations, to our universities.

Overseas academics are responsible for some of the highest quality research at our institutions and make up a particularly high proportion, 48%, of academics on research-only contracts.

36% of international staff at Russell Group universities are directly involved in teaching and provide a significant core of expertise and capacity for training future generations.

To position the UK as a dynamic and outward looking nation, Government should continue to welcome overseas talent to our universities and recognise the value they bring. Any future immigration system needs to support UK universities to attract and retain researchers, academics and technical experts from anywhere in the world.

2. Importance of International staff

Excellent overseas staff are vital for world-class universities. They drive excellence in research and teaching; promoting the international reputation of our universities and underpinning one of the UK's most successful export industries:

- Attracting the best global talent, including researchers and technical experts, to UK universities ensures that our research base is continually refreshed. As a result of investments in their training made by other nations, **these staff bring new ideas and knowledge to the UK - driving innovation and our world-leading research** performance
- Overseas researchers attract vital international research funding to the UK and inward investment to the regions in which they're based, **benefiting the local and national economy**
- International academics play a critical role in **educating future generations**. Their contribution is vital to deliver a highly skilled workforce for the UK
- **Economically valuable and strategically important disciplines** in the UK are underpinned by high quality research and teaching from overseas academics. Their contribution to support the growth of STEM and modern foreign languages in particular is crucial.

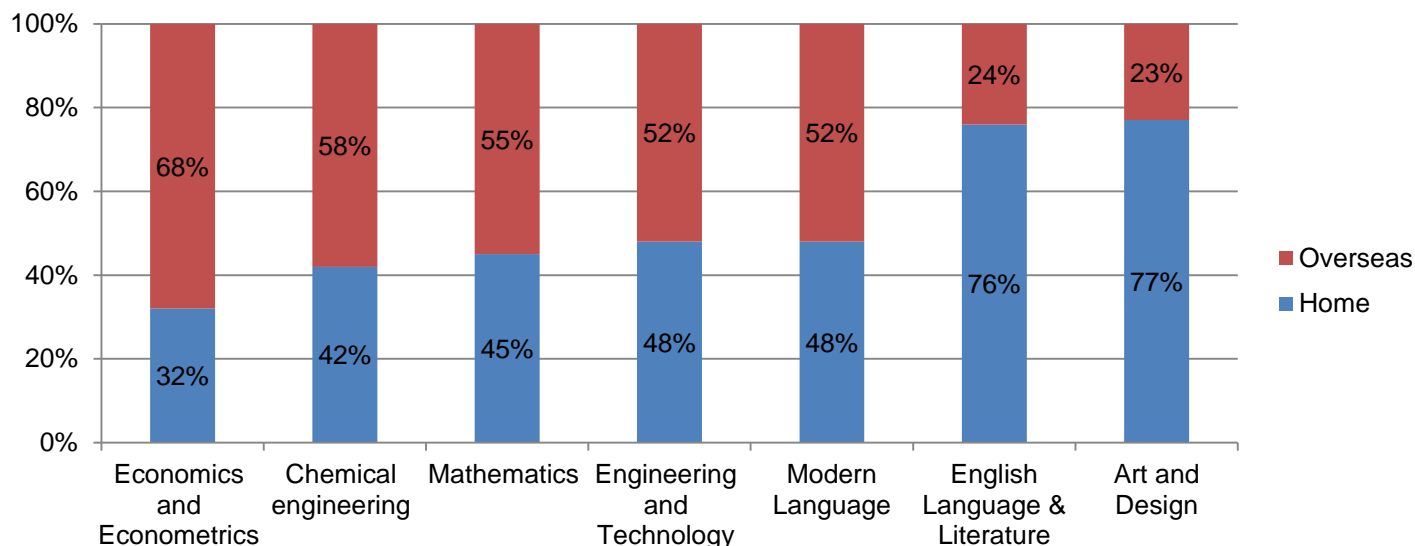
3. Our international staff in numbers

There are over 42,000 international staff (non-UK EU and non-EU nationals) working at Russell Group universities. International staff make up **25% of the overall workforce**, 39% of academics and 48% of staff on research-only contracts at Russell Group universities. Of international staff at our universities, 88% work in highly skilled professional, managerial and technical roles.

International staff at Russell Group universities are recruited through rigorous processes that ensure our universities secure the best talent from around the world. **Selection rates for the Research Excellence Framework 2014 were highest for international staff**, a clear indication of the high quality research they produce and their value to UK universities.

Of international staff at our universities, 36% are directly involved in teaching and thus provide a significant core of expertise and capacity for training future generations. International academics are particularly prominent in disciplines of strategic importance to the UK, including **key STEM subjects and modern languages**. Their contribution to the growth of these disciplines in the UK is crucial.

Proportion of overseas academics in key disciplines at Russell Group universities



Of all non-academics at Russell Group universities, 12% are international staff. Many of these staff are in associate professional or technical occupations (over 2,200 staff) and hold highly skilled posts such as laboratory technicians. These staff are crucial for the running of our research-intensive institutions.

4. A future immigration system

Any future immigration system needs to support UK universities to attract and retain researchers, academics and technical experts from anywhere in the world as they are essential for driving innovation, improving national productivity and maintaining the UK's competitive advantage in research and education. The system should:

- **Prioritise highly skilled people** (including researchers and academics) and those with specialist knowledge and expertise (including technicians, analysts, and expert practitioners).
- This would involve **continuing to prioritise those in PhD-level and other highly skilled positions**, perhaps through a separate light-touch route for academic, research and associated specialist/technical positions.
- Acknowledge that earnings thresholds alone are not fit for purpose as a proxy for the level of skill and specialisation necessary to undertake research and teaching roles in universities.
- Offer options for long-term migration with **flexible and low burden routes to residency** and facilitate short term/temporary migration for education, training, research collaboration and knowledge exchange.

In addition, the Government should confirm the rights and long-term status of current and prospective EU staff at UK universities. These assurances are needed to safeguard the UK's position as a world leader in science, research and HE for the long-term.

In order to position the UK as a dynamic and outward looking nation, we should continue to welcome overseas staff to our universities and recognise the value they bring.