

***From the Trustees of The Council for Industry and Higher Education
& from The Royal Academy of Engineering and The Engineering Technology Board***

Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill

4th July 2005

Dear Sir,

The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill, which has its Second Reading on Tuesday 5th July, proposes abolishing the right of appeal for international students who are refused visas. As a matter of principle this is wholly unjust. As a matter of practice it is unfair as the refusal is based on a subjective view that has often then been overturned. As a matter of policy it is illogical for one part of the Government to be encouraging overseas students and graduates to study in the UK, contribute to the diversity of the student experience, underpin our research effort and contribute substantially to the finances of our universities while another part sends signals through substantial increases in visa fees and now through trying to remove a right of appeal that we do not value these students.

The Government purports to be concerned about strategically important science, engineering and technology (SET) subjects. In engineering some 50% of post-graduate research students come from overseas. Across all SET subjects 23% of PhD students are international. Their presence underpins the viability of many departments. Their research and their subsequent work in a range of organisations contribute enormously to the international competitiveness of the UK. We need consistent policies from the Government based on a recognition of the importance of overseas students and a desire to treat them fairly and justly.

We urge the Government to reconsider.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Greenhalgh
Sir Tom McKillop
Rob Margetts CBE
Ruth Silver CBE
Sir David Watson
Dr Geoffrey Copland

Lord Broers, President the Royal Academy of Engineering
Sir Peter Williams, Chairman ETB