



Sent by email to: pmpost.ext@no10.gov.uk

30 April 2024

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing on behalf of Universities UK and Creative UK about the potential impact of changes to the Graduate route visa on the UK's creative industries.

From the cultural revolution of the 'swinging sixties' to the rise of 'Cool Britannia' and our gaming industry, which birthed iconic brands like, Rockstar Games, the creative industries have led the charge in showcasing the best of Britain to the world. British culture has been a major export for the past century, and our creative industries are a true example of a British success story. They generate £108 billion a year, employ over 2.3 million people across the UK, and the industry is bigger than aerospace, life sciences and the automotive industry combined. Just last year, the [government made a pledge to grow the industry by an extra £50 billion.](#)

Yet this progress could be jeopardised if proposals to reform the Graduate visa are introduced which would deny the creative industries access to the talent they need to succeed. After all, international students and graduates are integral to the growth of the creative industries. Without their skills, we risk damaging the sector thanks to our stringent visa and immigration policies which make it harder to bring people over to the UK. Following further increases to visa fees and salary thresholds, the Graduate visa represents one of the few routes left which enables talented graduates to remain in the UK and contribute to our growing creative industries.

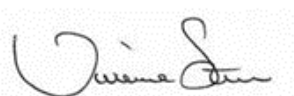
Not only would this be a loss for the creative industries, but also for the UK as a whole. Creative thinking and problem solving will be crucial to solving the issues of tomorrow. For example, [studies have found that creative graduates](#) are best placed to utilise and harness the potential of AI tools, while a recent report published by [London Economics](#) exploring the economic impact of international Arts and Design students to the UK economy found that they contributed a net benefit of £2.45 billion.

For decades, our universities have been at the forefront of training and developing these skillsets. Helping provide a springboard for artists, playwrights, directors, and designers, and serving as a beacon for creatives from around the world wanting to hone their skills. Whether it's a young Jimmy Choo developing his craft at Cordwainers (now part of London College of Fashion) or world-renowned DJ Peggy Gou who studied at London College of Fashion, the role our universities play in attracting the best creative talent from around the world goes to show the soft power influence of our institutions.

Experts have been warning the government for years on how their policies could lead to the [decline of the creative industry](#). Policy decisions made following the government's decision to review the Graduate visa could be yet another move which serves to stifle growth and undermine the UK's creative industry, while making the UK higher education sector less attractive to the future talent of tomorrow.

The Graduate visa has helped to keep the UK as a top study destination in an increasingly competitive global market, making a £60 billion impact to the economy and bolstering the country's reputation and soft power influence. It's important we continue to attract the best global creative talent as their skills and passion will help to ensure that our creative industries remain world leading.

Yours sincerely,



Vivienne Stern MBE
Chief Executive, Universities UK



Caroline Norbury OBE
Chief Executive, Creative UK

cc. Rt Hon James Cleverly MP; Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP; Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC MP; Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP.