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Bill Rammell MP
Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education

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Dear Vice- Chancellor/Principal

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES SCHEME

I am very pleased to draw your attention to an announcement which has been made today to replace the Science and Engineering Graduate Scheme (SEGS) on 1 May 2007 with a new staying on scheme which is not subject specific. The new scheme, entitled the International Graduates Scheme (IGS), will enable international students who have acquired a bachelor degree or higher qualification in any subject from a recognised UK higher education institution to be able to apply to stay on to work in the UK for up to one year.

Key features of the new scheme are:-

- The existing SEGS list of eligible courses, which expires at the end of April, will not be renewed. Instead the Immigration Rules will be amended to indicate that no restrictions apply in relation to subject of qualification for those applying after completing a qualification from 1 May 2007. Applicants will still have to apply within one year of successfully completing their qualification.
- Unlike SEGS which applied only to those with a 2:2 or above, any degree class (except fail) will be eligible.
- Those with postgraduate certificates and diplomas, such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) will be eligible to apply.
- A re-branding of the scheme as the International Graduates Scheme in keeping with its widened scope.
- Eligible international graduates will be offered a permit granting them to stay in the UK for 12 months to seek work.
- The International Graduates Scheme will be a transitional route from studying in the UK into skilled work. Extensions of the leave in this category will not be permitted and it won't itself be a route to settlement.
- As the scheme is to allow students to transfer into highly skilled and skilled work, in-country switching into the temporary workers or exchange migrant routes will not be allowed.
- To stay in the UK beyond the 12 months granted under this scheme, international graduates will be required to apply and meet the criteria of a suitable employment category, such as the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (in future Tier 1 of the Points Based System (PBS)), or Work Permits (in future Tier 2 of PBS), both of which are routes to settlement.

I believe that the facility for international students to stay on in the UK after they have completed their studies to gain a year's work experience will enhance the UK's attraction as a study destination. It will reinforce the message that international students are welcome here and we value them.

Bill Rammell

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