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### Reform of the student immigration system

**The Minister of State for Immigration (Damian Green):** The government has committed to making changes across the immigration system to achieve its overall aim of reducing net migration. The student route accounts for two thirds of migrants entering the UK each year which makes it a key focus for reform.

Therefore, the Government is today launching a consultation on the reform of the student immigration system.

The UK's education system is world-renowned, and we remain the global destination of choice for the many thousands of higher education students who choose to study abroad each year. We want to encourage all those genuine students coming here to study at our world class academic institutions.

At the same time the Government wants to ensure that those who enter on a student visa genuinely come here to study. The Government is committed to minimising abuse of the student route by those whose primary motivation is not to study but to work and settle in the UK.

By minimising abuse, we shall also take a further step towards our aim of reducing net migration to the UK to sustainable levels. The majority of non-EU migrants are students. They, and their dependants, accounted for around two thirds of visas issued last year under the Points Based System. It is clear that the Government's aim to reduce net migration will not be achieved without careful consideration and action on the non-economic routes including students.

The proposals in our consultation aim to build on recent changes to the Points Based System, which we believe offers a transparent and flexible framework but which needs further strengthening. They are grouped under the following broad aims which we expect our reforms to achieve:

- Raising the level of courses students can study, with only Highly Trusted Sponsors able to offer courses to adult students below degree level.
- Introducing tougher entry criteria for adult students
- Ensuring students return overseas after their course
- Limiting the entitlements to work and to sponsor dependants
- Simpler procedures for checking low-risk applications
- Stricter accreditation procedures for education providers in the private sector.

We want to hear views on our proposals from a wide range of people. The consultation will run for 8 weeks until 31st January. This is shorter than a standard 12 week consultation so that the policy can be announced in advance of the next academic year.

The consultation document will be available on the UK Border Agency website and copies will also be available in both House libraries.