

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Migration last week published its much anticipated report on the closure of the Tier 1 Post Study Work (PSW) category and its impact on UK businesses, universities and our overall position in the global market place.

The publication of the [report](#) followed an extensive consultation period which saw 100 written submissions from universities, businesses and industry representatives, plus oral evidence from expert witnesses.

Squire Patton Boggs teamed up with EEF, the manufacturers' organisation, to submit a joint response to the consultation (one of only two law firms to do so). In preparation, Squire Patton Boggs' UK Business Immigration team gathered valuable information through an anonymous survey of clients affected by the closure of the Tier 1 PSW category and key findings from that survey have been cited by the APPG on Migration within its report.

Paul Blomfield MP and Chair of the APPG on Migration states of the report's findings that there is *"strong cross-party agreement on the need to take action to restore our reputation as the 'destination of choice' for international students"* and that current UK post study work opportunities should be reconsidered with a view to:

- maximising the attractiveness of UK higher education in an increasingly competitive international marketplace;
- better serving the interests of UK employers, particularly within growth areas of the economy such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths ("STEM" areas); and
- sending a positive message internationally that the UK is 'open for business'.

Two key recommendations featured in the report are that:

- a new immigration route should be established which allows non-EEA students to remain in the UK for at least 12 months following graduation from a recognised domestic academic institution, in order to secure skilled employment. This route would:
 - better enable UK businesses to identify and recruit skilled non-EEA graduates;
 - provide graduates with adequate time to prepare and apply for jobs following graduation, including via graduate recruitment cycles;
 - require graduates, by the end of the 12 month period, to have secured employment under Tier 2 (General), switched into another permitted immigration route or left the UK.
- improvements should be made to Tier 2 in order to ensure that skilled international graduates can be retained within key sectors of the UK economy. In particular, the Government should:
 - review current rules for Tier 2 (General) – including the licensing and reporting requirements – to improve the attractiveness of this route to UK employers, including SMEs;
 - allow greater flexibility regarding the Tier 2 (General) salary requirement to accommodate variations in average graduate starting salaries across the regions and constituent countries of the UK, and sectoral variations across the UK economy; and
 - improve Home Office information targeting employers – and particularly SMEs – regarding Tier 2 rules in relation to non-EEA graduates in the UK.

The report also called on the Government to commission an in-depth independent review of the impacts of policy in this area and on the UK's share of the international student market.

These findings are welcome and reflect the very clear message in Squire Patton Boggs' joint response with EEF (and well before that), that the decision to close the Tier 1 PSW category was a mistake and that urgent measures should be taken to re-instate the category or introduce a similar alternative.

It is hoped that whatever the outcome of May's general election, urgent steps are taken to follow the recommendations set out in this report. The Squire Patton Boggs' Business Immigration team will continue to push for changes in this area.