



Leverhulme Centre
for Research on Globalisation and Economic Policy

Migration adviser to address GEP in wake of 'degrees for visas' row

GEP lecture

A key government adviser is to address an audience at GEP just days after expressing his alarm at the ease with which migrants can secure a degree to remain in the UK.

Professor David Metcalf has called for a review of "lower tier" colleges amid fears that it is too simple for non-Europeans to gain qualifications entitling them to two-year visas.

He described the current system for allowing such students to extend their stay in Britain as "one of the most generous schemes" of its type anywhere in the world.

Professor Metcalf was speaking in his role as Chairman of the Migration Advisory Committee, which has recommended far closer scrutiny of standards in such cases.

His remarks made national headlines after he said he was "stunned", "staggered" and "amazed" by the way in which an apparent loophole in the system is being exploited.

Now Professor Metcalf, Emeritus Professor of Industrial Relations at the London School of Economics, is to become the latest speaker in GEP's prestigious Leverhulme Globalisation Lecture Series.

He will deliver his address, entitled British Immigration Policy and Work, when he visits the Centre on 7 December.

In the past academic year some 42,000 non-European students have secured a visa to stay in the UK after obtaining a degree under the Post-Study Work Route scheme.

But Professor Metcalf said he was astonished to learn that, aside from the 154 major universities, Britain has almost 600 colleges and institutions that provide undergraduate courses.

Among them are Circus Space, which offers a degree in circus arts, and the College of Ayurveda, which specialises in ancient Indian medical science.

Professor Metcalf said: "They are not 'proper' universities. They are basically further education colleges that get their degrees validated by one of the universities.

"What we think, without being overly elitist, is that we should have a good look at these institutions to see if it is legitimate for all the students studying there on all the courses to get post-study work visas."

The MAC's report, entitled Analysis of the Points-Based System: Tier 1, questions the generosity of the PSWR scheme and calls for regular reviews.

The PSWR is intended to keep "highly skilled" students, yet a snapshot survey revealed one in 10 to be working in "semi-skilled" or "elementary" jobs.

Such findings have fuelled claims that, rather than filling skills gaps, the system might in fact be taking jobs away from British workers.

The MAC's report warns: "It is plausible that the standard of the qualification, in terms of both the quality of teaching and assessment and the value of the qualification to employers, varies greatly among these institutions. Yet all are treated equally in terms of post-study leave entitlement."

The Committee suggests foreign students could be forced to

find a job within months of finishing their course before they are given a full two-year visa.

Professor Metcalf's visit to GEP comes less than a fortnight after another key government figure, Trade Minister Lord Davies, delivered a Leverhulme Globalisation Lecture at the Centre.

Other guests in 2009 have included Professor Danny Blanchflower, the Monetary Policy Committee member whose warnings of recession were ignored by the Bank of England, and Andrew Witty, CEO of pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline.

Professor Alan Duncan, Head of the Nottingham School of Economics, said: "It is very satisfying for us to be ending such an impressive year in style.

"Our capacity to offer economics students genuine interaction with important and influential figures is crucial to our commitment to broadening education beyond mere course work and individually supervised research.

"To that end we have been fortunate to attract an especially strong array of speakers throughout 2009, and we are proud to be able to add Professor Metcalf to a very distinguished list."

About GEP

GEP is based at the University of Nottingham and is substantially funded by grants from the Leverhulme Trust.

In January 2008 it opened GEP in Malaysia at the University of Nottingham's purpose-built Semenyih campus, 30km from Kuala Lumpur.

In November 2008 it launched GEP in China at the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China.

GEP is keen to promote its research work and is committed to communicating its expertise through the media and to assisting journalists whenever able.

Website: www.gep.org.uk

GEP lectures

GEP hosts a number of public lecture series.

The Nottingham Lectures in International Economics represent a 'masterclass' series and attract leading academics from around the world.

The World Economy Annual Lecture, The World Economy Annual Asia Lecture and The World Economy Annual China Lecture are all sponsored by Wiley-Blackwell, publisher of The World Economy.

The Leverhulme Globalisation Lecture Series attracts speakers from the policymaking, business and media communities.

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