

International Students in England and Wales

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We still have approximately 500,000 international students studying in Higher Education. There has been a fall in numbers from India and visa restrictions and limits to how long they can stay on after the graduate mean that the UK is a less attractive place to study. It is also very expensive and the cost of accommodation often comes as an unpleasant shock to students. There is luxury housing for students from very wealthy families.

There is a tension in government approaches – the university ministers welcome international students and point to their financial value. The Home Office and Prime Minister see them as part of an “immigration problem”. This means international students can feel unwelcome especially since the referendum which has caused great anxiety to European students and university staff..

The referendum result is interpreted by the new government as a response to high levels of European Union immigration. I think it came from political alienation and has deeper causes though there is more public racism and xenophobia.

It's too soon to know whether sense will prevail and we will be able to negotiate access to the single market and our research science links with European science will continue.

Our university chaplaincies continue to be places where students from across the world can feel safe and welcome and can make friends with students from the UK. In some like Birmingham University and Manchester, the number of students means there can be national groupings like Jesus Youth. We now that some African Catholics come faithfully to Mass but also attend a Pentecostal Church or student group.

International students make up a large proportion of students in our chaplaincies and chaplains act as interpreters between the different Catholic cultures

Roberta Canning