

London Met University Students Face Deportation



About 2,600 students could be kicked out of the UK after the Government stripped a university of its right to admit foreigners.

London Metropolitan University has had its Highly Trusted Status (HTS) for sponsoring international students revoked and will no longer be allowed to authorise visas, according to the institution's website.

The move could mean more than 2,000 students being deported within 60 days unless they find another sponsor, according to the National Union of Students (NUS) .

Immigration minister Damian Green said there had been a "serious systematic failure" at the university.

He said it proved to be a "very, very deficient" sponsor because more than a quarter of students sampled were studying there when they did not have permission to stay in the country.

A "significant proportion" of students did not have a good standard of English and there was no proof that half of those sampled were turning up to lectures, he added.

Professor Malcolm Gillies, vice chancellor at London Metropolitan University, said the claims were not "particularly cogent" and said it would be disputing them.

He said: "I would go so far as to say that the UK Border Agency has been rewriting its own guidelines on this issue and this is something which should cause concern to all universities in the UK."

As foreign students were thrown into panic over the announcement, Universities Minister David Willetts announced the formation of a task force to help those affected by the decision.

He said: "It is important that genuine students who are affected through no fault of their own are offered prompt advice and help, including, if necessary, with finding other institutions at which to finish their studies."

But Keith Vaz, chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, said the move could harm Britain's

reputation as a prime destination for overseas students.

He said: "It has left thousands of students in limbo and I am afraid it may damage the reputation of this country as the best place in the world for overseas students.

"Just when we are welcoming thousands of overseas visitors for the Olympics, at the same time we are saying to thousands of overseas students who have paid a small fortune to come to Britain in good faith that they can no longer study at this university."

Some 290,000 international students and their dependents are granted visas each year on average, according to statistics from the National Audit Office. They contribute over £5bn to the UK economy, Universities UK says.

NUS President Liam Burns said: "Politicians need to realise that a continued attitude of suspicion towards international students could endanger the continuation of higher education as a successful export industry.

"This heavy-handed decision makes no sense for students, no sense for institutions and no sense for the country."

Emmanuel Egwu, international students' officer at the university, was one of the many students angered by the decision. He was granted a visa to study at the university in 2009 and is in the final year of his course.

"I pay a lot of money. I've spent £30,000 to 40,000 in tuition fees - my parents sell properties and land to make sure they can pay my fees so what's going to happen to people like me," he told Sky News.

A statement posted on the university's website last night read: "The implications of the revocation are hugely significant and far-reaching, and the university has already started to deal with these.

"Our absolute priority is to our students, both current and prospective, and the University will meet all its obligations to them."

London Metropolitan University's HTS status was suspended last month while the UK Border Agency examined alleged failings.

About 2,700 students and student over-stayers have been removed since April 1 2009 while another 40,000 to 50,000 individuals may have entered in 2009 to work rather than study.

Sky News