

New UK immigration rules threaten academic mobility

The UK government's latest immigration policy aims to increase the annual earnings threshold for skilled overseas workers coming into the country by nearly 50%, from £26,200 (US\$33,100) to £38,700 (go.nature.com/3rqk8g2). This exceeds the starting salary for many UK postdoctoral and university lectureship positions, which are already hard to fill (see *Nature* <https://doi.org/k87d> (2022) and *Nature* **622**, 419–422; 2023).

The higher threshold could further imperil the quality and future of UK science — even if it stimulates a much-needed boost in starting salaries for new postdocs and other research staff. For example, it might affect UK participation in the European Union's Horizon Europe research-funding scheme and in other budgeting projects that span multiple countries. It would challenge the drive for salary equity among those employed before and after the threshold change. And it could impede the mobility of non-UK partners of UK scientists if their earnings are below the new threshold.

The vitality of UK science depends on recruiting the best scientists globally. And postdocs who have recently obtained PhDs from international laboratories can import the research skills that are currently most in demand.

Nature **625**, 30 (2024)

doi: <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-023-04162-4>

Alexander C. Lees, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK.

alexander.lees@mmu.ac.uk

Ben C. Sheldon, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.