

PLEDGE AGAINST THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

We, the undersigned Vice-chancellors and Principals, condemn the advance of the 'hostile environment' into universities in the United Kingdom.

We believe that education is a public good, and urge government policy in the higher education sector to treat it as such. Universities are places of knowledge-production. Our responsibilities lie in expanding capacity for critical research and learning, as well as ensuring the well-being of students and staff and fulfilling our broader mission for social good. Duties that have been imposed on universities to maintain immigration control harm our capacity to deliver on our true purpose.

We are dedicated to enabling access to higher education for all. Many BAME students, facing a heavily obstructed path to gaining settled status and citizenship, are unable to access student finance. Restrictions on visa sponsorship have encouraged discriminatory barriers to admission for international students. Hostile environment policies undercut migrants' access to public goods. We, however, will turn actively against the trend of exclusion and instead pledge support to young people encountering these financial and legal barriers to education.

We are committed to defending the social and political freedoms that undergird democracy and critical scholarship. Visa-related monitoring duties imposed on universities co-opt educational relationships into an invasive policing role. Such monitoring and other aspects of Immigration enforcement has threatened staff's freedom of association. We will give primacy to legislation protecting human rights, civil liberties and equality over compliance with hostile environment policy. We will do our utmost to protect students and staff from the systemic abuses of detention and deportation, and to ensure that freedom of association is upheld in the university.

In light of these values, we make the following commitments:

1. We will create a scheme classifying students en-route to settled status and citizenship as 'home' students for fee purposes. We will create a scheme to provide bursaries and administrative support to applicants with temporary status.
2. We will ensure that admissions requirements promote equal access and that 'risk' associated with visa refusal is not shouldered by applicants. We will remove differential academic and financial requirements for international applicants that have been established to minimise the possibility of visa rejection.
3. We will review systems developed to survey students' visa status and attendance with due regard for fundamental rights. We will overhaul data-collection systems which risk violating human rights and discrimination of individuals or groups, thereby giving primacy to our protective duties under the UK Human Rights Act, the UK Equality Act, and the EU General Data Protection Regulation. We will not subcontract any data-collection services to private companies.
4. We will ensure that all internal training on Home Office compliance for immigration control purposes puts primary emphasis on protecting the fundamental rights and civil liberties of students and staff.
5. We will not invite Immigration Enforcement 'visits' onto our premises. We will provide support to students and staff placed in detention or threatened with deportation.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Position: _____