

P-06-1486 Grant BN(O) Hong Kong students home fee status after three years of residence – Correspondence from the petitioner to the Committee, 14 November 2024

Annwyl

I am reaching out to express my appreciation for your response regarding the review of tuition fee protections and student support for holders of the Hong Kong BN(O) visa. While I welcome the Welsh Government's attention to this matter, I have concerns regarding the proposed timeline, which indicates that any changes would likely take effect in the 2026/27 academic year.

For many students currently on the BN(O) visa, this timeline presents significant challenges. Waiting until 2026/27 means that several cohorts of students will continue to face high international tuition fees, which may severely limit their access to higher education in Wales. Many of these students are already residing in the UK and are eager to pursue their studies, but the cost of international fees is often a prohibitive factor. A delay until the 2026/27 academic year would result in missed opportunities for these students, adding financial and emotional strain on them and their families.

I kindly request that you provide further details on the current review process and an explanation of why it cannot be conducted sooner. Understanding the factors contributing to this timeline would be immensely helpful, as it would allow students and families to plan accordingly. Additionally, if there are specific legislative or procedural hurdles causing the delay, I would be grateful if you could share these insights, as they may help us advocate for adjustments to expedite the review process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I am hopeful that with your support, we can work toward a more immediate resolution that ensures equitable access to higher education for BN(O) visa holders in Wales.

Confirm Garau

Melody Lin

There are also some additional information below, I hope it'll help in the meeting.

1. On 6 June 2023, Scottish Government Minister for Higher and Further Education, Graeme Dey confirmed that BN(O) Hong Kong students would be eligible for home fee status after three years of residence.
<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-18389>
2. Since its introduction in January 2021, there have been 182,600 applications for the BN(O) visas to migrate to the UK (up to the end of June 2023, according to the UK Government).
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-june-2023/how-many-people-come-to-the-uk-each-year-including-visitors#british-national-overseas-bno-route>
3. For quotes that the then UK Government said regarding the BN(O) visa:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hong-kong-bno-visa-uk-government-to-honour-historic-commitment>
4. In a rejected Westminster petition calling for home fee status for BN(O) students, the Department for Education responded that: "Higher Education in the UK is devolved, with the result that the Devolved Administrations may choose to take different approaches to student eligibility."
<https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/petitions/653888/home-fee-status-for-bno-students-after-3-years-continuous-stay-in-the-uk>
5. The Welsh Government has granted exceptions for certain groups of students to be eligible for home fee status, for example refugees, people granted humanitarian protection, and those under the Afghan and Ukrainian schemes.
https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/eligibility-for-home-fee-status-and-student-support-in-wales/?_gl=1*tt7u4j*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTYzNjUwNjI3OS4xNzI2NDk0NTA5*_ga_14RSNY7L8B*MTcyNjQ5NDUwOS4xLjAuMTcyNjQ5NDUwOS4wLjAuMA..*_ga_9684J19FT4*MTcyNjQ5NDUwOS4xLjAuMTcyNjQ5NDUwOS4wLjAuMA..
6. Currently, the maintenance help for students whose home is in Wales is the most generous one among the UK nations. Yet, being "non-settled" means that many BN(O) Hong Kong students are not eligible for this financial help.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-62241512?xtor=ES-208-%5B77364%5D-NEWS%5D-NLB%5D-ABC%5D-WK38%5D-MON%5D-16%5D-SEP%5D-20240916-%5Bbbcnews%5D-studentloansexplainer%5D-newseducation%5D>