

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

7th March 2018

Dear Prime Minister,

Training and attracting talented people is critical to the success of the Government's Industrial Strategy and to the UK's productivity. Currently two thirds of roles on the Shortage Occupation List are in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine, demonstrating the Government's recognition of demand in these areas. Alongside nationwide efforts to develop our domestic skills base, it will always be desirable to attract talent from abroad.

Productivity will suffer if firms cannot access the talent they need. Due to the cap on Tier 2 (General) visas being reached in each of the last three months, hundreds of business-critical roles across the economy are going unfilled. Employers need a predictable immigration system. The implementation of the cap on Tier 2 visas undermines business confidence and could damage productivity.

Research and innovation is a global endeavour and Government statements have been clear on the intention to be an open international partner and a magnet for scientists and innovators from across the globe. However, the repeated rejection of skilled workers due to the Tier 2 cap being reached is already damaging the UK's international appeal.

Urgent action is needed by Government to resolve the tension between the current mode of operation of the Tier 2 (General) cap and the aims of the Government's Industrial Strategy. There is support for such a change from the public, from business, charities and professional bodies. Polling has consistently shown that the public is overwhelming in its support for continued immigration of skilled workers, including engineers and other roles being affected by the Tier 2 cap.

We urge the Government to take this opportunity to revise the current policy and exempt roles on the Shortage Occupation List and PhD level roles from the Tier 2 cap. This would be in line with the priority already afforded to these roles and would relieve pressure on the operation of the cap, allowing other business-critical roles to be given due consideration. This change would enhance prospects for raising productivity, would support the Industrial Strategy and would be widely welcomed.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Main

Dr Sarah Main
Executive Director

This letter is supported by the following 46 organisations:

Arthritis Research UK
Association of Medical Research Charities
Babraham Institute
BASF
Biochemical Society
BioIndustry Association
British Chambers of Commerce
British Heart Foundation
British Psychological Society
British Society for Immunology
Cancer Research UK
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The Physiological Society
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University College London
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Zoological Society of London

Cc: The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP, Home Secretary

The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Secretary