

Mobility in UK chemical sciences

A policy position from the Royal Society of Chemistry

Recommendations

1. The new immigration system should seek to remove arbitrary barriers to skilled workers, to decrease associated costs and promote a welcoming attitude. This is particularly crucial for early-career chemical scientists and for SMEs.
2. The UK should seek ambitious reciprocal arrangements across the world in order to enable scientists to move around and to collaborate on both a long and short-term basis.
3. The current UK visa system is complicated, not user-friendly and should be significantly streamlined. It should instead focus on attracting talent rather than plugging gaps in the jobs market, simply expanding the current system cover EEA nationals is inadequate for the needs of UK science.

Background

The UK effectively has two systems for allowing non-UK citizens into the UK to work and live, for EU and non-EU citizens, respectively. Firstly, The UK's non-EEA visa system has evolved over time into a multi-tier system that allows for controlled entry to the UK for those who are not EU/EEA/Swiss nationals. Secondly, as a member of the EU, the UK has facilitated the principle of free movement of people across the EU to live and work in another member state. The same applies to citizens from EEA countries and Switzerland. The Government has pledged to end freedom of movement (FoM), confirming this in its

“It’s not like hiring a doctor or a lawyer; these are areas of research where there are maybe fewer than 50 people working in them. It’s not unreasonable to say that, for this research, it would not have been able to happen without hiring from the EU.”³

Moreover, those who work in chemical sciences have come to expect to travel as a natural part of their work and know that this is highly beneficial to their own careers.¹ Scientists and innovators bringing ideas to the UK will be crucial to the UK achieving the Industrial Strategy’s target to boost spending on R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.⁴ Enabling mobility of scientists and researchers throughout the world for both long and short-

