



## Craig Whittaker MP

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### **Response to Open University & Cuban Students – July 2017**

Thank you for contacting me about the Open University's use of a restricted countries list in its application process.

The Open University is an autonomous institution and it is for them to make decisions about how best to meet the needs of their students and structure their workforce. As such, I know that the Secretary of State has not held any meetings with the Open University regarding its use of a restricted countries list in its application process. I welcome, however, that higher education institutions are responsible for meeting their legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010. I know the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is investigating whether the Open University is in breach of the Equality Act 2010 and I will continue to follow this matter closely.

The UK welcomes international students and I am encouraged that the number of international students studying at UK universities are at record highs. There were over 170,000 entrants to UK higher education institutions for the sixth year running. The latest Home Office data shows that university-sponsored visa applications have increased by around 11 per cent since 2011.

International students make an important contribution to the UK's higher education sector, both economically and culturally. There remains no limit to the number of international students who can come to the UK to study.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP