

UKVI BANGLADESH SHARE INCREASE IN VISA APPROVAL FIGURES DUE TO IMPROVED QUALITY APPLICATIONS

UKVI are expecting the next quarter VISA data to show a decrease in visa refusal rates due to increased quality of UG and PG applications in the market resulting in improved turnaround times for student visas processing. Could these be early signs of growing maturity and quality in the Bangladeshi market?

Recent statistics released by the UKVI show 68% Bangladeshi student (Tier 4) applications are successful and this figure is expected to rise in the next data release. Faster turnaround times (9.5 days was the average processing time for a non-settlement visa in Bangladesh) for the year ending June 2015 was also reported. The new figures indicate visa refusal rates have declined and the turnaround time for processing a visa has been reduced compared with last year and are set to improve further, demonstrating Bangladesh now as a more stable market when it comes to visa processing and approvals. Could these green shoots in Bangladesh be a turning point for the student mobility market to the UK?



Jane Elton, Head of UKVI, British High Commission Dhaka delivers the presentation.

While Bangladesh's student market in the UK remains only half the size of Pakistan and one quarter the size of India, the country still represents the 18th largest non-EU market for UK education in (HESA 2014) – larger than Turkey, Indonesia or Mexico.

Interestingly, the UK continues to be the most popular destination for international study, after the USA.

These latest statistics were shared with 17 local agents at a visa seminar organised by the British Council on 6 October 2015. Officials from UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) Bangladesh presented and responded to different queries from local representatives on student visas and highlighted new UK Tier 4 visa policies. The Director of Examinations in British Council Bangladesh addressed queries and concerns about SELT and IELTS.

Jane Elton, Head of UKVI, British High Commission Dhaka, presented on the latest statistics on student visa applications, followed by information on the visa application process, supporting documents and funding requirements; and student interviews. She further discussed common reasons for visa refusal, options of working in the UK during and after study; and summarised the latest policies related to the Health Surcharge, Biometric Residents Permits and English Language Tests.



While data and statistics from the UKVI are encouraging, it is the agents, who work on the ground that we were keen to hear from. They reported that while some UK institutions have reduced their activity in the Bangladeshi market due to recent visa refusal rates, there had been a massive turnaround and the situation has improved as the refusal rates have decreased and average time to get the visa and passport has been reduced. Jane Elton also mentioned that increased quality applications were being received.



Agents did feedback about specific cases where they had faced issues regarding the Health Surcharge and visa interviews and this provided a useful opportunity to discuss and share best practice in this area.

British Council Bangladesh will continue to work closely with local partners and the UKVI and provide platforms where key stakeholders can come together to discuss and solve problems as well as celebrate small victories! We remain committed to working with UK institutions in their marketing efforts in Bangladesh and look forward to hearing from you about your engagement plans in the country.



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To know more about the latest visa statistics, the agents visa seminar or about the Bangladesh market, please get in touch with Jahir Uddin at Jahir.Uddin@bd.britishcouncil.org and siemsouthasia@britishcouncil.org .