



**Association of Brazilian Researchers and Post-  
Graduate Students in the United Kingdom**  
[www.abep.org.uk](http://www.abep.org.uk)

19 April 2011

UK Border Agency  
Lunar House  
40 Wellesley Road  
CR9 2BY

Re: Visa for Brazilian Post-graduate students and Researchers.

Dear Sir/Madam,

For 30 years the Association of Brazilian Researchers and Post-graduate students in the United Kingdom (ABEP) has been the main representative of more than 3,500 Brazilian students yearly entering the UK.<sup>1</sup> During its existence, it has proudly helped to strengthen research partnerships between academic and governmental institutions in the two countries.

In the last months, it has been brought to our attention that many Brazilian post-graduate students have been facing problems with their visa application. Due to the increasing number of complaints, we felt compelled to express our concerns that these obstacles not only have profound negative impact on the plans of these students, but also on the UK's image before our Brazilian scientific community.

It is of paramount importance that post-graduate students attend the beginning of the courses when the foundations of the subjects are laid down. Any unnecessary delay in obtaining the visa may compromise their performance in the course. The application process is both costly in terms of time and money. Most post-graduate students, particularly PhD students, come on scholarships and have scarce resources by the application time. The visa application fee may represent one third of their monthly stipend; therefore, the need to reapply for a visa may severely compromise their budget.

As showed in a previous study by the British Council<sup>2</sup>, international students total expenditure on and off-campus is somewhere in the region of £8-10 billion. Brazil is one of the fastest growing emerging economies, and the number of Brazilian students willing to pay for higher education abroad is growing at the same pace. However, difficulties in obtaining the visa are undermining their choice to come to the UK, and ABEP is particularly involved in informing both our scientific community and governmental authorities of such issues. An alarming message was sent by the report on student visas published on 17 March 2011 by the Home Affairs Committee of the House of Commons according to which the number of student visas issued for Brazilian nationals has dropped from 4,474 in 2005 to 2,262 in 2010.<sup>3</sup>

We believe that the UK government's objective of reducing abuse and non-compliance in the student visa regime is legitimate and laudable. However, we hope that the strategies used will improve its efficiency and not unfairly penalise Brazilian post-graduate students that value and give their contribution to the academic strength of the UK research institutions.

Yours Sincerely,

Michael Freitas Mohallem  
President  
Association of Brazilian Researchers and Post-Graduate Students in the United Kingdom

<sup>1</sup> See the Seventh Report of Session 2010–11, House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee, Student Visas, p. 86, appendix 4.

<sup>2</sup> British Council (2010) *Making it Happen: The Prime Minister's initiative for international education* Manchester: British Council apud Mulley S, Sachrajda A (2011) Student migration in the UK. Institute for Public Policy Research, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Seventh Report of Session 2010–11, House of Commons, p. 17, appendix 4.