

Motion Name: Adjusting Graduation Ceremony Dates for International Students

Proposer: Tamie

Seconded: Joshua

Background:

1. Graduation is a significant milestone for all students. It is a day to celebrate years of hard work with friends and family. Unfortunately, many international students are deprived of this celebration opportunity. International students face challenges in attending ceremonies due to scheduling conflicts with visa regulations, travel limitations, or cultural observances.
2. Currently, the graduation dates that University of Bristol schedules each year do not take International students visa expiry dates under consideration. Graduation ceremonies are generally scheduled in February (this year in January) whereas the visa for international students enrolled in September intake expires in the second or third week of January.
3. This means that International students have to go back to their home countries, apply for a visit visa, fly over to the UK again and book in a hotel to stay which is very costly on top of the exorbitant fee they have already paid. Due to such expenses many international students are unable to attend their graduations at all.
4. What is more concerning is the fact that there are several Universities across the UK, such as the University of Manchester (1), the University of Birmingham (2), the University of Exeter (3), the University of Edinburgh (4), the University of Aberdeen (5), and the University of Greenwich (6) to quote a few, where Graduation ceremonies are scheduled at a time when their international students can attend them.

Purpose:

1. The purpose of this motion is to lobby the University to accommodate the international students when they are scheduling the winter graduations.
2. Adjusting graduation ceremony dates to accommodate international students is vital for inclusivity and ensuring that all graduates can celebrate their accomplishments. This motion seeks to create a more welcoming environment for our diverse student body.

Actions:

1. Review Current Dates:

- SU Officers to lobby the University to conduct a review of the current graduation schedule to identify conflicts and issues faced by international students.

2. Gather Feedback:

- SU Officers to implement a survey or focus groups to gather input from international students regarding their experiences and preferences for graduation dates.

- SU Officers to work with University to see assess the best practices at other Universities around scheduling of graduation ceremonies to include international students.

3. Propose Alternative Dates:

- Based on collected feedback, SU Officers should propose alternative graduation dates to the University that would maximize attendance for international students.

4. Engage with Administration:

- SU Officers to initiate discussions with university administration to present findings and advocate for changes in the graduation schedule.

5. Collaborate with Student Organizations:

- SU Officers to work alongside International Student Network, BAME network and other relevant groups to build a coalition advocating for this change.

6. Raise Awareness:

- SU Officers to launch a campaign to raise awareness about this issue among the student body and gather support from local and international communities.

Conclusion

The inability of international students to attend their graduation ceremonies due to visa complications is not just an isolated issue but part of a broader conversation about **equity** and **access**. It touches on themes of institutional responsibility, the unequal burdens placed on international students, and the emotional and cultural significance of academic milestones. Universities must recognize the full diversity of their student bodies and ensure that all students—regardless of their nationality—have equal access to all aspects of university life, including major celebrations like graduation. Addressing this issue can contribute to a more inclusive, equitable educational experience for all.

Sources:

- (1) University of Manchester, Graduation Dates <https://www.graduation.manchester.ac.uk/>
- (2) University of Birmingham, Graduation Dates <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/graduation/december-degree-congregations>
- (3) University of Exeter, Graduation Dates [Dates & schedules | Graduation | University of Exeter](#)
- (4) University of Edinburgh, Graduation Dates [Ceremony Dates Winter 2024 | Student Administration](#)
- (5) University of Aberdeen, Graduation Dates [Find my Ceremony | Students | The University of Aberdeen](#)
- (6) University of Greenwich, Graduation Dates <https://www.gre.ac.uk/awards-ceremonies/ceremony-dates>
- (7) International Students Should be Compensated for their Later Graduations <https://epigram.org.uk/the-3/>

