

Guidance

- Your report should be 1000 words or fewer. You should write in all three sections, but it is up to you to decide how much weight to give each section.
- Your report should be submitted one week before the date of each Scrutiny Panel. Completed reports should be emailed to r.nadeem@guild.bham.ac.uk or l.gill@guild.bham.ac.uk
- You will have two minutes at the beginning of each Scrutiny Panel meeting to supplement your report with a verbal update.

Officer:	International Officer
Date of panel:	20 Jan 2022

Matter arising - student issues to note (Nov – Jan 2022):

Petition on online learning option for the second semester

- lobbied the University for option to study online in second semester (Nov 2021)
- raised to PVC International (12 Nov 2021)
- raised concerns in UEB meeting with the UEB meeting (15 Nov 2021)
- met with the PVC International to discuss (16 Nov 2021)
- collected further feedback in All Student Meeting (1st Dec 2021)
- met with the Your Idea submitter for All Student Vote (3rd Dec 2021)
- met with the PVC International and lobbied for extending the deadline (14th Dec 2021)

IST delayed responses

- worked with the Guild Advice to create IST case report – appendix 1. (Oct 2021)
- helped chasing up cases with the IST for visa problems of 17 students (Nov-Jan 2021)
- met and discussed with the PVC International and the senior management of the IST; set up monthly meetings again with the IST (15th Dec 2021)

Written Statement action plan

This section is for you to track your progress on your written statement priorities, as outlined in your action plan. The “context” section of the document can remain the same for each panel.

Written Statement Item #1	
Inclusivity	
Context:	To develop inclusivity training for students, student reps and student groups of the Guild.
Progress:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worked with the University EDI Team to developed the EDI training canvas course - Discussed with the Student Groups Manager to find resources of Inclusivity training for student groups - In process of applying funding to cover the costs

Written Statement Item #2	
Community & Support	
Context:	To increase the sense of belonging to the university community and ensure international students feel supported by the communities that they are in.
Progress:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - outgoing exchange students community - created Facebook group for year abroad 2022-2023 (Nov 2021) - supported UoBEX Society to restart for our incoming exchange students community: (Dec 2021) - liaised with the IST and supported individual students with visa problems (Oct-Jan 2021) - helped raised the Turing funding issues with the Study Abroad Office (Dec 2021)

Role and responsibilities

This section is for you to write about any projects you have been working on or meetings you have been to that you think are of particular importance to your remit.

Meetings attended:

Full-time Officer Group Meeting (weekly)
 Activity and Events Meeting (weekly)
 Comms and Marketing Meeting (weekly)
 UoBe Festival Working Group (fortnightly)

Study Abroad and Exchange Team Meeting (fortnightly)
 Guild Officer Group Meeting (9th Nov 2021)
 ProFF Meeting – Programmes for Future Framework (11th Nov 2021)
 UEB/ Guild Meeting (15th Nov 2021)
 Guild Education Committee (18th Nov 2021)
 Officer Away Day (19th Nov 2021)
 University Council (24th Nov 2021)
 University Education Committee (24th Nov 2021)
 Campus Services SMT Meeting (30th November 2021)
 Fitness to Practice Committee (30th November 2021)
 All Student Meeting (1st December 2021)
 Registration and Enrolment Project Board (2nd December 2021)
 International Employability Community of Practice Meeting (7th December 2021)
 Guild Hardship Fund Panel (7th December 2021)
 LES College Education Committee (8th December 2021)
 HR Committee (9th December 2021)
 Guild Officer Group (14th December 2021)
 International Committee (16th December 2021)
 Trustee Board Meeting and Away Day (10th Jan 2022)
 Commercial Strategy Group Meeting (11th Jan 2022)
 MMT Away Day (13th Jan 2022)

Meetings	Outcome for students
Study Abroad and Exchange Team Meeting	Turing Scheme Funding (Dec 2021)
UoBe Festival Working Group	One World Fair (25 th Jan 2022)

Ideas and policy

This section is for you to report on progress made to ideas and Guild policy that you have been mandated to work on. You only need to update your actions taken. You can also add ideas or policy as they are passed through the year.

Idea / policy	Action taken since last Panel
Remote Learning in Second Semester	Lobbied for online learning option in second semester

Appendix 1. IST case report

Overview

Over the last few months Guild Advice noticed an increase in students requesting support with Visas, BRP's and Cas numbers.

This in itself is not uncommon and advisors would usually signpost straight to IST however it's been observed that these students had already contacted IST and not received any responses.

This report aims to provide an overview of the impact these delays have had on international students.

Case Management System

Guild Advice uses a case management system called Advice Pro. This is where all student cases and enquires are logged and is used to generate reports on various known student issues.

As the IST delays was an unknown concern it was not required for the advisers to indicate this when logging a case. This unfortunately limits the reports we can generate as the service is unable to identify a trend before it occurs.

Guild Advice does support a high number of international students throughout the academic year however they are not always initially requiring advice on international support specific enquiries, for example they may be requesting appeals advice or housing advice. Therefore, these student cases will be recorded on the case management system as an academic concern or a housing concern.

Some of these students have still faced difficulties and delays with responses from IST but we are not currently able to single out these cases for accurate numbers.

With this in mind this report will focus on impact rather than numbers.

Case examples

Below are some examples of just some of the challenges students have faced as a result of delayed responses from IST.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list of cases, but the aim of this information is to highlight the impact and propose a few suggestions to help smooth out the process for next year.

Case 1 –

Student withdrawn due to CMC outcome. Withdrawal of sponsorship letter received by student. Student was appealing the CMC outcome and requested to have it confirmed that IST will hold any action, i.e. hold off on notifying the Home Office of the withdrawal of

sponsorship until the outcome of the appeal, which would be delayed due to the delays in the appeals department.

IST responded to say they would not hold any action.

Case 2-

Student received Withdrawal of Sponsorship letter stating the University will be informing the Home office of the change in student status. Student submitted an academic appeal. The student contacted IST to state they were submitting an appeal and to ask if they could pause any action due to the impact on their visa. Please note the students initial contact to the IST team was a little unclear.

IST took over 3 weeks to respond and the response was very brief, did not answer the student's questions and directed them back to another University department.

Student emailed IST back for more support around mid-October and are still waiting for a response.

Case 3 –

Student required their CAS following completion of the 10-week pre-sessional course. Student had contacted IST but had no response.

At the time of the student contacting us their visa was due to expire the following day. The student was understandably very fearful and upset.

The student then chose not to engage further with Guild Advice so the outcome of this case is unclear.

Case 4 –

Similar to above where this student confirmed they had contacted IST re their CAS two months prior to contacting Guild Advice but had no response.

Guild Advice offered to try and follow this up but the student did not return their consent for us to do so.

Case 5-

Student needed a new visa following a transfer of courses. The student has been waiting for their CAS for four months, this students' studies are now being impacted as they are unable to return to the UK to continue their project.

Impact

Wellbeing-

Increase in mental health disclosures, Distress and anxiety, alongside anger and frustration.

Impacted further by the lack of clarity on what was going to happen when students had been notified of a time sensitive process taking place which could mean they have to leave the UK.

Academic –

Students unable to continue or start on their courses due to having no CAS/unable to renew visas

Students having to go through academic and conduct processes with the additional anxiety of not knowing their visa status.

Students who would have been in a position to apply for 'in country Post Study Work' visas may face no longer being able to do so. This would have a long-term future impact on their vocational opportunities as they wouldn't be able to apply for PSW once they have returned home.

Financial-

Students facing unexpected financial hardship to cover flights home and the quarantine required in their home county.

Students having tuition fee funders potentially refusing to continue the funding

Housing -

Students who had already signed up to tenancy agreements then being trapped in a legally binding contract, then having the concern of finding new accommodation if once they are able to continue their studies.

Suggestions moving forward.

In order to help alleviate some of the concerns raised by students it would be beneficial for the Advisors to have a clear understanding of the following;

Withdrawal of Sponsorship and Appeals

- Who issues the Withdrawal of Sponsorship letter and who is responsible for monitoring it?
- After what point do they inform the Home office and what are then the time lines for students to get visa's curtailed
- Who informs the Home Office of the Withdrawal of Sponsorship?

- What is the process for the above person/team to be notified of any appeals that may halt the process of informing the Home Office?
- Does the student need to do anything?
- Would IST consider creating a clear guide for international students that includes the above information?

CAS

- Is it usual for CAS requests to take so long?
- Who can support students on what to do if a delayed CAS impacts visa renewal?

Referral process between Guild Advice and IST

- Would it be worth looking at setting up a way of Guild Advice being able to refer cases directly to IST to support students with time sensitive cases, or where there is a further impact on the student that may be unknown by the IST team?