The compelling case for Visa & Immigration compliance solutions, in global HE and FE

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Today's fast changing regulatory environment demonstrates clearly the need to invest in Visa and Immigration compliance automation solutions such as Student Retention, Engagement and Attendance Management Systems (STREAMS).

Visa and Immigration Compliance

As you know, working in the rapidly changing world of Higher and Further Education, we have the perennial business drivers of doing more with less and the pressing need to satisfy the complex reporting and regulatory requirements of an increasing number of external stakeholders:

- Student Retention
- Student Progression and Completion
- Widening Participation
- Visa and Immigration Compliance
- Resource and Space Utilisation

Accountability from "Arrivals to Departures"

National Visa and Immigration Agencies have stepped up enforcement.

With mounting parliamentary, media and international pressure acting as change agents, agencies are stepping up the number of inspections both domestically and around the world in satellite and franchise campuses. In addition, they are working more closely with other International Agencies to coordinate and share enforcement activities.

With the increased activity, agencies are finding that the Visa and Immigration compliance gap has grown as evidenced by recent activity in the United Kingdom. The results are dramatic with an increase in licence suspensions, spot checks, and warning letters. They are more detailed, include more elements and the findings often involve a deep dive into every aspect of the recruitment and management of the international student cohort with coordinated warning letters that spread across Recruitment and Registration, Student Services, Course Delivery right to Finance and the University Secretary Function.

Cloud | Mobile | Reporting | Analytics

The resulting actions have associated remediation costs. In some cases, it results in licence suspension, termination of registrations, or loss of licence – all with even more costly consequences.

The internationalisation of Higher Education has picked up significant speed in the last few years, this has been happening in tandem with large scale expansion of the franchise sector, language feeder schools and other third-party providers. Also, they have seen the evolution of best practices, leading to a heightened awareness and expectations as to the level of compliance evidenced within institutional systems and processes.

The High Cost of Non-Compliance

- Remediation Costs
- Suspension of International Licence
- Overnight Loss of Substantial Fee Income
- Damage to Reputation and Standings
- Substantial Fines
- Potential Executive Liability

Visa and Immigration Compliance Hot Buttons

In examining recent feedback on spot checks, audits and warning letters and feedback, a pattern emerges of what visa and immigration audits are emphasising. These are the top compliance trends seen most frequently:

Systems and Process Approach - Visa and immigration agencies are reviewing systems and processes and their findings and audit reports reflect this shift. There is an emerging requirement for evidence of an auditable system of attendance and engagement with their studies by international student cohorts.

Standardisation across Departments & Institutions - Visa & Immigration Enforcement Agencies are holding institutions accountable to standardisation and demanding consistency.

Proper Use of Risk Based Approaches - Adoption of best practice had led to the adoption of a formal risk register based approach and the use of risk-based approaches that are based on sound management information supported by evidence-able data.

Management of Change Control - One of the most frequently cited visa and immigration excursions is poor management of change.

Corrective Action/ Preventive Action (CAPA) - One of the first places that compliance officers typically review; Identification of previous issues and evidence of corrective action are standard operating procedure for any audit.

While most of these Visa and Immigration trends are broad and systemic in nature, their influence on the operation of institutions, their international recruitment activity and the institutional risk register is significant.

From maintaining a validated data state and to reporting tolerance breaches, these areas require new approaches to drive compliance without substantial increases in costs.

Student Technology Drivers

21st technology platforms offering advanced analytics, reporting, workflow capabilities present new options for driving student success and automating visa and immigration compliance in education. Progressive HEI's and FEI's are embracing this new functionality to ensure they can deliver on student success as well as visa and immigration compliance:

- Integrated Student Success and Compliance Systems and Processes
- Robust Performance Metrics
- Paperless Work-flow calls to action and escalations as appropriate.
- On-line Reporting of Non-Compliance

These tools, combined with the power of cloud, mobile, reporting, analytical and social networking platforms, enable deep-dive student performance analytics, earlier error trapping and paperless processes maintaining the highest levels of accuracy, consistency, equity and ultimately compliance and student success.

Benefits of New Student Success Technology

Major benefits of implementing compliance solutions with this updated technology include:

Improved Quality - Improving student outcomes quality, whether through holding tighter tolerances, reducing attrition, improving results or student satisfaction will improve reputation and revenue and ensures greater market share of prospective students. Current software functionality coupled with advances in technology infrastructure can reduce variability and enable optimal tolerances with lower attrition. By keeping early warning systems ahead of compliance requirements, international student compliance and retention increase and compliance costs and loss of fees are significantly

compliance and retention increase and compliance costs and loss of fees are significantly mitigated.

Increased Productivity - There is tremendous opportunity to increase effectiveness both at the system and process levels. By optimising student success and compliance planning and execution, automation of routine tasks and communication and elimination of paper and manual process, key indicators, such as retention, number of early warnings, repeat cases and others are positively impacted. By automating Visa and Immigration workflow, automatic notifications and auto-generating reports and performance metrics, the benefit of a paperless work environment offers additional productivity.

Higher Compliance - With recent increase in regulatory and enforcement activity at the coalface of higher education, the Visa and Immigration compliance bar has been raised. Many institutions report that this new technology provides greater consistency, enforcement of workflow and reductions in costly errors. By eliminating redundancy and conflicting data, audits are streamlined. Fully automated workflow processes, with built in calls to action and email alert functionality, further improve this compliance equation.

Reduced Costs - Every institution in today's environment must reduce cost wherever possible. Implementing new student success and compliance software offers many cost benefits including reduced administration effort and costs, protection of existing revenue streams, enhanced international income as well as improved student satisfaction and all associated reputational benefits to your institution.

Prepare for Brexit

There is no doubt that Brexit will have a big impact on the higher education sector. Research has shown that EU (Non-UK) students will decrease from the current 120,000 post Brexit. Universities will have to work harder to keep their existing UK based students. They may have to recruit more UK-based students to fill the void, many with lower tariffs.

With the widening of participation, the cohort of at-risk students increases. These students need active supports to complete their student journey right through to graduation.

Visa restrictions and higher fees for EU (non-UK) student's due to their changing status will increase the UKVI compliance workload and associated risks.

Good business practice calls for planning for whatever eventuality will occur.

Conclusion

We are working in challenging times with many new constraints. As has been the case many times, innovation, technology and new methodologies can combine to provide cost effective solutions.

This is a unique time in higher and further – one that drives us to select and implement tools that will lead our institutions forward, protecting their legacy and building a platform for future success. Student and Institutional Success Solutions will help us achieve both high levels of compliance, operational effectiveness and student success.

For further information on how we can assist your University :

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