

# **Educational Choices of International Students in Relation to Scottish Independence**

## **Report for special edition of ChinaGirlsAbroad**



### **1. Introduction**

This report examines choices made by international students for higher education provision and how these might be affected by Scottish independence. It analyzes the reasons why students might be more or less likely to come to an independent Scotland, and also looks at levels of knowledge about England and Scotland, which students have before coming to Britain.

### **2. Methods and sample**

The report is based on individual interviews which were conducted with 200 international students from the University of Glasgow, University of Edinburgh, University of Strathclyde, and Glasgow Caledonian University, in April 2014. In these

face to face interviews, each student answered a sequence of questions and was asked to fill in an answer sheet, which included providing contact details if further clarification of replies was required. The students were also invited to explain their reasons, and where they have done so, the answers are included in this report. The students were randomly selected, and came from 36 countries with a preponderance of Chinese as these are the largest single group. The remaining interviewees include students from Australia, Mexico, Canada, Norway, Tanzania, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, India, Tai Wan, Hong Kong, Russia, Colombia, Saudi Arabia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Rwanda, Nigeria, Iran, Greece, Sweden, Spain, Germany, Finland, Bulgaria, Hungary, France, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Belgium, Slovakia, Estonia, and the USA.

The questions asked are as follows:

1. Before you came here to study, what did you know about Scotland?
2. Before you came here to study, what did you know about England?
3. If Scotland left the UK and became a separate country, would it affect your decision to study here?
4. If Scotland left the UK and became a separate country, would it make any difference to how you rate a degree from Scotland?
5. Apart from your course, would you say you are enjoying your life in Scotland?

### **3. Results**

The results were collated and tabulated into main areas of response as below:

#### **3.1. What did they know about Scotland and England before they came?**

Some students, especially from non-EU countries knew very little about either England or Scotland before they came. For this reason, the issue of Scottish independence means very little to some students. Where there was knowledge of England and Scotland, it often conformed to familiar stereotypes, some of which derived from tourist advertising, others came apparently from films, TV, or school books. The film *Braveheart* was mentioned in twelve responses in what was known about Scotland. Other typical responses for Scotland include kilts/men wearing skirts (28), whiskey (14), bagpipes (15), and rainy weather (16). Scotland's natural beauty and scenery was also featured in replies a total of 26 times, an additional eleven noting the highlands. The Scottish accent was referred to ten times, but only once for

England.

The images for England were different. It was only once referred to in terms of landscape (by an Australia student). It was described as a country of gentlemen (7), polite (1), restricted (1), conservative (1), proud (2), the Queen and Royal Family (20), afternoon tea (4), and just 5 for bad weather. Interestingly, Scotland was never mentioned in relation to the Queen or as having gentlemen in it, but it has friendly people (8), which was never mentioned in relation to England. As one 22 year-old Estonian student from Glasgow Caledonian University put it: “English people are very posh and well mannered. Scotland is very rainy with the Loch Ness monster.”

Sports, including football (27), rugby (1) and cricket (1) are mentioned 29 times for England, and 9 for Scotland with football (3), rugby (3), and golf (3). Manchester United was mentioned twice, Liverpool F.C. once, and for Scotland, there were 4 references to Celtic.

Cities in Britain were also frequently mentioned, and most of these were in England. They included London (43), Croydon (in South London) (1), Southampton (1), Manchester (5), York (1), Liverpool (2), Bath (1), Birmingham (1), Cambridge (1), Oxford (1), and 11 other references for “cities” in England. For Scotland, there were 19 references for Edinburgh, 5 for Glasgow, 2 for Aberdeen. This is interesting, since these students are actually studying in Scotland.

England is mentioned once for ruling India and once for imperialism, but it does better for its cultural style. This includes fashion (2), English style (1), music (1), Beatles (1), Oasis (1), films (2), books (1), literature (1), Shakespeare (1), Jane Austin (1), Tower of London (1), London Eye (3), Big Ben (6), red buses (1), underground (1), architecture (1), good environment (1), interesting (1), British opera (1), food (4), currency (1), history (9), Roman period (1), culture (13), busy life (1), and is seen as developed (3), powerful (2), with a strong finance industry (2).

Scotland was referred to as English-speaking (1), and is also mentioned for ceilidhs(1), sheep (2), salmon (1), shortbread (1), food (3), Loch Ness (4), castle (1), music (3), resources (1), architecture (2), history (4), and culture (12). England is noted for fish and chips four times, while Scotland is noted for haggis twice.

There were also references to politics, and political institutions. For England, these were government (2), parliament (2), and social policy (1). For Scotland, the references were: freedom (1), referendum (1), about to (achieve) independence (1).

One famous British institution notable for its absence is the BBC, which was mentioned only once in the whole sample (in relation to England).

Rather unfairly, J.K. Rowling, and Harry Potter were mentioned twice for England, and

just once for Scotland. Other famous names for England were David Beckham (1), David Cameron (1), and Sherlock Homes/Baker Street (5).

For Scotland, there was Darwin (again a bit unfair; 1), William Wallace (4), Robert Carlyle (1), Adam Smith (2), Gordon Brown (1), and Dolly the sheep (1).

Education and institutions relating to it were referred to 16 times for England and 10 for Scotland. This is interesting, since the sample is of students who have actually come to Scotland. For England, the references were: education system (3), high quality of education (4), famous for education (1), famous universities (4), university in London (1), Oxford University (2), and many international students (1).

For Scotland, the references were: reputation of universities (4), good education system (3), many international students (1), university cooperation (1), and Edinburgh University has cool people (1).

**There were also a number of extended comments made about the relationship between Scotland and England within Britain and how both were seen. These are as follow:**

“Scotland is part of the UK, once had war with England. It has its own culture; England is a representative of UK. It seems that when Chinese people mentioned UK, it means England.” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Scotland has the skirts for male with beautiful scenery; England is the main part of UK” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Scotland is an area of UK; England is a big part of UK (苏格兰是英国的一个区, 英格兰是英国的一个大部分)” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Scotland is a part of the UK; England is a major part of the UK” (Chinese, 26, male, University of Glasgow)

“Scotland is one part of UK, but it is very special; England is one part of UK and it is very important” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Glasgow)

For Scotland: “I just know it is a part of the UK”; for England: “It is more popular among students who plan to study in the UK” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Edinburgh)

For Scotland: “The beautiful view, friendly people, but not that modernized like England”; for England: “People are kind of restricted, but a few cities are famous” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Glasgow)

For Scotland: “Braveheart”; for England: “Football, London, full of gentlemen, English style” (Chinese, 23, male, University of Strathclyde)

For Scotland: “People are more friendly than England” (Chinese, 23, female)

For Scotland: “The relationship between Scotland and England is very tense, Scotland has higher amount of resources than England (oil) (苏格兰与英格兰关系紧张，苏格兰能源高于英格兰（石油）)”； for England: “Finance industry is developed (金融业发达)” (Chinese, 24, male, University of Glasgow)

For Scotland: “A beautiful country with fantastic history and culture, ruled by England, but never stop fighting”; for England: “A powerful country in Europe, which has amazing achievements in science, economics, military and culture” (Chinese, 22, male, University of Strathclyde)

For Scotland: “Scottish kilts, whisky”; for England: “One of the most powerful and prosperous country in the world, gentlemen” (Chinese, 22, male, University of Glasgow)

For Scotland: “Scotland has become a part of UK from 1707, Scottish people made a significant contribution to British Empire in history”; for England: “Part of the UK, one origin of the modern legal system and democracy. It always takes the leading position in the UK governance” (Chinese, 26, male, University of Glasgow)

For Scotland: “Its beautiful view and good education system”; for England: “It is the central area of UK in economic or political way” (Chinese, 21, female, University of Glasgow)

For Scotland: “Nothing relevant”; for England: “I knew that is one of the best places to work and study in the EU, because it offers a big variety of degree programmes” (Mexican, 28, male, University of Glasgow)

For Scotland: “I knew that it was part of UK and the Scots were different people from rest of the Brits”; for England: “I knew that London is a megapolis, a centre of diversity of culture, but still keeping a sense of Britishness” (Latvian, 21, female, University of Glasgow)

“England is the dominant country in the UK” (Hong Kong, 19, male, University of Edinburgh)

“Scotland is part of UK; England is the most part of UK” (Thai, 25, male, University of Edinburgh)

“Scotland is part of the UK, together with Wales, England, and Northern Ireland;

England is the ‘capital nation’ and most important of the UK.” (Nigerian, 33, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

For Scotland: “They have a cold weather and they are under the United Kingdom”; for England: “England is a civilized country that a lot of tax is been paid by the residents” (Nigerian, 29, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

For Scotland: “That it is in the north of the UK, and had an important intellectual bloom during the Scottish Enlightenment”; for England: “A lot. I read Guardian regularly and was quite up to date with political and legal developments, being from a former colony” (Singapore, 31, female, University of Edinburgh)

### **3.2. More or less likely to come to an independent Scotland?**

This is in practice a hypothetical question, in that the students are already in Scotland, and it is not at present independent. So they are being asked to imagine if a decision to come would be affected if Scotland was separate from the rest of the UK, and this was made clear to them in the interviews.

#### **3.2.1. Less likely to come**

For non-European students as a whole, 46% said they would be less likely to choose to study in Scotland if it became an independent country. For Chinese students (132), 45% also said they would be less likely to come. European students are treated as a separate category, as the fee structure for them is the same as students from Scotland. Even so, nearly a third of them said they would be less likely to come.

The main reasons given were that the UK is seen as a powerful brand, and is associated very strongly with quality in education. One 28 year-old Thai student from Glasgow Caledonian University said: “People in Thailand just know UK; Scotland is not credible.”

#### **Other comments from non-European students were:**

“Scotland’s reputation (is lower)” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Lower reputation” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Not stable” (Chinese, 21, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Because the UK degree has been widely recognized, but Scottish degree has not yet (可能是因为英国的学历已经受到普遍认可，而苏格兰的还没有吧)” (Chinese, 21, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Visa” (Chinese, 20, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Less reputation” (Chinese, 22, female, University of Edinburgh)

“UK is a comparatively developed and well organized country (in education), but if Scotland became independent, it would face many issues, such as currency, diplomacy, and defence, etc. (英国是个比较 developed 和 well organized 国家 (在教育上), 但苏格兰如果独立有许多问题需要面对, 如货币、外交、国防等)” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Edinburgh)

“It would be a new country, small, not stable, want to go to England (新国家较小, 不稳定, 要想去英格兰)” (Chinese, 22, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Scotland is not outstanding academic country for edge-cutting research.” (Chinese, 21, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Scotland is not so well know and reputable in China.” (Chinese, 24, male, University of Edinburgh)

“More interested in UK culture, so from this perspective, may not choose Scotland, but it may not have much impact (对 UK 文化更感兴趣一些, 所以这个方面可能不会选择苏格兰, 但是可能不会造成太大的影响)” (Chinese, 21, male, University of Edinburgh)

“Degree from the UK is more popular.” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Wouldn’t have opportunities to explore the rest part of UK.” (Chinese, 28, female, University of Edinburgh)

“England has more legitimacy, don’t know if university reputation would be affected (英格兰更牛点吧, 不知道独立后学校的名胜是否受影响)” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Glasgow)

“I prefer England, when UK is mentioned, it usually refers to England (我更喜欢的是英格兰, 首要提及英国即为英格兰)” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Glasgow)

“Not so popular in China” (Chinese, 22, male, University of Glasgow)

“After independence, the spending on education might be reduced (独立后可能会坚守教育费用)” (Chinese, 23, male, University of Glasgow)

“Because I like England” (Chinese, 19, female, Glasgow Caledonian university)

“It may become weird if my degree is about Scottish, personal feeling” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Glasgow)

“Lower reputation, England is the representative of UK” (Chinese, male, University of Glasgow)

“Chinese may don't know Scotland” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Glasgow)

“Not a famous country (不出名的国家)” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Glasgow)

“Same as Ireland (south), less popular than UK. When thinking of going abroad to study, it's either US or UK, but not Scotland (一想到留学, 首先想到 US, UK, 而不是 Scotland)” (Chinese, 23, male, University of Glasgow)

“For the united relation, they are strong power in the world, and thus created a splendid history, if Scotland leaves, they are nothing!” (Chinese, 26, male, University of Glasgow)

“Scotland doesn't sound so strong and powerful! (literally: tall, big, up, 苏格兰听起来不够高大上! )” (Chinese, 25, male, University of Glasgow)

“Ratings be lower” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Glasgow)

“My degree will not be about England.” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Glasgow)

“Fame and reputation of English education is higher” (Chinese, 23, male)

“Attraction will decrease, the reputation of education” (Chinese, 21, female, University of Glasgow)

“Need a powerful background” (Chinese, 21, male, University of Glasgow)

“I came here, mostly due to UK's reputation on education” (Chinese, 24, male, University of Glasgow)

“No reputation (没声望)” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Glasgow)

“It will not be the part of UK” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Glasgow)

“Scotland is not belong to UK, maybe will affect my choice” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Glasgow)



“(If Scotland became independent), I wouldn’t know the university (这样我就不知道这学校了)” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Glasgow)

“Before I choose the further study, I decided to choose UK, if Scotland left UK, it no longer belong to UK” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Glasgow)

“The reputation of Scotland is not as high as England (苏格兰名声不如英格兰高)” (Chinese, 23, male, University of Strathclyde)

“International students give more credit to the UK, not Scotland” (Chinese, 23, male, University of Strathclyde)

“I chose to study in the UK; if Scotland became independent, then it’s not part of UK” (Chinese, 22, female, University of Strathclyde)

“if Scotland became independent, public welfare goes down (如果苏格兰独立，社会公共设施、福利下降)” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Strathclyde)

“I will choose the university in England” (Chinese, 24, female, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“Because Scotland sounds not as rich as England or other countries” (Chinese, 24, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“Cos it’s not part of the UK, attraction of the unis”(Chinese, 26, male, University of Glasgow)

“Lower position” (Chinese, 21, male)

“Scottish degree is less attractive than English degree. The degree wouldn’t be worth much (感觉学位不值钱了)” (Chinese, 25, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“Scottish degree is less attractive than English degree” (Chinese, 29, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“I haven’t planned to come to Scotland” (Chinese, female, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“England is more famous than Scotland” (Chinese, 23, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“Possible higher tuition rates” (American, 19, male, University of Edinburgh)

“I came here to experience UK culture, so it would be a bit disappointing” (American,

23, female, University of Edinburgh)

“England has more academic prestige than Scotland” (Mexican, 32, male, University of Edinburgh)

“Political change, social reaction, may be disorganized” (Canadian, 21, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Less stable, different currency, change in tuition fees” (Norwegian, 20, male, University of Edinburgh)

“I feel it would likely affect the amount of funding/opportunities available to the uni” (American, 22, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Have to re-do visa, Scottish visa” (Tanzanian, 22, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Less attractive degree” (Korean, 20, male, University of Edinburgh)

“Because it may become to have lower reputation” (Korean, 20, female, University of Edinburgh)

“I enjoy being in the UK and if it’s not convenient to travel within the UK, I would not come here” (Singapore, 31, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Time costly to change currency and always have to show passport” (Malaysian, 22, male, University of Edinburgh)

“Because Scotland isn’t famous as UK in my country” (Thai, 25, male, University of Edinburgh)

“The country can become less stable during the first years” (Mexican, 28, male, University of Glasgow)

“Being a part of the UK makes Scotland powerful” (Mongolian, 20, female, University of Glasgow)

“Immigration will be different and currency will be not the same” (Malaysian, 33, male, University of Glasgow)

“People in Thailand know just UK, Scotland is not credible” (Thai, 28, female, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“I probably couldn’t come here for further studies, because a Scotland university might have less weightage in my field of study” (Indian, 27, female, University of

Glasgow)

“It would be a less stable environment” (American, 20, female, University of Glasgow)

“Economic – maybe more expensive to study, health care may become unavailable, not free” (American, 32, male, University of Glasgow)

**Comments from EU students were:**

“It might have financial issues etc. Economy goes down, the level of education at universities because of less funding” (Finnish, 35, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Independent Scotland might raise issues with immigration status, bias, etc. Outside EU might have to apply for visa” (Bulgarian, 23, male, University of Edinburgh)

“I really like the city and the university. No, if the financial system changes, I might have to reconsider it” (Hungarian, 19, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Less funding, less reputation” (French, 24, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Because it wouldn’t be valid in the EU” (Italian, 21, male, University of Edinburgh)

“If the prices were the same for EU students, then it would not make a difference” (Hungarian, 24, male, University of Glasgow)

**3.2.2. More likely to come**

Amongst the non-European students, 8% indicated that they would be more likely to come to an independent Scotland. The reasons given related to beliefs, such as that visas would be easier to obtain along with work permits, that the economy would be stronger, its ranking might go up, or even that the Scottish economy would decline, and therefore it would be cheaper to live here.

**The following comments from non-European students were made:**

“Post Study Work Visa” (Chinese, 22, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Easy to find jobs” (Chinese, 23, male, University of Edinburgh)

“Ranking goes up” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Glasgow)

“North Sea oil exploration, employment higher” (Chinese, 20, male, University of Glasgow)

“More chance to study here, more open to migrants” (Chinese, 24, male, University of Glasgow)

“Increase ranking in the world” (Chinese, 24, male, University of Glasgow)

“As the people here are quite nice and friendly” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Glasgow)

“Work visa (工签)” (Chinese, 22, male, University of Glasgow)

“Maybe there will be a PSW, offering us to work here” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Glasgow)

“More chance to stay here (更多留下的机会)” (Chinese, 25, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“With rich amount of energy resources, and it would become a richer and better developed country” (Chinese, 25, female, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“If Scotland become independent, we may have two year PSW” (Chinese, 24, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“The life expenses in Scotland are much lower than in England and after the separation, it would become even less” (Saudi Arabian, 26, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

#### **One comment from an EU student:**

“Because it would be free from England” (Greek, 24, female, University of Edinburgh)

#### **3.2.3. No Change**

For non-European students, 46% said their views of Scotland as a place to study remained unchanged. Some of those said they had family and cultural connections with Scotland, which made it attractive. One 27 year-old American female from the University of Edinburgh commented: “I have a personal attachment to Scotland, more than England.” Others pointed to the quality of a particular degree or university, and believed this would remain the same. A 25 year-old Rwandan student from the University of Glasgow said: “It’s the university standard and ranking that I care about, not the politics.”

#### **Other comments were:**

“To me, Scotland and England are the same” (Chinese, 21, female, University of Edinburgh)

“What seems important to me is the university itself, has no relationship with its area” (Chinese, 22, female, University of Edinburgh)

“I think that depends on the new immigration policy as well as education policy that affects international students” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Because I chose to study in Edinburgh is none of business of whether Scotland is a separate country or not. It’s because of the school” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Edinburgh)

“What matters is the university ranking and reputation, the area is not important (看学校排名和声誉，并不注重地区)”(Chinese, 23, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Edinburgh University has international reputation, and I love this city” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Because I like this city comparing to the rest of UK’s” (Chinese, 23, male, University of Edinburgh)

“Because my family is in Scotland” (Chinese, 23, female, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“I like Glasgow, my parents (would) maybe care about if Scotland left the UK” (Chinese, 20, female, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“I don’t think Scotland will be independent, university still has the reputation” (Chinese, 24, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“What I care about is only the reputation of the university” (Chinese, 34, male, University of Glasgow)

“Focus on school, not country” (Chinese, female)

“Schools are the same” (Chinese, 24, male, University of Glasgow)

“Because what matters is the major, not the area” (Chinese, 21, female, University of Glasgow)

“Reputation of the school” (Chinese, 21, female, University of Glasgow)

“Based on the reputation of school” (Chinese, 28, female, University of Glasgow)

“I’m ok with everywhere” (Chinese, 23, male, University of Glasgow)

“Education system is highly related, and it is an English speaking country” (American, 23, female, University of Edinburgh)

“It will not really affect the university I am studying in” (Indian, 23, male, University of Edinburgh)

“I have a personal attachment to Scotland more than England” (American, 27, female, University of Edinburgh)

“It is the university that matters, not the country. Independence has not got anything to do with the quality and standard of teaching in the university” (Korean, 20, female, University of Edinburgh)

“I study here for the reason that I want to learn more about different culture” (Taiwan, 22, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Since I like it so much here anyway” (Norwegian, 22, male, University of Edinburgh)

“I don’t see my education changing after independence” (Hong Kong, 19, male, University of Edinburgh)

“They are not clear on their policies” (Russian, 20, female, University of Edinburgh)

“Depending situational factors, like currency, possible change in laws” (Canadian, 23, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“Because the course I chose depends on the university itself, not the country” (Thai, 25, male, University of Glasgow)

**Comments from EU students were:**

“Still an interesting place to study with great history and a possibility to learn English” (Swedish, 22, female, University of Edinburgh)

“I think the uni would not change, education will take time to be rebuilt” (Latvian, 21, female, University of Glasgow).

“Free education may not be an option anymore, but universities are still good, English-speaking, and cheaper than the rest of UK” (Portuguese, 20, female,

University of Glasgow).

“As long as universities remain free to EU citizens” (Belgian, 21, male, University of Glasgow).

“As long as we don’t have to pay fee” (Belgian, 19, male, University of Glasgow).

“If condition is the same” (Slovak, 20, male, University of Glasgow)

### **3.3. Value of the degree**

There were also strong beliefs expressed on the value of a degree from an independent Scotland. For the students as a whole, 37% believe the degree would have less value. 54% indicated that it would be the same while 10% believed it would be worth more.

#### **3.3.1. The degree would have less value**

The following comments were made:

“Scotland will be worse off being a separate country” (Chinese, 23, female, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“Scottish degree will be affected, it’s important in terms of how people see it (苏格兰证书会受影响，外界评论很重要)” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Glasgow)

“England is more famous (英格兰更知名)” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Glasgow)

“Economic power (经济实力)” (Chinese, 24, female, University of Glasgow)

“Most people have only heard of students coming back from the UK, not Scotland (大多数都只听说过英国留学生，而非苏格兰的留学生)” (Chinese, 23, male, University of Strathclyde)

“Less credibility, less reputation (literally the persuasion of your degree goes down, 说服力，名气下降)” (Chinese, 22, female, University of Strathclyde)

“Prestige factor” (Australian, 25, male, University of Edinburgh)

“University of Edinburgh is stronger if under England, as England is very strong on an international basis” (Norwegian, 22, female, University of Edinburgh)

“UK is one of the most influential countries in the world. It’s a powerful brand. Scotland would be a completely new concept, so potentially seen as less reliable.”

(Latvian, 21, female, University of Glasgow)

### **3.3.2. The degree would have a higher value**

The following comments were made:

“Master with Honours in Scotland may value more. 4 years compared to 3 years in England, and dissertation is longer” (Chinese, 22, female, University of Edinburgh)

“The status of an independent country is higher (独立国家的地位更高)” (Chinese, 23, female, University of Edinburgh)

“In order to win public support, Scottish government will increase investment in education, to improve its competitiveness. Also Scottish independence will draw the world’s attention (政府为了增加苏格兰人民对于独立的支持会加大对人民关心的教育问题的投资，改变一些现有政策，提高教育水平，和英格兰一些名校竞争，并且苏格兰独立会受到世界关注，提升名气)” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Glasgow)

“As an independent country, the government will invest more in education (独立国家，政府投入更多)” (Chinese, 25, male, Glasgow Caledonian University)

“It’ll become stronger. Only if it had the capacity, would it want to be independent” (Chinese, 21, female, University of Glasgow)

“More independent, higher status, government take it seriously” (Chinese, 25, female, University of Glasgow)

### **3.3.3. The value of the degree would remain the same**

The following comments were made:

“Quality of education unchanged” (Chinese, 23, male, University of Glasgow)

“I do not see why it would go up or down” (Korean, 20, female, University of Edinburgh)

“I don’t care about the country, only reputation and ranking” (Hungarian, 24, male, University of Glasgow)

### **3.4. Are they happy?**

One very positive note from the survey was that students expressed great satisfaction with living in Scotland, with 77% enjoying their life here and just 5% saying they are



unhappy.

The friendly people make up for the weather. When asked do they like it here, as one Mexican student put it: “absolutely!” And another from China: “I love this place!”

#### **4. Conclusions**

For Universities in Scotland, these results raise serious questions. Many have embarked on major programmes of international recruitment, and the flow of fees and other income derived has become an important part of their funding. It also has implications for the wider Scottish economy, since international students now bring in around £800 million a year, which was anticipated to rise.

Universities in the UK are already very concerned about the impact of visa restriction on international students, and are struggling to cope of what is thought to be 1% decline as a result of these. As Ulrike Peter, the Universities Scotland senior policy officer commented to us: “Universities need to think creatively to recruit more students”.

Academics from the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dundee recently wrote that the limits on immigration imposed by the current UK government had a “universally acknowledged negative impact on student recruitment to, and the reputation of, all UK universities.” (The Herald, 6 May 2014).

Since so much concern has been generated over a 1% decline, the possibility that 46% of international students might turn away from an independent Scotland is potentially a very serious problem. It could lead to redundancies in universities and severe cutbacks in areas such as the development of accommodation, as well as academic provision.

The validity of these results is of course a central question in the sense of how well they represent the views of all students. But it is unlikely that they underestimate the negative impacts of independence on issues such as the value of a degree and choice of institution. Chinese students, for example, when coming to Britain, are often told by their parents not to say anything negative about the country. In addition, students take their own educational status largely from the degree which they have obtained. It is asking a lot of them to think about whether their degree could be less valuable after they have just paid so much money to study for it. Even so, the negative consequences of independence upon potential recruitment as measured here are extremely high.

In a sense, the views of the students expressed here and the divisions between them over the future status of Scotland, parallel the arguments in Scottish society as a

whole. They feature the same discussion about whether Scotland would be better making its way alone, or better together with the rest of the UK. But there is a crucial difference between the students and the Scottish population in that the former are intensely mobile. A choice of university destination and which country is preferred can be altered with a click on a computer. So any effects produced by possible vote for independence would be very immediately felt by universities.

These results should at least press universities in Scotland to undertake their own research, and to develop appropriate strategies to cope with any changes which may come.

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