



### **WARNING OF A SCAM DIRECTED AT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

The University has been advised that a 'scam' is in operation and has been targeting international students by telephoning them and claiming to be from the Home Office. Please note that the Home office will never contact you to ask for money and personal details.

#### **How the people conducting this scam may contact you:**

- Through telephone
- using websites to offer fake services
- using email addresses that look official but are not

The people conducting this scam can be very convincing, so, please be aware that:

- The call will be made by a person who claims that they are calling from the Home Office;
- They will try to make you believe that they can offer you something very easily, such as a visa for the UK, or that there is a problem with your application or visa.
- They may tell you their telephone number (020 7035 4848) and ask you to verify it by checking on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website;
- This same phone number will be on the Home Office website;
- In addition, the caller ID on your phone may show this number (020 7035 4848);
- The caller will have your full name, postcode in the UK and passport number, and the caller will ask you to confirm that the details are correct (we do not know how they have obtained your details but the Home Office has been made aware of this by Universities in the UK).
- The caller will then proceed to tell you that you have not paid for an immigration service or there is a problem with your visa application, and will tell you that you have to pay a fine (from reports this ranges from £1200 - £1520);
- They will tell you that if you do not pay they will report you to the Police and/or the Home Office who will detain you or deport you;
- If you do not comply with their requests, the caller will become increasingly insistent and verbally aggressive.
- They may use websites to offer fake services.
- They can use email addresses that look official but are not.

#### **DO NOT PAY ANY MONEY**

We understand that you may feel anxious or afraid; however, it is not Home Office policy to ring applicants and demand payment.

Therefore it is extremely likely that this is a scam and the caller is trying to steal your money.

Please do not let the caller frighten or intimidate you. Instead, try to remain calm and do one of the following:



[www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentsservices](http://www.intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentsservices)

1. Tell the caller that you are aware that there is a 'scam' that targets international students, and that your University has told you NOT to pay any money. Your University has instead told you that you need to verify if they are really the Home Office and to do this the caller should give you their name, telephone number and the location of their office/team in the Home Office. Tell the caller that you will give their details to the University's International Student Advisory Service who have said that they will check the information directly with the Home Office.

Or

2. Tell the caller that you are aware that there is a 'scam' that targets international students, and that your University has told you NOT to pay any money. Tell the caller that you are authorising them to email the University and explain in the email what is needed from you. Please note - you do not need to give them an email address as the Home Office has the email addresses to contact us at the University. If the caller is a genuine Home Office member of staff they will be happy to email the University directly.

End the phone call and immediately contact the ISAS at [www.studenthelp.bham.ac.uk](http://www.studenthelp.bham.ac.uk) informing us of a 'SCAM CALL FROM THE HOME OFFICE' and tell us:

☑ The name, number and location of the caller if they provided it - we will then check with the Home Office and get back to you; or

☑ If you received a call and they refused to give you any information please let us know; the ISAS will send you an authorisation form which will allow us to email the Home Office and check if they did try and contact you. The ISAS will then contact you following this check.

If the caller becomes aggressive or abusive after you inform them that the University has requested that you do NOT pay them any money, hang up the phone immediately.

We understand that you will feel anxious about this, but please, do not pay money or provide any banking details if you receive a call.

We hope that you do not receive a call, but if you do, please follow our instructions above

Please note that fake websites are designed to look like official ones for the UK government or its official visa enquiry services. Official UK government websites always have '.gov.uk' at the end of their website address.

Also note that official Home Office email addresses are always in one of two formats:

- name.surname@ukba.gsi.gov.uk
- name.surname@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk



These are the formats of official Foreign and Commonwealth Office email addresses:

- name.surname@fco.gov.uk
- xxxxxxxx@fco.gov.uk

Sometimes the email address you see on the screen of a fake website or email is in that format, but when you click on it, it creates an email that will be sent to a different email address. Please always check the actual address on the email you are sending.

Please note that you can report your suspicions or incidents to Action Fraud, either on the Action Fraud website or (only if you are in the UK) by phoning 0300 123 2040.

You can also help to stop scammers by warning your friends and family, and by making Action Fraud aware of any scams that you have encountered.

**Please use the following link for further information and updates:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/frauds-tricks-and-scams/fraud-tricks-and-scams>