**UK Council
for International
Student Affairs**

UKCISA

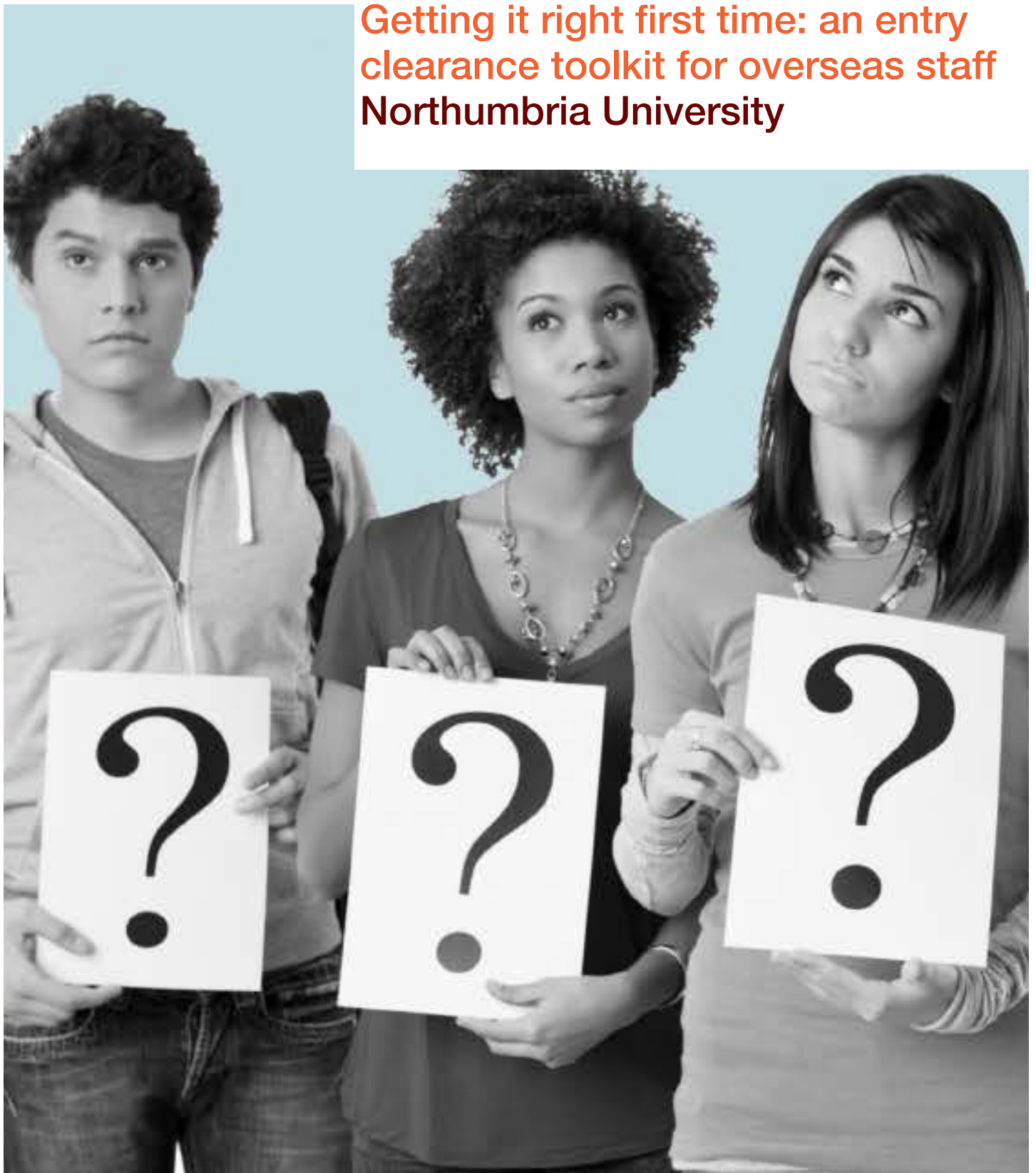# Getting it right first time: an entry clearance toolkit for overseas staff
Northumbria University

Getting it right first time: an entry clearance toolkit for overseas staff
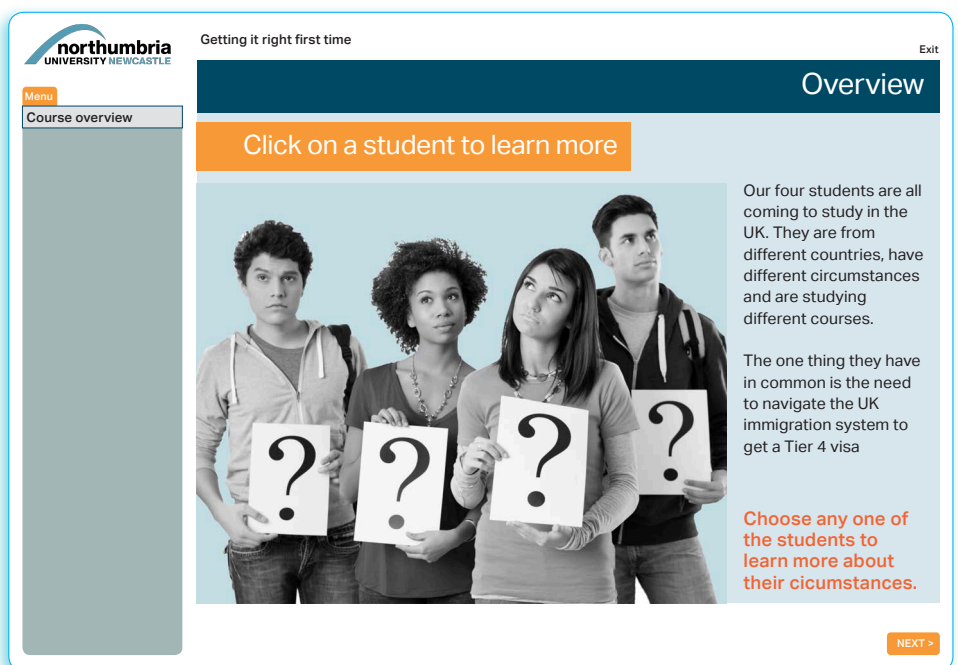## Northumbria University

Rationale for the project

In 2015 Northumbria University witnessed a spike in the number of entry clearance refusals. A study of these identified two main reasons: minor errors in financial evidence and failure at the credibility interview.

Overseas colleagues expressed concern with regard to the increasing complexity of visa regulations and the importance of giving correct and up-to-date advice and guidance to applicants at all times. It was identified that agents and overseas colleagues would benefit from a regularly updated training to ensure their knowledge remains current and comprehensive.

Due to the nature of the intended audience – in several countries working in different capacities – an online training package was preferred.

Project aims

To create an online toolkit for overseas staff and agents which is focussed on Tier 4 financial requirements to instil confidence when advising students about this complex area of student immigration.

Online toolkit, aimed at overseas staff and agents, on immigration requirements for international students

Motivations for project

To reduce the number of refusals by enabling overseas colleagues to learn more about the importance of checking students' documents prior to a visa application and allowing them to regularly test their knowledge.

Summary of project outcomes

After exploring the many packages available we decided to use two: Articulate Storyline for the logistics and Shutterstock for images. We chose the anonymous locations of the Shutterstock images, avoiding Northumbria related photographs, so that other universities could use the toolkit.

The toolkit introduces four international students (specific nationalities and countries of origin are withheld) whose background and study plans are outlined across three slides. Each of the four students has a complex immigration situation. Users of the toolkit can choose which of the four students they wish to meet first by clicking on the image of the

student. This unlocks that student and guides the user through their story. At the end of the slides there are three questions, each using different answer formats: true/false, multiple choice, free text and so on. The questions will be taken from a bank of six, which, if answered wrongly, will be reset at random. The pass mark for this part of the toolkit is 100%.

Once all four students' questions have been answered correctly, the user progresses to the final stage. This comprises eight general immigration questions with a pass mark of 75%. The question formats vary and are taken from a bank of 20 questions to minimise repeats when reset. Users will be able to take each stage of the toolkit as many times as they wish until they reach the required pass rate. Uptake and results can be monitored, should the host university wish to do this.

All slides feature photographic imagery only, which is generic in terms of both UK study location and student nationality/background. This style of image is chosen for two reasons: colleagues overseas will not just feel that the student from 'their' country is relevant to them and other universities will be able to use the toolkit without having to change images to 'neutralise' the style.

As the Immigration Rules change, the questions will be revised, with a maximum number of three amendments per year. In the unusual case of there being no change, then we will refresh the questions every six months.

Conclusions and ideas for further enhancement of the project

The toolkit is useful for those who have a certain knowledge of immigration, in particular Tier 4 applications. It is not suitable for those completely new to the subject.

However, a toolkit aimed at absolute beginners would be relatively simple to produce with a few word changes and different introductions.

Those who work in larger UK universities are not able to easily influence entry clearance applications due to the volume of CAS issued and the relatively low number of UK staff to check documents. Ensuring colleagues overseas, or possibly students themselves, have access to training and up-to-date information, is a small step in the right direction.

The module is being trialled by Northumbria's UK-based and overseas staff. Early indications are that the information and exercises in the module are easy to navigate, and are already proving to be very helpful.

Learning points for other UK institutions

The many changes to the immigration rules, especially those seemingly small changes that could have huge consequences if ignored, means this toolkit must be kept up to date. It will need a keen eye to monitor the toolkit following any rule changes so that it remains relevant and useful.

Further information

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Useful link
Links to the videos: www.ukcisa.org.uk/grants-schemes