counter\mapping:

finding (y)our way through borders and filters

How did you get here?

We got here by asking how the university functions not only as a knowledge factory but also as a border. This counter\map draws some of the connections between the borders, institutions and regulatory systems that operate in, on and around the university. That the university is a border is made possible by the operation of filter mechanisms. What is a border for some may be a filter for others - the counting of the bodies of student and staff, money in and money out, who can get here and who can't, what we're worth when we leave and the limits of what is and is not knowledge. Who and what is stopped at the border? There is no way of mapping this neutrally: rather we offer a counter\map that helps us orient ourselves in, against and beyond the various filter and border regimes.

This map is inspired by all those who resist the border, our experiences of education and our migrations from various locations on and off this map. It was produced by counter\mappers based in London and North Carolina, with the support of the School of Business and Management at Queen Mary.

For more background about the information on this map, sources for our statistics, and to find out where we're going after this, visit our blog at: countermappingqmary.blogspot.com

Legend

- VFS Global Office†
- IRC - Immigration Removal Centre
- Student
- Service Staff
- Admin Staff
- Academic Staff

†VFS icons sized proportionally to the number of UK student visa applicants from that city

The College Council is the governing body of QMary. Comprising 19 members, of whom 10 are external, and most of whom are experts in privatisation processes, the Council is responsible for overseeing the strategic mission, direction and affairs of the College. Council sits at the pinnacle of the College's corporate governance framework, and convenes on six occasions per year.

Among academic and administrative staff at QMary women are on average paid approximately £2,000 less than men of the same age, length of service, and ethnic group, working in the same department.

Total service-based staff - 475
46% women
57% white

Total academic staff - 1665
39% women
78% white

Total admin staff - 1528
64% women
71% white

Total student population - 16726
69% home students
31% international

27 January to 4 February 2009: Students at QMary occupied lecture theatre 1.13 in the Francis Bancroft Building in solidarity with the people of Gaza. The students demanded that the college divest from arms companies GKN and Cobham, condemn the Israeli bombardments of Gaza and make fully paid scholarships available for Palestinian students.

The living wage movement started in Baltimore in 1994, and the UK campaign was launched in 2001 by London Citizens to end working poverty.

In 2004 the Greater London Authority began calculating an official London hourly rate of pay, which takes into account the higher cost of living in the capital (shelter, diet, social life, dependants) and the rate of inflation. It is currently set at £7.85 (June 2010). QMary became the first Living Wage University in 2007.

Feb 2010: Over 50 women went on hunger strike at Yarl's Wood. They were protesting at poor conditions and the length of time they have been detained - one woman has been held for over two years.

Yarl's Wood IRC

Opened in November 2001. The contract for operating Yarl's Wood was awarded in December 2006 to Serco Ltd. Yarl's Wood has become the main removal centre for women and families. There are 405 bed spaces, divided into 284 single female bed spaces and 121 family bed spaces. All rooms are twin-bedded and interconnected in pairs, so that families can be located together.

> “I was detained for eight hours at Heathrow on my way to a UK conference I had been invited to – then I was sent back to the States for reasons that were unclear. Border agents could not even answer my questions regarding the laws. This has personally cost me thousands, ruined months of plans…”
>
> US based hip-hop artist

students at QMary total tuition fees paid

Tuition fees have been an indispensable revenue stream for all UK universities since New Labour abolished free education. In 1998 they introduced contributions (up to £1,250 p/a). In 2006 top up fees were introduced, with a cap for home and EU students at £3,225 a year. The Con-Dems are proposing to lift the cap in 2011. In Scotland higher education is free for home and EU students.

Overseas student fees are not capped and provide a crucial income for universities. At QMary overseas students generally pay between £10,250 - £13,000 for BA studies and up to £34,000 for an MSc.

Overseas students make up only 31% of the student population at QMary. But their tuition fees amount to 48% of all tuition fees received (down from pre-crisis 66% in 2006).

> “I've been studying in the UK for two years but each time I return from visiting my family in Pakistan, I have problems with border control. They don't trust I'm a student, and hold me for hours. ‘Why don't you carry books if you're a student?’ I travel with my computer, so I use Pdfs – they won't believe that. Now when I cross the border I take a few books just not to be hassled.”
>
> Phd student, QMary

Research Excellence Framework

The REF is a system for measuring ‘academic output’. It reduces everything to a system of measure via bibliometrics. The system favours research relevant to industry and business and helps create a market of knowledge and education through their commodification. Co-operation between universities and companies is encouraged. Research funded by tax payers is turned into privately owned knowledge for companies. Competition amongst universities is promoted whilst the cooperation between independently acting researchers is stifled. The REF is crucial in deciding how much government funding each university receives. It allows government bureaucrats and politicians to discipline universities and university managers to discipline academic staff.

> “I applied for a visa to study in the UK while I was studying in Japan – so it was the Tokyo embassy that issued it. And so when I arrived at Heathrow, the UKBA claimed that I was Japanese, not from New Zealand. “I'm sorry, your papers aren't in order,” - and they sent me back to New Zealand at huge personal cost.”
>
> Student from New Zealand

On the 4th of May, 2010, Middlesex Philosophy students staged a sit-in in response to plans to close down their department. The sit-in turned into a full blown occupation that lasted for 12 days, hosting lectures, discussions, films and meetings.

750,000 people in London and the South-East are at risk of losing their homes due to the Con-Dems cuts to housing benefits.

Studentification: gentrification caused by a high concentration of uni students, whose higher (debt-fuelled) purchasing power triggers inflation of the property prices and rents.

> “International students are really put off because the amount of money we spend paying for visas every year is unbelievable. I really don't think it's fair for the Home Office to think that everyone who wants to study in the UK has to be rich. Sometimes a visa is given for 6 months yet you clearly requested 1 year which is the length of your course. Then the Home Office expects you to cough up more money for a new visa after the 6 months which is really unfair.”
>
> International student

Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications is engaged in a partnership with the Dept. of Electronic Engineering at QMary. This means that there is a flow of students, researchers, money and knowledge between Beijing and London. Similar collaborations have been set up between QMary engineering and universities in Beihang, Fudan and Macau.

QMary also collaborates with Beihang University on developing a software system capable of automatically searching and profiling the gender, age and type of human subjects/populations captured in video, and to provide a facility for either real-time information gathering on people movement. This is exactly the kind of software that police, border agents or military would use to identify people at borders, for purposes of policing and in situations of war.

Dept. for Business, Innovation, and Skills

The Dept. of Business, Innovation and Skills has had many name changes. In 1992 it was the Dept. for Education and Science. In 2001 it changed to the Dept. for Education and Employment. By 2009 it was the Dept. for Innovation, Universities and Skills. In was in 2010 that the Dept. lost all mention of either education or universities.

Vince Cable, MP is the State Secretary of State for Dept. Business, Innovation and Skills. He is the former chief economist for the oil company, Shell. Adrian Smith is the Director General of Science and Research. He was the Principal of QMary from 1998 – 2008. Beginning in 1982 he was Operational Analysis Advisor to the Ministry of Defence, the year of the Malvinas War.

On May 5th 2010, the UCU held a rally from King's College to Parliament Square as part of a London-wide education strike.

Colnbrooke and Harmondsworth IRCs

Colnbrooke opened in 2004 and is the most secure removal centre within the UKBA estate. It is located close to London Heathrow Airport. Bed spaces: 308 total. Harmondsworth IRC is adjacent to Heathrow Airport and is neighbour to the Colnbrook immigration removal centre. It is a long-term centre where detainees are detained pending their case resolutions and subsequent deportation from the UK. Bed spaces: 259 single males

In March 2010 King's College announced plans to cut 10% of its staff budget. In response staff went on strike and on 30th of March 250 people joined picket lines on all four King's campuses.

Brook House and Tinsley House Immigration Removal Centres

Opened in March 2009, Brook House is the latest addition to the UKBA removals estate. It is a secure centre, purpose-built to category B prison service standard and is adjacent to the existing facility at Tinsley House near Gatwick Airport. Provides relatively short term accommodation for 426 male detainees.

In March 2010 a sit-in against the proposed cuts to Sussex University led to the suspension of 6 students and a high court injunction against ‘occupational protests’. A week later, 300 students occupied a lecture theatre for eight days while UCU members voted to strike in solidarity. These actions successfully forced management to revoke the suspensions.

Dover IRC

Opened on April 2002 as an Immigration Removal Centre. Bed spaces: 314 for males over the age of 18.

Since the mid-1990's tens of thousands of undocumented migrants have lived in destitution, sleeping rough in Calais. Between 1999 and 2002, the Red Cross ran a centre at nearby Sangatte. This was forced to close after political pressure from France and Britain. Since then, a massive police presence in Calais has forced men, women and children to wander the Calais region and all along the north coast of France, Belgium and Holland.

During June 2009, a No Border Camp in Calais brought together over 700 activists from across Europe to share a camp alongside undocumented migrants from Africa, the Middle East and Asia as well as local residents.

VFS Global

VFS works for 31 diplomatic missions in 46 countries worldwide and processes in excess of 7 million visa applications annually. It has 387 Visa Centres in 45 countries, with its headquarters in Mumbai, India. It is part of the Swiss Kuoni Travel Group, its annual reports and financial flows passing intransparently through Swiss banks. In early 2007 VFS Global was awarded a £195 million 5-year contract with UKBA to provide visa outsourcing services in 7 geographical regions, covering approximately 70% of UKBA visa applications globally. VFS does not give advice on visa applications, but only processes paperwork and charge fees ('non judgmental tasks'). Its revenues have 'pleasantly increased' in the last years. A student visa application for the UK with VFS costs about £210 no matter in which country it is made.