Exploring the Graduate Visa in the UK: An Interview Study with Chinese International Graduates

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Acknowledgement

This dissertation speaks to my heart.

At the very end of my four-year journey as an international student, I am beyond honoured to have conducted this project and to have shared meaningful conversations about the Graduate visa policy.

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Abstract

This study explores the real-life experience of applying to and using the Graduate visa. It collects qualitative data from twenty semi-structured online individual interviews with Chinese graduates who chose to stay after graduating from UK universities. The Graduate visa is re-introduced in 2021 and facing potential policy changes according to the newly released Immigration White Paper (UK Home Office, 2025c). Changes of the PSWR policy influences the international student recruitment and life decisions of international graduates. Therefore, this study aims to explore the puzzle of the experience of international graduates in their usage of Graduate visa to form a more comprehensive understanding of the Graduate visa and post-study migration.

Three research questions are investigated: First, how did the Chinese graduates decided to use the Graduate visa; Secondly, how is their current experience of using this visa to work and live their everyday life after graduating and remaining in the host country; And lastly, how did the Chinese graduates reflect and give feedback on their experience of applying to and using the Graduate visa. The findings of this interview study show the stage of using the Graduate visa connects the continuous personal growth of Chinese graduates between their higher education and work opportunity in the UK. This study enriches our understand on the challenges and opportunities provided by the Post-Study Work Rights (PSWR) policy such as the Graduate visa in the UK from the genuine perspective of the Chinese visa holders.

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Chapter One Introduction

The Graduate visa is a recently re-introduced Post-Study Work Rights (PSWR) policy in the UK, established in 2021. It is a policy that connects the UK's international higher education to the temporary migration of international graduates (Robertson, 2013; MAC, 2024; Ahmed & Davies, 2025). The PSWR policy in the UK has undergone establishment, cancellation, and reintroduction over the past two decades (Ahmed & Davies, 2025).

More recently, the UK government released an Immigration White Paper in May 2025, which outlines further policy changes to the Graduate visa, along with the restoration of control over the immigration system (UK Home Office, 2025c). This study has its timely urgency because of the shifting PSWR policies in the UK and its recent signs of retrenchment, with the UK government seeking to restore stricter immigration controls (Robertson, 2013; Joshi & Ziguras, 2024; Ahmed & Davies, 2025; UK Home Office, 2025b). This study provides an empirical source of data on the experience and feedback of Chinese Graduate visa holders in the UK, so that the voice of international student graduates is potentially able to be involved in policymaking decisions and future theoretical discussion.

The findings from this interview study highlight the crucial stage of using the Graduate visa after UK universities and before settling down at a permanent job or a place of long-term residence. It argues that the role of the Graduate visa is a pathway for achieving personal growth through working and living in the host country after overseas higher education. Personal growth in this study refers to the development of educational and working skills, harmony of social relationships, and self-formation of international graduates (Tu, 2013; Sun, 2008; Zhao & Biesta, 2011; Marginson, 2014). This introduction section will first outline the aim and research questions, as well as the answers to these research questions. After this, it will explain the background of the Graduate visa policy and the Graduate visa holders in the UK.

1.2 Research Aim, Questions, and Structure

This present qualitative research aims to understand the Graduate visa policy in the UK and its impact on UK higher education and international students. This study is designed to enrich our understanding of the experiences of Chinese graduates who are using the Graduate visa. It also provides policy implications and suggestions to understand the shifting PSWR policy in the UK and support international graduates to gain effective usage of this Graduate visa.

There are three main research questions of this interview study:

First, 1) how do Chinese graduates make decisions about applying for a Graduate visa?

Secondly, 2) what is the current working and living experience of Chinese graduates using the Graduate visa in the UK?

Thirdly, 3) how do they reflect on their gains and opinions of using the Graduate visa?

This study provides answers to these three questions. First, Chinese Graduate visa holders position the decision of using the Graduate visa as a crucial transition from overseas higher education to post-study continued personal growth. Second, the experience of using the Graduate visa has challenges in securing satisfying jobs within the two-year duration and the importance of housing and homemaking. It also shows active responses and strategies of Chinese graduates to solve the challenges in working and living. Finally, Chinese graduates reflect on their gains based on their personal growth in working and self-formation. They also provided insightful opinions on recognising the Graduate visa usage as a continuing trajectory of living in the UK.

This article uses five chapters to structure the research arguments. The rest of this introduction chapter sketches out the basic knowledge of the Graduate visa policy. More details of the overview on the Graduate visa are discussed later in Chapter Two. Chapter two is the literature review on the existing theories, studies and debates on the Post-Study Work Rights policies. After this, the third chapter outlines the methodology of this study to answer the research questions by using qualitative semi-structured individual online interviews. Following the methodology, the fourth chapter reports the findings and presents a critical discussion of the practical and policy implications of the research arguments. Finally, the fifth chapter concludes the article's research arguments, contributions and limitations.

1.3 Background of the Graduate Visa in the UK

The Graduate visa is a Post-Study Work Rights (PSWR) policy in the UK. It is a pathway for international students to stay and work in the UK after graduating from local universities (Joshi & Ziguras, 2024). The PSWR policy in the UK has gone through changes in the last two decades. The previous Post-Study Work visa was implemented in 2004 and was cancelled in 2012 (UK Government, 2004; UK Home Office, 2010; UK Home Office, 2012). This Graduate visa was re-established in July 2021 (UK Home Office, n.d.). It is also referred to as the Graduate route in some research and reports (UK Home Office, 2025a).

For the visa holders, this route does not require employer sponsorship and permits work at any skill level. They are allowed to stay in the UK to work, look for work, be self-employed, travel, and bring dependents under some circumstances (UK Home Office, n.d.). For doctoral graduates, this period extends

to three years. However, this study focuses on the Graduate visa holders with a two-year visa duration for a more concentrated understanding on their experience.

However, this post-study work visa is non-extendable, which means visa holders need to switch to another visa route or leave the UK after the granted visa duration (UK Home Office, n.d.). Popular PSWR policies in other major host countries are similarly not available for extension, for example, in Australia, Canada, Germany, or in some circumstances in the US (MAC, 2024).

The Graduate visa has attracted 276,000 international student graduates to gain extensions of stay, according to the statistics collected from July 2021 to March 2024 (UK Home Office, 2025a). This research by the UK Home Office (2025a) collected and analysed 2,951 responses in quantitative survey study and 30 follow-up qualitative interviews with main route users between April and July 2024. Not only the number of remaining international graduates is growing, but the remaining graduated international students also contribute to the host country's economy (Conlon & Hedges, 2019). The total net benefit to the UK Exchequer of hosting Graduate Route visa holders in the first full year of the scheme (2022/23) is estimated to be £70 million (or £1,240 per international graduate), disproving claims that the UK loses out financially (HEPI, 2024). Beyond economic contribution, the social and cultural impact of hosting international graduates on wider society receives less attention in research.

Due to the constraints of research scope and timeline, this study chooses to research with the cohort of Chinese Graduate visa holders. Among the Graduate visa holder population, Chinese international student graduates are the second largest cohort with distinctive character traits, including being mostly in their twenties, female-dominated, and mostly graduated from a Russel Group University, and largely received a master's degree in the UK (UK Home Office, 2025a). This study aims to fill the research gap in understanding the experience and feedback of Chinese graduates as a growing and distinctive cohort living in the UK society.

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines existing studies of the Post-Study Work Rights (PSWR) policies. The existing studies on the PSWR policy are in relation to international higher education and research on/with international student graduates. This chapter's structure starts from a broader background of the PSWR policy in a global lens, and then narrows down to a national focus of this study on the context of the UK. It then outlines existing understanding of the lived experience of applying and using the Graduate visa in the UK by Chinese graduates.

In this structure, section 2.2 explains the development of the PSWR policies as a part of the internationalisation of education and a function to govern international students and graduates through mobility. Within the broader context, section 2.3 unfolds the shifting PSWR policy in the UK and provides an overview of the Graduate visa policy. After this, the section 2.4 analyses the Graduate visa policy implementation from the perspective of Chinese graduates who remained after UK higher education.

2.2 A Global Lens: The Role and Function of the Post-Study Work Rights

2.2.1 Background of Developing Post-Study Work Rights Policies

The right and opportunity of international students to work and remain in the host country after graduation is actively promoted in many key destination countries. These host countries value the importance of developing a globalised knowledge economy and competitiveness in the global race for talent (Robertson, 2013, p. 13). A knowledge economy increasingly depends on "knowledge, information and high skill levels," along with "ready access to all of these by the business and public sectors" (OECD, 2008, p. 298). Higher education is one of the sectors that plays a central role in attracting international student to strengthen the knowledge economy (Joshi & Ziguras, 2024). The higher education sector is therefore involved in the global trend of internationalisation, which is defined as "the integration of international, intercultural, or global dimensions into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education" (Knight, 2004, p. 11; 2013).

From the 1990s, host countries such as Australia, the UK, and the US started to implement immigration policies that attract international students and maintain skilled international graduates (Knight, 2012; Robertson, 2013). In a global context, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD) claimed in 2013 that PSWR policies are a powerful influence on international students' study destinations (Joshi & Zigura, 2024). Encouraged by the global trend of welcoming post-international-study graduates, many host countries have become more aware of the contribution of remaining international student graduates. In the context of the UK, for example, sizeable economic contributions are made by those international graduates entering and remaining in the UK labour market (Halterbeck & Conlon, 2019).

However, despite the importance of international students and graduates, there has been limited reflection or examination on the effectiveness of PSWR policies (Gopal, 2016). The importance of having post-study migration visas is largely limited to understanding the economic benefits for the host country, instead of a more holistic reflection of visa holders' opinions. Scholars and governments have become more aware of this research gap. For instance, Tran and colleagues (2025) recently researched the policy nexus between international education and migration by conducting qualitative interviews with international graduates who were on the post-study visa in Australia. Similarly, the UK Home Office (2025a) conducted empirical research to evaluate the Graduate visa by conducting a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews with visa holders. These studies underscore more attention on humanised discussion of international higher education and post-study migration from the perspective of international graduates as active actors (Mittelmeier et al., 2022). This study follows this path to highlight experiences of Chinese graduates and their feedback on the Graduate visa policy in the UK.

Meanwhile, existing studies highlight the interrelatedness of PSWR policies of different host countries. This connectedness is due to the globalised flows of international students and graduates (Robertson, 2013; Gopal, 2016; Joshi & Ziguras, 2024). The higher education sector in the UK provides a clear example of being influenced by this global flow of international students (Lomer, 2018). In 2012, the UK removed its Post-Study Work visa driven by various economic and political reasons, including rising concerns over border and immigration control (Lomer, 2018). The cancellation led to a sharp drop in international student enrolment and an estimated loss of £1 billion in tuition revenue (Lomer, 2018; Halterbeck & Conlon, 2019; Tran et al., 2022). In 2021, the UK reintroduced the Graduate visa. The Home Office of the UK (2025a) highlights that the UK must meet the challenges of a fast-changing global education market in competition with other ambitious countries. This study aims to provide a concentrated discussion about the UK's PSWR policy based on the background of the competitive international higher education sector.

Scholars argued that the PSWR policies have their various dynamism to adapt to the political and economic agenda of host countries (Robertson, 2013; Tran et al., 2025). Therefore, the section 2.3 will later outline more details about the PSWR policy in the UK within the broader background of global awareness of the importance of hosting international student graduates.

2.2.2 Function of the Post-Study Work Rights Policy to Govern through Mobility

The Post-Study Work Rights (PSWR) policy plays a role as part of the neoliberal biopolitical project to govern international students and graduates. (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014; Pinkerton, 2019). A neoliberal biopolitical project, according to Foucauldian theory, refers to governmental techniques used to manage populations and bodies (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014). Governments construct and promote the image of the ideal migrant subject to attract and retain international students while maintaining control over their mobility (Pinkerton, 2019). In the Australian context, Robertson and Runganaikaloo (2014, p. 209) argue that international graduates are shaped into "desirable workers" or "designer migrants". Similarly, in the UK, Pinkerton (2019) suggests that mobility itself is constructed as a privilege, and international graduates are governed by the desire to travel, live, and work abroad.

Yet, the role of visa holders in shaping, critiquing, and responding to PSWR policies remains underexamined. These individuals are often recognised as passive subjects within broader biopolitical frameworks (Lomer, 2018). International graduates in the host country often experience vulnerability due to shifting policy landscapes and the temporary nature of their migration status (Tran et al., 2023). For example, Shanthi Robertson (2013) describes how Australia's education-migration nexus creates a staggered path toward permanent settlement. The staggered path refers to the multiple applications for international graduates to complete and prove themselves in order to extend their period of stay in the host country (Robertson, 2013). The shifting policy in the UK also shapes the post-study migration into a stage of precariousness and uncertainty (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014; Ahmed & Davies, 2025).

However, Graduate visa users are active decision-makers and key actors in the policy implementation of the Graduate visa living in the host country's society, more than the confusing and constraining biopolitical terms (Robertson, 2013). To magnify the role of Graduate visa holders in understanding this post-study work right policy, the lived experience and active reflections on the usage of the Graduate visa are positioned at the centre of this qualitative interview study.

2.3 National Focus: UK's Post-Study Work Rights Policy and Graduate Visa

Building on the global context of post-study work rights, this study utilises the UK as its case study. This section outlines the evolution of the UK's post-study work visa policies and explores the shifting intentions behind the current Graduate Visa policy.

Before the launch of the Graduate route, the UK experienced significant shifts in its post-study work policies. These changes reflected the dual policy goals of promoting the UK's higher education sector

globally while also limiting net migration (Lomer, 2018; Ahmed and Davies, 2025; UK House of Commons Library, 2025). As outlined earlier in section 2.2, PSWR policies are shaped by host countries' desires to attract international students for economic and geopolitical advantage. However, these policies are frequently revised in response to changing political and economic pressures (Ahmed and Davies, 2025; Tran et al., 2025). The closure and re-establishment of the Post-Study Work rights policy in the UK stressed the research gap to understand the impact of the current Graduate visa. The experience and reflection of Chinese graduates on the Graduate visa in this present study prepares for responding to further policy changes and impacts on international higher education and international students (Lomer, 2018; MAC, 2024; Ahmed & Davies, 2025).

The development of UK's PSWR policy started from the launch of Tony Blair's Prime Minister's Initiative in 1999 and its continuation through PMI2 until 2011. The UK aimed to recruit more international students in the face of growing global competition (Lomer, 2018). During this period, the UK Government first introduced a one-year visa for STEM graduates in 2004. In 2008, the Tier 1 Post-Study Work visa route was established as part of a points-based immigration system. This route allowed non-EU international students to remain in the UK for up to two years after graduation without employer sponsorship (UK Parliament, 2016). The policy attracted thousands of international students and was widely seen as beneficial to the UK economy by enabling skilled and educated graduates to contribute to the workforce (Ahmed and Davies, 2025).

However, the UK also became known for tightening its visa policies toward international students, reflecting a broader trend of using migration policy as a biopolitical mechanism, as previously discussed in section 2.2 (Robertson, 2013; Lomer, 2018; Tran et al., 2022; Pinkerton, 2019). In 2010, the Migration Advisory Committee reported that international students made up the largest share of migrants to the UK (MAC, 2018a). In 2012, the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, made the controversial decision to end the Post-Study Work visa (UK Home Office, 2012). The government claimed that abolishing this post-graduation visa would help prevent exploitation of the system by low-quality institutions (UK Home Office, 2010, para. 4).

The closure of the route had negative consequences for UK higher education, workforce, and society. As briefly noted earlier in section 2.2, international students actively invest their time, money, and futures when choosing a study destination. The UK, as the host country, in turn, must recognise the significant economic value of international graduates who remain and work after graduating from local universities (Conlon et al., 2019). In 2019, the UK introduced its International Education Strategy (UK HM Government, 2019). The strategy aimed to present the education sector as a competitive global export (UK HM Government, 2019). Conlon and colleagues (2019) published a report highlighting the tax contributions made by international graduates and suggesting the reestablishment of a separate post-study work route.

These pressures of reintroducing PSWR policy were intensified by other major developments such as Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic, both of which placed financial strain on higher education institutions and exposed skill shortages in parts of the UK labour market (Ahmed and Davies, 2025). These political, economic, and social drivers created strong bottom-up pressure on the UK Government to reconsider its position (Ahmed and Davies, 2025). As a result, the Graduate Route visa was reintroduced in 2021, allowing international graduates to remain in the UK and participate in the labour market and local communities.

Despite the reintroduction of the Graduate visa, the conflicting policy intensions behind the Graduate Visa remain contested. In the UK, international migrants are encouraged to link their sense of success to their ability to remain mobile (Pinkerton, 2019). They are expected to perform as a "genuine student" and become the "brightest and the best", according to terms used by politicians and policies (UK Home Office, 2010, para. 16; UK Home Office, 2012, p.8). The goal of attracting the "brightest and best" in international education and post-study migration policies is difficult to define and evaluate (MAC, 2024). Notably, this phrase of "the brightest and the best" was used to justify the closure of the previous Post-Study Work visa in 2012, but also reappeared in the Department for Education's announcement when the Graduate route was launched in 2021 (UK Home Office, 2021). Despite its frequent use, this term lacks a clear definition in official policy documents and government communications (MAC, 2024).

In contrast, the number of international students and temporary migrants is much more measurable than the standard of being the brightest and the best students. To control the growth of net migration, the Immigration White Paper (UK Home Office, 2025c) proposed shortening the Graduate Visa from two years to eighteen months. The biopolitical logic of the visa system was further intensified by new requirements (Pinkerton, 2019). Migrants were expected to contribute, learn English, and integrate, while employers were urged to invest in the domestic workforce before hiring internationally (UK Home Office, 2025c, para. 5). This document positioned the new migration framework toward "fairness" in the market of higher education and skilled migration (UK Home Office, 2025c, para. 5). While the Graduate route remains available to international students and graduates, recent government reports and policy debates have raised fresh doubts about whether the UK continues to present itself as a welcoming destination for global talent.

Overall, the intentions behind the UK's post-study work visa policy are constantly shifting and marked by internal contradictions. As Pinkerton (2019) argues, the UK government aims to attract a mobile, skilled workforce that maintains ties with both the UK and their countries of origin, rather than seeking long-term settlers. However, this expectation for mobile but not settled migrants faces tensions against the lived realities and human needs of a sense of belongingness in visa holders' daily interactions with UK universities, employers, and their identity and belongingness. The following section will move on from the debates on the policy intentions to discuss existing studies and understanding of the policy implementations experienced by the Graduate visa policy in the UK.

2.4 Perspective: Experience and Reflection of Chinese Graduate Visa Holders

This section discusses existing studies on the Graduate visa holders, especially those from China. It first outlines the profile of Chinese visa holders and then conceptualises the usage of Graduate visa as a transitional stage between international higher education and permanent job positions or long-term settlement.

2.4.1 Profile of Chinese Visa Holders of the Graduate Route in the UK

Since the introduction of the Graduate visa in July 2021, there has been a rapid increase in the number of visas granted (MAC, 2024). These visa users are key actors to reflect on the reality of using the Graduate visa and provide insightful feedback (Robertson, 2013; Ahmed & Davies, 2025). However, there is a lack of research with the Graduate visa holders compared with existing studies on policy analysis (Gopal, 2016; Lomer, 2018; Ahmed & Davies, 2025). This study points out this research gap and concentrate on the case of Chinese graduates in the UK with the Graduate visa.

China has been a very important market for UK education exports, according to the International Education Strategy (2019, p. 20). To compete with other major host countries, as stated in 2.2, the Chinese market is crucial for the UK to attract and maintain sustainable relationships. According to the rapid report by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC, 2024), the proportion of Chinese international students in the UK is 25%, only slightly lower than the biggest group from India (26%). Meanwhile, the size of Chinese international students who choose to remain in the UK after graduation is the third largest (10%) among the top four nationalities (India, Nigeria, Chinese, and Pakistan in sequence) (MAC, 2024; UK Home Office, 2025a). Hence, the experience and opinions of international students and graduates from China contribute to the effectiveness of the policy implementation in the UK's higher education and other sectors.

More specifically, this study aims to shed light on the dynamic experience and agentic feedback of Chinese Graduate visa holders. Chinese graduates represent one of the largest groups of Graduate visa holders, ranking second only to Indian graduates, while also exhibiting distinctive characteristics in their experiences of higher education and trajectories of migration (MAC, 2024; UK Home Office, 2025a).

According to the research by the UK Home Office (2025a), the Chinese Graduate users were largely in their twenties (85%) did not bring any dependents (less than 0.5% of the respondents brought dependents) according to the quantitative survey research by the UK Home Office (2025a). On the contrary, Graduate visa users from other major sending countries (India, Nigeria and Pakistan) were largely over thirty years old and brought their dependents along with them to the UK.

There is little direct explanation on the younger age and much lower interests in bringing dependents of Chinese graduates. Nevertheless, we can relate these distinctive characters to the family structure of the generation of Chinese who are only-child of their households. The nationwide birth-control only-child policy was implemented from 1978 to 2016. Most of the Chinese international students and graduates in their twenties were born under this only-child policy. This nationwide policy accelerated China's socioeconomic modernisation to some extent, and it also encouraged many households to increase their investment in their only children, including their education (Wang & Fong, 2004; Feng, 2021).

Meanwhile, higher education has become more marketised as a positional good (Cantwell et al., 2018). International higher education and mobility after international education are recognised as a potential pathway for the betterment of life and social status of only children (Robertson, 2013; Cantwell et al., 2018; Wang & Feng, 2021).

For Chinese international students and graduates, educational achievement and personal growth remain central in their investment in international higher education. Robertson (2013) identifies two types of approaches in the two-step nexus between education and migration, respectively, education-to-immigration and migration-to-education. The former refers to international students aiming to immigrate to the host country through international education, and the latter describes the students who moved to the host country for post-secondary education. Although Robertson (2013) critically argues that the reality of the education-migration nexus is more complex than the clear-cut categories, Chinese international graduates who remained in the UK show a tendency of migration-to-education according to the data collected by the UK Home Office (2025a) Therefore, these two factors of only-child family structure and the marketised higher education may explain the reasons for the relatively more attention on education than migration with dependents among Chinese international graduates.

Secondly, the gender distribution of Chinese international graduates with the Graduate visa is female-dominated. In the research report by the UK Home Office (2025a), Chinese Graduate visa holders tend to be female (75%). Comparatively, in the cases of Indian (62%) and Nigerian (58%) visa holders, more male international students used the Graduate visa after graduating in the UK, according to the research (UK Home Office, 2025a). This study does not focus on gendered differences in experience and reflection on the usage of the Graduate visa among Chinese international graduates, because the data on the female dominance by the UK Home Office was published in May 2025, after the design of this present research. Nevertheless, this study aims to fill the research gaps on understanding the female Graduate visa holders from China.

2.4.2 Conceptualising the Stage of Using the Graduate Visa

Few existing studies have conceptualised the lived experience of applying to and using the Graduate visa (Brotherhood, 2023; Tran et al., 2025). This study aims to further explore the implementation and effectiveness of the UK's post-study work rights policy by analysing Chinese Graduate visa holders' experience and reflections. It conceptualises the experience of using the Graduate visa in relation to studies on higher education, work opportunity, and the life stage of emerging adulthood.

2.4.2.1 Conceptualisation: International Higher Education and Post-Study Migration

The stage of using the Post-Study Work Right (PSWR) policy is conceptualised in close relationship with the experience of international higher education. Robertson (2013) analyses the PSWR policy in the UK has been motivated more by the desire to increase its market share in international student enrolments than to benefit from an increase in skilled migration. Hence, the relationship between higher education sector and the PSWR policy is a crucial aspect to discuss in the context of the UK. This relationship also directly influences choices and opportunities of international students and graduates (Lomer, 2018). This study analyses this relationship from the perspective of international students and graduates (Mittelmeier, 2019).

In the decision-making process, Chinese international students consider the investment on the Graduate visa based on or influenced by their experience in UK universities. Higher education experience in overseas university is important to Chinese students. According to the research by the UK Home Office (2025a), almost half of the Chinese respondents (41%) implied that they would still come to the UK for higher education even without this Graduate visa. Meanwhile, the stage of higher education also provides crucial information about the Graduate visa to Chinese international students. The research by the UK Home Office (2025a) highlights that over 60% of Chinese route users only knew about the existence of this Graduate visa after coming to the UK (UK Home Office, 2025a). These findings conceptualises the crucial role of higher education experience in the decision-making of Chinese Graduate route users.

Moreover, higher education is a process of self-formation which is nested in knowledge sets and varying social relations that enable students to explore their identities and future in different ways (Marginson, 2014; 2018). Few studies have utilised this notion of self-formation to understand international graduates when they graduated from higher education (Oldaç, 2021). However, the student-centred view of higher education helps to understand other changes in post-study migration, including making careers, social networking, mobility, and choice in where we live (Marginson, 2018). This study, therefore, learns from the theory of higher education in student self-formation and applies it to understand the continued formation of self-identity and social relations of Chinese international graduates on a Graduate visa in the UK.

This present study conceptualises the experience of post-study migration as a holistic self-formation process, including not only employment experience but also living conditions such as housing and accommodation of international graduates. In existing studies, Tran and colleagues (2023 & 2025) qualitatively investigate the life stories of student migrants in Australia, but only related to their employment. UK Home Office (2025a) recently provided valuable insights; however, it only includes economic activities during the usage of the Graduate route. This study aims to provide a more holistic view of the purposes and outcomes of using the Graduate visa after international higher education from the perspective of Chinese Graduate visa holders. The financial aspect of work opportunity and the social aspect of personal networks are discussed below.

2.4.2.2 Conceptualisation: Post-Study Work Opportunity in the Host Country

Work opportunity is a crucial but also challenging aspect of post-study migration for international graduates. In the decision-making process, the post-study work right is significant for earning the financial input on international education and for accumulating valuable work experience (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014). First-hand data collected by the UK Home Office (2025a) also shows that the opportunities to work in the UK were the most popular factor (85%) when considering remaining in the UK after graduating for Graduate visa holders. This echoes the finding of the qualitative research by Ly Thi Tran and colleagues (2025) in Australia. They point out that work opportunities have become the most important reason for graduate international students to prolong their stay in the host country (Tran et al., 2025). Therefore, this study aims to investigate how Chinese visa holders view work opportunities when considering staying in the UK after graduation.

Existing studies show difficulties in gaining desirable work opportunities in the host country (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014; Tomlinson, 2024; Tran et al., 2023). Many studies identify the temporariness of the post-study temporary visas as a main barrier for some international graduates to fit into the job market or local workforce for a permanent job position (Brotherhood, 2023; Tomlinson, 2024; UK Home Office, 2025a; Tran et al., 2025). The temporariness here refers to the limited two-year or three-year duration of the non-extendable post-study visa (UK Home Office, n.d.). In the context of the UK, most Graduate visa users (91%) who are still looking for a job said it is difficult to find a job on time-limited visas or leave period (UK Home Office, 2025a). However, there is little discussion on why the short duration of visa status hinders the competitiveness of Graduate visa holders in the UK. In the context of Australia, Tran and colleagues (2022 & 2025) show that temporariness becomes a challenge for job seeking because employers prefer applicants with permanent residence or longer leave periods. This situation happens in the UK as well. Hillman (2023), the Director of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), revealed that the current migration system is widely disliked by employers in the UK.

More recently, in policy change, the UK Home Office (2025c) announced an extra requirement for UK employers to prioritise recruiting local employees before job seekers from other countries, even with valid temporary post-study visas. This present study therefore provides timely responses to the increasing pressure on international graduates and UK employers due to the tightening PSWR policy.

Meanwhile, Chinese Graduate visa holders (54%) were less likely than average (65%) to be employed full-time (UK Home Office, 2025a). Their job-seeking difficulties are linked to the lack of previous working experience, as most (85%) of Chinese route users are younger than the age of twenty-nine (UK Home Office, 2025a). The data also shows that route users in their early twenties were less likely (70%) than average to be full-time employed (UK Home Office, 2025a). Based on the statistics, this study aims to dig deeper into the reasons for the barriers in job application and Chinese Graduate visa holders' active reactions or responses towards the challenges through the qualitative interviews.

Moreover, the responses and solutions of the Graduate visa holders need to be discussed beyond the exhibition of the difficulties. The notion of resilience and adaptability is useful to explore the active responses of Chinese visa holders during unemployment or underemployment. Burke and Scurry (2019) define resilience as a compound of these main elements: adaptability, goal re-setting, recovery and self-efficacy. Brotherhood (2023) exhibits the capability of international student graduates to evolve and adapt agentively to pursue their goals in education-migration journeys in the context of the UK and Japan. This present study aims to investigate this resilience and capacity to adapt to the challenges in employment and transitional life living abroad after graduating, and interactions with universities and the labour market in the UK.

2.4.2.3 Conceptualisation: Emerging Adulthood and social relationships

The post-study migration process is intertwined with the life-stage of emerging adulthood, where international student graduates go through the process of becoming more financially and socially independent (Arnett, 2000). The emerging adulthood is a liminal stage to become more independent financially and socially and take up responsibilities as adults (Arnett, 2000). This stage is also full of opportunities and choices to make for their future (Arnett, 2000). Similarly, Brotherhood (2023) points out the stage of temporal short-term migration after graduating as a life stage full of uncertainty and changing agentive orientations in his qualitative interview study with student-migrants in the UK and Japan. The post-study migration intertwined with the life stage of emerging adulthood for some international graduates.

Meanwhile, changing social and personal networks are crucial aspect of emerging adulthood and the experience of taking post-study migration. The relationships of international graduates with family, friends and partners are shifting and influencing their decisions and everyday lives. In existing literature on international students in Europe, Rachel Brooks (2018) demonstrates that the reliance on the family to

support young people's engagement in higher education has become much more widespread as governments adopt funding policies that assume a significant contribution from families. While Brooks' (2018) study focuses on students as family members in the context of Europe, international students in the UK from China also involve their family in their decision of remaining after graduating.

Moreover, evolving personal networks are crucial for understanding the process of using the Graduate visa. According to the data collected by the UK Home Office (2025a), Chinese users value new social networks developed during their higher education and post-graduation migration to the UK. In fact, Chinese route users were the most likely to cite the factor of personal networks like friends and family, in the UK, in considering remaining in the UK after the end of the Graduate visa duration (UK Home Office, 2025a). Moreover, considering alternative routes after the non-extendable Graduate visa, Chinese respondents were more likely to plan for a Family visa (19%) than any other nationality (UK Home Office, 2025a). However, there is still a lack of understanding of the personal network building and self-development of Chinese visa holders. Beyond the economic activities, this present qualitative study aims to explore the personal and social network of the Chinese Graduate visa holders.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter builds the understanding of the role and importance of developing the Post-Study Work Rights (PSWR) policies based on critical discussion on existing literature and studies. It first shows the relationship between the PSWR policies and internationalisation of education in global lens, as well as the biopolitical control over international students and graduates through mobility. After the global lens, it moves to the national focus of this study on the UK and outlines the shifting PSWR policy and the Graduate visa in this national context. Finally, this chapter outlines the profile of Chinese graduates and the conceptualisation framework to understand their experience of using the Graduate visa in the UK.

The increasing tensions in shifting policy intentions stress the urgent need to understand the Graduate visa in the UK from the perspective of visa holders (Robertson and Runganaikaloo, 2014). Existing studies on international graduates and usage of Graduate visa are mainly limited to understanding economic activities (UK Home Office, 2025a). Hence, this study adopts qualitative methodology to explore both working and living experience of Chinese visa holders to understand the tensions and strategies in the usage of Graduate visa.

The chapter shows the research gaps of understanding the PSWR policies in the context of the UK as well as the urgent practical and theoretical understanding of the Graduate visa holders' experience to response to the frequent policy change of the UK's Graduate visa. These research gaps formulate the research questions of this present study on the experience of Chinese Graduate visa holders, including their

decision-making process, lived experience of working and living in the UK and their reflections on the usage of the Graduate visa.

Chapter Three Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research paradigm, research design, participant recruitment method and outcome, data collection process, data analysis procedure, and ethical considerations. This study puts daily experience and genuine reflection of Chinese Graduate visa holders at the centre of the study's methodology.

The next section explains the research paradigm and the design of the individual semi-structured online interview method. Next, 3.3 describes and analyses the process and outcome of recruiting Chinese Graduate visa holders through purposive and snowball sampling methods. Then, 3.4 discusses the data collection process of the twenty online interviews. After this, 3.5 outlines the thematic data analysis process. Finally, 3.6 discusses the ethical considerations throughout the process of designing and doing this qualitative interview study.

3.2 Research Design

This research adopts the qualitative method as a suitable strategy to answer the research questions. The qualitative method is an umbrella term for conducting an inquiry that is aimed at discovering how human beings understand, experience, interpret, and produce the social world (Sandelowski, 2004, p. 893). Situated within this broad framework of qualitative research, this study designed individual semi-structured online interviews using visual elicitation at the beginning of each interview to explore participants' experiences in depth. This section discusses the rationales of each aspect of the research design.

3.1.1 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is crucial as a structure for methodology and conceptualisation. The paradigm has a philosophical foundation which explains how the researcher believes reality is (ontology), how knowledge can be understood in this study (epistemology), and what the value of this present research stands with (axiology) (Pretorius, 2024, p. 2699). This study constructs the research in an interpretivist

paradigm, which recognises that reality is subjective and can partially be known through individual Graduate visa holders' interpretation (Pretorius, 2024, p. 2702).

The epistemology of this research is to understand the Graduate visa policy by examining the meanings individuals attach to their experiences of using the visa in their everyday lives in the UK (Pretorius, 2024, p. 2702). Due to the importance of individual experience and interpretations, values and reflexivity are central in the process of research to identity dynamic perspectives and contexts (Pretorius, 2024, p. 2702).

Reflexivity is the self-reflection on self and others throughout the research process (Finley, 2012; Gallette, 2012). At the time of conducting the interview study, I am an insider as an international student from China in the UK, but also an outsider without the experience of using the Graduate visa. This unique positionality enables me to have common topics and build closer personal relationships with each participant.

3.2.2 Interview Format: One-to-One Semi-Structured Online Interview

The interview was designed to be a one-to-one conversation between the participant and researcher. The individual interview enabled a private environment for each participant and allowed in-depth exploration on participants' everyday experiences and reflections on the Graduate visa usage (Borer et al., 2012). At the time of the interviews, each participant had used the Graduate visa for a different amount of time and had different experiences working and living in the UK. Hence, individual conversations with each of them could facilitate differentiation and contingent situations (Sorgente, 2004; Borer et al., 2012). Therefore, designing the interviews as individual conversations was suitable to collect rich and personal information about the complex and diverse experience of using the Graduate visa in the UK.

Meanwhile, the interviews were designed as semi-structured instead of unstructured or structured interviews. On the one hand, the overall structure of the interview was designed to answer the three aspects of the research questions clearly, namely the decision-making process, current usage of the visa, and reflection on the post-study migration experiences. Hence, the interview guide was clearly designed in alignment with these three research questions. On the other hand, the interview questions left space for probing more personal situations and narratives for each particpant (Galletta, 2012).

Moreover, the interviews in this research were designed as online meetings to save time and make it easier for Chinese Graduate visa holders to participate. Chinese international graduates live in different cities in the UK and have different working and life schedules. Doing online interviews could save the travelling expenses and time cost of this short-term dissertation project (Rosen, 2023; James et al., 2024). More importantly, it allowed participants to arrange the interview at a time suitable for them and join the interview from their rooms or wherever they find the most comfortable.

3.2.3 Interview Process Design: Visual Elicitation and Three-Part Questions

The process of the interviews in this study was designed to have two parts. Considering the possible difficulty of building rapport on an online setting, I designed a separate ice-breaking part using visual elicitation at the beginning of each interview (See Appendix 1 and 2). Visual elicitation refers to the usage images, diagrams, drawings, or other visual materials to prompt discussion, evoke memories, and generate richer responses from participants (Harper, 2002). This method is suitable for articulate experiences on applying to and using the Graduate visa as the timeline of application and current experience may be complicated to express through words alone (Harper, 2002). Hence, the incorporation of the visual elicitation tasks enhanced the depth of data generated through the semi-structured qualitative interviews (Orr et al., 2020).

The visual elicitation stage had two interactive activities designed using the Whiteboard function in Microsoft Teams, allowing both the participant and me to collaboratively edit during the online interview session. Rather than simply collecting data from participants, these interactive activities were a methodological tool to stimulate the participants to not only tell their stories but also construct the meaning of their experience by themselves (Nada et al., 2024).

The first activity (Appendix 1) was designed to understand the timeline of each participant, with three key events on the stickers, namely the time when they decided to use the Graduate visa, their current stage of using the visa, and when they plan to take the next move of either staying in the UK or moving to other places. Participants could freely move these three stickers on the timeline.

The second activity (Appendix 2) invited participants to compare their initial expectations of using the Graduate visa with the realities of their current experiences. Two blank boards were used to fill in participants' anticipated plans and the realities of their current actions and experiences of using the Graduate visa. On the top part of the Whiteboard, two sets of stickers in blue and pink colours show the activities visa holders could do according to the policy of the Graduate visa (UK Home Office, n.d.). The blue stickers are things related to work, including "look for work", "work", "self-employed", and "volunteer"; and the pink stickers stand for things that are not related to career, including "travel", "live with dependents", and stickers for other activities (UK Home Office, n.d.). Participants were encouraged to move these stickers to the expectation board or/and reality board, as well as add personalised descriptions to the activities. In the data collection process, participants use these two activities to reflect on their journey of applying for and using the Graduate visa.

After the interactive activity using the visual elicitation, the interview questions were designed in three main parts (See Appendix 3 for the prepared interview guide). Three parts of the interview questions

discussed the decision-making process, current experience of working and living, and the reflection on the Graduate visa policy and the post-study migration experience.

The process of interviews faces constant power struggles, which require constant explicit, self-aware reflection in the research practice (Finlay et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2012). On the one side, I need to carefully examine my assumptions and biases when designing and asking the interview questions. On the other side, the interviewees have control over how much they would like to share with me or cooperate in this verbal communication, especially when they have already chosen to turn off the cameras (Wang et al., 2012).

Overall, this present qualitative study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm and was designed to be a one-to-one semi-structured online interview starting with a visual elicitation and collecting data from three aspects of questions about decision-making, current lives, and reflections.

3.3 Participant Recruitment

3.3.1 Participant Recruitment Process and Outcome

The sampling process used purposive and snowball methods. This study has a clear focus on the cohort of Chinese Graduate visa holders among the population of Graduate route users, as discussed above in 2.3.1. Therefore, this study adopts purposive sampling as the main recruitment method (Robinson, 2014). Meanwhile, the cohort of Chinese Graduate visa holders is not in a unified institution to be contacted altogether through institutions such as universities or companies. Therefore, using snowball sampling as a supporting method could reach out to more potential participants (Robinson, 2014). In recruitment process, the purposive and snowball sampling methods were used together to recruit participants.

The sampling criteria were to find Chinese international students who graduated from UK universities and are currently in possession of a Graduate visa in the UK. I wrote the research aim, content and sampling criteria on advertisement posters in English and Chinese (See Appendix 4). Meanwhile, I created an online sign-up form (Appendix 5) with the participant information sheet and asking about basic information related to the usage of the Graduate visa, including the potential participant's age group, gender, UK university they went to, how long they have used the Graduate visa, their contact email or WeChat and the name they would like me to use in contact. Personal information in the sign-up form is collected to have a broad understanding of each participant before the interview. This study does not aim to represent Chinese Graduate visa holders or smaller categories within this cohort. Hence, this information will only be used as a tool to describe participants (See the table in 3.3.2).

After the preparation of the posters and the sign-up form, I posted them on Chinese social media Xiaohongshu (also referred to as The Rednote) and Instagram using my accounts to explain the content, aim and method of this present research. I also encouraged participants to spread the advertising posters and sign-up form to Chinese Graduate visa holders as a way of snowball sampling. Within two weeks, eighteen participants signed up through purposive sampling. Following that, three more participants were recruited by snowball sampling. One participant chose to withdraw before the interview. At last, twenty Chinese Graduate visa holders participated in this interview study. This sample size provides a suitable number of details and diversity of the working and living experience on the Graduate visa in the UK.

The demographic of the twenty participants shows different stages of using the Graduate visa (See the table in 3.3.2). Six of the participants used visas for more than three months but less than half a year. This group of participants just graduated with master's degrees in the UK last year in September, and their student visa expired before February 2025. Five participants graduated a year ago with postgraduate degrees in the UK, so they have used the visa for over a year, but still have more than half a year of visa duration. This shows a large proportion of the participants (17 out of 20) in this study were international post-graduate students who graduated from the UK. This matches the findings in the study by the UK Home Office (2025a), which shows that 85% of the Chinese respondents completed a master's degree in the UK before using the Graduate visa.

Meanwhile, most of the participants are female (18 out of 20) and people below the age of thirty (18 out of 20). This also matches with the data collected by the UK Home Office (2025a) about the majority of the Chinese Graduate route users being women and younger adults in their twenties. The table below shows the demographic of the twenty participants.

3.3.2 Table: Demographic of Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age group	Duration of visa utilization	UK HE Background
Alex	Prefer not to say	21-25	3-6 months	Master's degree
Antong	Male	26-30	3-6 months	Bachelor's and master's degrees
Iris	Female	21-25	1-1.5 years	Master's degree
Nina	Female	26-30	1-1.5 years	Master's degree
Chloe	Female	21-25	7-12 months	Bachelor's degree
Ivy	Female	21-25	1-1.5 years	Master's degree
Sicher	Female	21-25	Less than 3 months	Master's degree
Bird	Female	N/A	7-12 months	Master's degree
Seren	Female	21-25	3-6 months	Master's degree
Nana	Female	31-35	3-6 months	Master's degree
Layton	Male	21-25	1-1.5 years	Bachelor's and master's degrees
Elinor	Female	26-30	3-6 months	Master's degree
Daisy	Female	21-25	1-1.5 years	Bachelor's and master's degrees
Eva	Female	21-25	1.5-2 years	Bachelor's degree
Bookoomoi	Female	21-25	1.5-2 years	Master's degree
Yan	Female	21-25	3-6 months	Master's degree
Coco	Female	N/A	3-6 months	Master's degree
Jiujiu	Female	21-25	Less than 3 months	Master's degree
Bob	Female	21-25	3-6 months	Master's degree

3.4 Data collection

A total of twenty in-depth interviews were conducted over the course of May 2025, offering rich insights into the lived experiences of Graduate visa holders. The length of the interview time varies from 50 minutes to 85 minutes. The data collection considers the linguistic diversity of participants (Fay et al., 2024). Nineteen participants chose to have our interviews in Mandarin Chinese. One participant (Ivy) requested to have the interview in English because she recently came back to the UK and wanted to practice her language skills. In interviews, most participants used both Chinese and English to describe their experiences and feelings.

After receiving the consent email scripts, the process of data collection begins by sending the meeting link to participants at least three days in advance and reminding them of the event on the day of the interview. I kept my camera on throughout the interviews. Participants were given full autonomy to choose whether to have their cameras on or off during the interviews, ensuring comfort and respecting individual preferences. Eight participants kept their cameras off. These eight interviews generated fewer records on participants' reactions and expressions due to the lack of face-to-face conversations. This is a limitation of the online interviews with the camera off.

All the interviews were recorded and automatically transcribed using Microsoft Teams. I also took detailed field notes during the interviews about the keywords and reactions of the participants. The details of participants' facial and body expressions and the discourses they used help with the iterative data analysis (Galletta, 2013).

In the data collection process, I used the prepared list of interview questions as a reference (See Appendix 3). Drawing on insights from the initial activities and participants' responses to prepared questions, I adapted my approach by rephrasing questions, offering prompts, and adjusting my phrasing according to the flow and context of each interview.

The awareness of self and others in the researcher-participant relationship is crucial for collecting data productively through the semi-structured interview (Galletta, 2012). Reflexivity is crucial in the data collection process, which is a disciplined self-reflection (Finley et al., 2012, p. 317). At the start of each interview, I briefly introduced myself not only as the researcher but also as a Chinese international student and a prospective Graduate visa holder. This situational and sociocultural position of mine was a contextual-discursive reflexivity. It helped me to explain the importance of participants' contribution not only for data collection of this research but also for giving valuable advice to potential Graduate visa holders like me (Finley et al., 2012).

After the end of the interviews, I explained that their participation was anonymous to protect their privacy and returned the rights of pseudonymity to each participant. They chose the names they would like to be called in this research (See 3.3.2 above). The data collection process concludes with my heartfelt gratitude expressed to each participant for their valuable contribution to this study. I also emphasised their rights to read their interview transcript and to raise questions and concerns about the interview content.

3.5 Data analysis

The data analysis of this qualitative research uses thematic analysis in an ongoing and iterative process (Galletta, 2012). Thematic analysis is a method for analysing qualitative data that involves searching for recurring ideas in a data set (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016, p. 33). The present study generates themes, which are the recurring ideas driven by the data inductively (Hammersley, 2013, p. 12).

In the process of data collection, I shed light on emerging codes and themes by reflexively writing a research diary and organising the recordings and transcripts (Galletta, 2012). After the twenty interviews, I stepped into the next level of analysis, which is the organisation of the data collected from many sources during the semi-structured interviews, including the recordings, fieldnotes, and mapping (Galletta, 2012).

Recordings were initially transcribed automatically by Microsoft Teams, after which I meticulously reviewed and corrected the transcripts by repeatedly listening to the audio to ensure accuracy. Because the interviews were mostly bilingual in English and Chinese, the correcting process was time-consuming but also thought-provoking. With the transcripts ready, I manually generate initial codes that respond to specific research questions (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). I deliberately chose manual coding to preserve the rich complexity of participants' original language and to incorporate their nonverbal cues, including Whiteboard contributions from the first interview stage and facial expressions, into the holistic analysis.

After the initial coding stage, I moved on to search for themes. The themes in this study are not in hierarchy but in networks and interlocking ideas structured by the three research questions about the decision-making process, current stage and reflection (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). After this, I reviewed the themes more than three times according to data from recordings and related theories (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). The last stage was to identify and name the themes and finally produce the report (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). This report goes beyond merely describing the experiences of Chinese visa holders; it presents a compelling analysis of their perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the Graduate visa policy in shaping employment opportunities and post-study transitions.

In the report in the Chapter of Findings, direct quotations are cited in Italics, and the English words used by participants in the interviews will be directly used with the italic and bolded format.

3.6 Ethical consideration

Research ethics is crucial in this qualitative study, which values the reflective process of data collection and the rights of participants (Orb, 2001; Finley, 2012; Nada, 2024). The present research has been granted ethics approval before participant recruitment (See Sppendix 9). In the sign-up form and before the interview, I implemented several rounds of explanations to make sure the participants had time to understand the risks and potential benefits of participation. First, in the sign-up form, I attached the participant information before the questions (See Appendix 6). Secondly, I introduced the research aim and content in Chinese language to potential participants. After this, I sent the participant information and consent form (See Appendix 7) to potential participants. Each potential participant took their time to consider carefully before being asked to give their consent and arrange our meeting. After they considered and agreed to participate, they could confirm their consent by replying to me with the copied content of the consent form (See Appendix 7). All participants sent me the consent scripts before attending the interviews (See Appendix 8 for examples of received consent scripts).

Participants retained the full right to withdraw from the study at any point before, during, or after the interview, up to two weeks before the project submission deadline in August, without needing to provide any justification or explanation.

Moreover, participants oversaw deciding the time of the interviews (Orb, 2001). They could also arrange to have the interview anywhere that was comfortable and confidential for them. I, as the researcher, conducted the interview in a private room or a pre-booked meeting room to ensure the confidentiality of our conversations.

The anonymity and confidentiality of this study are important (Heggen & Guillemin, 2012). Each participant chose their pseudonym. Therefore, they could gain more visible ownership over their contribution to this study while having their privacy protected. The recordings were saved in a password-protected device. As mentioned briefly at the end of section 3.4, participants in this study had the right to request the interview transcript after their interview. I deleted all the identifiable information in the transcripts, including their names, their exact jobs, their precise locations, etc. Participants could further delete or change the things to be included in the final transcripts used in the data analysis.

3.7 Conclusion

Overall, this chapter shows the research designed to explore the lived experience of Chinese Graduate visa holders in the UK and their opinions on the policy implementation and potential policy changes. The twenty qualitative semi-structured one-to-one online interviews produced rich insights into the Graduate visa in the UK.

Chapter Four Finding and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings and discussion generated from the twenty semi-structured individual online interviews with Chinese Graduate visa holders. The three sections in this chapter after this introduction section respectively answers the three research questions: 1) how the Chinese Graduate visa holders decided to use the Graduate visa holders after graduating from UK universities (Section 4.2); 2) How they experience working and living in the UK as Graduate visa holders (Section 4.3); And 3) how they reflect on their decision and experience of using the Graduate visa in the UK (Section 4.4). Theoretical and policy implications based on the findings is discussed in this chapter.

Section 4.2 firstly outlines that Chinese Graduate visa holders make the decision to use the Graduate visa based on their experience of studying in UK universities and their expectation of personal growth through work and living abroad opportunities. It also stresses that the decision of post-study migration is relational, involving Chinese graduates' parents and romantic relationships.

After this, section 4.3 shows the lived experience of using a Graduate visa to achieve personal growth through working and homemaking in the UK.

Finally, section 4.4 provides findings and discussion on reflection and suggestions provided by participants of this interview study.

4.2 Decision-Making Process

This section reports answers to the first research question about how Chinese international graduates decided to use the Graduate visa. Answers to this question aim to explain the role of the PSWR policy from the perspective of international graduates who went through the decision-making process and are now using the Graduate visa.

This section outlines two main findings. First, the interviews show that Chinese international graduates decided to use the Graduate visa to continue their experience of living, working, and growing in the UK, which was prolonged from their UK higher education, and to achieve their goals of personal growth by taking work opportunities in the UK. Section 4.2.1 discusses this first finding. Secondly, the 4.2.2 shows

that the decision to take short-term migration after international higher education is a relational process for Chinese Graduate visa holders as they involve their parents and partners in considerations.

This section also applies these findings to the critical discussion in 4.2.3. It enriches our understanding of the crucial position of the host country's PSWR policy between developing international higher education and implementing opportunities in its job market for international student graduates. Meanwhile, these finding stresses active and complex motivations of Chinese international graduates to use the Graduate visa as a stage for self-formation and achieving personal growth.

4.2.1 Decision-Making Factor: the UK Higher Education and the Graduate Visa

Six participants (Antong, Bird, Nana, Layton, Daisy, Yan) out of twenty shared that they already planned to use the Graduate visa after graduating from UK universities. Their experience of international higher education and the two-year post-study migration is integrated into their plan of living abroad. They clearly stated this plan because they expected to gain a longer-term experience of living in the UK for more than one time during their taught master's degrees.

> Nana: *I tried so hard to come to the UK. I will never just stay here for only a year and go back. So, I want to extend this time to experience.*
>
> Yan: *I think the one-year master's is too short. I need a richer experience -this is probably my priority.*

These quotations above state that taking extra years to continue their experience in UK universities becomes a factor for using the Graduate visa.

On the contrary, most participants in the interview study declared a more complicated and hesitant process of choosing to use the Graduate visa. Among the decision-making factors, a delightful and rewarding experience of studying and living in the UK contributes to the decision to use the Graduate visa. For instance, Jiujiu did her one-year master's course in the UK and was hesitating about the decision of post-study migration while studying at the university. She finally decided to prolong her stay in the UK on the exact day of the graduation ceremony. In our interview, Jiujiu described the year studying at the university in the UK as "the happiest year in life" because she "never thought that the world can be such a diverse place". Similarly, Seren expressed a sense of attachment to life in the UK. She shared that she decided to extend her time staying in the UK because she has built connections with the bigger world, and she wanted to maintain these connections by remaining in the UK.

4.2.2 Decision-Making Factor: Motivated by Expectation for Work Opportunity

Another factor that attracts Chinese international graduates to stay in the UK is the work opportunities that could potentially achieve their expectations for career and personal growth. According to the twenty individual interviews, these expectations are diverse and specific to each Chinese Graduate visa holder.

The first crucial motivation for using the Graduate visa after universities is participants' expectations for better working conditions in the UK. The Chinese Graduate route users are shown to be female-dominated in their twenties (UK Home Office, 2025a). This interview study recruited seventeen female participants out of a total of twenty. The interviews with them show a common expectation for more work opportunities for women in the workforce in the UK compared to their previous working experience in China. Bird, Nana and Elinor shared their expectation for more space and opportunity for personal growth as women in their professional areas.

> Elinor: *Because I've experienced the work culture in China, I feel like by the time I return at 30 — being an older, unmarried woman without children — I'd already be disqualified outright.*

The excerpt above by Elinor considers intersectional factors of gender-based bias and age-based discrimination in her decision to stay in the UK for work opportunities after international higher education.

Meanwhile, the expectation for achieving work-life balance in the workforce was commonly highlighted by participants as a reason to stay in the UK. Yan shared that she has a sense of longing or aspiration for the job market in the UK, influenced by social media and people around her.

The interviews with female Chinese graduates point out that the Graduate visa is attractive because of the reputation of the work environment in the UK as having more opportunities and fair competition. The value of the Graduate visa is attached to the desire for personal growth in career development.

Apart from the general expectation for the workforce environment in the UK, some participants held more specific standards for the jobs or goals of career development. For example, Antong graduated with a bachelor's and master's degrees in the UK and aimed for jobs in photography and the fashion sector. He chose to remain in the UK for the higher standard of aesthetics and more freedom in this sector in the UK than in China. For graduate students from Education Studies, Chloe and Nina graduated with a major in Education in the UK. In our interviews, both mentioned the same standard of educational visions or beliefs as a crucial expectation for work opportunities in the UK. In our interviews, these two participants used this same word in Chinese - educational visions and beliefs (*教育理念 jiao yu li nian*) to emphasise the need to find a job that matches their expectation for educational vision.

Furthermore, the expectation for work opportunity aims to gain crucial skills for longer-term career development. As Sicher described vividly, she always plans to use the Graduate visa on the "*where the blade hits*," i.e., make it effective and sharp, instead of spending this time on the Graduate visa aimlessly. This finding shows that Chinese international students have clear expectations for work opportunities according to their majors and career imaginations (Xu, 2021). Their decision-making of using the short-term Graduate visa is intertwined with longer-term plans for career development to achieve certain standards.

4.2.4 Decision-Making Process: Relationship with Parents and Partners

The decision-making process of using the Graduate visa is not individual. Rather, it is related to the relationships with parents and partners in romantic relationships.

4.2.4.1 Decided to Use the Graduate Visa in Communication with Parents

First, the decision to use the Graduate visa is inevitably related to the financial status of Chinese international students and their parents. Graduate visa costs £880 application fee and a two-year healthcare surcharge of £2,070 (UK Home Office, n.d.), which is a huge amount of money for nearly every participant in this study, especially for those newly graduated university students with little prior working experience before applying to this post-study visa. Eighteen out of the twenty Chinese Graduate visa holders in the interviews were wholly or partially supported by their parents to pay for the costs of the visa and some living and housing costs during their use of the Graduate visa in the UK. These participants shared a common eagerness to become financially independent during the use of the Graduate visa. Iris, for example, expressed the sense of *"guilt"* to let her parents keep paying for her life in the UK *"at the age of twenty-five (Iris)"*. This eagerness is intensified by the short duration of the Graduate visa, during which participants need to secure a job that could pay for their housing and living costs, according to Antong and Alex, who both used the Graduate visa for around four months at the time of the interviews. They shared with me a sense of anxiety that they may have to return home if they could not pay for the housing rent for the half-year from this June to December, because their parents may stop or become unable to support their living costs in the UK. Therefore, the application for the Graduate visa is related to parents, especially related to the ability to achieve financial independence.

Second, the Chinese international students and their parents are interdependent in deeply rooted familial and social relationships. Seren and Elinor mentioned their identity as *the singular daughters (独生女 du sheng nv)* in their households. Seren included her mother's opinion in the decision to extend the time of

staying abroad after graduating. Elinor, similarly, argued that she would go back home to take care of her parents when she got older, as the only daughter. The family responsibility is part of the long-term plan of some female Chinese international students. The temporary Graduate visa enables the participants to prolong their time exploring their lives abroad before returning home to fulfil their family obligations and responsibilities. This shows the Graduate visa is not only influential for international students but also for their parents as a pathway for their only children to stay abroad for more years.

4.2.4.2 Decided to Use the Graduate Visa in Consideration of Romantic Partners

Thirdly, the decision to use the Graduate visa is related to romantic relationships with partners. Iris, Chloe, Elinor, Alex Yan and Nina mentioned the fact that one of the reasons for applying for the Graduate visa was to stay with their partners in the UK at the time of decision-making. Chloe and Iris highlighted that neither of them planned to stay longer in the UK after their university courses. However, they changed their mind and decided to stay after building their relationships with their boyfriends at that time. The romantic relationships are an important aspect of international students' networks established during their self-formation process in the UK higher education. The Graduate visa is used to prolong their exploration of self in their relationships. Hence, the Graduate visa is not only important to bridge education and potential migration but also crucial in an individual's life stage and personal networks.

4.2.5 Discussion: Re-positioning the Decision of Using the Graduate Visa

The two findings on decision-making process show that the attractiveness of the Graduate visa is 1) associated with Chinese international graduates' experience of studying and living in the UK universities, leading to work opportunity that meets Chinese international graduates' expectation for work and their personal growth development, and 2) discussed and communicated with parents and partners in romantic relationships. These two findings answer the first research question of this study. They also contribute to theoretical and policy implications to understand the role of the Graduate visa and to support international students in deciding their post-study trajectories.

First, the Graduate visa is positioned in visa holders' decision-making as a crucial stage to connect previous experience as international students and to bridge them towards their career and personal development.

On the one hand, the decision to take post-study migration is shown to be closely related to international students' experience in UK universities. As discussed by Lomer (2018) in the UK context and scholars in

Australia like Tran and colleagues (2025), the international student recruitment is influenced by the PSWR policies. This study further stresses this argument and adds another layer to the relationship where the quality of higher education influences the popularity of post-study migration. This theoretical development also indicates the practical need for UK universities to pay more attention to supporting their international students to consider the option of using the Graduate visa.

On the other hand, the study finds that Chinese international graduates choose to step into the stage of using the Graduate visa, holding various and specific expectations for work opportunities in the UK. This finding develops our understanding of the role of work in the nexus between education and migration (Tran et al., 2025). Tran and colleagues (2025) highlighted the importance of work in the nexus between education and migration. In this interview study, our understanding of the role of employment was further deepened by the personally and carefully planned expectation of Chinese international graduates for their career development by using the Graduate visa. This enriched theoretical understanding encourages UK universities and career support services to recognise the varying and diverse needs of guidance for international students who plan to take a post-study migration trajectory.

Secondly, the decision-making process of Chinese international students is not an isolated process but is in constant and complex interactions with social relations of parents and partners as a crucial aspect of forming their emerging adulthood (Zhao & Biesta, 2011; Mittelmeier et al., 2023; Sorgente et al., 2024). This finding provides another angle to explore the PSWR policies, such as the UK's Graduate visa. The post-study migration is intertwined with the stage of emerging adulthood, where international graduates are making their life decisions in relation to their close personal relationships with parents and partners (Arnett, 2000). Therefore, in practical support for international students at the end of their overseas education courses, UK universities and supporters could include students' changing social relationships as a factor to consider.

4.3 Current Experience of Employment and Housing

This section answers the second research question that explores how Chinese Graduate visa holders experience working and living in the UK after they gained the Graduate visa. This section outlines findings on two aspects, including their employment experience and living experience, with an example of housing issues. It shows that Chinese international graduates experience opportunities to fulfil their expectation for career development and homemaking by using the Graduate visa and extending their time of staying in the UK; however, they also actively respond to the exclusiveness due to the limited duration of the Graduate visa and uncertainty in everyday housing and living experience as short-term student-migrants.

In the aspect of employment experience, section 4.3.1 in this present research goes beyond the challenges in the job market and outlines findings about active responses of Chinese graduates to the visa with resilience and strategies (Burke & Scurry, 2019). This enriches current understanding of the international student graduates as active and agentic individuals in the workforce and longer-term self-formation (Brotherhood, 2023; Tran et al., 2025).

After discussion about employment-related current experience, this section moves to 4.3.2, which chooses to highlight housing and accommodation issues as this topic emerged from data collected during the twenty individual interviews. Fifteen participants (out of twenty in total) actively mentioned about the influence of housing to their lives of using the Graduate visa when they answered the interview questions of "Is there any difference between being a student and being a Graduate visa holder in the UK?" and "Do you feel more like a visitor or a residence in the UK?" (See Appendix 3. Therefore, housing is adopted in this study's findings and discussion as an example to show Chinese Graduate visa holders' non-employment-related living experience.

The following sections outline findings and discussion of the current working and housing experience of Chinese Graduate visa holders.

4.3.1 Current Experience: Job Seeking Challenges and Responses in Working

4.3.1.1 Challenges of Using the Limited-Duration Temporal Visa in Job Seeking

Without exception, all participants reported facing challenges of varying degrees when seeking employment in the UK while on the Graduate visa. The difficulty reported by the participants is not simply because of a lack of availability of job positions. However, the challenge faced by most Chinese graduates was to achieve their expectations or standards for career development mentioned before in 4.2.2. As Antong stated, *"it is not difficult to find a job; but it is hard to find one that matches my expectations with the requirements of the employers"*.

Digging deeper into the reasons for the difficulty in job seeking, the temporariness of the Graduate visa is referred to as a main barrier to securing a job during the transition from education to migration. This finding echoes with the argument raised in the research by Tran and colleagues (2025). As Tran and colleagues (2025) stated, although there is no limitation on what visa holders can work in, the short duration of the Graduate visa still shows as a main barrier for gaining the desired job positions in the UK. In the interviews, eight participants actively identified the clearly stated two-year duration of their leave to remain in the UK was a challenge to found acceptance or favour from UK employers. For example, Elinor explained that the Graduate visa has the strength of freedom to work in any position; however, any company

in the UK knows and considers the short visa duration as a negative factor that hinders the applicants' competitiveness in the recruitment stage.

Moreover, the limited-time temporal visa regulation brings various kinds of detailed challenges in job seeking. For instance, the 2-year valid visa duration may not be fully available in a practical job application. Bob shared that a job applicant with less than six months of valid visa duration could hardly be approved by recruiting employers, because it takes at least half a year for any company to consider switching a Graduate visa to a Skilled Worker visa and to pay the sponsorship.

Another possible challenging situation raised by Layton is when the job position is a two-year duration, but the visa holders received the job offer after using the two-year Graduate visa for some time. The strict two-year time limit of the Graduate visa takes away many potential work opportunities for Chinese visa holders.

The difficulty of job seeking is also because the Graduate visa itself is not extendable. Employers need to sponsor a Skilled-Worker visa if they desire to have longer-term employees. However, a further increase of the general salary threshold for a Skilled Worker from £26,200 to £38,700 per year after April 2024 adds another challenge for Chinese Graduate visa holders who plan to extend their stay longer than the two-year limit (University of Sussex Human Resources, 2024). Elinor commented on this policy change as making the difficulty of switching to a Skilled Worker visa at *"hell-level"* for newly graduated Chinese international students to achieve the increased threshold within two years of using the Graduate visa.

Another barrier to extending the stay in the UK is the insufficient information on building pathways for switching visa routes from the Graduate visa to the Skilled Worker Visa. Both Seren and Sicher highlighted the confusing information for them as visa holders and for the recruiting employers about the costs and procedure of switching from the Graduate route to the Skilled Worker route. Even though they could switch to a longer-term, extendable visa route, the lack of a reliable information source hindered them and their employers from doing so.

The unclear information on visa switching pathways not only disappointed visa holders but also increased difficulty for employers in the UK to recruit genuine skilled international student graduates (Hillman, 2023). Higher Education Institutions in the UK could facilitate more communication on the information of visa routes with international students and employers, if they receive support and funding from the UK government.

Considering the difficulty of finding a long-term sponsored job, some Chinese visa holders changed their job-seeking goals to look for short-term contract jobs without the intention of sponsorship. Most participants highlighted that they need to learn something from the time they have been using the Graduate visa. Hence, it would be better to work part-time in positions unrelated to their interests than to do nothing every day. However, Antong found that there was no short-term contract position that welcomed Graduate

visa holders. The temporariness of the Graduate visa should be less of a problem for a job with a shorter-term contract than a two-year visa duration. Nevertheless, the Chinese visa holders still found themselves unfavourable to recruiters in the UK. Jiujiu, for instance, showed her sense of disappointment in our conversations.

> Jiujiu: *We might … not their (the employers') most preferred choice. They, of course, will be more willing to choose those with permanent residence.*

Bob also shared a negative experience of her friend being directly rejected by a recruiter because of the status of using the temporary Graduate visa. Overall, the difficulty of job seeking is mainly generated by the exclusive selection process of job opportunities that does not favour or even accept applicants with a short duration of stay in the UK on the non-extendable Graduate visa and embedded challenges for each participant to secure a job that meets their standards or expectations of personal growth.

4.3.1.2 Responses to the Challenges of Job Seeking on Graduate Visa Usage

Two types of responses emerge from the twenty interviews with Chinese Graduate visa holders to face the difficulty in job seeking using the Graduate visa.

The first type of solution is to solve the realistic everyday needs by working in job positions that do not meet their standards or expectations. Coco used a Chinese saying to describe this type of lifestyle on the Graduate visa as *"better to strive and live than give up easily" (好死不如赖活着 hao si bu ru lai huo zhe)*. This old saying expresses the realistic grounding and resilient attitude of Coco to make a living in the UK on the post-study visa.

Similarly, Elinor realised the working experience in the UK with the Graduate visa was different from her expectations, giving her less free time to try new things. She had to work part-time to cover the living and housing expenses, and meanwhile, to look for jobs that match her expectations for personal growth in the UK on the Graduate visa. Chloe worked part-time at a bubble tea shop to earn essential living costs, even though she disliked the job and the working environment. She shared with me that she did not quit because of the lack of job positions, even just part-time positions at bubble tea shops in her city. The city Chloe lived in was a smaller city in the UK with fewer job positions. The compromising strategy is not rare among the twenty participants.

The second type of mindset of solution shared by many participants is to set up a longer-term strategy for career development, using part-time job experience as a steppingstone for a career that meets their expectation of personal growth. An old Chinese saying once again accurately and vividly captures participants' experience. Yan used another Chinese saying to describe this job-seeking journey vividly

as *"finding the expected 'horse' while riding on the 'donkey'" (骑驴找马 qi lv zhao ma)*. The 'horse' in this Chinese traditional saying refers to the career desired by Chinese visa holders. The 'donkey' refers to the part-time jobs or jobs that are below the visa holders' standard or expectations. This saying used by Yan precisely shows that using the Graduate visa is an ongoing journey of work and career development. The part-time or full-time jobs she experienced in the UK on the Graduate visa have accumulated skills for her to look for a job position that she would be satisfied with.

Not just Yan, many participants (fifteen out of twenty) shared with me that they were doing part-time jobs and were looking for full-time jobs that meet their standards. Bird used her experience of working part-time at a retail position to gain a full-time job, because the working experience in the UK helped to convince the job interviewers about her problem-solving skills using the English language in a British cultural environment. Similarly, Jiujiu was in the process of seeking a better job position to achieve her personal growth expectation while doing a job that was not exactly what she wanted to do. She considered the current job a crucial stepping stone for more work opportunities in the UK and beyond.

Overall, this section 4.3.1 shows the current experience of Chinese Graduate visa holders in actively facing the challenges of job seeking within the limited two-year Graduate visa duration.

4.3.2 Current Experience of Housing as an Aspect of Living Experience

Chinese Graduate visa holders in the interviews shared that their lives in the UK during and after higher education were not limited to job seeking. Instead, they are building their lives in the UK in various ways, especially through the process of house-seeking and homemaking. Eight participants actively highlighted the role of housing in building their lives in the UK after graduating from local universities. They reflected on the distinct difficulty of looking for long-term affordable accommodation after graduating from universities and before obtaining a long-term contract or permanent job position using the Graduate visa.

This finding on the importance of housing issues is inductively generated from interviews. Existing studies on housing systems of host countries emphasised that accommodation remains a difficult issue for most international students to find adequate housing with stable and secure living conditions, in the contexts of Australia and the Netherlands, respectively (Obeng-Odoom, 2012; Fang & van Liempt, 2021). In the context of the UK, Katie Morris (2025) recently argues that threats to the availability and affordability of student accommodation in the UK are rooted in the national housing crisis and urges actions to address the global student housing crisis in university locations worldwide.

However, little research touches upon housing and accommodation issues of post-study international graduates who remain in the host country on a temporary visa. Finding below in 4.3.2 enriches our

understanding of the living conditions of Chinese Graduate visa holders as an example cohort of post-study student-migrants.

Two aspects of housing experience are outlined below, one reflecting on the practical difficulty of searching for and affording housing as newly graduated international students, and the other stresses the symbolic importance of homemaking during the short duration of stay in the UK on the Graduate visa.

4.3.2.1 Practical House-Searching in Transitional Stage of Graduate Visa

The most practical difficulty of accommodation mentioned by six participants in interviews is the lack of availability or concern for affordability. The difficulty of finding accommodation at a suitable price is due to the short-term transition between being full-time university students and obtaining a full-time job position. Meanwhile, the cost of the housing and council tax for non-student Graduate visa holders is an extra financial pressure on top of the application and living costs.

Moreover, the lack of socio-economic terms like personal networks, as newly graduated international students, adds another challenge for Graduate visa holders to secure a suitable accommodation. Obeng-Odoom (2012) mentioned the factor of a lack of socio-economic resources as a barrier for international students to secure desirable accommodation in Australia. These present interviews with Chinese graduates echo the importance of considering wider situations of Graduate visa holders, rather than financial hardships. Daisy, for example, could not find an accommodation that meets her living condition standard due to the lack of suitable local guarantors to rent the housing. She described her anxious status at the beginning of using the Graduate visa as follows:

> Daisy: *After graduation, finding a place to rent was especially difficult … You know, what I was facing back then wasn't the question of 'What will my job be tomorrow?' — it was 'Where will I live tomorrow?'*

Exert above shows an example of the dilemma to look for suitable accommodation without either the identity as university student or a permeant job position. The change of visa status leads to precarious living status. The housing issue should be given more attention and supported by flexible housing and council tax payment for international student graduates with Graduate visa.

4.3.2.2 Symbolic and Emotional Homemaking on Graduate Visa

Beyond the practical difficulty of house-seeking, five participants (Iris, Nina, Daisy, Yan, and Jiujiu) emphasized their feeling of the sense of homemaking and belongingness at their homes in the UK, despite the short-term, temporary stay in the UK on a Graduate visa. For example, Daisy experienced a difficult process of house-seeking and multiple moving since graduating. However, she spent lots of time decorating each accommodation in her home and taking good care of her living conditions, even when she was busy working. Similarly, Elinor shared that the home during the stage of using the Graduate visa usage was not only a temporary place to live but also contains emotional attachment and sense of belonging.

However, most participants in interviews were still building their sense of home. Seren, Bird and Coco reflected on their regular moving and the lack of certainty in the short-term rented houses.

> Bird*: For Chinese people, there's this deep-rooted belief that only if you own a home can it truly be called a 'home'. So… I don't see myself as a resident in the UK.*

Bird emphasised the importance of the ownership of housing in her sense of building belongingness and an identity as a resident instead of a visitor. Coco expressed a similar urgent need to settle down and to live in one accommodation for a longer time instead of moving after three or four months.

Moreover, Layton was getting ready to return to China at the time of our interview. He reflected that he had not fully settled after using the Graduate visa for over a year because he was always hesitating about whether to go back to China or stay in the UK. Therefore, the housing issues are related to current job seeking during Graduate visa usage and further decisions for future trajectory after the temporary visa status.

On the contrary, the temporary status of the Graduate visa has less impact on some participants who were in long-term relationships with partners in the UK. For example, Nina was living in the UK with her partner at the time of our interview and showed a more confident perspective on building her own home.

> Nina: *Actually, from my own perspective, I feel more like a resident. If we put aside things like visas and all the practical realities, I think the sense of belonging is really about how you feel.*

Nina's assurance of feeling as a resident may also be because of her stable relationship with her husband, living together in the UK. Nevertheless, it emphasises the dynamics of attitudes on the housing status during the phase of using the Graduate visa.

4.3.3 Discussion: Reconceptualising the Stage of Using the Graduate Visa

The findings in this section about Chinese Graduate visa holders' experience of job seeking, working, and housing investigate the liminal stage of post-study migration (Tomlinson, 2024), full of challenges but also opportunities to grow and make a home.

Using the Graduate visa is shown as a process of transitioning identity from being an international student to a worker and resident in the host country. This process is intertwined with the life stage of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Along with the identity exploration, Arnett (2000) features emerging adulthood as a stage of instability and feeling in-between adolescence and adulthood with rich possibilities for the future. The interview with Chinese graduates shows the precariousness of the post-study migration. One participant, Bookoomoi, describes using a Graduate visa as *"a stroller for adulting".* She uses this metaphor to refer to the importance of the post-study migration stage, where she could gain extra time to become more independent from her family and decide what she wanted to achieve in her life. The stage of using the Graduate visa is therefore an important stage of life for many Chinese Graduate visa holders to go through the emerging adulthood.

In the existing understanding of the post-study migration, Robertson and Runganaikaloo (2014) revealed the significant tensions as well as strategic responses in the daily lives of student-migrants created by the uncertainty and precariousness in the process of transforming from being students to migrants in Australia. This study investigates these tensions and responses of post-study migration experiences through the case of Chinese Graduate visa holders in the UK. These findings in working and housing enrich the understanding of the precariousness and uncertainty of the post-study migration (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014; Tran et al., 2025). This study also highlights active responses towards difficulty in working and housing by Chinese Graduate visa holders, showing their resilience as international graduates (Burke & Scurry, 2019).

Moreover, these findings on the current experience of post-study working and living conditions of Chinese international graduates in the UK enrich our understanding of the role of the Graduate visa. This PSWR visa is not only a connecting pathway between education and migration, but also a meaningful stage where dynamic interactions happen among international student graduates and members in the UK society, including and not limited to university members and staff, employers, co-workers, landlords, residents, etc. The importance of understanding Graduate visa holders is therefore re-addressed beyond the economic contribution of international graduates for the host country (Halterbeck & Conlon, 2019) or the economic activities of visa holders in working (Tran et al., 2025). This study states that the role of having a post-study

migration policy is to facilitate interactions of skilled international graduates and wider society and to enable international students to go through the continued emerging adulthood in the host country.

4.4 Reflections on the Usage of the Graduate Visa

The last section shows findings and discussions in response to the third research question about how Chinese Graduate visa holders reflect on their usage of the Graduate visa. This section indicate that the Graduate visa has a profound meaning for Chinese international students and graduates as a potential opportunity for personal growth and a bridging role between international higher education and future engagement with the wider society of the host country and the world beyond.

This section integrates findings and discussion together in its writing. It first emphasises that the Chinese Graduate visa holders evaluate the outcomes of post-study migration by examining their personal growth through working or self-formation. Meanwhile, the second aspect of participants' reflection stresses the need for more opportunities for Graduate visa holders to achieve their goals of personal growth. Within this second section, participants provided insightful feedback and suggestions for UK universities, policymakers, and employers. The last section 4.4.3 shows participants' suggestions for potential visa holders to utilise their time on the Tier 4 student visa, the Graduate visa and future after the visa expires as a connected and integral ongoing process of continuous experience towards personal growth.

4.4.1 Personal Growth as the Evaluation Standard of the Outcome of Graduate Visa

Personal growth has been highlighted throughout the findings of this study in decision-making and the current experience of using the Graduate visa. In participants' reflections on their so-far journey of post-study migration, they evaluated the Graduate visa policy based on how much they grew in skills, knowledge, and opportunities. In existing studies, Wu Qi (2014) includes that gaining personal growth related to conditions in China and abroad is one of the motivations for Chinese students to take overseas education opportunities in the UK postgraduate education. This interview study further develops this theoretical understanding of post-study migration as a continued journey of personal growth using the Graduate visa.

Working experience is one of the most mentioned developments of personal growth from using the Graduate visa. Nina commented that she became more confident in job interviews after working and quitting her last full-time job in the UK, using the Graduate visa. Similarly, Layton and Nana have not found a job yet in the UK at the time of the interviews. However, they expressed positive valuation on using the

Graduate visa to look for work in the UK and become more familiar with the job market and understand themselves.

More than employment development, the Graduate visa usage serves as a gateway for more opportunities in career and life in general. Five participants in interviews shared with me that using the Graduate visa has opened new possibilities and options for them to choose from. For instance, Chloe graduated from an undergraduate course at a UK university seven months ago and has experience volunteering and part-time working in the UK. Despite the lack of longer-term full-time working experience during her Graduate visa usage, her part-time and volunteering experiences in education-related roles helped to prove her real-life problem-solving and communication capabilities in later applications for a master's degree in education.

More generally, in the self-formation process, participants like Eva and Bookoomoi used the Graduate visa as a continued journey to figure out their self-identity and to make a decision for the next step in life after full-time education (Oldaç, 2021).

Eva: *[During using the Graduate visa, I] met some people, went through some things — and* ***that made me who I am today****.*

Researcher: *Do you feel that, compared to two years ago, you have a clearer idea of who you are?*

Eva: *Not yet… but* ***I'm getting close. It's still happening.***

This conversation above shows that the Graduate visa plays a role in extending the time for figuring out self-formation.

Moreover, the function of the Graduate visa in enabling personal growth has contributed to participants' long-term vision for their lives. For example, Bird recognised the value of the Graduate visa to bring forward-looking hope and possibilities, no matter where she would end up after these two years of using this visa in the UK.

Bird: *For me, these two years have been worth it. It gave me a chance to step out of the environment in China, like… coming up for air — like a dolphin surfacing to breathe … maybe after that I'll return to China and dive back into the water. But what I hope…is that those breaths will help me become a little bird, flying in the sky.*

This vivid expression by Bird shows the significance of having the Graduate visa not only as a potential pathway for skilled labour to stay in the UK (Robertson, 2013). Instead, the post-study migration in the UK *"gives you more time to think, and more space to choose (Bird)"*.

However, three participants in the interviews showed a more negative view on their gains of personal growth by using the Graduate visa so far, because they were not satisfied with their career development. For example, Elinor claimed that she had not gained anything so far by using the Graduate visa. She received

this visa around four months ago and found it extremely challenging to find a helpful job for long-term career development. She believed that the investment in the Graduate visa would be wasted if she kept doing the part-time jobs that were not related to her personal growth. The next reflection will dive deeper into the lack of opportunity for Graduate visa holders.

In conclusion, this first reflection validates the meaning of using the post-study work visa as a crucial stage for international student graduates to develop their emerging adulthood and to engage with the wider host society. This builds upon the existing conceptualisation of the function of the PSWR policy as a way to attract international students or gain international skilled labour (Robertson, 2013; Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014; Tran et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2025). This study shifts the focus to the two-year post-study migration experience and encourages diverse interactions between temporary Graduate visa holders and wider society during these temporal encounters.

4.4.2 Reflection: More Work Opportunity and Support for Graduate Visa Holders

Following the evaluation standard based on personal growth, available work opportunities and career support are needed to maintain and strengthen the attractiveness and effectiveness of the Graduate visa policy in the UK. Six participants stated that they are seeking more work opportunities that accept applicants on a Graduate visa. Tran and colleagues (2025) find that the limited timescale provided by the post-study work visa is a barrier for student-migrants to secure a desirable job in the context of Australia. This present study underscores this temporariness, which limits the competitiveness of Chinese Graduate visa holders.

Furthermore, participants suggest that employers need to be more aware of the effectiveness of using the Graduate visa policy. In existing reports, Hillman (2023) revealed in the report of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) that although the Graduate Route removes the bureaucracy for employers and enables former international students to stay in the UK to work, it has not been knowingly used by more than a tiny handful of employers (3%). This present study further urges for closer collaborations between international students, UK universities, employers, and the UK government to use the Graduate visa route more effectively, benefiting international student graduates to show their talent and contribution to the host country and the host society to maintain its attractiveness.

More specifically, approachable information on how to switch from a Graduate visa to other visa routes is urgently needed for both Graduate visa holders and UK employers. Seren and Sicher emphasised the lack of this information or a clarified standard for switching routes.

> Sicher: *I'm still trying to switch to the Skilled Worker visa. The company's response was, well, only if your performance is outstanding will they give it to you right away. But this kind of thing is relatively*

subjective — there's no clear metric for it. So, um, you don't know what exactly you're expected to achieve.

The quotation above shows the passive and confused status of Sicher facing the unclear metric to extend her time in the UK. The visa holders need a more holistic and transparent information package on visa usage.

4.4.3 Reflection: Integrating Time of Education, Post-Study Migration and Future

The last reflection of the participants suggests recognising time gained from international higher education and post-study migration, and a longer-term future after migration as an integrated and continuing journey. This section analyses the interview answers of participants as they provided suggestions to potential international students and potential Graduate visa holders.

First, four participants reminded potential Graduate visa holders to utilise their time during international higher education wisely to accumulate work experience and to examine whether the UK is a suitable place for them to stay after graduating. Antong and Nina, for example, expressed a sense of regret for not having much working experience while studying in UK universities. Both were preparing to apply to further education in the UK instead of aiming to work right after finishing their postgraduate studies in the UK. Alex, on the other hand, already aimed to gain work experience after overseas education during the time of the master's degree in the UK. Particularly, Alex emphasised the importance of using the period after submitting the final dissertation or project and before the expiration of the Tier 4 student visa. This period normally leaves three months for international students to look for jobs and accommodation before investing in the Graduate visa. Inspired by participants' suggestions, student offices in UK universities could also facilitate support in advance of the end of the courses of international higher education.

The second advice given by the participants to potential Graduate visa holders is to consider the decision of post-study migration in relation to one's longer-term plans. Elinor, Bird, Bob, and Jiujiu all mentioned the importance of weighing one's purposes and the risks of using the Graduate visa. The three of them all mentioned the risks of failing to work in an expected or desired career or not being employed at all during the Graduate visa duration. The suggestion for potential Graduate visa holders is to think through their expectations and risks and to plan for the future after the two-year Graduate visa usage.

Concluding participants' reflections on their usage of the Graduate visa, the Graduate visa has been positioned at a crucial conjunction of education and post-study work and lives. It is also recognised as a stage of personal growth to accumulate skills and experience. Therefore, the UK universities, employers and policymakers could facilitate more transparent and comprehensive information and support for international

students and graduates to build their ongoing journey of growth from international higher education to post-study migration and to their future after the visa expiration. Hence, this finding of reflections further enriches the complexities and importance of the Graduate visa stage as a nexus between education and post-study life trajectories.

Chapter Five Conclusion

This qualitative interview study with twenty Chinese international graduates explores the application process and experience of using the Graduate visa in the UK. The first chapter of the introduction explained the background and content of this dissertation project and the basic information on the Graduate visa in the UK. After this, chapter two scaffolds the research on the Graduate visa using critical discussion on existing studies on the Post-Study Work Rights policies in host countries and research on the UK's PSWR policies, focusing on the experience and perspective of Chinese Graduate visa holders. Following the literature review, chapter three explains the rationales and designs of the research paradigm, method, analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter four reports findings and discussion to answer the three questions and apply them to practical and policy implications.

Three research questions are answered to enrich the understanding of the Graduate visa policy and the international graduates remaining in the UK after higher education.

The three research questions are:

1) How do Chinese graduates make decisions about applying for a Graduate visa?

2) How do Chinese Graduate visa holders experience post-study work and life in the UK?

And 3) how do they reflect on their gains and opinions of using the Graduate visa?

First, the interview study finds that Chinese graduates position the decision of using the Graduate visa as a smooth transition from the end of being international students in the UK towards the development of their personal growth through work opportunities in relation to their parents and partners.

Secondly, the experience of using the Graduate visa shows the challenge of job seeking within the limited two-year duration of the visa and the difficulty of housing after graduating from university but before securing a longer-term job position in the UK. The study also highlights active problem-solving and agentic strategies of Chinese graduates in the UK to effectively use the time of the Graduate visa to work and build their lives.

Finally, Chinese Graduate visa holders insightfully reflect on their journey of using the post-study visa as a valuable stage of personal growth and seek more work opportunities as visa holders.

These three aspects of findings answer the research questions and fulfil the aim of this project to enrich the understanding of the Graduate visa from the perspective of Chinese graduates from UK universities. These findings are generated from real-life experience and reflections of Chinese Graduate visa holders.

Therefore, the practical support from UK universities and policymakers related to the PSWR policy could be inspired and reminded by the challenges faced by visa holders and solutions or suggestions provided by them (MAC, 2024; UK Home Office, 2025a).

Meanwhile, the research method of this study also contributes to future studies on PSWR policies and understanding international graduates. The positionality of the researcher is a highlight of this interview study to build rapport with participants based on a similar experience as Chinese international students in the UK. The languages and discourses used in the interviews are also carefully designed to remind the researcher to put participants' experience and opinions at the centre of the conversations, such as referring to the interview as "our" interview and reminding participants of their contribution to the study as Graduate visa holders. Another lesson learned from the methodology of this study is to effectively use the online platform as a safe and comfortable space for participants and the researcher to share thoughts and feelings. The online interview method is beneficial for conducting interviews with participants living in different cities or countries, which is common for studies on international graduates.

Despite the valuable contributions of this interview study on theoretical and methodological development, there are some limitations in the research design. First, there is a selective bias in participants' recruitment using the social media platform to advertise this interview research. Future studies on international graduates and post-study visas should consider using universities' alumni platforms or in-person participant recruitment.

Secondly, this qualitative study has a relatively small sample and less diversity among the participants. Future projects could enlarge the size of the participants and consider factors of socio-economic background and majors of higher education to diversify the understanding of the Graduate visa policy and international graduates.

Finally, this study focuses on Chinese graduates who are using the two-year Graduate visa. Although it contributes concentrated and in-depth knowledge on this cohort, future studies could continue to build on a wider population of international graduates and users of the Graduate visa.

In conclusion, this interview study with Chinese graduates enriches our understanding of the Graduate visa as a stage of personal growth in close relation to the UK's higher education and the longer-term post-study life trajectories of international graduates.

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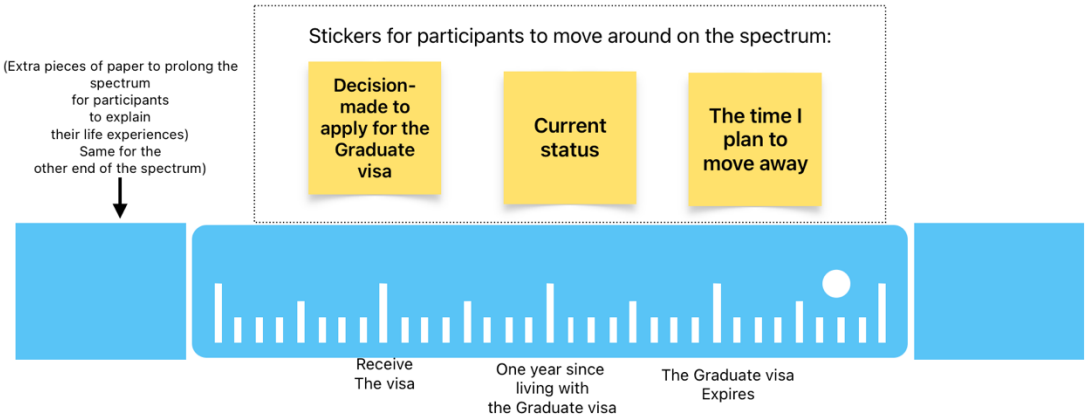
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Appendices

Appendix 1 The First Activity in the Interview



Appendix 2 The Second Activity in the Interview



Appendix 3 Prepared Interview Questions

Part 1: The Graduate Visa Application Process

1. *When and how did you decide to apply for the Graduate Visa? From the time you started preparing until you received the visa, how long did it take?*
2. *Roughly how much did it cost you to apply? (This can include the visa fee, IHS, etc.)*
3. *What made you decide to stay in the UK and apply for this visa?*
4. *How did the application process feel for you? Did you face any challenges or have any particular experiences?*

Support & Navigation

- *What resources were especially helpful to you during the application and while using the visa?*
- *Were there any areas where the information felt especially confusing, or where you felt no one could really help?*

Part 2: Experiences During the Graduate Visa Period

1. *You've now had this visa for [length of time]. Since getting it, you've tried [what they've done]. How does life in the UK feel to you right now? For example, your housing situation, social connections (friends, colleagues, family), etc.*
2. *How do you feel about your current work experience? Are there things that have made you feel happy or confused?*
3. *So far, how do you feel about what you've "gained" or accomplished during this visa period? Are you satisfied?*
4. *If you could describe your current state in one word, what would it be?*

Identity & Belonging

- *Do you feel more like a "visitor" or a "resident" right now? Why do you feel that way?*
- *Have you met others on the same visa? How do you think your experience is similar to or different from theirs?*

Part 3: Plans After the Visa Expires

1. *Do you plan to stay for the full length of the visa? What are your plans for after it expires — going back to your home country, staying in the UK, or going somewhere else?*
2. *Do you think this visa experience in the UK has influenced your career goals or future migration plans?*

Policy & Structure Reflection

- *Do you think the logic behind the Graduate Visa policy feels fair to you?*
- *Is there anything you wish the government or universities could do better?*

Relational Understanding

- *If a friend were considering applying for this visa, what would you advise them — and why?*

Appendix 4 Posters for Participant Recruitment in English and Chinese Language





Appendix 5 Sign-up Form for Potential Participants

Exploring the UK Graduate Visa: An Interview Study with Chinese International Graduates as active Visa-holders

Online sign-up form for potential participants

报名参加关于 PSW 毕业生签证的采访

Sign up for participating the interview about the Graduate visa

你好,

感谢您有兴趣参与关于申请英国毕业生签证和留英体验的采访。填写表格大约需要占用您 1 分钟时间，主要为了 让我能联系上您，并与您沟通采访时间。

在您填个人信息之前，请充分阅读表格前的

您的个人信息会被妥善保存，在研究结束后会全部消除 以保护您的隐私。有任何问题请联系我的邮箱: ---

Hi!

Thank you for having interests in participating the interview on the Graduate visa and experience of staying in the UK after graduation. It may take you one minute to fill out this form, to provide your contact information and the preference for the time of the interview.

The information sheet is incorporated in the beginning of this Form. Please read it before giving your information.

All the information will be storage in safe place and deleted after the research to protect your confidentiality. If there is any problem or concern, let me know

at: ---

1. 您的年龄 your age group

< 20

20 - 25

25 - 30

30 - 35

over 35

prefer not to say

2. 性别 your gender

Woman

Man

Non-binary

Prefer not to say

3. 您目前使用英国留学生毕业签证(Graduate visa 或者叫 PSW visa)的状态是?what's your stage of holding the Graduate visa?

拿到签证不到 3 个月 holding the visa less than 3 months

拿到签证 3 到 6 个月 holding the visa from 3 to 6 months

拿到签证半年到一年期间 from half a year to a year

拿到签证一年到一年半之间 from one year to 1.5 years

拿到签证一年半到两年 from 1.5 years to almost 2 years

其他(还在等待签证下签或) others (still waiting for the approval of the visa)

其他 (签证已经过期) others (Visa expired)

4. 你从英国的哪个大学毕业 Which university did you graduate from in the UK?
5. 你现在居住在哪个城市 Which city are you based in right now?
6. 您的联系邮箱或者微信号 your contact email address or WeChat
7. Your preferred name:

Appendix 6 Participant Information

Department of Education

University of Oxford, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY

Researcher: ---

Email: ---

PI: ---

Email: ---

An Interview about the Graduate visa with Chinese graduates in the UK

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Central University Research Ethics Committee Approval Reference: ---

Introductory paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

Why is this research being conducted?

The aim of this research is to understand more about your experience with the Graduate visa in the UK as a Chinese visa-holder.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You are invited because you have a Chinese nationality and currently hold the Graduate Visa (or called the PSW visa) in the UK. And you graduated from a UK university.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether to take part. You can withdraw yourself from the research, without giving a reason, by advising me of this decision. The deadline by which you can withdraw any information you have contributed to the research is the 10th of August 2025. The data collected from you will not be used in the final thesis if you decide to withdraw.

What will happen to me if I take part in the research?

Where: The interview research will take place purely online on the Microsoft Teams. I will send you the link to the interview at least one day before it takes place.

Consent: You will read this information sheet before signing up. After you sign up, I will contact you via emails with this information sheet and the consent form. Feel free to ask any questions and concerns you have before signing for the consent form. Before, during and after the interview, you can withdraw from the interview study.

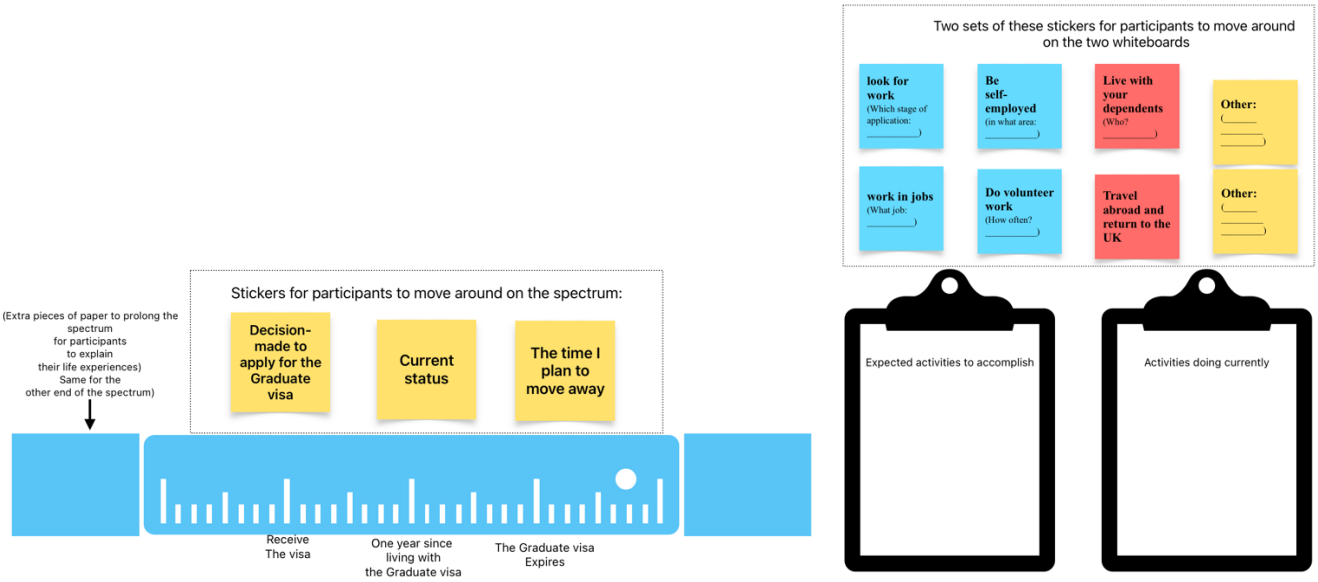
Length of time of the interview: The interview will take you around 60 minutes. You are not restricted to within 60 minutes. You are welcome to spend more time in the interview if you feel like it.

Activities in the interview: We will have two parts in interview. The first part of interview will invite you to move some "stickers" on the Teams Whiteboard function to discuss your current timeline of holding the Graduate visa, what you expected to do with the Graduate visa, and what you are currently doing as visa-holder. The pictures of the two activities are attached below.

The second part will be a discussion about 1) your decision of applying to the Graduate visa, 2) your current experiences of living and working in the UK and 3) your plan for your future after the Graduate visa expired.

With your consent, I would like to video record you and take screenshots of the first part of visual activities, so I can have an accurate record of our conversation.

You only need to attend this interview once for the research. And you can ask to pause or stop the research activities at any time.



What are the possible disadvantages and risks in taking part?

There might be discomforts of talking about some unpleasant experiences of applying to the Graduate visa, current experiences of living in the UK or the plans after the Graduate visa expired. If there is anything making you uncomfortable, we will skip that question or pause or stop the research for your wellbeing. And I will guide you to counselling service or other helps if you need.

Are there any benefits in taking part?

While there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the research, it is hoped that this research will lead to a reflection on your trajectories of holding the Graduate visa after the graduation from the UK universities.

What information will be collected and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research objectives?

I will collect information about your experience of applying to the Graduate visa, including when and why you applied to this visa. And I will collect information about your current experience of job seeking, housing, friendships, relationships with other while living in the UK with the Graduate visa. I will also collect information about your plans after the visa expired. These topics of information are collected to understand the experience of Chinese graduates from UK universities during the temporary migration with the Graduate visa.

The researcher will have access to the research data.

Identifiable data (including consent forms) will be securely stored on the University's Nexus365 cloud. The research data will be stored for three years after publication or public release of the work of the research.

Will the research be published? Could I be identified from any publications or other research outputs?

The findings from the research will be written up in a dissertation. You can choose a Pseudonym in the interview study. Your exact universities, jobs, and living locations are not included in the dissertation

I would like your permission to use direct quotations but without identifying you in any research outputs.

A copy of my dissertation will be deposited online in the Oxford University Research Archive where it will be publicly available to facilitate its use in future research.

Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the research. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from the University's Information Compliance website at https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights.

Who has reviewed this research?

This research has received ethics approval from a subcommittee of the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee. (Ethics reference:).

Who do I contact if I have a concern about the research or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this research, please contact the researcher *Qiuxu Ren at* --- or the supervisor --- ,and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the University of Oxford Research Governance, Ethics & Assurance (RGEA) team at rgea.complaints@admin.ox.ac.uk or on +44 (0)1865 616480.

Further Information and Contact Details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Department of Education, University of Oxford

Appendix 7 Consent Script

EMAIL CONSENT SCRIPT

Exploring the UK Graduate Visa: An Interview Study with Chinese International Graduates as active Visa-holder

Please read the statements below. If you are happy with all of the statements, please copy and paste them into an email and send it to me. This will be considered to constitute giving your consent to participate in the study.

If you have any questions about the research or the statements below, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the study **Exploring the UK Graduate Visa: An Interview Study with Chinese International Graduates as active Visa-holder**. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or penalty.

I understand what will happen to my data.

I give the researcher permission to interview me, video

record me, and take screenshots of the visual activities I participate in.

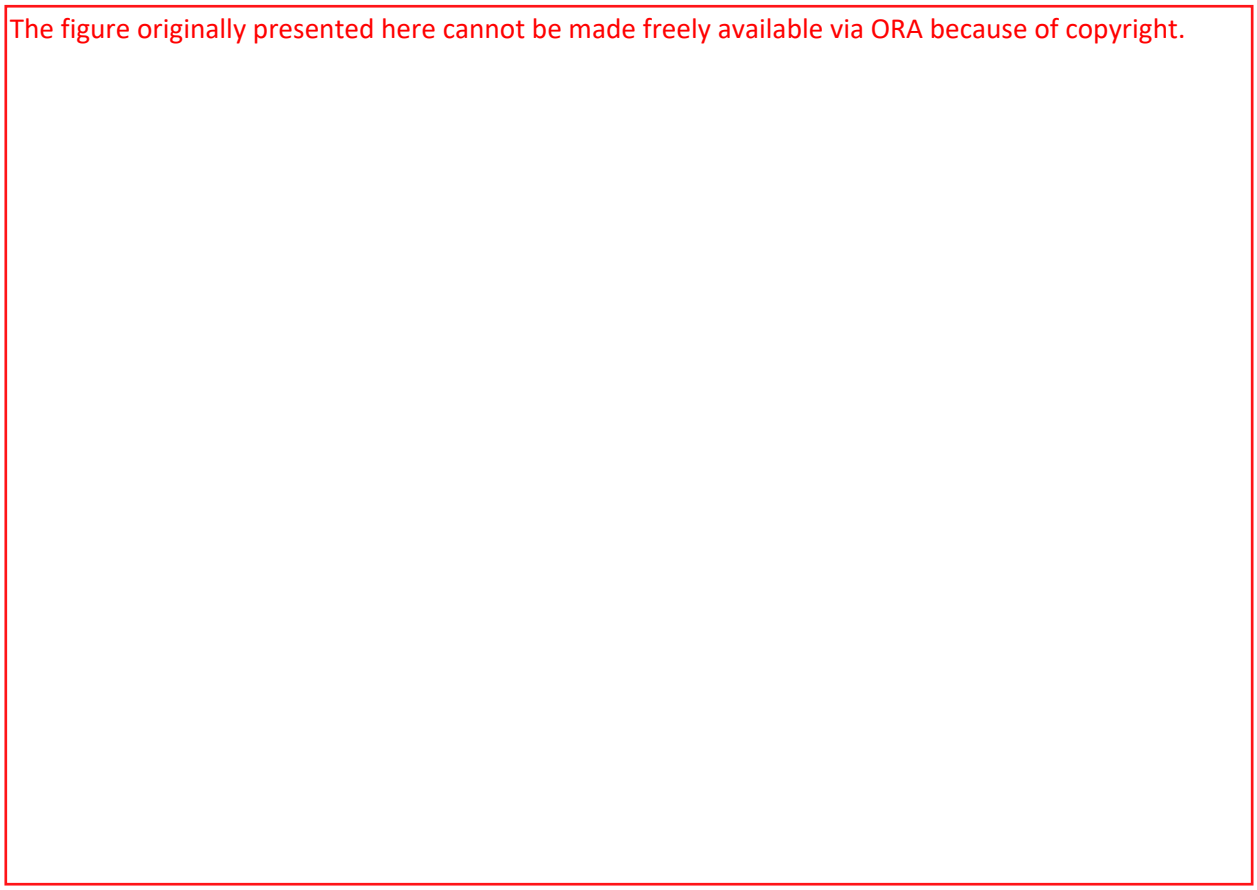
I give permission for the researcher to quote me directly using a pseudonym.

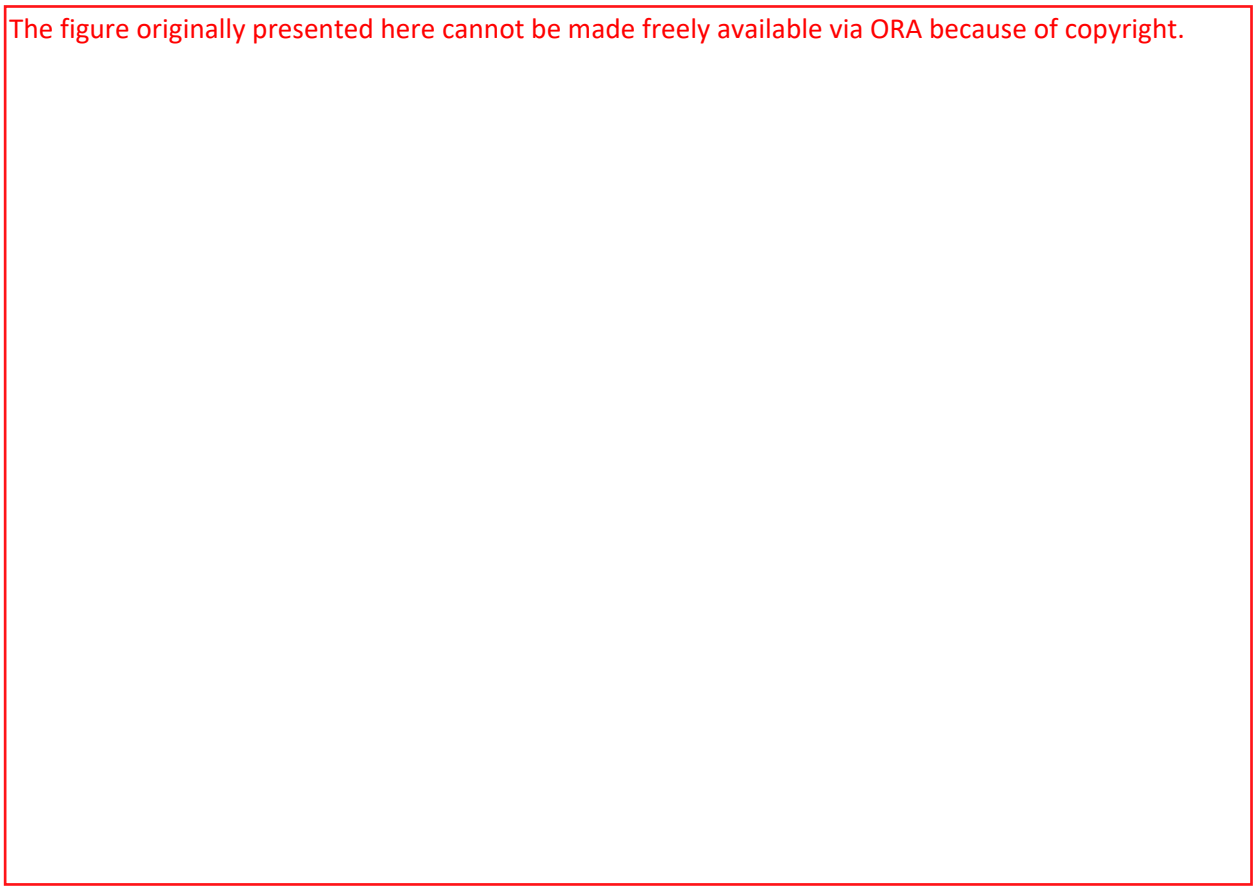
I give permission for the researcher to re-contact me to clarify information.

I agree for anonymised research data collected in this study to be used in other research studies.

I am happy to take part in the research.

Appendix 8 Examples of received Consent Scripts from Participants




The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright.

Appendix 9 Received CUREC Approval

Education (Educ) DREC
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford, OX2 6PY

Applicant: - -

Principal Investigator: Professor - -

Department: Education

Study title: Exploring the UK Graduate Visa: An Interview Study with Chinese International Graduates as active Visa-holders
(Version: 1.0)

Ethics reference: Education (Educ) DREC – (Blanked out for anonymity)

Dear Professor - -,

On behalf of the Committee, I confirm that the above research study described in the application and other supporting documentation submitted to the committee has been carefully considered on behalf of the Education (Educ) DREC in accordance with the University's regulations and policy for ethics approval of research involving human participants, human tissue and/or personal data. The opinion is as follows:

Opinion of Research Ethics Committee: Favourable Opinion

Subject to the following conditions:

Decision Date: 14 Apr 2025, 23:19

Opinion End Date: 14 Oct 2026

If favourable, insurance-provided indemnity arrangements will be in place between the decision date and opinion end date and you may now commence your study activities. Should you plan to continue the research beyond the end date above, it is your responsibility to ensure that you request, and receive, an extension (via amendment) from the committee for indemnity to remain in place. You may be required to provide a justification.

Please note the following:

Amendments: Should there be any subsequent changes to the reviewed study, applications for amendments can be made via the Oxford Ethics Application System (Worktribe Ethics).

Reports: Studies considered by OxTREC are expected to submit an *annual progress report* on each anniversary of study approval, until the study is completed. An end of study report is also required.

Audit: This study may be selected for audit at the discretion of the Research Governance, Ethics and Assurance Team.

Data safety: It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that all data collected during the course of the study is stored and transferred safely and securely in accordance with University requirements. Further guidance and advice are available from the Research Data Team. Additional information is available at https://researchsupport.web.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics

Yours Sincerely