

## Russell Group universities and Brexit

### Summary

Leaving the EU will have a significant impact on our universities, our students and our staff, as well as on the wider communities, business and other partners they work with. We support the Government's ambition for a far-reaching future partnership with the EU on science and innovation, and welcome the reassurances so far on EU students, Horizon 2020 and regional EU funding.

Russell Group universities generate tens of billions a year in economic benefit for the UK economy. After Brexit they will play an essential role in boosting jobs and growth and driving productivity through delivering cutting-edge research and innovation. To maximise their impact and retain their competitive advantage, universities must be able to continue to attract and retain talented EU staff and students and maintain a strong relationship with EU partners in higher education and research.

Our universities remain open and welcoming to students, staff and ideas from all around the world. It is through collaborative working that Russell Group universities and European partners have made huge breakthroughs in medicine, engineering and any number of other fields and our universities will continue to work with their European partners as closely as possible.

#### **Key priorities for the UK Government in the negotiations with the EU should be:**

- Guarantee the continued rights of current EU nationals (and their dependants) at UK universities through a simple system that minimises the burden and cost for individuals
- Ensure the UK's full access to Horizon 2020 from the date of EU exit to the end of the programme
- Secure an agreement on science and innovation which will enable the UK's full access to and influence over future EU research and innovation programmes (and infrastructures) with a focus on excellence and support universities' international collaborations
- Secure a good deal for future UK participation in the Erasmus+ programme
- Reach a rapid and satisfactory arrangement for the land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to sustain and enhance current north-south collaboration.

#### **EU nationals: staff and students at Russell Group universities**

Russell Group universities' number one priority is to give certainty to their EU staff and students. We value them highly and want them to stay, but they urgently need solid guarantees about their future. There are around 25,000 members of staff and 61,000 students from other EU countries at our universities. They are indispensable to our world-class institutions and make a significant contribution to the UK's success in research, innovation and education, as well as contributing to a diverse faculty and student body and a thriving society, culture and economy.

We have welcomed the reassurances Government has provided for current EU students and those starting courses in 2017/18 and 2018/19. However, a significant degree of uncertainty remains concerning the rights of current and prospective EU staff and students. We are asking the Government to:

- Guarantee the continued rights for current EU nationals (and their dependants) at UK universities to study, live and work without a visa that they have now (with no time limit placed on this)
- Confirm at the earliest opportunity the fee rate and other financial support EU undergraduates and postgraduates might be eligible for from 2019/20 onwards. We would support a transition period during which EU students starting courses will be eligible for 'home' fee status and access to loans and grants for the duration of their course, with the right to remain in the UK after graduation for further study and post-study work.
- Agree the cut-off date for settled status as the date the UK leaves the EU to allow universities and individuals sufficient time to plan accordingly
- Ensure that any new system for EU nationals is simple and minimises the burden and cost for individuals with no additional requirements beyond the residency requirements. Time spent abroad for study, career development and research should not jeopardise this status
- In the longer term we want an immigration system which actively supports our universities to recruit talented staff and students from all over the world without burdensome visa requirements

### **Research funding and collaboration**

Ensuring the UK remains the best place for science and innovation is one of the Government's 12 key Brexit principles – we want to ensure this remains a priority in the negotiations and welcome the Government's ambition for a far-reaching future partnership with the EU on science and innovation.

Participation in EU Research and Innovation Framework Programmes brings significant added value for UK research that extends far beyond the funding itself through the networks, opportunities for mobility, scale and a common framework for multi-lateral collaborations. It is also increasingly valuable for supporting collaborative and interdisciplinary research. Between 2007 and 2014, EU research funding supported UK organisations to make over 150,000 collaborative links with EU partners.

*To help sustain the UK's standing as one of the best places in the world to do science:*

- The Government should urgently secure the UK's full eligibility for and participation in Horizon 2020 to the end of 2020 as part of the financial settlement, as well as an appropriate arrangement for Euratom. This would be a pragmatic way to avoid a cliff-edge for research and would give vital reassurance and continuity to UK researchers and their European partners
- The Government should prioritise the UK's full access to and influence over future EU R&I programmes and infrastructures with a focus on excellence
- We welcome the Government's commitment to increasing R&D investment to 2.4% of GDP by 2027, with a longer-term goal of 3%. This increased investment will be particularly important to support universities' international collaborations post-Brexit and to replace any lost EU funds

### **Erasmus+**

We hope the Government will secure a good deal for future UK participation in the Erasmus+ programme to enable continued valuable academic and cultural exchange for UK and EU students and staff.

### **Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland the land border with the Republic of Ireland is a unique and important issue. It is vital that a rapid and satisfactory agreement is reached so that freedom of movement across both jurisdictions continues unimpeded in order to sustain and enhance current north-south collaboration.

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