



The All-Party Parliamentary
University Group

23 October 2019

Agenda

The subject of the meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group is Brexit and higher education

- 6:00pm** **Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP**, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary University Group
- 6:05pm** **Paul Blomfield MP**, Shadow Minister for Exiting the European Union
- 6:15pm** **Vivienne Stern**, Director, Universities UK International
- 6:25pm** **Dr Anne Corbett**, Senior Associate, LSE Enterprise
- 6:35pm** Questions, comments, and discussion with university leaders, MPs and peers
- 7:30pm** Speaker meeting concludes.

Speaker Biographies

Paul Blomfield MP

Paul Blomfield was elected Member of Parliament for Sheffield Central at the 2010 general election and has served as Shadow Minister for Exiting the European Union since 2016.

Previously he was PPS to Hilary Benn as Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Shadow Foreign Secretary.

Paul is Secretary of the APPG for Universities, and also serves as chair for the APPG for Students and APPG for International Students.



After studying Theology at St.John's College in York, and qualifying as a teacher, Paul returned to Sheffield and worked at the University of Sheffield.

Vivienne Stern

Vivienne is the Director of Universities UK International (UUKi) which represents UK universities around the world.

Prior to her role in UUKi, Vivienne was Head of Political Affairs at Universities UK. In this role she led the sector's response to several major pieces of legislation relating to universities, including the Higher Education Act 2004.

She previously worked in the UK Parliament for the Chair of the Education and Skills Select Committee, and as a higher education policy specialist working on topics including quality, student experience, innovation and university-business links.



She is a Director of Universities UK; a member of the Board of the UK India Research and Innovation Initiative and the Strategic Partnerships in Higher Education Fund; she is a member of the British Council's Education Advisory Group and a number of other Boards and Committees.

She is a graduate in English Literature from the University of Cambridge.

Dr Anne Corbett

Dr Anne Corbett is a Senior Associate at LSE Consulting with long-standing experience in the field of higher education and Europe as a researcher, a journalist and a contributor to public policy. She holds a PhD in political science (London University, 2002) and a BA (Hons) in History (Bristol University).



She is a former Visiting Fellow at the European Institute of LSE and in 2015/16 she was chair of the LSE Brexit Commission strand on Higher Education and Research, held under European Institute auspices. Dr Corbett also has a long-standing connection with France and has been an Officier de l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques.

She has been a team member on LSE Consulting reports to EU institutions related to education since 2013 and her research work on the Europeanisation of higher education has been shared with universities and public bodies in many European countries and in the US.

Her books include *Universities and the Europe of Knowledge: Ideas, Institutions and Policy Entrepreneurship in European Union Higher Education Policy, 1955-2005* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). She is a regular contributor to [LSE Blogs](#), [Brexit](#) and [EUROPP](#) on topics of Brexit, higher education and French politics.

Briefing: Brexit and Higher Education

Prepared for members of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group

This is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. It has not been approved by either house or its committees. All-Party Parliamentary Groups are informal groups of members of both houses with a common interest in particular issues.

This briefing document has been produced by Universities UK which provides the secretariat for the University APPG.

Introduction

This meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group will further explore the implications of the UK's exit from the European Union for the higher education sector, with contributions from speakers with a range of views and experiences. Although we have covered Brexit in previous meetings, it is a crucial time and an opportune moment to review what has happened so far and where the priorities of universities should be in the coming months.

This guide will give further information about the political context of Brexit and will provide further information as to how this could come to affect the higher education sector through changes to immigration laws, access to research funding and EU educational programmes and collaboration with European higher education institutions.

Political Update

Between the production of this guide and the meeting major developments in the Brexit process will have taken place.

There are numerous possible scenarios, including:

- *A deal having been signed and ratified meaning the UK leaves the EU on 31 October*
- *An extension having been sought and approved by the EU*
- *A provisional deal having been agreed with a short technical extension agreed to ratify the agreement*
- *A second referendum voted through by parliament*
- *Further political uncertainty with the possibility of a no-deal exit, general election and delay still on the table*

Withdrawal Agreement

Negotiations over the UK's exit from the European Union under Theresa May resulted in two documents: a Withdrawal Agreement relating to the issues to be solved as the UK leaves the EU; and a Political Declaration describing the UK and EU's future relationship. The House of Commons rejected this agreement on three separate occasions, leading to Theresa May's resignation in June and the election of Boris Johnson in July.

The current Government is in further negotiations to amend parts of the withdrawal agreement, however, most of the agreement relating to Higher Education will remain unchanged. If negotiations are successful in time for EU leaders to sign off an agreement at a two-day summit on 17-18 October, the government will introduce a withdrawal agreement bill to be voted on Saturday 19 October in a special Parliamentary session. If no Brexit deal has been approved by MPs the Prime Minister must ask the EU for another delay to Brexit under the Benn Act.

Political Developments

Gavin Williamson makes first major speech as Education Secretary

Recently appointed Secretary of State for Education Gavin Williamson gave his first major speech at the Universities UK annual conference on 12 September. He used the speech to praise the international role and standing of UK universities and reiterate the government's targets for increasing enrolments of international students and education exports.

He said his department was open to continued participation in Erasmus+, but that every eventuality had to be prepared for and therefore he had advised his departmental team to provide a "truly ambitious [replacement] scheme if necessary".

Appointment of Chris Skidmore MP as Universities Minister and Ministerial speeches

Following the resignation of Jo Johnson MP on 5 September, Chris Skidmore MP was appointed to the role of Universities, Science, Research and Innovation Minister on 10 September. Chris previously held the role between December 2018 and July 2019 and before his return to the brief, had a brief stint as a minister at the Department for Health and Social Care.

Since his appointment, the Minister has made several speeches on the sector, including key points relating to Brexit:

- At the Universities UK conference on the 12 September, the focus was largely on the government's commitment to increase R&D funding to 2.4% of GDP by 2017. He voiced particular support for Quality Related (QR) funding and stated his desire for the government to strike a deal with the EU which would protect UK participation in the current and future Erasmus and Horizon programmes.
- At the Tech UK conference on the 8 October, he noted the 2.4% research and development target cannot be met by 'home grown' talent alone, highlighting the need to ensure the UK is the most attractive place to come and undertake new research, test and develop new technologies and start a tech business.
- Finally, at the British Academy on the 10 October, the commitment to underwrite Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ funding was reaffirmed. He also highlighted the benefits of Erasmus+ and noted that the Government will be distributing information to EU researchers and institutions on Horizon+ in due course. He also noted that the Government will soon be publishing the outcomes of the Adrian Smith review, however, no date has been confirmed.

Select Committees

Higher Education and research in the context of Brexit have been the focus of a series of select committees:

- On the 4 June, the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee held a select committee briefing entitled 'Science research funding in universities', which looked at broad issues related to research funding as well as the impact of domestic teaching funding changes on research activity within universities.
- In October, the Science and Technology Committee hosted a roundtable event entitled 'Brexit: risks, opportunities and a no deal'. The committee held this session to inform an evidence session with the Science Minister later in October.
- On 19 June, the House of Commons Exiting the European Union Select Committee held an oral evidence session entitled 'The progress of the UK's negotiations on EU withdrawal: The impact of a no-deal departure on key sectors of the UK economy'. The inquiry aimed to gather evidence from key sectors of the economy, including Higher Education, on what the Article 50 extension has meant for their industries and what the implications of a no-deal exit would be.
- The House of Lords EU Home Affairs Sub-Committee held an inquiry into 'Brexit: EU student exchanges and funding for university research' which explored the effect of Brexit on UK participation in Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 specifically. The report was eventually published in February 2019.

What we know – guarantees so far

Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+

If the UK ratifies the Withdrawal Agreement, participation in Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 would continue largely unchanged until both programmes draw to a close at the end of 2020, which coincides with the expected end of the transition period.

The UK government has confirmed that in a 'no deal' scenario, it will underwrite Erasmus+ grants already agreed by exit day subject to existing projects being deemed 'viable' to continue. This commitment is intended to cover the UK university students on an Erasmus+ placement at the point of Brexit, and any projects that fall under these grant agreements but are yet to start (for example, an outbound student due to undertake an Erasmus+ placement in May which has already been agreed and ratified under a 2018 call). However, the underwrite will not cover funding committed to partners and participants in other Member States and other participating countries. The UK government launched an online portal in late

February/early March 2019 for UK-based recipients of Erasmus+ funding to log details of their grants.

In July 2018, the UK government extended a commitment to underwrite payments of Horizon 2020 awards so that it covers grant applications for funding streams open to third country participation (i.e. multi-beneficiary grants) that are submitted after the UK leaves the EU in March 2019. In September 2018, UKRI launched an online portal for UK-based recipients of Horizon 2020 funding to log details of their grants. In his evidence to a House of Lords EU Home Affairs sub-committee hearing in January 2018, the Universities Minister stated that the government is aware that access to European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions funding would be lost if the UK leaves without a withdrawal deal, and that they are considering options for domestic alternatives to these programmes.

Whether the UK leaves the EU under the Withdrawal Agreement or in a 'no deal' scenario, it could still seek to participate in the successor programmes to Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 'Erasmus' and 'Horizon Europe', which will run from 2021 to 2027—as a third country.

Associate membership would not give the UK voting rights in the committees which oversee the strategic planning of the programmes, and so the UK would have less influence over the priorities and future development of Erasmus and Horizon Europe than would EU Member States.

EU student fee status/financial support

On the 28 May 2019 Universities Minister, Chris Skidmore, announced that EU students starting university in 2020/21 academic year will have guaranteed home fee status and financial support for the duration of courses in England even in a 'no deal' scenario. This followed similar announcements from the Scottish Government on the 19 April and Welsh Minister for Education Kirsty Williams AM on the 31 May. The UK government has also confirmed that EEA students who are currently eligible for home student fees and financial support in English universities will still be eligible for courses beginning in the academic year 2019-20, even in the case of a no-deal Brexit.

Qualifications recognition

The Brexit White Paper states that the government wants to establish a system on mutual recognition of professional qualifications (MRPQ) that covers the same range of professions as the existing MRPQ Directive. The government has also issued a 'no deal' technical notice on professional qualifications. The government has guaranteed that recognition decisions which have already been made by the exit date will continue to be recognised in the UK, and that applications made by (but not assessed by) the exit date will be assessed according to existing MRPQ Directive rules, including potential appeals.

Freedom of movement

The Government has published a policy paper on citizens' rights in the event of a no deal. It confirms that in the event of a no deal, the EU Settlement Scheme will continue to be implemented, enabling EU citizens and their family members living in the UK by exit day to secure their status and continue to be able to work, study, and access benefits and services in the UK on the same basis after we exit the EU as they do now. The Scheme opened fully on 30 March 2019. The planned application deadline will be brought forward to 31 December 2020 in the event of a no deal.

The government has also confirmed the migration arrangements for EU and EEA nationals arriving after exit day in a 'no deal' scenario. These individuals will be able to travel to and enter the UK as now, but if they wish to remain for more than 3 months, they will need to register for European Temporary Leave to Remain which will be valid for 3 years. If they wish to stay after their temporary leave to remain expires, they will need to apply for the appropriate permission under the future immigration system.

With the withdrawal agreement any student arriving in the UK before January 2021 will be able to apply for 'pre-settled status'. This will allow students to stay in the UK for five years and then apply for 'settled status'. Once they have settled status, they will be able to remain in the UK indefinitely.

The government has already committed to a number of stability measures beyond March 2019. The Home Secretary, Sajid Javid MP, has indicated that the UK-EU draft agreement on citizens' rights will be honoured, even if the UK is unable to reach "an acceptable deal with the EU 27" and that "EU citizens living lawfully in the UK will be able to stay. No matter what happens". The draft withdrawal agreement makes explicit that all EU citizenship rights will continue to apply to EU nationals and their family members (as defined by EU law, rather than domestic law) throughout the transition period. This also confirms that EU/UK nationals and their family members would acquire the rights of 'permanent residence', termed settled status, after accumulating five years' continuous lawful residence in accordance with EU law.

Despite these guarantees, there would be no certainty on what the UK's future relationship with the EU would look like, including in areas like the mobility of citizens and access to EU programmes.

Risks

The risks to the UK of leaving the EU, either with or without a deal, range across several areas including: funding, collaboration opportunities and staff mobility.

Research funding

Many of the concerns UUK has about the UK leaving the EU relate to funding. The UK is one of the largest beneficiaries of EU research funding, winning more European Research Council (ERC) grants than any other country since 2014 and receiving 15.2% of all funding awarded by the Horizon 2020 programme. At this stage, there is no guarantee that the UK will participate in Horizon 2020's successor programme Horizon Europe which will run from 2021-2027. The potential costs to the UK in this regard are:

- Fewer funded opportunities for UK researchers to collaborate with EU counterparts on topics of local, national, regional and global importance.
- Less funding for curiosity-driven research.
- Fewer opportunities for leading on and coordinating scientific research.

If the UK ceases to participate in EU funded programmes, this may have an impact upon the UK's reputation as one of the world's leading nations for research and innovation. Programmes such as Horizon 2020 provide a ready-made platform for collaboration and have a strong reputation across the globe.

- Even if the UK replaces EU awards with a domestic alternative, such awards may not have the same reputation, reducing the attractiveness of a career in the UK for talented scientists and researchers.
- There is a real risk that a no-deal exit could jeopardise the UK's ability to associate with the next Horizon and Erasmus+ programmes which run from 2021–27. Lead-in times for developing research partnerships across borders can be lengthy, but UK researchers remain in the dark about whether they will be eligible to lead or participate in key projects. We have already seen a sharp drop in UK universities leading projects through Horizon 2020 because of uncertainty.

Mono-beneficiary strands of Horizon 2020 funding are not open to third countries and therefore the UK institutions would not be eligible to compete for funding from the globally prestigious European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA). UK researchers received €540million from the latest round of ERC Advanced Grants alone.

Immigration

Brexit will also have a profound impact upon the UK's immigration system, particularly as the government intends to use it as a catalyst for revising the current immigration system. Risks include:

- The UK could lose out on talented research staff, assistants and technicians from the EU. Many universities' technical staff are on salaries below £30,000,

making them ineligible for sponsorship through the Tier 2 system as it is currently structured.

- Students from EU member states may be deterred from studying in the UK if it is easier for them to study abroad in another EU country, depriving UK institutions of the potential researchers of the future. Students from the EU who study at UK institutions often go on to pursue further study or careers in the UK, including in science and research.
- Any drop in EU student numbers would also have an adverse effect on university finances and consequently on university research budgets.
- The UK will forgo the benefits to students, universities and the economy if it ends participation in the Erasmus+ programme. The UK currently gains £390 million per year in export earnings brought through Erasmus+ students' living expenses alone.
- EU students entering the UK would be subject to the European Temporary Leave to Remain system only allowing them to stay in the UK for up to three years. Those wishing to study for courses longer than three years, such as medics, linguists, PhD students and most undergraduates in Scotland, would have to apply for a Tier 4 visa and face additional costs and uncertainty about their immigration status part way through their studies. Potential students may, therefore, be put off from choosing UK universities.
- There are already 79,700 higher education students in EU countries who are studying for a UK degree in their home country, and TNE is a key source of education exports for the UK.

Erasmus+

Unless further preparatory actions are taken, or commitments made by government, a 'No deal' outcome would create immediate uncertainty for those participating in Erasmus+ programmes. Risks include:

- Around 17,000 students in the UK would no longer be able to study or work abroad as part of Erasmus+ as planned in the 2020–21 academic year. This would severely limit study and work opportunities for students to enhance their language skills, employability and intercultural awareness – all vital in a global Britain. Undertaking a period of study or work abroad has positive academic and career benefits for students, these are particularly pronounced for students from underrepresented backgrounds.
- The UK economy would forego £390 million per year in export earnings currently brought through incoming Erasmus+ students' living expenses alone. This is because EU students would lose the right to come to UK universities under the scheme.

Other risks of No-deal

- There would be great uncertainty around mutual recognition of professional qualifications (MRPQ). This could potentially disincentivise individuals from around the world studying subjects covered by the current MRPQ Directive (eg architecture, veterinary science) from coming to the UK.
- UK universities that provide degrees in EU countries ('transnational education' or TNE) face uncertainty about their future operations once the EU Services Directive no longer applies to UK education providers.

Opportunities

There is some potential for the UK government to create and support new opportunities to build upon the UK's already thriving research environment, providing this approach also aims to reduce the risks outlined above. These opportunities include:

- More funding for international collaboration projects. This funding should be part of a more rounded approach by the research sector to international collaboration which tackles other obstacles such as cultural barriers and agency-level bilateral agreements. Such funding could work alongside (rather than instead of) funding participation in Horizon Europe.
- An immigration system equipped to attract talent from across the world. As the government revises current immigration and visa rules, it has the opportunity to develop a system to attract more research talent to the UK. Universities UK want to see a revision of the salary threshold for the Tier 2 visa to £21,000 per year, the 'appropriate rate' for technical staff and assistants working in universities.

Sector Asks

The higher education sector has urged the government to take action in the following areas to mitigate against the risks a no-deal Brexit would pose to universities:

- Reconsider the policy of European Temporary Leave to Remain in order to provide reassurance to EU students starting courses that are longer than three years in duration they will not face financial and administrative barriers in order to complete their course.
- Clarify how the underwrite for EU grants will work in practice, including who will administer funds/make funding decisions and what would be required of universities in receipt of funds
- Set out its contingency plans for replacing access to single beneficiary Horizon 2020 funds, largely the ERC and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

- Set out its contingency plans for replacing access to Erasmus+ (this must be fully funded and UK-wide)

Whilst waiting for government confirmation on the above areas, there are several actions universities have/can be taking to mitigate against the risks a no-deal Brexit could cause:

- Speak with European partners regularly to share understandings of the impact of no deal and collaboratively plan for such an outcome
- Be mindful of how courses are described to prospective students in terms of fee/loan status and qualifications recognition, assessing legal implications of incorrect information
- Communicate with EU prospective students and staff with regards to future directions for immigration, focusing on the European Temporary Leave to Remain route, and what this would mean for these groups in practice
- Work with existing staff with non-UK nationalities and consider communication to this group around the publication of the EU Settlement Scheme