



The All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Chris Skidmore MP
Minister of State for Universities
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

6 February 2019

Dear Minister,

We are writing in our capacity of chairs of the Universities and Students All-Party Parliamentary Groups to highlight the urgent need for further assurances surrounding protecting the higher education sector in the case of a 'no deal' Brexit.

We welcome the assurances that have been given to date, including underwrites for Horizon 2020 funding and updated technical note on Erasmus, however these do not go far enough to protect the sector from the unquestionable damage it would suffer as a result of the UK leaving the EU without a deal.

An immediate concern shared by members of our respective all-party parliamentary groups centres around the recently announced European Temporary Leave to Remain scheme which would only allow EEA and Swiss nationals arriving after 29 March 2019 up to three years to live, work and study in the UK. As you will be aware, this would not cover the duration of study for many undergraduate courses in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, all undergraduate courses in Scotland and any UK PhD courses. We would urge you to speak to the Home Secretary about the need to extend the time limit for EEA students as a matter of urgency, giving prospective EU students much needed clarity.

There is strong evidence of the benefits that studying abroad brings to individuals, and especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We are therefore concerned that the 28th January technical note does not guarantee funding for students' international study and work placements, unless they are already ratified or underway, after the 30th March 2019. We are now seeking cast iron assurances that even if the UK is unable to negotiate continued participation in the Erasmus+ programme, the government will continue to fund study abroad opportunities for UK students. We would be happy to provide you with further information about the immense value of international mobility if this would be helpful.

As Members with strong constituency links to universities we were heartened to hear your enthusiasm for maintaining close links with EU partners on science and research. We are however concerned that with less than two months to go universities still face a great deal of uncertainty regarding funding for mono-beneficiary elements of Horizon2020 such as the European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions. Universities UK estimates that UK researchers stand to lose out €1.3 billion in a No Deal scenario unless this funding is replaced and therefore urgent assurances are required.

As Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation I am sure you share our desire to ensure the UK university sector continues to be world leading, internationally welcoming and able to provide students with life-enhancing experiences. We would be most grateful if you could press your colleagues for clarity in the areas outlined above, and address our members in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roberta C. Blackman-Woods". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP

Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Universities Group (APPUG)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Blomfield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Blomfield MP

Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Students