

Written evidence submitted by the Universities UK (FRE0099)

About Universities UK

Universities UK is the representative organisation for the UK's universities. Founded in 1918, its mission is to create the conditions for universities to be the best in the world; maximising their impact locally, nationally and globally. With 137 members and offices in London, Cardiff (Universities Wales) and Edinburgh (Universities Scotland), it provides high-quality leadership and support to members, promoting a successful and diverse higher education sector.

UUKi is the international arm of Universities UK, representing UK universities and acting in their collective interests globally. We actively promote universities abroad, provide trusted information for and about them, and create new opportunities for the sector.

What are the key priorities of the higher education sector in the negotiations between the UK and the EU? How do these priorities vary between different institutions and stakeholders? Has the Covid-19 pandemic changed any of these priorities? What might be the consequences of a deal which does not meet these priorities?

1. Time is short for the UK government to reach an agreement with the EU on a future relationship, and it is vital that substantial progress is made by the autumn in a number of areas with implications for universities. To avoid significant disruption, before the end of the transition period, universities need:
 - a) **An agreement to be reached on UK participation in Horizon Europe.** If no agreement is reached, or if the UK Government opts not to associate to Horizon Europe, then the UK Government has announced that it will:
 - make funding available to support participation by UK researchers in Horizon Europe projects as a third country. However, we need a stronger guarantee that this will cover all third country participation
 - establish a 'Discovery Fund' to support researchers at all career stages to pursue discovery-led, ground-breaking research, as well as scaling up certain existing domestic grant schemes. However, there are urgent questions for the UK Government to answer on this fund, including: What eligibility rules will apply? How will applications be assessed? How quickly will the calls be opened?
 - b) **An agreement to be reached on UK participation in the future Erasmus+ programme.** Should the UK not associate, the UK Government has committed to fund international student mobility through a new national scheme as a replacement to Erasmus+ participation. The Department for Education (DfE)

has advised that this scheme will be ambitious, UK-wide and global in its reach. However, we still need clarification on:

- the structure, funding levels and framework of the proposed national alternative in advance of the 2020-21 academic year;
 - whether a supportive immigration route will be in place to ensure that incoming students can continue to use Erasmus+ to study or undergo work placements in the UK and facilitate exchanges for a national alternative scheme. This is important as Erasmus+ students are due to arrive in the UK to undergo second semester study from the 1st January 2021.
- c) **An agreement on the provision of education services covering transnational education (TNE)** that will avoid the cliff-edge situation of falling back on WTO rules and grant market access and national treatment to UK higher education service providers, covering rights of establishment and rights to provide higher education through franchise and validation.
- d) **An agreement on a pathway for continued Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications** and automatic recognition of sectoral professions to be mutually recognised across the UK and EU as far as possible
- e) **An 'adequacy' decision on data protection** given that GDPR will cease to apply from 1 January 2021
2. Separate to an agreement with the EU, further clarifications are needed on immigration arrangements for EEA nationals from 1 January. For example, the new Student route will be amongst the first of the new routes to open (in the Autumn 2020 to facilitate students beginning programmes in January 2021) but questions remain over how the application process will operate. That is why further information, as well as improved communication to prospective international students, is essential.
3. University resources and attention have been redirected towards an immediate response to the Covid-19 pandemic and short to medium-term planning for different scenarios for the 2020/21 academic year. Responding to such an unprecedented situation during a time of uncertainty in terms of the UK's future relationship with the EU is placing additional pressures on universities' ability to plan for an already challenging financial environment.

To what extent did the UK Government consult your sector before publishing its negotiating aims and draft texts? How well does what the Government has proposed meet its needs? What further provisions would you have advised the Government to seek?

4. UUK and UUKi have been in touch with relevant departments on a regular basis in the past years on these issues and have provided BEIS and DfE with several briefings on the value for money of both Horizon Europe and

Erasmus+, and the importance of these programmes for the sector. Leading up to the publication of the UK Government's negotiating mandate, UUKi was asked by DfE to share any extra evidence on the impact of Erasmus+ that we had not shared already. Overall, there was no official consultation with UUK, but we have been provided with informal opportunities to feed evidence into various relevant government departments due to the relationships we had established with officials throughout the negotiating process.

5. The government's negotiating mandate showed less commitment to our priority areas than we would have liked. However, on Horizon Europe association, for example, several government officials provided reassurance that the negotiating mandate should be interpreted in a more positive way than initial impression implied.
6. The section of the UK's negotiating mandate on Erasmus+ association was less reassuring as it spoke of association for a time limited period and only parts of the programme, whereas we have advocated for full association. The wording was also problematic as it suggested a course of action that would not be welcomed by the EU. We would have liked to see the same level of commitment to Erasmus+ as the government has shown on Horizon Europe.
7. On the specific issue of Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) we welcomed that the UK Government's proposal went further than that of the EU, by proposing a streamlined process for all countries to facilitate obtaining professional recognition.
8. To support the functioning of Horizon Europe and Erasmus+, the UK Government should seek reciprocal mobility arrangements to recognise the need for mobility of students and research workers.

How do the UK's and the EU's negotiations positions compare on matters relating to higher education? On which areas are the UK and EU's aims farthest apart? Where do their positions align? What is your assessment of the level of technical detail the negotiators have grappled with on this topic to date?

Horizon Europe

9. Up until the start of the negotiation rounds in the week commencing 20 July, we had understood that both sides had presented their positions, had identified the hurdles, but had not yet addressed these hurdles or discussed possible solutions.
10. The UK has stated in its negotiating objectives, and more recently in the R&D Roadmap, that it is seeking full associated country status for Horizon Europe, meaning that it would pay into the EU budget for the programme in return for full eligibility for Horizon Europe funding. The EU mandate makes clear that it is open to UK participation in Union programmes which are open to

third countries on the terms proposed in its draft EU-UK FTA. In this way, both sides are open to full UK association in Horizon Europe, subject to agreement on the wider future partnership and on the terms of conditions of UK association.

11. However, there remains significant gaps between both sides on a number of issues. Most importantly, there are contrasting views on the UK financial contribution. The EU has proposed that the UK should make a contribution based on its GDP as a ratio of the EU27 GDP, and that the likely shortfall in UK receipts would become a net contribution to the EU. UUK modelling suggests that this is likely to mean a net UK contribution stretching to billions of Euros over the course of the seven-year programme if the UK funding share remained consistent with that for Horizon 2020. This scale of the financial contribution would be excessive, so UUK has co-authored a statement with the Wellcome Trust and over 100 other UK and EU science and research organisations calling on the two sides to find a compromise.

Erasmus+

12. In the UK's approach to negotiations with the UK published in February 2020 the UK government stated its desire to *'consider options for participation in elements of Erasmus+ on a time limited basis, provided the terms are in the UK's interests'*.
13. The EU mandate makes clear that the EU is open to UK participation in Union programmes (on programmes which allow third country participation). Both sides are open to full UK association to Erasmus+, subject to agreement on the wider future partnership and on the terms of conditions of UK association. The EU has suggested the UK, in line with all other associated third countries participating in Erasmus+, should make a contribution based on UK GDP as a ratio of the EU27 GDP.
14. There remain significant differences between the EU and UK's negotiating positions, despite mutual agreement on the importance of educational exchanges and international collaboration. On the EU side, there is currently no precedent for partial association to Erasmus+ based on the elements of the programme deemed greater value for money than others. The mandate for the EU negotiations adopted by the European Parliament on 18 June 2020 also states that UK participation in Union programmes should be 'for the full duration of the programme concerned'. This is in line with the EU's multi-annual financial framework budget is from 2021 until 2027.

In which EU programmes concerning higher education (for example Erasmus and Horizon) should the UK be seeking continued involvement?

Given the UK and EU's negotiating positions what level of involvement appears possible?

What would be the consequences of this for the UK's higher education sector?

What alternatives to involvement in these programmes are available or may be possible?

Erasmus+

15. The UK should seek to associate to the future Erasmus+ programme in order to maximise opportunities for students enrolled at UK universities to study or train abroad (known as mobility) as part of their degree programmes. The programme has shown to enhance language skills, employability, and intercultural awareness – all vital in a global Britain. It also provides funding for research, innovation and cooperative projects for universities to advance their international networks and also allows funding for the establishment of international joint master degree programmes. The new strategy on language learning in the UK¹ has called for association to the new Erasmus+ programme.
16. The EU is open to full UK association to Erasmus+ as a third country. Currently, Iceland, Norway, Turkey, Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia participate in the Erasmus+ programme as fully associated non-EU countries, are able to access funding and participate in all aspects of the programme, in the same way as an EU member state. The UK should seek full association on the same terms.
17. If access to Erasmus+ not possible, the UK government has committed to establishing a domestic alternative. Several urgent questions remain including the scale and scope of any such programme and when the details of this scheme will be available to universities to ensure that there is no break in mobility funding for the academic year 2021-2022.
18. UUKi re-convened the Outward Student Mobility Working Group – a group of sector representatives and mobility experts - for a series of roundtables with DfE in April and May 2020 to consult further on the design and development of a new UK international educational mobilities scheme. These roundtables built on the group's recommendations for a UK scheme in their 2018 paper: 'Developing a government-funded, large scale mobility programme'² with the development of a further paper of recommendations³.
19. The UK government has indicated that the domestic alternative scheme would predominately fund UK students undergoing a study or traineeship abroad. There is currently no commitment to provide funding for inbound students to the UK. There has also been no commitment to replacing the

¹ British Academy (2020) [‘Towards a national languages strategy: education and skills’](#)

² Universities UK International (2018) [‘Developing a government-funded, large scale mobility programme’](#)

³ Universities UK International (2020) [‘Developing a government-funded, large scale mobility programme: 2020 update’](#)

non-mobility aspects of the Erasmus+ programme which will negatively impact smaller universities with modest research capacities.

20. As many details (including the overall budget) of a domestic alternative remain unconfirmed, there remains a risk that a domestic alternative to Erasmus+ will not be able to maintain the current levels of mobility achieved under the Erasmus+ programme. Current Erasmus+ partnerships are based on reciprocity, and if inward students are not funded or incentivised to come to the UK there may be reluctance for EU partners to host UK outbound students, with some EU partners already expressing this informally. This combined with uncertainty around new immigration requirements for EU students mean that the UK economy could see a significant reduction in the £420 million per year received in export earnings currently brought through incoming Erasmus+ students' living expenses.
21. The UK government should therefore seek association to the Erasmus+ programme and failing this proceed with their implementation of a domestic replacement scheme. In both scenarios, a supportive immigration system which easily facilitates, as far as possible, periods of study or work experience for the purposes of education exchanges should be in place and communicated effectively to UK and EU stakeholders in advance of the end of the transition period. This is particularly important as under the current programme, Erasmus+ students are due to arrive in the UK to undergo second semester study from the 1st January 2021.

Horizon Europe

22. The UK should seek full association to Horizon Europe. Depending on progress with the wider negotiations, this is possible if agreement on the financial contribution mechanism can be found.
23. If this is not possible, the UK will need to put in place domestic alternatives. The Government has committed to do this in the R&D Roadmap, but several urgent questions remain. Universities need urgent clarification on the exact provision of the proposed third country funding guarantee in order to persuade EU partners to involve UK partners in EU project. Universities also need more information about the replacement 'Discovery Fund', which will be essential for retaining and attracting excellent researchers to the UK if access to EU programmes is lost.
24. UUK is working on a comprehensive set of proposals for future funding of international collaboration in research and innovation which is due to be published before the Spending Review. We will share this document with the Committee upon its publication.

How might the new immigration regime impact the higher education sector?

To what extent might any risks and opportunities be influenced by provisions on labour mobility envisaged in the UK and EU's negotiating positions?

How might these affect the ability of higher education institutions to recruit and retain staff and students from EU member states?

How might these affect the ability of UK staff to work with or for higher education institutions in the EU, either on a permanent or temporary basis?

What wider impact might this have on individual institutions and the higher education sector in general?

25. The introduction of points-based system for EU/EEA students represents one of the biggest changes to the student immigration system for a generation. Given the additional costs, administrative processes and requirements applying for a visa requires, it is likely that there will be a significant impact on EU student inflow. This would be a significant policy challenge at any point, but 2020 presents unique risks due to the on-going coronavirus pandemic.

26. Each year, the UK higher education sector attracts around 450,000 students from overseas, with EU students making up almost a third of the total⁴. The government's own impact assessment⁵ estimates that the points-based system will result in a 20% reduction of EU students, yet other reports, such as research from HEPI and Kaplan⁶, show that enrolments of EU students could decrease by 57% (over 31,000 students). The scale of the impact is difficult to predict, but we can assume that the introduction of the points-based system, in addition to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, will result in a significant drop in EU students coming to UK universities.

27. This impact will not just be felt across universities campuses – where international students enrich the diversity of our institutions and university life – but also across the wider UK economy. Research by HEPI, Kaplan and London Economics⁷ has found that one EU cohort can add as much as £5.1 billion to the UK economy through the direct and indirect economic benefits associated with student spending – a figure that amounts to an individual contribution of £87,000 per student.

28. The government have outlined details of what the new Student route (replacing Tier 4) will look like, which include a number of improvements that UUK has been calling for, such as extending the window in which prospective students can make visa applications from three to six months, removing study time limits at postgraduate level and allowing all students to switch any other type of visa from within the UK.

⁴ Universities UK International (2019) '[International Facts and Figures 2019](#)'

⁵ Home Office (2020) '[Impact assessment for Immigration and Social Security EU Withdrawal Bill 2020](#)'

⁶ HEPI (2017) '[The determinants of international demand for UK higher education](#)'

⁷ HEPI (2018) '[The costs and benefits of international students by parliamentary constituency](#)'

29. Nonetheless, with the new immigration system due to go live on 1 January 2021, further details on how the system will be operationalised still need to be made clear to ensure universities and prospective students have sufficient time to prepare for the new system.
30. Attracting talented staff from overseas, including the European Union, is crucial to the success of the UK higher education sector, where 18% of academic staff, and 7% of non-academic staff, are EU nationals⁸.
31. UUK has welcomed the government's decisions to reduce the required salary threshold for skilled workers to £25,600, and to introduce additional flexibility for highly-qualified PhD-holders where they do not meet the salary threshold. Other recently introduced immigration measures, such as the Graduate route as well as proposals to establish a new Office for Talent, should enhance the UK's international competitiveness as a destination for study and work.
32. However, further work is needed to provide full reassurance that UK universities will be able to continue to attract the diverse workforce, including laboratory technicians and language teaching assistants, who are vital to supporting our universities' success.
33. UUK has responded to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC)'s call for evidence on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL), calling for technician roles in particular to be recognised as 'in shortage'. In addition, UUK also believes regular reviews of the SOL will be critical to ensure that the higher education sector – along with other sectors – can continue to attract necessary expertise and respond to labour market demand as the UK transitions to the new immigration system.

What provisions is your sector seeking on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications?

What impact might an agreement on MRPQ based on the either the UK or EU negotiating positions have?

To what extent have institutions and stakeholders in your sector engaged with your counterparts in EU Member States to progress mutual recognition of qualifications on a bilateral basis, outside the framework of a future UK/EU agreement; and if you have, what progress has been made?

34. The Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications (MRPQ) Directive, the process where UK and EU nationals benefit from a simplified recognition procedure for certain regulated professions, and automatic recognition for sectoral professions, (doctors, nurses, dental practitioners, pharmacists, veterinary surgeons, lawyers, architects or engineers), will cease to apply in

⁸ HESA Staff Record 2018-19

the UK after the transition period even in the case a draft free trade agreement is agreed.

35. Any UK-EU future agreement should provide pathways for continued Mutual Recognition Agreements and automatic recognition of sectoral professions to be mutually recognised across the UK and EU as far as possible
36. Academic qualifications will be subject to the same recognition rules as they previously were, but the UK should continue to engage as much as possible in the Bologna Process in order to retain influence in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), as this is a non-European Union based initiative. This is particularly important as the EU continues to define its vision of a European Education Area in line with the Council of Europe's proposal for the future automatic recognition of high school and diplomas throughout the EU. This would provide a pathway to increased levels of student recruitment from the EU.
37. We welcome the introduction of a chapter on mutual recognition of qualifications in the UK Draft comprehensive free trade agreement (Chapter 13). However, the wording of Article 13.3 of the UK's draft agreement may exclude qualifications granted by UK providers outside of the UK through Transnational education (TNE) arrangements.
38. Divergence from the MRPQ directive will lead to regulatory barriers for regulated professions at UK universities and a much wider negative impact on the labour market on the practice of the seven sectoral professions in the UK, should automatic recognition not continue.
39. Issues would also arise for UK or EU students with UK acquired degrees wishing to practise a regulated or sectoral profession in the EEA, including possible financial redress due to a breach in CMA regulations for courses originally advertised as being mutually recognised in the EU, but where this is no longer possible.
40. Engagement with EU member states has been government to government with some EU27 members adopting contingencies to continue to recognise or automatically recognise sectoral or regulated professions. The UK government should clearly outline the regulations for third country/national recognition for UK acquired degrees in each EU27 member state following the end of the transition period.

Could you sketch out a possible compromise between the UK and the EU on matters related to higher education and how it might be achieved?

41. Universities UK was a main signatory to a statement on 'Securing a strong outcome for research in the EU-UK future relationship: Reaching an

agreement on UK participation in Horizon Europe' coordinated by the Wellcome Trust. The statement identifies 'sticking points' within discussions on the UK's potential association to Horizon Europe and suggests solutions. A summary of these are below. Further information can be found in the joint statement⁹.

- a) **Demonstrating commitment to the programme:** To build trust, the UK should explicitly set aside additional funding for full association for Horizon Europe in its science budget, in the same way that other countries are doing as they begin their association discussions. Discussion of exit clauses for the agreement should proceed on the basis of Horizon 2020 precedents.
- b) **Financial contributions:** The UK and EU should build on the original spirit of the Horizon Europe programme by introducing a two-way correction mechanism for balancing substantial disparities between initial contributions and eventual receipts from the programme. This could be capped if necessary, or only apply if the disparity is greater than a certain amount, after administrative costs are accounted for. It should apply to all third countries seeking to associate to Horizon Europe.
- c) **Overseeing the correct use of programme funds:** The UK should accept the need for EU institutions to oversee the correct use of programme funds. Existing Horizon 2020 agreements recognise this, and it is part of the EU's research collaboration with countries such as the USA.
- d) **Mobility:** Both sides should accept that an agreement should refer to reciprocal mobility arrangements being in place to support the functioning of the programme, recognising the need for mobility of research workers in different roles and sectors.
- e) **Exploitation of results:** The EU should clarify that results of research conducted in and/or with partners in associated countries are exploitable in those jurisdictions, as well as in Member States.

Based on the parameters set out by the UK and EU draft legal texts, could reaching an agreement with the EU restrict the UK's ability to pursue agreements on matters concerning higher education with third countries? For example, due to differing regulatory and data standards?

- f) The EU has no legislative powers where it comes to higher education. This is a policy area that is the responsibility of the individual Member States, meaning that the EU cannot supersede Member State competence. Cooperation in education policy is done through the Open-Method of Co-ordination (OMC). The OMC is a voluntary intergovernmental method

⁹ Wellcome Trust (2020) [Securing a strong outcome for research in the EU-UK future relationship: Reaching an agreement on UK participation in Horizon Europe'](#)

through which Member States are evaluated by one another and the Commission's role is very limited. In summary, within education policy, an agreement with the EU would not restrict the UK's ability to pursue arrangements with third countries.

42. Other issues possibly covered by an FTA, such as association to Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, would also not hinder agreements with other third countries. It would be possible for the UK to set up its own student mobility schemes bilaterally with countries in or outside of the Erasmus+ programme or Europe. Indeed, such programmes already exist (though they are much smaller in scale than Erasmus+). On research, Horizon Europe association would not preclude setting up international research collaboration programmes with other third countries.
43. The UK Government has stated in the negotiating mandate that it will seek an adequacy decision from the EU on data protection, and the EU has stated its willingness to start the process of assessing whether this is possible. The adequacy decision is the process through which the EU determines if data is sufficiently protected in third countries for Member States to share data without any hurdles. The UK has already implemented the general Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), meaning it is likely that the UK will get an adequacy decision and can continue to exchange data as normal.

Is it clear what institutions and stakeholders in your sector must do to prepare for the end of the transition period?

What remains uncertain?

How much progress have been made on preparations so far?

What support has the Government made available?

What would be the consequences if UK did not receive a positive data adequacy decision from the EU?

What steps are institutions taking to adjust to the changes to tuition fees paid by EU students?

44. UUK has published guidance for universities on how to prepare for an end to the transition period without an agreement being reached on the future UK-EU relationship. This includes a set of key actions and considerations.
45. UUK has been in regular contact with members through the Brexit negotiations process, and in particular ahead of important milestones and decisions i.e. the UK officially leaving the EU. In autumn 2019 we produced a Brexit Readiness Checklist and held Brexit Readiness Roadshows in London, Manchester, Cardiff, Belfast and Glasgow.¹⁰
46. On data protection, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will cease to apply to the UK after the transition period, and no agreement has yet been

¹⁰ Universities UK (2019) [Brexit Readiness Checklist](#)

reached on data protection from 1 January 2021. Without an 'adequacy' decision from the EU, personal data flows between the EU/EEA and the UK will become restricted without sufficient safeguards (e.g. Standard Contractual Clauses, Binding Corporate Rules) in place. This would affect transfers of data from the EU to the UK, and could result in a possible halt on the free flow of personal data between the UK and EU/transfers of data and disruption to the use of clouds based outside the UK.

Has leaving the EU and entering the transition period affected the ability of institutions and stakeholders to access projects with EU partners or successfully apply for support from EU funding streams? What experiences have staff in the sector had in relation to the implementation of the UK's settled status scheme?

47. It is difficult to say definitively due to a time lag in the data in becoming available, but we have received anecdotal evidence that UK researchers and EU partners are increasingly reluctant to include UK researchers in EU projects because of the confusion and uncertainty over UK eligibility. This is happening despite the assurances provided by the Withdrawal Agreement.

What would happen if agreement was not reached between the UK and the EU on matters relating to higher education?

What would be the consequences of this for institutions and stakeholders in your sector?

What steps could the UK Government stake to mitigate these consequences?

What evidence is there that it has taken, or is planning to take, these steps?

Are there existing international arrangements for cooperation in higher education that the UK could fall back on if agreement cannot be reached with the EU?

Transnational Education

48. In TNE terms, we could see discriminatory measures affecting UK transnational education programmes including equity ceilings, nationality requirements, restrictions on the recruitment of foreign teachers, subsidies to local providers, authorisation for establishment or delivery of services, economic needs tests, requirements to use a local partner and taxation of licensing/royalty payments.
49. This could lead to the cessation of transnational education programmes in some EU members states.
50. The UK Government could ensure that a free trade agreement does not exclude higher education and that UK providers are granted market access and national treatment, covering rights of establishment and rights to provide higher education through franchise and validation.

51. The UK Draft comprehensive free trade agreement includes many of these measures, but it's not clear if it will keep them in its final version, and if higher education will be included.

August 2020



Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Email: freucom@parliament.uk Website: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/366/committee-on-the-future-relationship-with-the-european-union/>

23 July 2020

Alistair Jarvis
Chief Executive
Universities UK

Dear Mr Jarvis,

The House of Commons Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union is inquiring into the progress of the negotiations between the UK and the EU. Under normal circumstances, the Committee holds regular oral evidence sessions in Westminster. However, measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus make this difficult.

The Committee is keen to gather as much evidence as possible to inform its deliberations so I am writing to you to ask whether you would be willing to help us with our work by making a written submission. We welcome general responses to our [call for evidence](#), which was published on 4 March. We also hope that you would be willing to answer some of the more specific questions set out below on issues that fall within your area of expertise. Submissions need not address every bullet point and can include other matters that you think are relevant to the negotiations and should be drawn to the attention of the Committee.

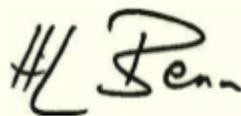
- What are the key priorities of the higher education sector in the negotiations between the UK and the EU? How do these priorities vary between different institutions and stakeholders? Has the Covid-19 pandemic changed any of these priorities? What might be the consequences of a deal which does not meet these priorities?
- To what extent did the UK Government consult your sector before publishing its negotiating aims and draft texts? How well does what the Government has proposed meet its needs? What further provisions would you have advised the Government to seek?
- How do the UK's and the EU's negotiations positions compare on matters relating to higher education? On which areas are the UK and EU's aims farthest apart? Where do their positions align? What is your assessment of the level of technical detail the negotiators have grappled with on this topic to date?
- In which EU programmes concerning higher education (for example Erasmus and Horizon) should the UK be seeking continued involvement? Given the UK and EU's negotiating positions what level of involvement appears possible? What would be the consequences of this for the UK's higher education sector? What alternatives to involvement in these programmes are available or may be possible?
- How might the new immigration regime impact the higher education sector? To what extent might any risks and opportunities be influenced by provisions on labour mobility envisaged in the UK and EU's negotiating positions? How might these affect the ability of higher education institutions to recruit and retain staff and students from EU member states? How might these affect the ability of UK staff to work with or for higher education institutions in the EU, either on a permanent or temporary basis? What wider impact might this have on individual institutions and the higher education sector in general?
- What provisions is your sector seeking on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications? What impact might an agreement on MRPQ based on either the UK or EU negotiating positions have? To what extent have institutions and stakeholders in your

sector engaged with your counterparts in EU Member States to progress mutual recognition of qualifications on a bilateral basis, outside the framework of a future UK/EU agreement; and if you have, what progress has been made?

- Could you sketch out a possible compromise between the UK and the EU on matters related to higher education and how it might be achieved?
- Based on the parameters set out by the UK and EU draft legal texts, could reaching an agreement with the EU restrict the UK's ability to pursue agreements on matters concerning higher education with third countries? For example, due to differing regulatory and data standards?
- Is it clear what institutions and stakeholders in your sector must do to prepare for the end of the transition period? What remains uncertain? How much progress have been made on preparations so far? What support has the Government made available? What would be the consequences if UK did not receive a positive data adequacy decision from the EU? What steps are institutions taking to adjust to the changes to tuition fees paid by EU students?
- Has leaving the EU and entering the transition period affected the ability of institutions and stakeholders to access projects with EU partners or successfully apply for support from EU funding streams? What experiences have staff in the sector had in relation to the implementation of the UK's settled status scheme?
- What would happen if agreement was not reached between the UK and the EU on matters relating to higher education? What would be the consequences of this for institutions and stakeholders in your sector? What steps could the UK Government take to mitigate these consequences? What evidence is there that it has taken, or is planning to take, these steps? Are there existing international arrangements for cooperation in higher education that the UK could fall back on if agreement cannot be reached with the EU?

The Committee staff will be happy to discuss the inquiry, any issues raised, or the process for submitting written evidence. You can contact them at freucom@parliament.uk.

Yours,



Hilary Benn
Chair of the Committee