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BREXIT ACTION PLAN FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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Introduction

- Scotland's story, and especially that of our colleges and universities, has been shaped by our close relationship with Europe. Today, our colleges and universities increasingly work together to expand their impact, but we have always recognised that co-operation within Scotland or the UK alone is never enough for real success. World-leading success comes from reaching out beyond our borders across the globe – and, of course, across Europe – to add value to research endeavours and the education of our students.
- Scotland builds on a great history that goes back centuries to our early links to Europe. Europe influenced Scotland, and Scotland influenced Europe and the world. The Scottish enlightenment figures David Hume, Adam Smith and James Hutton changed our way of thinking about the world and our economy.
- Scientists and researchers in Scotland continue to shape society, while students from around the world continue to see Scotland as one of the top destinations for study. Our excellent research base, which comprises universities, research institutes and public research bodies, as well as third and private sector activity, is having a positive impact on many aspects of Scottish society. Four of our universities are in the latest Times Higher Education's Top 200.
- Brexit, however, poses a huge threat to this excellence. Our membership of the EU provides enormous benefits for our institutions: from the EU citizens who choose to come and work and study here, to the large amounts of competitive EU research and innovation funding won and supporting international collaboration, to the support it provides up-skilling our workforce, to the opportunity offered to our students and staff to live, work, and study abroad, for example on the Erasmus+ programme.
- It is our view that the best future for Scotland is the one 62% of Scottish voters chose: to remain in the European Union.

Key Threats and Actions



Brexit brings unwelcome uncertainty to the many EU citizens working in our colleges and universities

- The Scottish Government is keen for EU nationals to continue to study and work at colleges, universities, and other research organisations in Scotland. We will continue to encourage them to do so.
- We will keep making the case to the UK Government for continued freedom of movement and protection of the rights of EU citizens already in Scotland.
- Our Colleges and Universities are offering support to their students and staff by providing up-to-date information and having regular engagement events.

Brexit may mean fewer EU students and researchers will come to Scotland

- EU students and staff are an essential part of our campus life, and we are determined for them to continue coming to Scotland.
- We have previously confirmed that we will support eligible EU students commencing courses in academic year 2019/2020 for the duration of their courses.
- When the details of what the UK's future status and relationship with the EU are clear, we will consider whether this should be extended to 2020/2021.
- We are in discussion with the further and higher education sectors as to support for EU students beyond this period. Decisions related to funding after Brexit will be part of future budget considerations.

- We continue to press the UK Government to take action in clarifying its future immigration plans. Inward migration has made an overwhelmingly positive contribution to Scotland's further and higher education institutions, and it is crucial that EU staff and students continue to come to Scotland to live, study and work here and contribute to Scotland's cultural diversity and excellence in research and teaching.
- We are in discussion with the UK Government on the Common Travel Area and how it relates to Irish citizens in Scotland and also for Scottish students and staff going to Ireland in the event of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.
- We are also considering the policy position for UK citizens in Gibraltar, and their access to student support.
- Further considerations are also underway on the Portability Pilot which to date has supported Scottish domiciled students to study at selected Higher Education institutions in the EU.
- We are working with the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to ensure that their websites include helpful information on Brexit for both staff and students. The SAAS website includes information and guidance for students affected which is being updated regularly. A link to this site and others is at the end of this document.

We need to protect Scottish students and researchers currently in Europe

- University and college staff that are UK citizens living, studying and/or working in other EU countries face great uncertainty about their future.
- We continue to call on the UK Government to even do more to support those UK citizens.
- We are working to consider longer term student support arrangements for eligible UK citizens residing in the EU, EEA and Switzerland post-Brexit, who may seek to return to the UK in the future to take up study.
- We are seeking clarity from the UK Government on what contingency measures are being put in place for researchers in EU countries in case they are unable to stay there due to Brexit.



Brexit could affect the renowned Erasmus+ Programme

- Scotland benefits enormously from Erasmus+: thousands of Scottish students take part in the programme each year, proportionally more than from any other country in the UK.
- We believe that Scotland's interests are best served by remaining in the programme: we have made our position clear to the UK Government, and are urging them to prioritise access to the programme in their planning and negotiations with the EU.
- We are also working to ensure that any UK-wide value for money analysis of the programme properly captures the views of all nations in the UK, and accurately reflects the benefits the programme provides.

Brexit could affect our participation in international research and innovation collaborations

- Scottish institutions are highly successful at winning competitive EU research and innovation funding, and it is essential that they continue to be able to continue international collaboration through the Horizon and other relevant European programmes.
- We support the future association of the UK with Horizon Europe and are asking the UK Government to involve the Devolved Administrations in the relevant value for money analysis.
- We are asking the UK Government to recognise that research and innovation policy is devolved (apart from UKRI policy) and to co-produce any policy on domestic alternatives to (parts of) Horizon Europe with the Devolved Administrations.



Brexit could present challenges to Scotland's workforce

- Not only does funding from the EU support the up-skilling of our workforce and the development of people's employability, but EU citizens work in a variety of sectors vital to the Scottish economy – such as hospitality and tourism, and health and social care.
- Scotland is already facing challenging demographics in the existing workforce, which would be compounded by the loss of skilled EU citizens and it will be essential for colleges and universities to respond to these challenges. For example, colleges are already looking at how they can adapt their curriculum offer to meet these emerging needs.
- We will continue to work with stakeholders across the sectors to ensure that our colleges and universities provide the training and learning required to meet any future skills gaps in the workforce.

Scotland remains open for collaboration with our European friends and partners

- Scotland did not vote to leave the EU and we deeply value our close partnerships and collaborations with our European partners that we will work hard to keep.
- We will use our network of Scottish Government Europe Hubs and other networks to strengthen bilateral and multilateral links with key European education, research and innovation partners.
- We will use our office in Brussels to make Scotland's voice heard in any EU policy debates on international higher and further education initiatives and programmes.

Conclusion



We are taking action across the range of identified impacts expected as a result of EU Exit and will continue to do so regardless of whether a deal is secured or not. As part of this we are liaising intensely with the UK Government and the other Devolved Administrations.

We are also working closely with both sectors through a Brexit Forum on Colleges and a Brexit Forum on Universities, and will continue to review whether further actions are needed. We are working closely with the Scottish Funding Council in collating and analysing data and evidence of the potential impact on our colleges and universities of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

We are doing everything we can to protect the interests of Scotland. We will always passionately make the case for EU membership, support a welcoming attitude to migration, and recognise the enormous contributions EU citizens make to our country.

Useful Links

There are many sources of further information and support and these are listed below:

- <https://www.mygov.scot/eu-exit-education/>
- https://www.saas.gov.uk/full_time/brexit/index.htm
- <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/eu-exit/eu-exit.aspx>
- <https://www.prepareforbrexit.scot/>
- https://www.ukro.ac.uk/Documents/factsheet_brexit.pdf?pubdate=20180843
- <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-place-europe-science-research/>
- <https://www.scotlandeuropa.com>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/overseas-living-in-guides>

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