

Queen's University Belfast

Brexit Update

Since the 2016 referendum decision for the UK to leave the EU, the University has sought clarity on four key issues that are crucial to the future of the higher education sector. These were set out in the Brexit Institutional response paper, which can be accessed here:

www.qub.ac.uk/Brexit

Key Issues

- Access to EU Research Funding;
- Status of Current and Future EU Staff;
- Student Recruitment and Mobility; and
- Relationship with the Republic of Ireland (ROI)

The current draft Withdrawal Agreement announced by the Prime Minister on 14 November 2018 and the subsequent UK/EU Outline Political Declaration announced on 22 November 2018 address the concerns as outlined below:

Access to EU Research Funding

Confirmation of existing funding up to 2020 is assured. Participation by the UK in Union programmes will be subject to a continued financial contribution from the UK Government to the European Economic Community. There is also the possibility that the UK will be able to participate in the European Research Infrastructure Consortia (ERICs). There is a further commitment to the development of a PEACE PLUS programme, which will focus on reconciliation and a shared future in Northern Ireland. From 2011-2017 the University secured over £69 million of research income from the EU.

An excellent example of EU partnership working is the Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) on Food. Queen's is a key partner in this substantial new pan-European partnership which brings together a unique group of 50 leading companies, universities, and scientific partners covering the entire food value chain. Access to future research funding programmes will be included in the future UK/EU relationship negotiations.

Status of Current and Future EU Staff

There is provision for the maintenance of the Common Travel Area (CTA) which will allow students and staff to continue to travel freely between Britain and Ireland. It also allows British and Irish citizens to live, work, study and access housing, healthcare, pensions and welfare in each other's countries on a reciprocal basis. Institutionally Queen's currently employs 807 non-UK EU staff, which represents 21% of our total staffing.

Student Recruitment and Mobility

There is commitment to continuing the UK participation in student exchange programmes, subject to a financial contribution from the UK Government. One of the main strands of student mobility is the Erasmus programme which annually supports over 14,000 UK students to study abroad. The Erasmus exchange scheme allows students to study at leading European universities or undertake a European internship, enhancing their skills and employability. Some 357 Queen's students have benefited from the ERASMUS programme in this academic year.

There will also be an arrangement on recognition of professional qualifications that will ensure that fields of study such as medicine and nursing continue to be internationally

validated. In addition to the commitments on mobility, there is also a commitment to consider conditions for entry and stay for purposes such as research, study, training and youth exchanges. These will be without prejudice to the CTA.

Relationship with the Republic of Ireland (ROI)

A dedicated Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland will ensure that there will be no hard border on the island of Ireland in any circumstances, as well as continued cooperation within the North-South Ministerial Council Framework.

This will allow programmes and joint research partnerships to continue, such as the Bryden Centre for Advanced Marine and Bio-Energy Research, which is funded by the EU's INTERREG VA Programme. Through the Centre, Queen's is working with a number of cross-border partners including the University of Highlands and Islands, Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Ulster University, the Agri-Food & Biosciences Institute, Donegal County Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council. The project is on course to create the largest amount of cross-border research in this specific area to date and will recruit 34 PhD students across the marine and bio-energy disciplines.

Queen's has consistently expressed concerns at the implications of a hard Brexit for universities and the wider economic implications for Northern Ireland and the UK. It remains the institutional position of the University that a no-deal Brexit would be damaging for both the higher education and the business sectors in Northern Ireland.

The draft Withdrawal Agreement and Outline Political Declaration can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/draft-withdrawal-agreement-and-outline-political-declaration>