

President Tusk,
European Council,
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B-1048 Brussels
Belgium

The Russell Group of Universities
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27 April 2017

Dear President Tusk,

As Vice-Chancellors representing research-intensive universities in every nation of the UK, we write on behalf of the Russell Group of universities regarding the start of formal Brexit negotiations.

Russell Group universities are world leaders in science and research. In 2015, our members were responsible for nearly 20 per cent of the most highly cited research papers in the EU28.

Our message to you ahead of the European Council meeting is simple: both UK and EU science will be stronger if we continue to work together.

The UK has a lot to offer and we do not want our contribution to end when we leave the EU. We will continue working with our European partners as closely as possible.

The UK government has made clear it wants to maintain close collaboration on science and innovation. We would urge the Council to take a similar approach, building on a long history of strong and positive cooperation between the UK and the EU on science to ensure this can continue.

Russell Group universities have established around 7,000 collaborative links with partners in other EU member states through Horizon 2020 alone. We would encourage you to give full consideration to options that would allow UK higher education institutions to participate in future EU research and innovation framework programmes based on excellence.

We note your intention to make reciprocal guarantees for the rights of EU and UK citizens and their families one of the first items for discussion during talks. We fully support this approach and hope an agreement can be reached as soon as possible to give certainty to the millions of people who will be affected, including the 61,000 students and more than 24,000 employees of other EU nationalities at Russell Group universities.

Changes to the UK's current relationship with the EU are inevitable. New barriers that would prevent the free flow of ideas and restrict international research collaboration are not. There are a number of ways we could maintain existing ties and protect working relationships after the UK leaves the EU and these should be explored fully, and as a priority, as negotiations progress. In Northern Ireland the land border with the Republic of Ireland is a unique and important issue. It is vital that freedom of movement across both jurisdictions continues unimpeded in order to sustain and enhance current north-south collaboration.

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University of York

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Any Brexit settlement which makes it more difficult for universities to work together across international borders would be harmful for all of us. We would encourage all parties to do everything they can to avoid such an outcome.

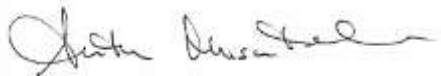
With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Greenaway". The script is cursive and fluid.

Professor Sir David Greenaway, Vice Chancellor of the University of Nottingham and Chair of the Russell Group of Universities

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Johnston". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Professor Patrick Johnston, President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anton Muscatelli". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Professor Anton Muscatelli, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Glasgow

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colin Riordan". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Professor Colin Riordan, Vice-Chancellor, Cardiff University