

Brexit Working Group

17 April 2019



College Preparations for Brexit

BWG/19/Apr/1

Recommendation	Brexit Working Group is invited to review the attached paper that details the preparations for Brexit being made across the College.
Summary	The paper summarises the preparations for Brexit being made across the College and co-ordinated by the Brexit Working Group.
Strategic context	Preparing for Brexit is essential to minimise possible impact on a number of themes of the strategic plan, including our reputation, our research, our people and culture and our institutional sustainability.
Strategic risks	If the College does not prepare for a possible 'no deal' Brexit, the wide-ranging implications may not be considered within adequate time to mitigate any associated risks. These risks may include impact on: EU staff and student recruitment and retention; EU research collaborations; staff and student mobility; supply chain and trade; and many other areas.
Resource implications	N/A
Previous review	N/A
OfS reportable event	No
Next steps	Brexit Working Group will continue to prepare for Brexit.
Date of introduction	Immediately relevant
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Date of writing	10 April 2019

College Preparations for Brexit

Update from UUK / sector

The government and Universities UK have both published guidance for HEIs on preparing for a no-deal Brexit, details of which have been shared with the group.

EU research collaborations

There is a high likelihood of *reduction in research funding* arising from time taken to negotiate participation in Horizon Europe based on third country status, as well as high levels of uncertainty. The EU is currently the second largest funder of College research (behind UKRI). A more *strategic approach to international partnership development* across the College will be a critical success factor if we wish to maximise our engagement with, and income from, internationally focused income streams.

EU students

Student Recruitment

The Student Recruitment team has undertaken a detailed risk assessment in relation to our European markets, which currently account for around 9.25% of our UG and 4.18% PGT applications. The key risks lie in the potential trade-off between loss of income resulting from a drop in enrolments and the opportunity for increased income linked to the likely reclassification of EU students as international fee-payers. Student Recruitment Committee has been considering whether there might be value in putting in place transitional financial support for EU students to offset the impact of any increase in fees, in the short term. A number of potential models are under consideration although the Committee wishes to wait until the wider sector reaction becomes clearer before reaching a final, public position on the issue.

Students' Union

As the Students' Union, we have attended the College's Brexit Working Group that is working through measures needed to support students, staff and those part of the Royal Holloway community in the event of a no deal scenario. In representing the student body, we have raised student concerns regarding College communications to students about Brexit, the future of the Erasmus+ programme and its funding, and the impact of no deal on College commercial services' stock procurement; we have also signed a petition along with the College Principal and other student leaders from across the UK requesting that the government continue their commitment to fund Erasmus+. We continue to encourage students to come and speak about any concerns that they may have.

International Student Support Office (ISSO)

Following guidance from ICN (immigration Compliance Network) and UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs) a decision was made to review our communication with our current EU students.

It was decided that we had a duty to update the students on the current situation and what effects a no deal outcome could have on them. EU students were emailed directly in early March directing them to relevant Gov.UK and UKCISA websites, advising on Easter travel plans and offering personal guidance and support through the ISSO. Working with internal communications we also updated the information on the EU Hub and included information and a link to the websites on the student weekly newsletter.

Communications

Advice has been given on EU travel and an EU hub has been set up to provide answers to FAQs, general information on Brexit and UK Universities and latest update information. Comms has liaised with ISSO to issue regular updates to EU students.

EU staff

Discussions and actions in this area have focussed on good communication with EU staff, including travel advice and there is also a proposal being drafted regarding a possible loan scheme to assist EU staff with relocation costs.

Staff and student mobility

AQPO and CeDAS

AQPO and CeDAS are jointly responsible for the College's participation in the Erasmus+ framework to support incoming and outgoing student mobility:

AQPO: oversight of Erasmus+ partnership agreements with European universities; monitoring of performance; initiation, renewal and termination; liaison with partner institutions

CeDAS: oversight of the College's grant agreement with the British Council and compliance with Erasmus+ regulations; oversight of academic and pastoral support for visiting students; managing outgoing non-SMLLC students and staff teaching mobility

Staff engagement with sector guidance on Brexit during 2018/19

- Attendance at Europe Network events organised by Universities UK International
- Participation in Brexit webinar series on Higher Education and Research (Universities UK)
- Monitoring of information circulated by Universities UK, Department of Education and European Commission, especially the Erasmus+ section of the no-deal scenario action plan (risk register) issued by Universities UK

Priorities for Brexit contingency planning:

1. Secure access to the UK government underwrite of Erasmus+ funding for the remainder of the current Erasmus+ project (start date 01.06.2018), to maintain financial support for students and staff who are mobile during the 2018-19 academic year.
2. Coordinate communication with current and prospective RHUL students participating in the Erasmus+ project as a mandatory or optional component of their degree programme.
3. Communicate with partner universities to ensure continuity of future cooperation regardless of Brexit outcome, and to amend or renew partner agreement documentation accordingly.
4. Advise Brexit Working Group on the financial implications of worst-case scenario loss of access to Erasmus+ funding and impact on students

Summary of key actions completed by 29th March 2019

1. Reviewed status of all 72 Erasmus+ agreements and determined a priority list of 28 partner institutions crucial for continuity of provision for SMLLC students with mandatory years abroad.
2. Renewed 34 agreements due to expire in 2019 with the addition of a 'Brexit clause' indicating mutual commitment to continue collaboration post-Brexit regardless of outcome.
3. Contacted 42 partner institutions to propose a new non-Erasmus+ bilateral exchange agreement using the nationally approved template. 15 institutions have agreed so far, with the remainder either pending approval, not approved or waiting for Brexit outcome.
4. Supported senior management with responding to personal letters of concern received from leaders of 7 European partner institutions.
5. Communicated general guidance on passport validity, EHIC validity and travel arrangements to current visiting Erasmus+ students.
6. Advised internal stakeholders (SMLLC, MarComms, Students Union) on communications with current students regarding Erasmus+ and College contingency planning
7. Estimated funding requirements in 2019-20 and recommended to BWG that the College commits to an underwrite of equivalent Erasmus+ funding in the event of a no-deal Brexit to protect mandatory and optional mobility for cohorts up to and including 2022-23.
8. Completed initial registration with new UK government portal for 2018-19 underwrite funding and monitored guidance on underwrite requirements.

The College has recently made a commitment to underwrite the Erasmus+ deal for 4 years due to the uncertainty over continued government support for this initiative. This has been very much welcomed by staff and students alike.

This area of discussion has also focussed on travel insurance, EHIC/health insurance, and communication with staff.

Supply Chain and Trade

Security

Security have undertaken a supply chain review and do not foresee any substantive difficulties for security caused by Brexit.

Procurement

It is recognised that due to the variety of products and services that is purchased across college, the Procurement team have started to risk assess and understand the risks around each category (Estates, IT & Corporate). This includes mapping the supply chain in order to identify any potential risks which need to be resolved in the event of a 'No Deal' Brexit.

We have over 10,000 suppliers on Agresso, which makes it impossible to contact all of the suppliers. Therefore we are targeting the high value and high risk suppliers.

We have developed a sector wide Brexit Impact Risks Analysis template. All framework agreements are categorised as having a low, medium or high risk impact. The assessment looks at the supply chain risks in the following areas:

- Labour
- Regulatory
- Supply Chain
- Commercial

1.

The results so far show that there are no significant supply chain issues within the sector.