The following update was issued by Alistair Jarvis, Deputy Chief Executive, Universities UK.

Dear colleagues,

Please find below an update on the latest Brexit information and activities.

All the best,

Alistair

- Meeting with Prime Minister’s policy advisers

We met earlier this week with the Prime Minister’s policy advisers responsible for Education, Research and innovation issues. It is clear that the urgent issue of providing clarity on fees and student finance for EU students applying for 2017/18 (and 18/19) entry is now with No.10 for a political decision. We stressed the needs for urgent action to provide transitional stability and reminded them of our proposal for the relatively simple action they could take to provide the necessary clarity. We also highlighted continuing challenge with ESIF applications and the need for a longer-term transitional support commitment from Government for all bids pre-exit. Additionally, had a lengthy discussion about the measures that the Government should take to best support universities to thrive post-exit. This included sharing our current thinking on what more Government could do to support international research collaboration, provide stable investment and make the UK an attractive destination for EU and international staff and students.

- Meeting with the Department for Education / collating evidence on value of ESIF

We also met earlier this week with the team at DfE responsible for both Brexit and immigration policy issues. Although the Department is still largely in the evidence gathering phase of its work on Brexit, they are aware that they have just 4-5 months in which to firm up their ‘asks’ ahead of the formal negotiations opening in early 2017. There is a strong recognition within DfE (including at ministerial level) of the need for clarity as a matter of urgency on EU students fees and student finance for 17/18, although,
unfortunately, no further guarantees were provided as to the possible timing of any upcoming announcement. The political decision on this is clearly with No.10, although we understand our case has been supported by both DfE and DfExEU.

We also highlighted the challenges with the ESIF programme, given that the Treasury’s financial guarantee announced in mid-August applied only to ESIF projects signed before the Autumn Statement. With this deadline now fast approaching, DfE is interested in evidence on the value of ESIF. The Department has already requested that UUK share with them our evidence on the value of the ESIF programme to date. Further to this, we are also engaging with the Treasury on this matter, who advised that they will put in place arrangements for assessing whether to guarantee funding for certain ESIF projects that might be signed after the Autumn Statement. We will keep members informed as these discussions progress.

We also discussed exit negotiations priorities (research programmes, EU staff, EU students, mobility) and the measures that the Government should take to best support universities to thrive post-exit and have agreed to provide further evidence, support DfE modelling and share our developing policy suggestions on these issues, most urgently on EU student and staff immigration.

- **How can the Government best support universities to thrive post-exit?**

I have attached a paper that outlines our preliminary thinking on how the Government can best support universities to thrive following the UK’s exit from the EU. This paper includes a number of actions that Government could deliver to ensure that universities are best placed to maximise the UK’s economic success and global influence outside of the EU in five areas:

1. Enhancing international research collaboration
2. Making the UK an attractive destination for talented university staff
3. Encouraging talented and entrepreneurial students from around the world to choose to study in the UK
4. Increasing public investment in research and innovation
5. Supporting UK students and staff to access vital global opportunities

The paper will be developed further over the autumn. Work is currently underway to develop more detailed policy proposals in each of these five areas. Members’ input is being sought through UUK’s International Policy Network and Research Policy Network, the UUK Board and the informal VC advisory group on Brexit issues. We are also holding a number of regional dinners for Vice-Chancellors over the autumn to discuss the post-exit options further.

- **HEFCE and Universities UK conference, 5th December 2016**

On Monday 5 December 2016, Universities UK, in partnership with HEFCE, will be hosting a free to attend event titled *Putting universities at the heart of a thriving, global post-exit*
UK that will examine the current political and policy environment and explore new models to support and enhance UK universities’ international collaborations across Europe and the wider world. The event will bring together representatives from university leadership teams to consider how the challenges of Brexit can best be met, as well as how the sector can identify and benefit from new opportunities following the UK’s exit from the EU. We hope this will provide a useful forum to share our latest thinking and importantly hear a range of perspectives to contribute to the debate.

- #WeAreInternational campaign, EAIE conference and international communications

We are also supporting the #WeAreInternational campaign. The campaign is designed to promote the value of international students and staff, and the internationalism of UK universities more broadly. As part of the campaign, we worked with the #WeAreInternational team to develop a short film that highlights the value of internationalism across UK universities. It features the voices of students and academics at UK universities from around the world. The film was kindly produced by the University of Sheffield, although is very much a campaign designed to represent and support all UK universities. We have also been informed that Universities Minister Jo Johnson will be using the film to support his speech in China today. More information on the campaign and how universities can get involved can be found here.

This film along with a postcard was used to promote the UK as an international student destination at the EAIE conference in Liverpool 13-16 September. The conference is Europe's largest gathering of international higher education staff. The film was shown on a loop at the British Council stand, where other UUKi materials were displayed, and shown at the beginning of a panel discussion 'Life after Brexit' in which UUKi Director Vivienne Stern spoke. The postcard, which featured positive messages about internationalism at UK institutions was handed out at the British Council reception. UUKi colleagues also spoke on TNE and outward mobility at the event and Universities Wales and Universities Scotland had exhibition stands promoting their respective nations as study destinations.

Additionally, we are working in partnership with the British Council to develop a programme of activities and materials (including student-focused Q&As) to support a series of recruitment fairs for prospective EU students taking places across Europe over the Autumn. This first of these events takes place in Madrid on the 19 October 2016 and each event will include a panel discussions and Q&As on the implications of Brexit for EU students.

- Lords Science and Technology Committee inquiry

Professor Sir David Greenaway, Vice-Chancellor, University of Nottingham and Professor David Phoenix OBE, Vice-Chancellor, London South Bank University gave evidence at The Science and Technology Committee which is assessing what action is needed to ensure UK
science continues to flourish as the UK negotiates its exit from the EU on 13 September. Their evidence can be viewed here.

- **Update from Scotland**

  Mike Russell MSP was appointed as Minister for responsibility for Brexit negotiations with the UK Government. Scotland’s First Minister made the announcement on 25 August. Universities Scotland has written to the new Minister to set out HE priorities and will seek a meeting at the earliest convenience. As a former Cabinet Secretary for Education he is well placed to understand the issues facing HE. The creation of this post is intended to be an indication of the importance the First Minister places on the negotiations. Universities Scotland has taken several opportunities, both privately with Ministers and publicly, to push for a decision on the fee-status of EU students from the Scottish Government. So far, no decision has been forthcoming.

  Alastair Sim, Director of Universities Scotland, was a panellist in a Brexit briefing session focused on HE and research on 20th September. Other panellists included Catherine Stihler MEP and Anne Glover, Scotland’s former Chief Scientific Officer. Alastair took the opportunity to push, again, for a decision from the Scottish Government on the fee status of EU entrants for 2017. Universities Scotland has also been invited to give oral evidence to the Committee’s inquiry into Scotland’s place in Europe following the Brexit vote. Professor Sir Tim O’Shea will give evidence to MPs on behalf of Universities Scotland at the session in Glasgow on 24 October.

- **Update from Wales**

  The Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams AM, gave a keynote address at Cardiff University on 8 September, outlining the role that universities can play in community cohesion, following the vote to leave the European Union. She has now also publically confirmed her formation of a Welsh HE Brexit Working Group with Universities Wales to co-ordinate intelligence and provide advice to the First Minister on both the impact and possibilities of UK withdrawal from the EU.

  Universities Wales has increased its communications as a sector with EU students via the existing campaign – Study in Wales – a brand with accompanying brochures, website and social media accounts that promotes studying at Welsh universities to international students. We have added an EU Students page to target promotion towards these students and to help answer questions, resulting from the referendum vote.

  All the best,

  Alistair
For all Royal Holloway colleagues:

- How can the Government best support universities to thrive post-exit?

If you have any comments on the paper that has been shared by Alistair Jarvis, which outlines our preliminary thinking on how the Government can best support universities to thrive following the UK’s exit from the EU, please share with Marie Ennis, Director of Communications and External Relations and Doug German, Executive Policy Assistant.