

**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY AND  
DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION**

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS EU HOME AFFAIRS  
SUB-COMMITTEE'S REPORT: "BREXIT: THE ERASMUS AND HORIZON  
PROGRAMMES"**

**MINISTER: CHRIS SKIDMORE MP – MINISTER FOR UNIVERSITIES, SCIENCE,  
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

**APRIL 2019**

**THE ERASMUS AND HORIZON PROGRAMMES**

- 1. Erasmus+ is the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport. In the UK, Erasmus+ funding has supported more than 4,700 projects and 128,000 participants since the programme began. While many people think of Erasmus+ as a university student exchange scheme, the programme also extends opportunities to study, work, teach or train abroad to other groups, including vocational students, education staff and youth workers. It also supports youth exchanges, international partnership projects, and youth policy development. Witnesses were extremely positive about the impact of Erasmus+, particularly in terms of improving employment prospects, contributing to economic growth, and increasing opportunities for people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special needs. (Paragraph 46)**
- 2. Horizon 2020 is the EU's framework programme for research and innovation. The UK has been both a significant contributor to and beneficiary from Horizon 2020, with the highest share of participants in signed grant agreements and the second highest share of total programme funding distributed. Witnesses agreed that the programme helps to raise the standard of research and supports excellent science in the UK, including by facilitating international research collaboration, providing access to largescale research facilities, and attracting the best staff to work on research projects. (Paragraph 47)**

## BREXIT IMPLICATIONS

- 3. The Withdrawal Agreement would ensure that UK participation in Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 could continue largely unchanged but only until the end of the current Multiannual Financial Framework period, at the end of 2020. We note that uncertainty about whether this Agreement will be ratified is a matter of concern to current and potential UK participants in these programmes. (Paragraph 88)**

The Government's priority remains leaving the EU with a deal. The terms of the Withdrawal Agreement would provide for ongoing UK participation in current EU Programmes - under the 2014 to 2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) - until the end of 2020, and ensure funding is provided for the lifetime of individual projects beyond this. From January 2021, successor programmes under the 2021 to 2027 MFF would begin and our involvement will be subject to future negotiations.

We recognise the uncertainty caused by the possibility of leaving the EU without a deal. However, as we approach exit day, we remain confident that we have robust plans in place to mitigate the risks to UK participation in Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 posed by a no deal scenario.

Irrespective of the terms of EU exit, we wish to keep cooperating with our EU partners. We believe young people and students from the UK and other European countries should continue to have the opportunity to benefit from each other's world-leading universities. We will also seek to ensure that UK and EU researchers, universities and businesses can continue to collaborate in the future.

- 4. The Government has guaranteed to underwrite funding for successful UK bids to EU programmes until the end of 2020, if the UK leaves the EU without a deal. However, the Government still needs to agree terms with the EU for UK organisations to continue to participate in Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 projects as third country entities. (Paragraph 89)**

In addition to the UK Government's plans for a 'no deal' scenario (published in its most recent technical notice and subsequent guidance), the European Commission has passed a contingency planning regulation for Erasmus+. We welcome the further information provided by the Commission and are seeking clarity on the proposal. The government guarantee will also provide underwrite

funding where the UK beneficiary has agreed to a bilateral agreement with their partner outside of the Erasmus+ framework.

We have been actively seeking to engage in substantive discussions with the European Commission to agree arrangements and ultimately provide greater certainty to organisations and participants. We continue to be ready to engage with the Commission on the details of our respective contingency plans and will continue our engagement efforts in the immediate future. It is clearly in the interests of both sides to provide stakeholders with as much clarity as possible.

- 5. We note the European Commission's current unwillingness to engage in discussions on possible actions to protect people on Erasmus+ exchanges and Horizon 2020 projects in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit, but urge the Government to continue its efforts to reach a resolution with the Commission to avoid disruption. We remain extremely concerned about the lack of time available to negotiate and confirm these 'no deal' contingency plans. If a resolution cannot be agreed, the Government should use funds set aside for the underwrite guarantee to establish replacement UK mobility and research funding schemes as quickly as possible. (Paragraph 90)**

If discussions with the Commission to secure UK organisations' continued ability to participate in the Erasmus+ programme are unsuccessful, the Government will engage directly with Member States and key institutions to seek to ensure UK students can continue with their planned activity.

In these circumstances, UK organisations may wish to consider bilateral arrangements with partner organisations that would enable their projects to continue. We have engaged with stakeholder groups throughout the education sector to support and encourage these bilateral discussions. The government will provide funding for Erasmus+ projects that are approved prior to the UK's withdrawal from the EU, either directly by the European Commission, or by the UK National Agency and ratified by the European Commission. For Horizon 2020, the Government continues to welcome "No Deal" discussions with the Commission at the earliest opportunity. As a matter of urgency, these discussions would need to include the status of UK participants in Horizon 2020 projects that are ongoing at the point of exit. In the absence of these discussions, the Government continues to work closely with UKRI to ensure that all systems are in place to deliver the underwrite guarantee at the point of exit, if it is required.

If a resolution cannot be agreed, the Government is considering a wide range of

options with regards to the future of international exchange and collaboration in education and training, including potential domestic alternatives. While it is not appropriate to set out any assessment at this stage, we will always want to ensure value for money for the taxpayer.

- 6. The Government should, as a matter of urgency, provide further information on how it intends the underwrite guarantee to operate in practice, including who will disburse the funding and what terms and conditions will apply to beneficiaries. We recommend that schedules for releasing payments and monitoring and reporting systems should be as similar to those set out in the original grant agreements as possible, to provide certainty and minimise disruption for UK participants transitioning to the new system. (Paragraph 91)**

The delivery of the Government's Erasmus+ guarantee will seek to maintain the same processes as those that are currently in place where funding will be distributed to beneficiaries via the Erasmus+ UK National Agency, administering the Government underwrite guarantee on behalf of the UK Government. It is not proposed to deviate from the existing payment schedules.

Registration for Erasmus+ claims is available now on the [Grant Management Function page of GOV.UK](#) and organisations in receipt of funds from Erasmus+ or European Solidarity Corps (ESC) and organisations that have submitted a bid to Erasmus+ will need to submit a recipient registration form to make a claim against the guarantee.

The Cabinet Office Grants Management Function team will review each submission and may ask for additional information. They will then pass completed submissions to the National Agency, who will contact them within 10 working days. Further information will be provided to applicants in due course.

UKRI is the delivery partner for the Government's Horizon 2020 underwrite guarantee. The Government is working in partnership with UKRI to develop guidance for stakeholders on how the underwrite and extension will be delivered in a "No Deal" scenario. This guidance will include further information on guarantee payment schedules and the monitoring and reporting processes for grants.

We can confirm that UKRI intends to use existing systems to administer the underwrite guarantee and extension. Use of existing systems will ensure a

smooth post-exit transition for UK grant recipients and minimise disruption for the UK research community.

- 7. Of particular concern to the UK's research community is the loss of access to key sources of UK Horizon 2020 funding, including the European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, which are not open to third country participation and so are not covered by the underwrite guarantee. We note that the Government is keenly aware of this issue and emphasise the importance of confirming replacements for these funding streams as soon as possible. (Paragraph 92)**

In the event of a “No Deal” scenario, the Government has committed to underwrite all successful UK bids to Horizon 2020, including European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, submitted while the UK is still a member of the EU. The Government has also extended the guarantee to cover UK participants' funding for all Horizon 2020 calls open to third country participation from the date of exit until the end of 2020.

- 8. We welcome indications that the UK and EU are willing to work together on the free flow of data and regulatory alignment with regard to clinical trials and chemical registration. This will be essential to facilitate continued international research collaboration. (Paragraph 93)**

Across regulation – including in data protection, clinical trials and chemical registration – the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is working with relevant other government departments to ensure regulatory regimes which are as supportive of our science and innovation communities as possible.

The White Paper on the future relationship between the UK and the EU set out that the UK would want to secure access to relevant IT systems, ensuring the timely transfer of data between UK and EU authorities. It also set out that we would seek to participating in other activities like ongoing safety monitoring and the incoming clinical trials framework.

We are already aligned with the EU on the flow of data. Our Data Protection Act 2018 updated the UK's rules in accordance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation and transposed the Law Enforcement Directive. The Political Declaration commits the EU to begin adequacy assessments once the UK leaves, and seeks to ensure decisions are in place by the end of 2020 to

sustain flows of data.

The EU is planning to implement new Clinical Trials Regulation (CTR). We expect this to be implemented during 2020 and we will align where possible without delay when it does come into force in the EU, subject to parliamentary approvals. In the event that the CTR does not come into force during the proposed implementation period, the Government has confirmed that UK law will remain aligned with parts of the EU's CTR legislation that are within the UK's control, in order that researchers conducting clinical trials can plan with greater certainty.

In the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal, the CTR will not be in force in the EU at the time of Exit, and so will not be incorporated into UK law on Exit day. However, we will align where possible with the CTR without delay when it does come into force in the EU, subject to usual parliamentary approvals. This alignment will happen after Exit day.

Regarding chemical registration, the Political Declaration published on 22 November 2018 stated that the UK and EU would explore the possibility of cooperation between UK authorities and the European Chemicals Agency as part of the detailed negotiations.

## **FUTURE UK POLICY OPTIONS**

- 9. The UK is a respected and important partner in both the Erasmus and Horizon programmes. It is a popular destination for mobility placements and a world leader in research with an exceptionally strong science base. The UK receives substantial amounts of funding from EU programmes, and other less tangible benefits built on decades of international cooperation with European partners. We strongly believe—and it was the unanimous view of our witnesses—that it is in the UK and the EU's mutual interest to preserve current close levels of cooperation on research and innovation and educational mobility. We are encouraged by positive indications in the Political Declaration on the future UK-EU relationship that this will be possible. (Paragraph 172)**

The Government recognises and agrees with the recommendation made by the Committee that it is imperative that the UK and EU maintain a strong level of cooperation in research and innovation and educational mobility.

The UK Government has made clear that it is open to maintaining cooperation in the areas of education and culture, including through EU Programmes in areas such as youth, culture, education and science and innovation. This will be done

by working together with our EU partners helping build a strong future relationship.

## **Erasmus**

- 10. The Erasmus programme has played a significant role in facilitating the international mobility of people studying and working in the fields of education, training, youth, and sport in the UK. The programme offers unparalleled financial support and flexibility to enable people from lower income backgrounds, and those with medical needs or disabilities, to take part in educational exchanges. The Government should seek to ensure the UK remains part of this important initiative by seeking full association to the 2021–2027 Erasmus programme. (Paragraph 173)**

The proposed regulation for the new programme has reached a partial general approach in the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament has also adopted its first reading position. We are open to exploring participation in the successor scheme to the current Erasmus+ Programme and we welcome the proposal for the 2021-2027 successor scheme to Erasmus+. We will continue to participate in discussions on the 2021-2027 Erasmus programme while we remain in the EU.

However, ultimately UK participation in the next programme is a matter for wider negotiations about our future relationship with the EU.

- 11. The cost of participating in the 2021–2027 Erasmus programme is likely to be higher than for Erasmus+, as it will have double the overall budget. Nevertheless, we consider this a worthwhile investment to maintain access to Erasmus and the partnerships the UK has built within Europe through the programme over the past 30 years. It is clear, as the Minister himself noted, that the value of Erasmus cannot be measured simply in terms of financial contributions and receipts. (Paragraph 174)**

As noted in the report, the benefits of Erasmus+ cannot be defined in purely financial terms and we are committed to ensuring that post-exit the UK and its European partners continue to benefit from the years of international cooperation and partnerships in the area of education.

- 12. As an associated third country the UK would be able to attend Erasmus programme committees but would lose its voting rights, reducing the UK's**

**strategic influence over the programme. We are reassured, however, that these meetings operate mainly on a collaborative basis and non-EU programme countries are regarded as “valued partners”. (Paragraph 175)**

- 13. As a non-associated third country, the UK would not even have a seat at the table in Erasmus programme committees, and UK participants would have access to less funding and fewer exchange opportunities. We do not consider this to be an attractive option. (Paragraph 176)**

The Government recognises the Committee’s recommendation that the UK secure full participation in the 2021-27 successor Erasmus+ scheme and the Government is considering its options at this stage.

The Political Declaration set out that UK participation would be on the basis of a set of agreed terms which would provide for a fair and appropriate financial contribution, provisions allowing for sound financial management by both sides, fair treatment of participants, and management and consultation appropriate to the nature of our involvement.

We are considering options for future participation in the next Erasmus+ programme, however ultimately such participation will be subject to wider UK-EU negotiations on the future relationship.

- 14. If association to Erasmus cannot be negotiated, it will be essential to establish an alternative UK mobility scheme. This programme must be adequately resourced to support continued growth in the number of people undertaking educational exchanges, particularly in the vocational education and training sector. It should also provide additional support for people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with disabilities or additional needs, and flexibility in the placements on offer, to ensure opportunities to study, work, teach, or train abroad remain accessible to all. Even with comparative financial investment, however, it will be impossible to replicate aspects of Erasmus which are key to facilitating international exchanges, namely, the programme’s strong brand, trusted reputation, common rulebook and framework for partnership agreements, and its established network of potential partners. (Paragraph 177)**

We would still like to have the option to participate in the future programme. The proposal is still being negotiated in the Council and the European Parliament and further details need to be determined before we are able to make an informed decision on future participation. As part of this process, the Department for Education are engaging stakeholders from a range of sectors.



In the event that the UK does not participate in the next programme, the Government has made clear that it wants young people and students from the UK and European countries to continue to benefit from cooperation in education and training.

While Erasmus+ is the largest mobility programme in which the UK participates, evidence suggest that around half of UK HE outward mobilities take place outside of the Erasmus+ programme.

The potential benefits of the UK establishing its own international mobility scheme would include the ability to tailor the scheme to the UK's needs and target the funding to where it is most needed.

**15. Launching a new UK mobility scheme—or increasing investment in existing schemes—to extend mobility opportunities beyond Europe would be welcome in addition to continued participation in Erasmus. Nonetheless, this must not be prioritised at the expense of exchanges “on our doorstep”, which are particularly attractive to vocational students, people with special needs, and those with family commitments. (Paragraph 178)**

Irrespective of the UK's status in the 2021-27 Erasmus+ Programme, the Government wants international exchange and cooperation in education with our European partners to continue post-exit. The Government also fully recognises the important contribution that international students make to the UK's higher education sector. They bring greater diversity to university and college campuses, an international dimension to the experience of all students, stimulate demand for courses and add to the UK's impressive research capacity. In the longer term, they offer the prospect of productive business, political, cultural and research links. Of course, they also bring welcome income to UK universities, and our wider economy. That is why Government, through the recently published International Education Strategy, set set out ambitions to increase the total number of international students hosted by UK universities to 600,000 by 2030.

We also have bilateral education relationships with many countries and some existing bilateral exchange and mobility initiatives with individual countries outside of the Erasmus+ programme, in Europe and beyond. Examples of these are the school-level UK-German Connection, which funds a variety of small-scale exchanges and visits to Germany for pupils of different ages.

Further afield, our bilateral relationship with China has also resulted in two mobility programmes for UK students – Generation UK, which allows participants from disadvantaged backgrounds to undertake an internship in China and Study China which involves a cultural stay in China during which

students study Mandarin.

Similarly, through the US-UK Fulbright Commission we also fund a number of post-graduate and post-doctoral scholarships for UK citizens to study in the US. This programme has also benefitted from a recently-agreed funding uplift. The Secretary of State for Education announced a new £2.5 million programme in January 2019 to boost international exchanges for disadvantaged pupils. Schools in England are now able to apply for grants to take pupils aged 11 and above to visit partner schools overseas, giving them the chance to learn first-hand about another country, improve language skills and build independence, character and resilience. This will allow thousands more disadvantaged secondary pupils to experience the different cultures of countries “on our doorstep” and also beyond, as school can apply for grants for exchange visits to any country.

### **Horizon**

- 16. We note the Government’s commitment to increase spending on research and development to 2.4% of GDP by 2027, and look forward to an ambitious new International Research and Innovation Strategy which affirms the centrality of research and innovation to technological progress and the future economic prosperity of the UK. (Paragraph 179)**

The Government recognises the Committee’s interest in the International Research and Innovation Strategy, as science, research and innovation are vital to our country’s prosperity, security and wellbeing.

The upcoming launch of the International Research and Innovation Strategy was announced in the Chancellor’s Spring Statement. We anticipate that publication of the Strategy will follow in the next few months. As a first step in implementing the Strategy, the Government has commissioned Sir Adrian Smith to carry out an independent review that will assess and make recommendations on our future frameworks for European and international collaboration.

- 17. A key part of this strategy should be to prioritise continued access to EU research framework programmes by securing association to Horizon Europe. The Government should ensure UK universities retain full access to EU funding opportunities and can participate in, and lead, collaborative research projects. (Paragraph 180)**

The Government recognises the Committee's recommendation that the UK secures association to Horizon Europe, and recognises the benefits that participation in past and current Framework Programmes have provided to our research and innovation communities.

The Prime Minister has been clear that we would like the option to fully associate to Horizon Europe. However, we cannot make an informed decision about future participation while the Horizon Europe proposal is still being negotiated through the European Institutions.

Through these negotiations and other, informal channels, UK officials are working tirelessly to ensure that the Horizon Europe framework is in the best possible shape to align with UK priorities, which are: a focus on excellence, global openness and added value.

In the event that the UK does not associate to Horizon Europe, the Government remains committed to exploring credible and ambitious alternatives to deliver positive outcomes for science, research and innovation, and that enable world-class collaborative research.

- 18. We note that the UK's access to Horizon Europe will be commensurate with the financial contribution it is willing to make to the programme. Given the anticipated increase in the budget for Horizon Europe, this is likely to be larger than the UK's contribution to Horizon 2020. The financial rebalancing mechanism set out in the draft Horizon Europe Regulation would also prevent the UK from being a net beneficiary of EU research funding, as is currently the case. Nonetheless, an increased programme budget means that Horizon Europe will be able to support more grants and collaborative research projects than its predecessor. We urge the Government to agree an appropriate level of financial contributions to ensure the UK can access these opportunities. (Paragraph 181)**

The Government welcomes the recommendation from the Committee and agrees with the importance of considering how best to secure ongoing opportunities for UK researchers and innovators.

At present, the Horizon Europe proposal is still being negotiated through the European Institutions. Once the Programme has been finalised, we will assess the value for money of association holistically, considering both monetised and unmonetised costs and benefits. Details of UK involvement will need to be consistent with wider decisions on the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework

(MFF) package.

- 19. As an associated third country, the UK would have observer status in Horizon Europe programme committees but no vote and so would not have the same influence over the strategic direction of the programme as an EU Member State. Even so, given the strength of the UK's science base and the significant role played by scientists in shaping research programmes, witnesses were confident that the UK can still remain an influential player in European research and innovation. We note that it will be important for the UK to "strike the right tone" in this regard, by seeking to ensure appropriate accountability for UK funds spent via Horizon Europe rather than by exercising overt political influence. (Paragraph 182)**

The Government would like to thank the Committee for their thoughtful recommendation and agree that we need to "strike the right tone". We have and want to continue our strong and positive relationship with previous EU Framework Programmes.

We agree that British scientists play a large role in helping shape research Programmes and look forward to their continued contribution in maintaining strong, positive relationship with previous EU Framework Programmes.

- 20. If the UK participated in Horizon Europe on a 'non-associated' third country basis, it would lose access to key funding opportunities—notably European Research Council grants and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions—and would be left without any credible means of influencing the future development and funding priorities of the programme. While limited participation in Horizon Europe would still provide the UK with unique opportunities for collaboration which could not be replicated at the national level, it is clear that full association is the most desirable outcome for UK research and innovation. (Paragraph 183)**

The Prime Minister and the UK Government have been clear that the UK wants to have the option to fully associate to Horizon Europe.

Horizon Europe is still under negotiation and the decision on Programmes participation, terms and corresponding costs will all be decided as part of future negotiations. Clearly there are many moving parts, and the details of UK involvement will need to be consistent with wider decisions on the EU's

Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) package.

In any scenario we want to continue to back the UK research and innovation communities by supporting the provision of opportunities for world-class collaborative research.

**21. Additional UK research programmes will be needed to replace EU funding opportunities, if the Government is not willing or able to secure association to Horizon Europe. These programmes should maintain the breadth of funding across different subject areas and institutions provided by EU research programmes, and support advanced scientific research and international collaboration. The Government should work with the research community to determine what key features of EU funding should be retained in UK replacement programmes, such as the excellence-based funding criteria of the European Research Council. (Paragraph 184)**

**22. We commend UKRI's willingness to work to develop prestigious domestic alternatives to EU schemes, if the UK loses access to them after Brexit. However, we note that it would take many years to emulate the tried and tested mechanism for international research collaboration provided by the EU framework programmes, the established research partnerships they support, and the EU's joint infrastructure capabilities. (Paragraph 185)**

The UK's participation in Horizon 2020 has benefited the UK's science, research and innovation landscape, and the UK remains committed to ongoing collaboration in research and innovation with partners across Europe. To this end the UK would like the option to associate to Horizon Europe and is continuing to actively shape the development of that programme. In parallel, we are also exploring credible and ambitious alternatives to deliver positive outcomes for science, research and innovation in the event that the UK chooses not to associate.

In the event that the UK does not associate to Horizon Europe, the government is committed to continuing to back UK researchers and innovators by supporting measures to enable world-class collaborative research. BEIS is working with the National Academies and UKRI to develop ambitious and credible alternatives to association that would enable world-class collaborative research.

We have also commissioned Sir Adrian Smith to provide independent advice on the design of potential future UK funding schemes for international, innovation

and curiosity-driven blue-skies research, in the context of the UK's future ambitions for international collaboration on research and innovation.

In the immediate term, Sir Adrian will be asked to advise on the design and delivery of elements of the potential alternatives to Horizon Europe association. This will include the Discovery Fund, which aims to provide a UK alternative to the curiosity-driven and excellence-focused elements of Horizon Europe.

### **Cross-cutting issues**

- 23. The ongoing lack of clarity over the future availability of EU funds for mobility and research is causing considerable concern among students and researchers in the UK. Although association cannot be secured until negotiations on the draft 2021–2027 Horizon and Erasmus Regulations are complete, the Government should confirm its intentions regarding future UK participation in these programmes as soon as possible to maximise certainty and stability for potential participants, and enable them to plan for any changes. (Paragraph 186)**

The Government recognises the Committee's desire for certainty over future Programme participation and the availability of EU funds for mobility and research.

The next generation of EU Programmes are currently under negotiation in the EU. The Government will decide whether to participate in specific programmes in light of these negotiations and wider UK priorities. However, for Horizon Europe, the Government has made clear that it wishes to have the option to fully associate to it.

The full details of the next Erasmus+ Programme, including third-country participation and the overall budget, have not been finalised. We will not be able to fully consider the UK's possible participation until then. Our participation in this programme will also be subject to wider negotiations on the future UK-EU partnership.

- 24. Whether the UK continues to participate in EU programmes or not, it will be important to ensure the UK's immigration policy facilitates the frictionless exchange of students and researchers across borders. We welcome the Government's confirmation in its recent Immigration White Paper that the UK will continue to welcome talented international scientists and researchers. The Government should work closely with the research community to ensure the UK visa system accommodates this**

**ambition. Given the significant positive benefits international students bring to the UK, we also support the Government's decision not to impose a cap on international student numbers. (Paragraph 187)**

We recognise the importance of mobility to supporting collaboration in science, research and the exchange of students.

The Government recognises the important contribution of international students both culturally and economically. The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) found that there is no doubt that international students offer a positive economic benefit, and the MAC recommended there should be no cap on international student numbers. We value the contribution of EU and international staff and students, and it is important that the UK can continue to attract world-class scientists and researchers. The future immigration system, set out in the Immigration White Paper (published 19 December 2018), emphasises the importance of science, research and innovation talent.

There are several proposals in the White Paper which will support science and research, including:

- Removing the cap on the number of skilled workers
- Removing the requirement to undertake a Resident Market Labour Test
- The required skill level will be reduced to include RQF 3-5 (A-level or equivalent)
- Increasing the number of places available under the Tier 1 Exceptional Talent route for leading scientists once EU nationals come within scope of the route.
- Making the sponsorship system less bureaucratic for employers
- There will continue to be no cap on the number of international students coming to study in the UK.

Within the White Paper, the Government proposed to increase the post-study leave period for international students following completion of studies to 12 months for those completing a PhD, and to six months for all full-time postgraduate students and undergraduate students at institutions with degree awarding powers. These proposals go beyond recommendations set out in the independent Migration Advisory Committee's report.

The Home Office has launched a 12-month extensive engagement programme across the whole of the UK, to take views from business and other stakeholders from a wide range of sectors, as well as continuing to work with other Government Departments, to hear their priorities, concerns and ideas about the future immigration system to ensure that it is efficient and able to respond to

users' needs.

The International Education Strategy, published on 16 March 2019, sets out actions to continue to provide a welcoming environment for international students. This includes extending the post-study leave period and considering where the visa process could be improved.

Furthermore, the Chancellor set out in the Spring Statement that from Autumn 2019, PhD-level occupations will be exempt from the Tier 2 (General) cap, and the government will update the immigration rules on 180-day absences so that researchers conducting fieldwork overseas are not penalised if they apply to settle in the UK.