

Article 50 and UCL: Provost statement

Professor Michael Arthur, UCL President & Provost, addresses the UCL community following the triggering of Article 50 by the UK government.

The government has today formally begun the process of exiting the EU by triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. This does not change anything immediately: the UK is still a member of the EU until we actually leave. But it underscores the challenge and responsibility UCL faces in managing the impact of the EU referendum on thousands of our staff and students.

We will therefore be stepping up our efforts to ensure that everyone potentially affected receives clear reassurance about their future as quickly and as early as possible in the negotiations. Our view is that the Government should, at the earliest opportunity, offer a clear commitment that EU citizens here will be entitled to stay, study and work in the UK following our EU exit.

This issue is particularly acute at UCL, as we have more students from the EU (over 4,000) than any other UK institution, and over 20% of our staff are EU citizens. Two more years of the current uncertainty around their future here would be simply unacceptable. As well as being hugely unsettling for everyone concerned, it would self-evidently be detrimental to our university and our sector if we start to see staff leave us, and if we struggle to recruit new students and staff from the EU. Currently one third of our early career research staff are from the EU and this is an essential pipeline of talent both to UCL and more widely to the UK economy

I will continue to urge Ministers and MPs to do the right thing and give EU citizens in the UK appropriate guarantees about their future as soon as possible. A 'frontloaded' agreement to give an unequivocal guarantee of the right to remain in the UK for our valued EU community would be the most welcome early result in the negotiations. We also strongly endorse the collective stance taken by the Russell Group and Universities UK and will continue to support wider sector efforts. The passage of the EU Bill showed that a majority of Lords already appreciate the moral and economic arguments for this. I will also continue to urge the government to clarify the status of EU students starting courses in 2018/19, and to confirm that those students will be eligible for home fee status.

There is a lot to do to get the best possible deal for the UK in the forthcoming negotiations about future arrangements for research funding and mobility between the UK and Europe. We believe that the best solution currently identified is to seek continued participation and collaboration with the key programmes, including Horizon 2020, Erasmus+, the forthcoming ninth research framework programme FP9 (intended to support and foster excellent research in the European Research Area), and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Programmes. Whether the outcome is continued association with a European scheme, or a replacement UK scheme offering comparable financial support for research, awards made on the basis of excellence, and ease of collaboration across multiple borders, will be key.

This is not about preserving the status quo, but about thinking logically about what is best for the UK and our future prosperity as a nation. I am encouraged that the Brexit White Paper's objectives for negotiations includes making the UK "one of the best places in the world for science and innovation". The White Paper also presents Brexit as the UK "leaving the EU, not leaving Europe".

We recently hosted David Jones MP, Minister of State at the Department for Exiting the European Union, another opportunity to make our position known. We are already actively keeping our staff and students [up to date as the situation evolves](#), along with all prospective

student enquirers from EU countries, and we will be holding another [open town hall event on Thursday 4 May](#) to enable us to answer any questions from the UCL community in person.

UCL President & Provost, Professor Michael Arthur

Video: Professor Arthur addresses students and staff

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Links

[UCL EU-referendum page](#)

[UCL Brexit Hub](#)

[UCL and Brexit: a post-Article 50 forum – Thursday 4 May](#)