

Update on the UK's relationship with the EU

This document was updated on 11 March 2021. Updated text has been highlighted. SFC will update this document as we receive relevant information in relation to education.

General Update

The Withdrawal Agreement Bill (WAB) entered into Law on 23 January 2020 and was signed by the European Commission on 24 January. The UK therefore left the EU on 31 January, entering the transition period until 31 December 2020. Following months of negotiation, the UK and European Union have since agreed a deal that will define their future relationship (how the UK and EU will trade, live and work), a deal which came into effect on 31 December 2020.

Fees for EU students

The Scottish Government confirmed it will meet the cost of tuition fees for eligible EU students starting their course in academic year AY 2019-20, and AY 2020-21, for the duration of their course. This includes eligible articulating students starting Higher National courses who progress directly to year two or three of a degree and students undertaking planned intercalating years. EU students who begin their courses between 1 January and 31 July 2021 will also be eligible for free tuition, although if they arrive in the UK after 1 January 2021 they will require a visa to enter the UK (see 'Immigration' section below).

On 9 July 2020, Scottish Ministers confirmed that as a result of Brexit, higher education students coming from the EU to attend Scottish colleges and universities will no longer qualify for tuition fee support beyond AY 2020-21. Institutions will be able to charge EU students international fees from AY 2021-22.

For more information on eligibility criteria refer to SAAS guidance at <https://www.saas.gov.uk/need-to-know/brexit>.

Post Brexit arrangements for supporting international education

A new UK Government website is now available. It provides information about the Turing Scheme to support international education including eligibility and grant amounts.

Following the agreement of the UK-EU trade agreement, Scottish students, pupils and adult learners will no longer be able to participate in the EU's Erasmus + scheme. However, the Scottish and Welsh Governments issued a joint statement on 26 January which affirms their decision to explore how both countries can continue to enjoy the benefits offered by Erasmus+.

Research

The agreement reached by the European Commission and the UK Government in December 2020 confirmed that the UK will be fully associated to Horizon Europe, the EU's flagship

research and innovation funding programme. Horizon Europe is the successor to Horizon 2020 and will run from 2021-2027. Agreement has also been reached to participate in a number of other programmes which are listed on the [Scottish Funding Portal](#).

The UK will participate in Horizon Europe on equivalent terms as Member States and other Associated Countries. Researchers can therefore continue to access funding via all parts of the Framework Programme, notably:

- Pillar 1 (Excellent Science – including the European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions).
- Pillar 2 (Global Challenges and Industrial Completeness).
- Pillar 3 (Innovative Europe).

Horizon Europe regulation is yet to be ratified so there are no countries formally associated to the programme. However, once ratification takes place, the UK will finalise the terms of participation and formally be associated to the programme.

The European Commission has produced a [Q&A on the UK's participation in Horizon Europe](#) which confirms that UK entities are already eligible to apply. It explains the process, scope and main features of the UK's association to Horizon Europe.

The [European Research Council](#) (ERC) is the premiere European funding organisation for excellent frontier research. The first [ERC grants within Horizon Europe](#) were announced on 22 February 2021 and countries that are negotiating association agreements with the EU, including the UK, may apply to the calls.

Immigration

EU citizens with settled or pre-settled status can continue to live, work and / or study in the UK with no restrictions. This includes full access to healthcare and, where eligible, public funds, tuition fee support and student funding.

On 13 July 2020, the UK Government published a summary of its points based immigration system. These arrangements have taken effect from 1 January 2021. Institutions should monitor the [UK Government website](#) for information on:

- Student visa routes.
- The new graduate immigration route which allows international students who have completed a degree in the UK to remain in the UK for up to two years following their studies, or three years for PhD graduates.
- The Global Talent Scheme for highly-skilled scientists and researchers. This scheme will be administered by UKRI and replaces the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa. Further detail on the Global Talent Scheme is available on the [UKRI website](#).
- The points-based immigration route for skilled workers who have a job offer from an approved employer sponsor.

Skills and workforce implications for Scotland

Scottish Government [analysis](#) shows some of the workforce sectors and geographic regions with the highest concentrations of EU nationals. We are aware that if the numbers of EU nationals working and studying in Scotland decrease, then this could result in skills shortages or compound existing shortages. There is also the potential that key industries and employers will leave Scotland or become unviable as a result of skills shortages and/or economic factors – particularly if the UK and EU are unable to agree a future deal – leading to localised problems in certain Scottish geographies.

SFC has been asked by Scottish Ministers to conduct a review to consider how best to achieve coherence and sustainability in the future delivery of further and higher education taking account of the joint impact of the COVID-19 crisis and Brexit transition. You can read more about the review [on the SFC website](#).

EU Structural and Investment Funds / UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The UK has been part of EU Regional Policy since its inception in the 1970s, and the funding has played a key role in local and regional economic development.

Following Brexit, the UK Government has stated that it will provide successor funding to EU Structural and Investment Funds through its proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). Its [Spending Review statement](#) published on 25 November 2020 sets out some initial detail on UKSPF, indicating that it will operate UK-wide, using the new financial assistance powers in the UK Internal Market Bill. Priorities for investment will include training and upskilling. For 2021-22 there will be £220 million additional funding to help local areas prepare introduction of the UKSPF and, in the longer term, funding will increase to around £1.5 billion a year.

Included in this year's UK Budget were proposals for a:

- [Community Renewal](#) Fund, and
- [Levelling Up](#) Fund

The Scottish Government and the [Scottish Parliament's Finance and Constitution Committee](#) have previously consulted on the replacement of EU funds. On 19 November 2020, the Scottish Government [published plans](#) on how it will direct any share it receives of the UKSPF. The Scottish Government is now seeking clarification on the implementation of the UKSPF as it will apply in Scotland and on the allocation of additional funding in 2021-22.

Future communication and further information

SFC will continue to monitor the negotiations on the future relationship between the EU and UK and keep universities and colleges informed. For further information, please contact: policy@sfc.ac.uk.