

Open letter

University leaders are united in the view that the UK leaving the EU without a deal is one of the biggest threats our universities have ever faced.

Our 50,000 EU staff and 130,000 EU students, not to mention the 15,000 UK students studying in Europe, are starting the new year facing significant uncertainty about their futures.

Vital research links will be compromised, from new cancer treatments to technologies combatting climate change. The valuable exchange of students, staff and knowledge would be seriously damaged. And we share the concerns of business about the impact of no deal on everything from supply chains to security and travel. It is no exaggeration to suggest that this would be an academic, cultural and scientific setback from which it would take decades to recover.

As a sector which contributes over £21 billion to UK GDP every year and supports 944,000 jobs, it is critical to the national interest, to the economy, communities and wider society, that the UK's universities thrive post-Brexit. To do so, our government must demonstrate the required ambition, put the right measures and guarantees in place, and, crucially, avoid the UK crashing out of the EU without a deal on 29 March.

As a matter of urgency, we are also seeking confirmation that the government will replace research funding sources from which we may be excluded at the end of March. In particular, we await explicit assurance that if the UK is unable to participate in the European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions funding schemes, which support world-leading breakthroughs, that domestic alternatives will be created with the same level of funding.

Signed:

Professor Dame Janet Beer, President, Universities UK and Vice-Chancellor,
University of Liverpool

Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli, Chair, Russell Group and Principal and Vice-
Chancellor, University of Glasgow

Professor John Latham, Chair, University Alliance and Vice-Chancellor, Coventry
University

Professor Dave Phoenix, Chair, Million Plus and Vice-Chancellor, London South
Bank University

Dr David Llewellyn, Chair, GuildHE and Vice-Chancellor, Harper Adams University

Professor Andrea Nolan OBE, Vice-President – Scotland, Universities UK and
Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Edinburgh Napier University

Professor Julie Lydon OBE, Vice-President – Wales, Universities UK and Vice-
Chancellor, University of South Wales

Sir David Bell, Vice-President – England and Northern Ireland, Universities UK and
Vice-Chancellor, University of Sunderland