SUMMARY

- The significant uncertainty triggered by the referendum result requires urgent attention, particularly in terms of the implications for researchers and students in the UK and the prospects for EU research collaboration. There is a need for clear political will to ensure that the UK continues to be a global leader in research, an active participant in international research collaboration, and a leading recruiter of global research talent.

- The continued free movement of EU students and researchers is probably the most pressing concern – it underpins much of the UK’s research endeavour (attracting talent, enabling collaboration, supporting knowledge transfer, etc.)

- The most urgent priority in terms of funding is to secure replacement funding for EU funds. It is likely that this will require a significant increase in the proportion of GDP invested in science and research.

- Continued EU research collaboration will be vital to ensure the continued success of the UK’s research base. This will require both support for the continuation of existing collaborations and, in the event of withdrawal from Horizon 2020, a commitment to a specific fund to support future research collaboration between the UK and EU member states (such that UK partners could continue to participate supported by the UK’s national research budget).

- There are significant concerns regarding the health of particular disciplines, especially those which have secured a large proportion of funding from EU funds such as the humanities and social sciences, and the impact on the UK’s research culture.

- The significance of the impacts on science and research of leaving the EU and the importance of science and research for the UK’s success as a knowledge economy and a global influencer mean that science and research should be included in exit negotiations from an early stage.

- There is a great depth of concern in the academic community at the impact of leaving the EU on research. Many of these concerns are reflected in this submission. However, they also point to the key issues for consideration in future research policy.

INTRODUCTION

1. UCL is pleased to make a submission to the Science and Technology Select Committee’s inquiry into the implications of leaving the EU for science and research. We would be happy to provide more detail on any of the points raised here; please contact Sarah Chaytor, Head of Public Policy, in the first instance – s.chaytor@ucl.ac.uk.

2. We make a few brief introductory remarks to provide the context for the rest of our submission, in which we respond to the specific questions posed by the Committee. Throughout our submission we have attempted to distinguish between the short-term and longer-term implications of leaving the EU for science and research.

3. An overarching issue which has been repeatedly raised by UCL academics is the effect of the referendum outcome on how the UK is perceived by other EU countries and elsewhere. There are significant concerns that negative perceptions in terms of the UK’s attitude to international collaboration and cooperation could impact on research collaborations and the desire of EU and other international researchers to come to the UK. This has both short- and long-term implications for the health of UK research.
A number of UCL departments and faculties have indicated that they would also like to make separate submissions to raise particular disciplinary concerns; we will therefore be making a supplementary submission to the Committee in the coming weeks with these additional responses.

Whilst this submission has, in response to the Committee’s questions, focused largely on our concerns at the implications of leaving the EU, we have also attempted to highlight the key points that should be part of any future research policy – namely, policy stability to reassure universities, researchers, business and others; access to global talent and investment; ability to retain the most talented in universities and elsewhere; support for international research collaboration; increased national research funding; and the need for UK to think about its global partnerships, including EU cooperation, and how to strengthen them in this new context.

**Short-term implications**

The most immediately damaging impact of the UK’s vote to leave the EU is the uncertainty regarding our future relationship and the consequences of this for science and research, including the instability created for EU researchers and students and for UK partners in collaborative EU research projects. **The immediate priority for the Government is to address this uncertainty in order to mitigate negative impacts (particularly in terms of prospective international recruitment and the removal of UK partners from prospective Horizon 2020 bids).**

The Government must also act to ensure that the UK continues to be a global participant in research, which is fully committed to international recruitment and collaboration. Research is a global endeavor; knowledge does not conform to national boundaries. Again, countering uncertainties and negative perceptions (particularly in terms of current and imminent collaborative research projects) as a result of the vote to leave the EU should be an urgent priority.

Given the significant uncertainties, it is likely that repeated statements of the Government’s position and intention will be required. We would therefore like to see the UK Government continue to make clear statements on:
- the UK’s current unchanged status as regards Horizon 2020 and the current unchanged status of EU researchers and Horizon 2020;
- a commitment to continuing to support UK participation in Horizon 2020 projects following withdrawal from the EU;
- the UK’s commitment to continued international collaboration and recruitment in the future.

The Government should also seek early clarification from the EU Commission on how UK partners in Horizon 2020 bids will be treated following withdrawal from the EU.

UCL believes that science and research should be a significant part of negotiations from early on, both in terms of their importance to the UK (to reduce the chance that we will lose our world-leading status) and, in light of the long-standing, successful partnership between the UK and the EU evidenced in research, as a useful basis on which to start.

**Longer-term implications**

Many academics are concerned at the likely loss of influence in EU funded programmes and EU research policy. This will be compounded by the fact that UK scientists will no longer have rapid or early access to new information, as a consequence of being left out of EU programmes. This could undermine the UK’s involvement in the global research endeavour and it will be important that the Government seek to mitigate this in negotiations.

We also emphasise the importance of ensuring the UK remains able to fully pursue and participate in EU research collaborations. This should be a key consideration in exit negotiations as critical to the continued success of the research base, and as the best mitigation of
loss of UK influence in the EU research agenda. The UK Research Office will have an important role to play here. Another crucial consideration will be the UK’s continued participation in long-term EU projects (such as CERN, the European Space Agency, etc.) and the future of UK-hosted EU infrastructure (such as Jodrell Bank).

12. A further consideration will be the facilitation of bilateral (and other multilateral) relationships with individual EU member states. Whilst many individual researchers may be able to pursue individual collaborations, the UK Government should consider what structures and frameworks might be put in place to facilitate strategic relationships with those countries where the UK has the greatest number of partnerships or where there may be strategic advantage.

What the effect of the various models available for the UK’s future relationship with the EU will be on UK science and research, in terms of:

- Collaboration
- Free movement of researchers and students;
- Access to funding
- Access to EU-funded research facilities, both in the UK and abroad
- Intellectual property and commercialisation of research

13. There remains much uncertainty around the possible future models for (which we assume are likely broadly be along the lines of either full associated country\(^1\), partial association\(^2\), or third country status\(^3\). At such an early stage and in advance of any indication of Government thinking or negotiations, it is difficult to make statements about the specific effects of models, although generally speaking the best outcome for UK science and research would be the full associated country model, which would allow the free movement of students and researchers and access to EU funding. Whether this is politically feasible remains an open question.

14. The Committee will be well aware that the UK is a global leader in science and research. For this to continue, we must be able to continue to recruit the best global talent (both staff and students.) UCL generally sees a strong showing of talented EU candidates in any research recruitment round and would be significantly concerned at any undermining of the UK’s ability to attract the brightest and best from the EU. Most of our departments have a high proportion of both EU and non-EU workers that make a vital contribution to activities and the prospect of future barriers to recruitment (including through the UK being seen as a less attractive place to work) is highly concerning. As one of our Vice-Deans (Research) put it:

“My greatest fear is that coming out of the EU will discourage movement of the best EU researchers to Britain.”

Leaving the EU could have a severe impact on the UK’s ability to recruit global talent, both from Europe and beyond (as the UK, no longer seen as a gateway to Europe, becomes a less attractive destination for international researchers). Many of our senior academics have observed that eligibility for EU funding is seen as a key advantage of working in the UK and thus is essential to recruitment.

15. The guiding principles for negotiations over particular models should be to continue to promote extensive collaboration, access to facilities and access to the best people. (This is a particularly important point for UCL in terms of our commitment to tackle some of the world’s greatest problems through cross-disciplinarity and international collaborations.)

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\(^1\) Whereby the UK will be able to continue to access future Framework Programmes, requiring mutually agreed financial contribution and an Association Agreement between UK and EU

\(^2\) In which case we would like to see the Government prioritise access to the ‘Excellent Sciences’ pillar of H2020 (including the ERC, Marie Slodowska-Curie functions, Future and Emerging Technologies, Research Infrastructures)

\(^3\) Which is likely to require individual funding arrangements for specific projects; the most desirable outcome would be for the Government to secure a bilateral scientific and technological agreement with the EU
16. We also emphasise that consideration of science and research in exit negotiations should include the full breadth of the research base, including arts, humanities and social sciences.

17. Finally, we note that the Committee has not explicitly set out to consider the impact of leaving the EU on the quality of UK research, but note the view of UCL academics that the EU research programme has helped to drive up the quality of UK science – expressed in one case thus:

“Observing the change in UK science from my previous position (28 years) in the USA, there was a notable enhancement of quality in UK science as EU-wide funding and conference-based programmes increased, leading to increased recognition and respect world-wide. This recognition factored strongly in my decision to move to UCL. In my own field of research, the EU conferences have become leading venue in the field for exchange of new ideas and participation is considered more prestigious than for equivalent conferences in the USA. It would be a retrograde step if the UK were no longer a key player in maintaining this EU scientific community.”

18. In terms of the specific issues that the Committee has raised, we wish to highlight a number of concerns around the impact of the UK leaving the EU on science and research, which we would hope that consideration of models and future negotiations would seek to mitigate.

Collaboration

19. Continued European research collaboration is essential for the continued success of the UK research endeavor. The likely uncertainty over the future months and years may lead to coordinators of EU-funded collaborative projects seeking members from elsewhere in Europe rather than UK members. It may also discourage UCL academics from developing collaborative projects. Whilst there have been some statements from the European Commission, UK Government and RCUK regarding the UK’s unchanged status as regards eligibility for Horizon 2020, it would also be helpful for the Government to reaffirm its commitment to supporting European research collaboration in general, including mechanisms for doing this following the UK’s withdrawal from the EU.

20. UCL has received several reports so far of prospective Horizon 2020 research bids which our academics have been asked to leave by their European partners, because of a view that the UK is ‘too risky’. We are currently seeking to establish the extent of this across the university and would be happy to share further information with the Committee on a confidential basis.

21. The prospect of increased difficulties in collaboration also has significant consequences for the health of disciplines which work within an international framework – for example, many researchers in arts, humanities and social sciences who study the history and culture of societies necessarily work across political or national borders. Language research is a particular example (there are many others) of the ways in which restriction of travel and loss of EU funding will reduce the ways in which researchers can collaborate. Equally, many labs have valuable collaborations with EU colleagues, funded by EU collaborative grants, which may now face an uncertain future.

22. Finally, we emphasise that the free movement of people underpins successful collaboration. This includes student exchange, which may well be undermined by the loss of the UK’s access to the Erasmus scheme and removal of the free movement of students (which underpins research collaboration).

23. Short term priorities in terms of collaboration are:

- to secure further, stronger commitments on the UK’s eligibility for Horizon 2020 projects and unchanged status as a research partner;
- to ensure the inclusion of science and research at an early stage in exit negotiations,
particularly with a view to discussing options for future research collaboration, and for building on this as an example of future successful partnerships.

24. Longer-term priorities are:
   - to ensure **continued financial support for EU research collaboration**, either through the UK’s continued participation in Horizon 2020, or through an alternative fund managed by the UK Research Councils;
   - to further consider how this might be augmented by **additional financial support for other international collaboration**;
   - to **secure the UK’s continued access to major EU collaborative research projects and scientific infrastructure**; and resolve the status of EU scientific infrastructure in the UK.

**Free movement**

25. **Free movement of staff and students is central to the success of UK universities and the UK research base.** It attracts the brightest talent from the EU and around the world (non-EU researchers see the UK as a gateway to the EU) to the UK and enables the recruitment of highly specialized skills from a wide talent pool. It also enables UK students and researchers to benefit from undertaking research in other EU countries. Free movement within the EU has greatly facilitated the UK research endeavor and UCL is highly concerned at the prospect of restrictions to this.

26. UCL is proud of our high proportion of EU postgraduate research students and postdoctoral students, which reflects our commitment to being a global university – however this is a talent stream that will be put at risk, for us and other institutions, by the UK leaving the EU. The impact of this is wider than universities – many EU PhD students go on to work in UK industry and this recruitment scheme too could be affected.

27. There are likely to already be impacts on the ability of students, postdocs, and academics to move to the UK as a result of the uncertainties created by the UK’s leave vote, as we have discussed in our introduction. Beyond this, many academic leaders at UCL have emphasised the significant numbers of outstanding researchers that they recruit from other EU countries, and their concerns at the detrimental effects on research if such talent can’t be recruited in the future. A further issue is the impact on the ability of UK students and postdocs to go to European labs for training.

28. One example from a UCL academic of the importance of free movement of students is of an EU student who is critical to a current MRC grant application: "This is a highly technical and specialised area, with only a handful of people in the world trained to do this work. We have invested a lot in her training and she has a unique skill set that is vital... she is very much in demand. She has been offered several postdocs in the USA and our industry partner (UK-based SME) also wants to recruit her.) So, not being able to have students would not only damage our research but would, I suspect, also have a very negative impact on SMEs in the UK."

29. The best outcome for research would be for no restrictions or visa requirements to be imposed on the movement of PhD students and researchers. Their introduction would add unnecessary hurdles, making collaboration more cumbersome and impeding our ability to recruit the best students and researchers. (Non-EU recruitment has been hindered by visa restrictions and the requirement to demonstrate no UK/EU equivalents and to advertise for longer.)

30. The **short term priority** in terms of free movement is to **confirm the unchanged status** of EU students and researchers currently residing in the UK and those students due to beginning programmes in September.

31. Longer-term priorities are:
• bearing in mind the severe concerns at the constraint of movement of staff and students over the longer-term, the reduction of available talent, and the impact on research, to argue for the continued free movement of EU students and researchers;
• if this does not appear politically feasible, then we would urge the UK Government to consider a harmonised, simplified scheme with as little restriction on the movement of all international (including EU) students and researchers as much as possible, in order to mitigate the impacts of leaving the EU and send a signal that the UK is still committed to recruiting talented researchers from all over the world.

Access to funding

32. UCL academic leaders have emphasised the benefits of access to EU funding, both in terms of the significant additional resource available for UK research activities, and for its role in attracting international researchers. For example, ERC Fellowships have enabled people to stay at UCL in the absence of equivalent Research Council or charity funding. Access to EU funding is often cited by international researchers at UCL as a reason for being in the UK; one recipient of a Marie-Sktodowska Curie Career Integration Grant has emphasised that:

“The presence of EU funding of this sort had a strong influence on my decision to return to the UK and not seek jobs elsewhere in Europe or the US.... In the absence of FP7/H2020 funding, the UK would have seemed a very unattractive place to establish my own group....I could not thrive without the free movement of the best and brightest talented scientists across Europe. As a junior group leader, without access to European funding of this sort that promotes the free movement of scientific ideas across Europe, my research would be severely compromised.”

33. There are significant concerns amongst UCL research groups who currently hold EU funding about the loss of opportunity to access EU funding in the future. We urge the Government to seek a settlement which will enable the UK to continue to access EU funds. However, we would not seek this at any cost. If a reasonable settlement can’t be agreed on access to Horizon 2020, then the Government should commit to an increase in the research budget and a new fund to support UK universities in continuing to undertake European research collaboration.

34. The short-term priority is to continue to seek and provide reassurances about the UK’s ability to participate in Horizon 2020 research projects and other research projects dependent on EU funding (for example, UCL is aware of at least one research project in receipt of ERDF funding where the grant agreement is on hold until the Treasury has ascertained the level of commitment that has been made across the UK.4)

35. The longer-term priority is to ensure that UK researchers continue to have access to equivalent research funds and to collaboration opportunities, and that the overall research funds available for UK scientists are not reduced. (If this were to happen, there would be a particularly detrimental effect on smaller groups and early career researchers who may no longer be successful in grant applications, effectively wasting past investment in training and equipment for those groups.)

Intellectual property and commercialisation of research

36. There are likely to be implications both for large business investment in research (e.g. UCL is aware of several EU companies who have expressed concern about investing in research collaborations and are now likely to delay investment, if not move it elsewhere) and for SMEs – for example, many London-based SMEs currently employ EU nationals and seek to recruit further EU nationals, including those who have undertaken doctoral studies at UCL in the UK. A further example of the impact on industry investment in research is an ongoing negotiation with UCL and

4 Please contact us if further details are required.
UCLH to establish a national proton therapy research facility, where a decision has just been taken to offer 75%, rather than 100% of the spare capacity to the private sector as a higher level was seen as too risky in the current climate. This decision will have longer-term impacts on the overall plans for the facility.

37. The short-term priority is to remove uncertainty for EU and international investors and offer as much reassurance as possible that the UK remains a stable, secure prospect for international private investment in R&D.

38. The longer-term priorities are to consider:
   - what arrangements can be put in place to enable EU nationals to undertake a period of work in the UK following completion of their doctoral studies;
   - what additional measures will be necessary to continue to attract international R&D investment in the UK (the role of UKTI will be important here)

WHAT THE SCIENCE AND RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR THE UK GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE IN NEGOTIATING A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EU

39. The current, urgent, priority is to keep uncertainty over the future situation for the research base to a minimum in order to avoid unnecessary disruption to researchers and students and of research projects, and wasted effort in terms of preparation of research projects that cannot reach fruition. Early reassurances, particularly on international recruitment, would be welcome; UCL is already seeing inquiries from incoming PhD students about whether they should in fact pursue their doctoral studies in the UK.

40. We draw the Committee’s attention to a statement issued by the postdoctoral researchers of the MRC Laboratory for Molecular Cell Biology and Cell and Developmental Biology which captures this point:

   “More than half of our postdoctoral workforce is international with a significant proportion of researchers hailing from EU countries. Many are already supported by fellowships funded by the EU through its flagship programmes, and many more plan to apply in the coming months. Several will soon be ready to apply for independent and teaching positions in universities across the UK. Drawn by the institute’s international, global outlook and scientific leadership, these postdocs have dedicated years of their life to UK science. Yet many are now reconsidering their choices, faced by the prospect of a freeze on hiring, interruptions in funding, the potential loss of the right to work and travel within Europe, and the spectre of growing racism and intolerance.

   Even if these fears are not eventually realized, prolonged uncertainty could still lead to an exodus of EU researchers from UCL, followed in turn by the non-EU and UK postdocs as the diversity and quality of the institute gradually deteriorate. The potentially damaging scenario playing out at UCL will be mirrored in departments and institutes across the country, and collectively, these losses could have a huge effect on the quality and impact of UK scientific research within a very short time. It will be critical to provide some measure of stability, perhaps through a visible and concerted effort of the universities, the funding agencies and the UK government to safeguard the status quo until a new arrangement with the EU can be reached.”

41. The main priorities for negotiations with the EU should be:
   - supporting free movement of people or avoiding additional onerous restrictions and visa requirements for researchers and students, in order to ensure that the UK remains an attractive destination for research talent across the world;
   - continued access to Horizon 2020 funds (particularly ERC and other ‘Excellence’ pillar funding) or alternative support for continued research collaboration;
• **continued access to collaborative research infrastructure** and securing the future of such infrastructure based in UK.

Other important, longer-term, considerations will be:

• how the UK Government might support **bilateral partnerships with EU member states**;
• how the UK might continue to **influence the broad direction of EU research policy**;
• if the UK continues to participate in Horizon 2020, whether the UK Government might secure a means for UK universities to continue to **influence the shape and scope of Horizon 2020 funding**.

42. Finally we note that some UCL academics interpreted this question as relating to which areas of science and research should be prioritized and expressed their concern at this prospect. We have considered this question in terms of the overarching priorities for science and research but in case this interpretation is correct, would caution against determining specific disciplinary priorities at this time.

**WHAT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY-RELATED LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND PROJECTS WILL NEED TO BE REVIEWED IN THE RUN UP TO THE UK LEAVING THE EU.**

43. It is difficult to go into much detail at this point, given the lack of clarity on the UK Government’s agenda, and on the direction and detail of exit negotiations. We would urge the Committee to keep a close watching brief in this area and sustain close dialogue with the science and research community, in order to identify particular issues at an early point. We anticipate important debates in the area of life sciences, the built environment (to ensure London remains a global hub for design and consulting), medical technology (e.g. medical device regulations) and environmental regulations, amongst others.

**THE STATUS OF RESEARCHERS, SCIENTISTS AND STUDENTS WORKING AND STUDYING IN THE UK WHEN THE UK LEAVES THE EU, AND WHAT PROTECTIONS SHOULD BE PUT IN PLACE FOR THEM.**

44. UCL believes that **EU researchers and students currently residing in the UK should continue to have full rights to live and work here**, without their status being compromised. UCL intends to support any possible efforts of eligible non-UK EU employees to obtain British citizenship. We also suggest that it would be in the UK’s interest to make paperwork and expenses towards acquiring British citizenship as light as possible for this highly skilled cohort. Many EU researchers who have made their lives in the UK will also have families here and this too will need consideration.

45. Additionally, it will be important that EU research students are able to remain in the UK for a period of post-PhD work, as this time immediately following doctoral training is often when they are most productive and when the UK economy can reap some of the benefit of having trained them.

46. Finally, we suggest that the Committee should consider **what mechanisms the UK could introduce to send a message that we welcome the best researchers from all over the world**. One option may be to offer Research Council PhD studentships at an equivalent level to UK students, or to introduce new fellowships aimed at attracting the best EU and international early-career researchers.

47. The issue of PhD student funding eligibility will need particular attention – at present UK Research Council funding has restrictions on it which mean the vast majority is for PhD students who are ordinarily resident in the UK, whilst EU schemes are used to support incoming EU students incoming and institutional, personal or partner country funds for non-EU international students. It will be essential to provide effective UK funding mechanisms to support incoming PhD students from across the world to address key areas of expertise. It may well be that the most appropriate mechanism to achieve this is to return to project-based studentships (a mechanism the
Research Councils have tended away from in recent years), but with newly expanded eligibility conditions that allow for the recruitment of the most suitable and able students from the global talent pool for that project. We recommend that the Committee question research funders and BIS in detail about future eligibility for PhD funding schemes, as it is essential they recognise that the presuppositions of the current funding regime will no longer apply, and changes are essential if the health of core disciplines is to be maintained.

48. The **short-term priority** is to **secure the status of EU students and researchers currently residing in the UK** and those with immediate arrangements to come here.

49. The **longer-term priorities are to**:
   - arrive at appropriate arrangements to underpin the **continued recruitment of talented EU researchers and students** following the UK’s withdrawal from the EU;
   - consider **what further measures the UK can take to support the recruitment of the best global talent** from the EU and elsewhere, including specifically to review doctoral funding.

50. **The opportunities that the UK’s exit presents for research collaboration and market access with non-EU countries, and how these might compare with existing EU arrangements.**

51. **If new opportunities are to be created, it will require the Government to dedicate substantial new funds to encourage new links with other countries.** For example, there may be opportunities to develop further research links with India and China, as well as strengthen partnerships in the US. A particular focus for consideration should be the possibility of significantly **strengthening the UK’s strategic bilateral partnership with EU member states and other countries.** It may be possible that in the absence of EU membership, stronger commitments could be made in this space. Furthermore, UK universities should continue how it might continue to work with organisations such as the League of European Research Universities (of which UCL is a member) and others to strengthen our European partnerships and research collaborations. Universities UK could play an important role in working with the European University Association on behalf of the UK sector.

52. **There may also be opportunities for the UK to carve out space as a global leader in scientific regulation,** particularly in areas such as animal research, biomedical sciences, and research ethics. This will require a renewed and sustained commitment from the UK Government to pursue ambitious agendas for the UK to genuinely lead the world in these spaces.

53. **Finally, we would suggest that if free movement of EU students and researchers cannot be secured, the UK could take this as an opportunity to harmonise, simplify, and ameliorate the visa regime for all international students and researchers** (including from the EU). This could significantly remove restrictions, particularly on the recruitment of the most talented PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, and academics, and therefore improve the UK’s ability to recruit international research talent in general. The aim would be to have the simplest, lightest-touch scheme possible in recognition that in the absence of free movement for EU students and researchers, it will be even more important that the UK is able to be competitive in terms of international recruitment.

54. We should however note that we doubt whether the possible opportunities we have outlined would adequately compensate for both the direct impacts of leaving the EU (in terms of an overarching partnership framework incorporating multiple countries) and the damage to the perception of the UK as no longer committed to international partnerships. Quoting from two academic leaders at UCL sums up the general feeling of our community:

> “I’m struggling to imagine how opportunities might increase or improve when we exit the
54. As a final point, it should be emphasised that the issues raised by the Committee of collaborating, free movement and access to funding are in fact all intertwined and interdependent. Any consideration of future opportunities therefore should be cognisant of how to create or pursue opportunities that will support the UK research base across these interdependencies.

What other measures the Government should undertake to keep UK science and research on a sound footing, with sufficient funding, after an EU exit.

55. The most crucial point is that the UK Government should ensure that science and research continues to be funded at current levels, including those funds currently received from EU funding. (We emphasise that this means the full sum won by the UK, not just our current contribution to the Horizon 2020 budget). This will mean a commitment to **significantly increase the proportion of GDP to be invested in science and research.**

56. It will also be important that the Government shows clear political will and commitment to supporting continued research collaboration and cooperation between the UK and EU countries. This will require a strong message of continuity around international recruitment. The (perhaps unintended) wider consequences of the UK’s vote to leave the EU include perceptions that we no longer welcome international staff and students; such a perception which will severely affect our ability to recruit competitively (and thus undermine our world-leading position in research).

57. The UK needs to send a strong message of commitment to being a global science player, both in terms of outward engagement and inward recruitment. We encourage the Government to work with other large research funders (such as the Wellcome Trust) and sector bodies (such as the Royal Society) to strongly indicate that in the long-term the funding of UK science will always be in partnership with EU schemes.

58. A further consideration is how the UK can capitalise on and reward the depth of experience gained by UK universities by acting as junior partners or co-investigators on EU-funded projects (often because of the perceived requirement to build up experience/earn credibility with EU research bodies before bidding to be a lead partner or principal investigator).

59. The Government will need to give specific consideration to the future health of arts, humanities and social sciences, which have received an increasingly large proportion of their overall research funds from the EU. H2020 funding and European Council Starting, Consolidator, and Advanced grants (which are highly prestigious, and in which the UK does very well) are an important supporter of funding in the arts, humanities and social sciences. UCL’s arts and humanities research is currently ranked fifth in the world; to maintain this world-class standing, continued access to international research funds and the ability to travel is required. There are therefore grave concerns among these disciplines at the implications of the UK leaving the EU. Further detail is available in the briefing note produced by the Academy of Social Sciences.

60. There are also specific concerns for particular areas of research; for example, one issue that has been raised by UCL academics is the loss of important EU funding for design research (not currently well supported by the Research Councils). Additionally, there may be adverse

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5 The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2015-16
consequences for particular interdisciplinary areas; for example, the UCL Institute of Education has received EU funding for its artificial intelligence in education research (which combines technology innovation and educational innovation) in recent years, in the absence of RCUK funding for this particular kind of interdisciplinary work. Without EU funding the future of this work looks uncertain.

61. There are additional, less tangible, but important issues related to the impact of leaving the EU on research culture, including:

- a perception amongst academics that EU funded projects are rather less risk averse than those funded through national research organisations (especially ESRC). It will be important that national funders take steps to address this in the event of an EU exit;
- a perception that EU funding has supported more imaginative and more basic science with high potential for long-term social impact than is being currently supported by funding agencies in the UK;
- EU funding has contributed to the diversity and creativity of the UK’s research culture in general, and in some UCL departments has supported the outstanding research of a disproportionate number of women in the Division (enhancing our ability to meet equality and diversity targets);
- EU projects are generally agreed to routinely exploit the positive potential of interdisciplinary research by their very nature.

62. Finally, we have been concerned at the upsurge in racial and xenophobic attacks following the referendum which could deter international researchers and would encourage the Government to continue to make it clear that the UK will not tolerate such attacks and that we remain an open and multicultural society.

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