



Mini-manifesto for the 2017 General Election

How can a new UK Government support universities to deliver growth and improve life opportunities?

Our world leading universities play a central role through their teaching and research to support economic growth and employment, improve life opportunities, support social cohesion and promote invention and innovation. They generate more than £7.6 billion in output for the economy, £1.5 billion in export earnings and over 142,000 full-time equivalent jobs across Scotland.

Higher education is devolved to the Scottish Parliament but there are some reserved matters which have a big impact on the success and competitiveness of Scotland's 19 higher education institutions. Our manifesto asks, ahead of the 8 June General Election, concentrate on reserved matters only.

We have three asks of the next UK Government. We ask you to make them part of your policy and funding priorities. They are to:

- 1. Secure an effective post-Brexit settlement for universities**
- 2. Introduce an effective immigration system for Scotland's 19 higher education institutions**
- 3. Ensure that opportunities for UK research and innovation serve all parts of the UK.**

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1. Secure an effective post-Brexit settlement for universities

The UK needs to achieve an effective post-Brexit settlement that allows universities to continue to be successful and maximise the contribution they make. A new UK Government can:

- Confirm rights to reside and work in the UK post-exit for EU nationals that are currently working in the university sector
- Confirm the entitlement to access public services like schools and the NHS for EU nationals and their dependents on the same basis as at present
- Seek to secure continued UK participation in the Horizon 2020 research and innovation framework programme for the remainder of the current programme
- Seek to influence and access the 9th Framework Programme for research and innovation provided it maintains its focus on excellence
- Continue access to Erasmus+ and other mobility programmes
- Develop successor initiatives to the European Regional Structural and Investment Funds
- Maintain freedom of movement for EU staff and students.

Our [Brexit priorities](#) can be found in more detail on our website.

2. Deliver an effective immigration system for Scotland's 19 higher education institutions

International staff and students are vital to the long-term sustainability of Scottish higher education. Their presence as an important part of our higher education community enhances the educational and life experience of our 'home' students and contributes significantly to the economy and society in our regions across Scotland.

There is unanimity across Scotland's staff and student unions and the Principals of our universities for the removal of international students from net migration targets and for the reintroduction of a competitive policy to allow international students to work in Scotland after their studies. This is supported by Scotland's [business community](#) and across all [political parties](#) in Scotland.

A [March 2017 poll](#) of Scots in March found that 83% support international students remaining in Scotland to work for a period after they graduate rather than immediately returning to their home country. 67% of Scots

think the economic impact of international students helps to create jobs. Only 27% of Scots think of international students as immigrants.

The UK's decision to leave the European Union presents an unparalleled opportunity to re-think the immigration system. We would be happy to see a policy change for the whole of the UK or to take opportunity to create a regionally differentiated policy that can meet Scotland's needs without impacting on the rest of the UK.

We want to see:

- Arrangements that enable EU/EEA students and staff to continue to move freely to Scotland without visa restrictions, maintaining close relationships with our neighbours.
- Simplified and improved visa regimes for international students and for staff from the rest of the world.
- A new policy framework to allow qualified international graduates to stay in Scotland to work and contribute to the economy. The reintroduction of the post-study work visa in Scotland would achieve this. The detail of that policy should position Scotland to be competitive with universities in the US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Ireland.
- Robust and reliable data to be published on the number of international students in/leaving the UK to identify the extent of overstaying.
- A change in the classification of international students at UK level so they are not considered long term migrants for public policy purposes.
- An international student growth strategy backed by investment to support international marketing, mobility and partnerships
- A welcoming and consistent message to international students and staff

3. Ensure that opportunities for UK research and innovation serve all parts of the UK.

Scotland's 19 higher education institutions are part of important cross-UK research networks and funding programmes. Access to this 'research ecosystem' is important to Scotland's institutions for the same reasons as continued access to networks and sources of investment across the EU. Collaborative research is more impactful research.

Last year Scotland's 19 higher education institutions were successful in the competitive bidding for £255 million of research grants from the UK

Research Councils. This was 14% of RCUK project funding. Currently, only around 7% of RCUK investment in national facilities is invested in Scotland.

The UK Government's Industrial Strategy, launched in January 2017 opens up £4.7 billion worth of opportunities in research, in innovation, high level skills and internationalism to the whole of the UK. Scotland's universities are well placed to work with industry to bring those opportunities into Scotland.

A new Government can:

- Further the UK's international competitiveness by committing to a real term increase in public research and development funding, with the aim of moving the UK further towards a target of 3% of GDP spending.
- The next UK Government should honour the commitments given in Westminster that UK Research and Innovation will work for the benefit of all parts of the UK, and that the devolved jurisdictions will be closely involved in forming its strategy.
- Deliver the Ministerial Forum for the delivery of the Industrial Strategy, as proposed by the outgoing Government, which will coordinate action across the UK. We want to see early moves after the election to formalise the offer.
- Take the opportunity, presented by the final Industrial Strategy, to promote innovation-driven economic growth in every part of the UK. The Scottish and UK Governments should work closely together to maximise these opportunities. The UK Government should be clear where activities are intended to be UK-wide or devolved.
- Recognise of the diversity of the research and innovation landscapes across the devolved administrations of the UK. The Industrial Strategy's focus on place is welcome and should accommodate this understanding. The creation of national institutes based on excellence should be considered for a limited number of sites distributed across the UK.

Universities Scotland represents the Principals and Directors of Scotland's 19 higher education institutions.

www.universities-scotland.ac.uk