

Universities Scotland: General Election 2019 manifesto asks

These policies have been written in mind for parties standing in Scotland who will be publishing their own or a Scottish edition of their manifesto. This short document should be seen as a companion to the manifesto asks being developed by [Universities UK](#). Our asks have been divided into themes recognising different policy agendas.

Letting people and places reach their potential

We want political parties to commit to:

- Reform the current Apprenticeship Levy so that it can fund a wide range of Scottish businesses to invest in staff learning & development, from universities and other providers.
- Ensure that UK Government investments in 'place' e.g. through the Industrial Strategy and City/Region Deals, supports universities' contribution to inclusive growth throughout Scotland.

Putting global talent to work for Scotland

We want political parties to commit to:

- Introduce the promised two year post-study work offer to international graduates so we can keep talent developed in UK universities and make sure students choose to study in Scotland and not in rival countries like Australia and Canada.
- Lower the proposed salary requirement for international workers to gain a high-skilled work visa to £21,000 to ensure we can attract the vital staff our universities need.
- Attract international talent to the UK by reforming the burdensome visa process for talented international scientists and researchers, making it easier for them to work for short periods in the UK.
- Immigration policies that address Scotland's specific demographic need for high-skills and inward migration.

World leaders in science and research

We want political parties to commit to:

- Making sure universities can continue to get funding from the EU's Horizon Europe programme or, if this is not possible, making sure that the UK has its own ambitious funding programme to support international research.
- Reaching the target of 2.4% of GDP invested in UK research and development by 2027 by increasing, year on year, public investment in R&D by £1.39bn from the 2020/21 spending review. This would amount to £20bn of additional funding over a five-year period across the UK and would mean the UK stays at the forefront of new technologies like Artificial Intelligence.
- Preparing for the longer-term goal of increasing the amount of GDP invested in R&D to 3% by 2034.

- Doubling the Strength in Places Fund run by UKRI to £240m, supporting local growth through science and research and spreading opportunity throughout the UK so that all parts of the country have a chance to lead innovation.
- Long-term funding of ODA research through the Newton Fund and Global Challenges Research Fund so that Scotland's universities can help the world's poorest.
- Attracting global talent through increased funding for international fellowships for researchers and scholarships for talented post-graduate research students.

A prosperous Scotland post-Brexit

We want political parties to commit to:

- An immigration system that facilitates and promotes academic collaboration and exchange among students, researchers and scientists.
- Securing associated country status to the next EU Framework Programme, Horizon Europe, and making sure there is, at a minimum, no decline in the total funding available for big, international projects of the sort that Horizon 2020 has provided.
- Securing ongoing full Scottish participation in the next Erasmus+ programme which allows university students and staff to move between universities across Europe.
- Creating a UK Shared Prosperity Fund to replace European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) that is structured in a way that supports inclusive economic growth in all parts of the UK, with substantial devolved discretion on priorities.

Universities Scotland does not support leaving the EU without a deal, and if this were to happen, any government would immediately need to commit to:

- Scrap the three-year limit to the European Temporary Leave to Remain scheme and guarantee EU students at university under this scheme that they will be able to stay for the duration of their course and graduate without having to change their visa mid-study.
- Create fully-funded domestic replacements to the parts of Horizon 2020 not open to third party countries, such as the European Research Council.
- Establish an ambitious and fully-funded replacement to Erasmus+, **if** association to Erasmus+ is not possible.

