Brexit - A Way Forward

What will we do?

1. Edinburgh University Students’ Association and its representatives should work to lobby the Scottish and UK governments in whatever way possible to accomplish the following:
   a. Fee and funding status - The Scottish Government should provide a guarantee that it will fund EU-domiciled entrants who start studying in Scotland between 2018-19 and for the duration of their course.
      i. We welcome the Scottish Government’s guarantee to continue to fund EU-domiciled entrants for the 2017-18 academic year, and call for a decision on the funding status of entrants for 2018-19 to be made by spring 2017 to enable universities to provide accurate advice and guidance to potential students.
      ii. We strongly urge the Scottish Government to provide certainty that EU students starting their course at any point prior to the UK leaving the EU will continue to be funded under current arrangements for the duration of their course, even where this continues beyond the UK’s potential exit from the EU.
      iii. Without this certainty in the short term then there is a great risk that the number of EU students choosing to study in Scotland will decrease and this would have consequences for local economies and jobs, and be detrimental to society and education. EU students generated £414.1m for the economy and 3743 jobs in Scotland.
   b. Immigration Status - The UK Government should make an urgent decision on the post-Brexit immigration status of EU students who want to start studying at Scottish universities after the time that the UK officially leaves the EU.
      i. It is crucial that the UK Government makes a decision as soon as possible on the immigration status of students from the EU who wish to start courses in Scotland after the UK has left the EU. Only then can institutions and students start planning appropriately for any effects of the UK’s withdrawal from the EU.
      ii. EU students make up 9.3% of the undergraduate and postgraduate population in Scotland’s universities, and they make up a higher proportion of postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students in Scotland than they do at undergraduate level. As such, a decrease in their numbers due to changes in immigration status potentially poses a challenge to the viability of certain courses.
iii. Changes in immigration status would also have a detrimental effect on Scotland’s economy, which could lose out on highly skilled EU graduates who currently are able to remain in Scotland and work after their studies.

c. Exchange and Mobility - The UK Government should seek continued access to Erasmus funding or establish an alternative scheme.

i. Around 1,600 Scottish students used ERASMUS in 2014-15 to study abroad, and the number of students from Scottish institutions taking part in Erasmus increased by 50% between 2007-08 to 2014-15.

ii. Student mobility provides a range of benefits to individual students and institutions. Living and studying in another country broadens students’ outlook and provides them with valuable cultural and social experiences, which make them more employable. Graduates with global outlooks are beneficial to society and to employers.

iii. The Erasmus scheme is open to non-EU members but it is linked to freedom of movement and as such, this must form part of the Brexit settlement. Without funding for study exchanges this experience will become unaffordable to most students and this will be a loss to education, society and the economy.

d. Post Study Work Visa - The UK Government should introduce a scheme, which provides international students with the opportunity to remain in the UK and work after completing their studies.

i. There is a concern that the number of students from the EU coming to study in Scotland will decline significantly after Brexit if they face international student fees, no loan facility to pay these and tougher visa restrictions.

ii. Under current arrangements, EU graduates can stay and work in Scotland and help meet demand for high skills and contribute to the economy. Stricter visa rules introduced over the last few years have already made the UK less appealing to talented international students.

iii. There is a consensus in Scottish education and politics that a post-study work visa should be reintroduced in Scotland. If there is any restriction on the mobility of EU students post-Brexit then the need for Scotland to have a visa scheme that makes it an attractive destination for talented students will be even more important.
iv. As well as being of benefit to education, it would also help to address Scotland’s aging population, help to meet demand for high skills and contribute to the economy.

What is the background to this?
1. Edinburgh University Students’ Association campaigned to remain within the European Union\(^1\).
2. Given the recent rhetoric surrounding Brexit and the uncertainty regarding the situation that we face as a University and student body, it is necessary to establish our aims and outlook on the situation. These aims will provide the organisation with a core set of goals that it can focus on and work to achieve.

What beliefs motivate the actions you propose?
1. We believe that students should feel welcome and be empowered to study and grow on this international campus.
2. We believe that students studying at the University of Edinburgh should be able study at partner institutions through the ERASMUS exchange programme.
3. We believe that EU students should not face political barriers to participating in the educational environment offered here.
4. We believe that freedom of movement should be defended.
5. We believe that upon leaving university, students should be allowed to remain and work in Scotland without facing significant legal or financial barriers.

Submitted on behalf of Association Executive