RUSSELL GROUP

Russell Group evidence to the Migration Advisory Committee on EEA-workers in the UK labour market

1. Summary

Overseas talent at Russell Group universities underpins their excellence in education, research and innovation. This excellence drives the UK's position as a world-leading research nation and is helping secure a skilled and effective future UK workforce.

- Russell Group universities make a substantial positive impact on the UK economy. They are ready and well placed to support Government in delivering an ambitious and successful industrial strategy; boosting jobs and growth across the country.

- EEA staff make a significant contribution to the success of Russell Group universities:
  - 25,000 EU nationals are employed by Russell Group universities.
  - EU nationals represent 15% of all staff, 23% of academics and 27% of staff on research-only contracts.
  - There are a greater proportion of EU staff in economically and strategically important subjects including STEM disciplines and modern foreign languages.
  - EU nationals also work in technical positions at our universities; supporting research and teaching, and training future technicians needed across the UK.

- In addition to their direct contribution to research and teaching in our universities, EEA staff promote international collaborations and attract inward investment. They help position our universities as hubs of research excellence, which attracts talented staff and students from around the world, bringing wider economic and social benefits to the UK.

- Russell Group universities value the contribution EEA staff are making to their institutions and want them to stay. A loss of EEA talent from UK universities could impact on research and teaching quality and damage our relationships with higher education and research institutions across the EEA.

- We would be concerned if there was a reduction in the number of EEA migrants available to fill roles at our universities because of reduced appetite to work in the UK or policies that restrict their access. Introducing visa restrictions for EEA nationals would serve as a barrier to prospective staff and would increase administration and recruitment costs. This could threaten the ability of our universities to recruit the skills they need in an efficient and cost-effective way. To mitigate this risk, UK Government should use our new relationship with the EU as an opportunity to develop a future immigration system for EEA nationals which:

(a) enables universities to continue to attract and recruit talented staff from the EEA easily and cost-effectively; prioritising highly skilled academics and other research workers.
(b) offers options for long-term migration with flexible and low burden routes to residence.
(c) is simple and predictable, to ensure all EEA employees and UK employers alike can navigate the system confidently, and keeps administrative burden to a minimum.
(d) effectively facilitates short-term migration of visiting academics between the UK and EEA for knowledge-exchange, training and research collaborations. Any burden imposed on those wishing to come to the UK should be minimised and proportionate to the time they intend to spend here.
(e) is implemented gradually and in full consultation with all sectors, ensuring the necessary lead time is given for UK institutions and potential EEA staff to be able to plan and adapt to any new recruitment systems.

2. Context

2.1 The purpose of The Russell Group is to provide strategic direction, policy development and communications for 24 major research-intensive universities in the UK. We aim to ensure that policy development in a wide range of issues relating to higher education is underpinned by a robust evidence base and a commitment to civic responsibility, improving life chances, raising aspirations and contributing to economic prosperity and innovation.

2.2 We welcome this commission and appreciate the MAC's engagement to date with the higher education sector. This review as an important opportunity to develop a robust evidence base to underpin future immigration policy. Our response is structured as follows:

(a) Why our universities need to recruit talent from the EEA
(b) Characteristics of EEA migrants at Russell Group universities
(c) Impact of a reduction in availability of EEA migrants
(d) Our priorities for a future system

2.3 Given the commission timelines, we welcome continued engagement with the MAC. We are happy to follow up on any of the analysis presented in this paper in more detail.

3. Why Russell Group universities need to continue to recruit talent from the EEA

3.1 Our universities recruit based on merit, choosing the best candidate in recruitment competitions that attract applications from across the world. Many positions require highly skilled individuals of whom there may only be a small number internationally.

3.2 For some disciplines, such as languages, and international history and politics, international staff will always be critical. This is reflected by the high proportion of non-UK nationals in these disciplines at our universities, for example, 37% of modern foreign language academics are from the EU. In other areas, including STEM disciplines, other EU countries have invested heavily in skills and areas of research that compliment UK investment. Our universities are reaping the benefits of this by tapping into this highly mobile talent pool: EU nationals represent 31% of academic staff in mathematics, 28% in chemical engineering and 27% in physics.

3.3 In the sections below, we describe the value EEA nationals bring to our universities and the importance of their continued contribution to our workforce. Case studies on the impact of individual EEA staff can be found in **Annex A**.

<u>Maintaining the competitiveness of UK research</u>

3.4 Countries that support academic mobility are more likely to produce impactful research. Indeed, a nation's openness (measured by combining international co-authorship metrics with the mobility of the research workforce) is a better predictor of scientific impact than the proportion of GDP that nation spends on research.[1] In part, this is because mobility drives collaborative research, which often has greater impact:[2]

(a) Countries, such as the UK, that have a high share of internationally co-authored articles tend to publish more impactful research (as measured by citations).
(b) In 2014, over 51% of all UK publications were co-authored with at least one non-UK researcher.

[1] http://www.nature.com/news/open-countries-have-strong-science-1.22754
[2] Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (October 2017), International Comparative Performance of the UK Research Base 2016. A report prepared by Elsevier.

(c) 57% of Russell Group universities' collaborative publication were with European partners over the period 2011-2016[3]
(d) UK international co-authorship is associated with 59% greater field-weighted citation impact when compared to institutional co-authorship (where the co-authors are all affiliated to the same institution in one country).

3.5 Overseas researchers and PhD students help refresh the UK's research base, facilitating the exchange of ideas and expertise. It is no coincidence that our universities, which attract a high proportion of international academics, are the driving force behind the UK's world-leading research performance.[4] These academics are at the forefront of research in their fields, as shown by their success in winning highly competitive research funding:

(a) Overall, around 45% of European Research Council (ERC) grantees at UK institutions during FP7 (2007-13) were of non-UK nationality.
(b) More than 50% of the prestigious ERC Consolidator Grants awarded to UK universities, worth up to £2 million each, were won by EEA academics working here.
(c) Selection rates for the Research Excellence Framework 2014 were highest for EU staff at UK universities, a clear indication of the high-quality research they produce and their value to UK universities.[5]

3.6 In recognition of the valuable contribution international academics make to UK research, the Government recently committed £18m additional investment to the Rutherford Fund in 2017/18 to support more than 200 fellowships.[6] This builds on the £100m already committed to this fund over the next 4 years to attract global talent to the UK.

3.7 Overseas academics also enable our universities to access international research funding (both from overseas governments and private companies) and attract inward investment to universities' regions, benefiting the local and national economy:

(a) Russell Group universities won £600 million in EU research grants and contracts in 2015/16 – more in value than from any of the seven UK research councils.
(b) 70% of international (non-EU) research grants and contracts to the UK went to Russell Group universities in 2015/16.
(c) At one of our universities, for example, current Tier 2 researchers have attracted over 200 funding awards totalling over £120 million.

Training a future skilled UK workforce

3.8 EEA academics play a critical role in educating future generations and producing a highly skilled workforce in the UK, which is essential for economic growth and prosperity:

(a) Around 36% of EU staff[7] at Russell Group universities are involved directly in teaching.
(b) EEA academics are more highly represented in STEM disciplines and play an important role in training STEM graduates, which are in high demand.
(c) EEA nationals are also more highly represented in strategically important subjects such as modern European languages. Providing degrees in these subjects will help the UK develop its capability to engage globally in business, diplomacy and academia.
(d) At least 30 EU-born Nobel Laureates have attended or taught at our universities.

[3] Elsevier – Scopus analysis for the Russell Group
[4] Whilst the UK represents less than 1% of the world's population, we represent 4% of researchers globally, and produce 16% of the world's most highly-cited articles, of which nearly three quarters are produced by Russell Group researchers.
[5] http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/201517/
[6] https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/how-universities-can-drive-prosperity-through-deeper-engagement
[7] Analysis done using HESA data, with nationality filter for 'non-EU', 'UK' and 'other EU'.

3.9 EEA academics enrich the learning environment for students by contributing to the cultural diversity on campus. This diversity helps generate new innovative approaches to teaching and learning and encourages students to develop an international outlook, which most consider to be important to achieve their personal goals.[8] Cultural diversity on campus also helps prepare students for gainful employment in a competitive global market and working abroad, which we know most students aspire to do.[9]

Continuing our involvement in EU science

3.10 Mobility between the UK and EEA has enabled the UK to build strong relationships with EEA institutions. It has facilitated research collaboration by enabling academics to share ideas, develop joint project proposals and ensure their smooth delivery. Russell Group universities are active participants in EU Research and Innovation Framework Programmes:

(a) Between 2007 and 2014, the UK made over 150,000 collaborative links with EEA partners through the FP7 programme.[10]
(b) Under Horizon 2020 the 24 Russell Group universities have fostered over 9,300 high-value collaborative links in the first two and half years of the programme alone.

3.11 In many cases, EEA staff have been central to our ability to build and sustain these collaborative networks.

3.12 We welcome Government's intention to seek an ambitious science and innovation agreement with the EU - one that continues high levels of collaboration with European partners on major science, research, and technology initiatives. This level of collaboration will require an immigration system that facilitates mobility of academics and other research workers between the EEA and the UK.

Growing the UK's technical workforce

3.13 EEA technicians are supporting a broad range of research programmes at Russell Group universities, most notably across the STEM disciplines. They are also helping address the current skills gap the UK by training future technicians:

(a) Estimates suggest UK industry needs to recruit at least 70,000 new technicians every year to replace those retiring and to fill new positions.[11]
(b) Demand for STEM technicians is particularly acute.[12]

3.14 Although initiatives are underway to grow technical skills in the UK, this will take time:

(a) Universities across the UK, including many Russell Group universities, have signed the Technician Commitment[13] recognising the need to ensure sustainability by safeguarding technical skills across their organisations.
(b) Government's commitment to technical education and expansion of technical apprenticeships should support training of more young people.

[8] British Council (September 2017), The UK's Next Generation.
[9] 56% of respondents to the British Council survey (ibid) were ambitious to work abroad.
[10] European Commission, Seventh FP7 Monitoring Report
[11] The Gatsby Charitable Foundation (April 2017), *Building our Industrial Strategy, response to the Government green paper*
[12] Combining current and anticipated difficulties, nearly half of businesses responding to the CBI education and skills survey, view recruitment of technicians with STEM capability as a problem area.
[13] The Technician Commitment is a sector-wide initiative led by the Science Council, supported by the Gatsby Foundation to help address key challenges facing technical staff working in research.

3.15 However, even with an improved skills pipeline, the UK will always need to tap into technical talent around the world to maximise benefit from innovative technologies developed overseas.

Enabling the UK to deliver an ambitious industrial strategy

3.16 Russell Group universities are ready and well placed to support the Government in delivering an ambitious and successful industrial strategy – both in their own right and as high-value assets for the UK underpinning every other sector. Our universities:

(a) conduct research at the forefront of new technologies where the UK can take a global lead – such as in AI, genomics and advanced materials
(b) work with industry to grow innovative businesses, while also helping improve productivity in established sectors
(c) create the pool of high-level graduate and postgraduate skills needed for an adaptable and professional workforce
(d) invest strategically in infrastructure and collaborative partnerships that attract further investment and world-class talent to the UK, and
(e) act as portals to tap into knowledge, skills and opportunities from around the globe.

3.17 Located in every nation and region, our universities boost jobs and growth across the country. As well as providing local leadership in their communities, they draw on international links, expertise and knowledge. An immigration system that facilitates mobility between the UK and EEA will enable our institutions to continue to connect their local regions and cities to experts and businesses in the EEA, furthering growth and opportunities for innovation.

3.18 Russell Group universities teach strategically important subjects, training over 80% of the UK's doctors and dentists and around half of mathematics and physical sciences graduates.[14] Our universities deliver high-quality courses, drawing on research and links with business, the NHS and others. The delivery and quality of many of these courses depends on our ability to recruit staff with the right skills and experience from the EEA.

4. Characteristics of EEA migrants at Russell Group universities

4.1 There are 24,860 staff from other EU countries at our universities, representing 15% of the overall workforce.[15] The clear majority of EU staff at Russell Group universities are working in highly skilled professional, managerial and technical roles:

(a) 88% of EU staff at our universities are working in occupations classified as managerial, professional, associate professional and technical occupations (Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) groups 1-3).

4.2 Case studies on EEA staff at our universities can be found in **Annex A.**

Academic staff

4.3 76% of EU staff at our universities are on academic contracts, representing 23% of all academic staff. Table 1 shows that a significant number of these EU staff are in teaching roles and an even larger proportion, 27%, are employed on research only contracts.

4.4 Table 2 shows there is a greater proportion of EU nationals in academic posts in STEM subjects at our universities compared to the average. For example, 31% of academic staff in

[14] 2015/16 HESA Student record.
[15] HESA staff (excluding atypical) Full Person Equivalent, 2015-16. Analysis performed using nationality filter for 'non-EU', 'UK' and 'other EU'.

mathematics, 28% in chemical engineering, 27% in physics, 26% in biosciences and 25% in chemistry are EU nationals.

Table 1: EU staff by contract type at Russell Group universities

Contract type		EU staff	Total staff	EU as % of total staff[16]
Non-academic contract		**6,090**	**86,835**	**7%**
Academic contract				
	Research only contracts	9,705	36,570	27%
	Teaching only contracts	2,580	14,175	18%
	Research & teaching contracts	6,465	33,355	19%
	Neither research nor teaching contracts	20	420	5%
	All academic contracts	**18,770**	**84,520**	**23%**

Table 2: Top 25 cost centres for EU staff (excluding atypical) on academic contracts at Russell Group universities (2015-16)

Discipline	EU academic staff as a proportion of total academic staff
Economics & econometrics	39%
Modern languages	37%
IT, systems sciences & computer software engineering	32%
Mathematics	31%
Agriculture, forestry & food science	28%
Chemical engineering	28%
Classics	27%
Area studies	27%
Physics	27%
Biosciences	26%
Politics & international studies	26%
Anatomy & physiology	26%
Chemistry	25%
Civil engineering	25%
Business & management studies	24%
Law	24%
Anthropology & development studies	23%
Electrical, electronic & computer engineering	23%
Archaeology	23%
General engineering	22%
Architecture, built environment & planning	22%
Psychology & behavioural sciences	21%
Mineral, metallurgy & materials engineering	21%
Continuing education	21%
(Mechanical, aero & production engineering	21%

[16] Unknown nationalities removed

4.5 EU academic staff are also more highly represented in humanities and social science disciplines, for example 39% in economics, and 37% in modern foreign languages – an area where business consistently says the UK needs to improve.[17] Furthermore, they make up a significant proportion (20%) of all academic staff in clinical medicine posts at Russell Group universities and are helping to train the UK's future health professionals.

Non-academic staff

4.6 Over 6,000 EU staff at Russell Group universities are in non-academic roles, providing important support to research, teaching and smooth-running operation of these institutions.[18] Many of these non-academic staff will hold highly skilled posts as laboratory, IT and medical technicians, assistant researchers and laboratory managers. Some will also be expert administrators and in IT support roles, which are important for the day-to-day running of our universities.

4.7 EEA technicians at Russell Group universities are a highly trained workforce with a diverse range of expertise, providing essential support to research and teaching. They train PhD students and postdoctoral researchers, support the delivery of undergraduate education and typically work as an integral part of research teams. A survey of 800 technicians and laboratory assistants by the BBSRC found 40% teach, 60% supervise students and 80% had contributed to research papers.[19]

4.8 In total, there are around 9,000 technicians at Russell Group universities.[20] These roles are particularly prevalent in certain disciplines including clinical medicine, biosciences and engineering, showing the importance of technicians to underpin research in these areas, which are so crucial for improving public health and treatment of disease.

4.9 Non-UK nationals represent 13% of technicians at Russell Group universities. There are 750 EU technicians, representing 9% of the total. This is lower than the proportion of total staff (15%) and academics (23%). However, the technical expertise of these 750 EU nationals supports a broad range of research programmes, most notably across the STEM disciplines. For example, EU nationals represent:

- 17% of technicians in anatomy and physiology
- 13% of technicians in clinical medicine
- 11% of technicians in earth, marine and environmental sciences
- 11% of technicians in biosciences

Visiting academics

4.10 Freedom of movement has meant that academics across the EEA have been easily able to visit other academic institutions to share knowledge, further projects and collaborations and undertake training opportunities. This is a normal and important feature of academic careers. In a recent survey of Fellows and grant recipients from the UK National Academies, participants commonly reported that they took short-term trips overseas (of less than one year) as part of their role. Almost two fifths (38%) reported taking more than twenty short visits in the past five years.[21]

[17] CBI/Pearson education and skills survey 2017, Helping the UK Thrive
[18] HESA staff (excluding atypical) FPE, 2015-16. Analysis performed using nationality filter for 'non-EU', 'UK' and 'other EU'.
[19] Ball, M., Hardwick, R., and Vere, K. (Dec 2016), Performance metrics: Forge a clearer path for technical careers, Nature Correspondence.
[20] This analysis was performed on data provided by HESA. Copyright Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited. Neither the Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited nor HESA Services Limited can accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived by third parties from data or other information supplied by HESA Services.
[21] National Academies survey (2017), *The role of international collaboration and mobility in research*, Opinion Leader

4.11 Visiting EEA academics tend to do so under informal arrangements so unless the academic is employed on a short-term fixed contract, the university will not hold information of these visits centrally. It is therefore challenging to get a comprehensive picture of the number of EEA nationals in our universities on a short-term basis. However, from speaking to our institutions we know such visits are common, with many research groups at Russell Group universities hosting academic visitors from the EEA, for example:

(a) Professor Adolfo Saiardi works at the MRC Laboratory for Molecular Cell Biology at UCL. His research focuses on basic metabolism and signalling linked to human diseases including obesity, diabetes and cancer. Because of the expertise of his lab, he frequently trains students and researchers from across the UK and overseas. In the past year, he has hosted three PhD students from universities in other EU countries for between 2-4 weeks, and a Professor from Spain who is carrying out sabbatical research in his lab for a few months. In recent years he has seen a similar flux of visitors from the EEA and these visits have resulted in several high impact research publications.[22]

5. Impact of a reduction in availability of EEA migrants

5.1 We would be concerned if there was a reduction in the number of EEA migrants available to fill roles at our universities because of reduced appetite to work in the UK or policies that restrict their access. Such a scenario is likely to mean a loss of talent from UK universities, which could impact on research and teaching quality, with knock-on impacts for students and the wider economy and society. A loss of EEA staff is also likely to damage our relationships with higher education (HE) and research institutions in EEA member countries and the reputation of our universities throughout the EEA and further afield.

5.2 If a future system were to require EEA migrants to meet the same conditions as non-EEA nationals entering the UK under the current points-based system, this could affect our ability to recruit EEA staff to some positions and would increase recruitment costs and administrative burden. Furthermore, the additional hurdle of having to negotiate the UK's visa systems may deter prospective EEA staff. Even the perception the UK does not welcome overseas talent could reduce appetite to work here.

Salary requirements

5.3 Around 6,000 EU staff at our universities (24%) earn under £30,000, which is below the Tier 2 eligibility threshold.[23] Table 3 shows the number of EU staff at Russell Group universities disaggregated by salary band. It shows that the largest salary band by number of EU staff at our universities is salary band 4 – those earning between £34,277 and £43,325 per year.

5.4 There tends to be a correlation between salary band and qualification level.[24] Lower qualified staff are therefore most likely to be affected if the salary threshold of £30,000 were applied to EU nationals. However, this salary threshold could also impact on a number of highly qualified staff: 640 EU staff with doctorates and 1,270 EU staff with postgraduate and other higher degrees, earn less than £30,000.

[22] Biochim Biophys Acta. 2016;1862(9):1766-73; Science. 2016;352(6288):986-90; Angew Chem Int Ed Engl. 2015;54(33):9622-6; Plant Cell. 2015;27(4):1082-97; Biochem J. 2014;460(3):377-85; Planta. 2014;239(5):965-77.
[23] HESA staff (excluding atypical) Full Person Equivalent, 2015-16. Analysis performed using nationality filter for 'non-EU', 'UK' and 'other EU'.
[24] There tends to be a correlation between salary and qualification level: 54% of those with NQF level 6 qualifications or lower earn less than £30,000, whereas only 12% of those with NQF level 7 of above, with doctorates and other postgraduate qualifications, earn less than £30,000.

Table 3: Number of EU staff by salary band (SB) at Russell Group universities (2015-16)

Salary Band	SB1: <£18,031	SB2: ≥£18,031 & <£24,057	SB3: ≥£24,057 & <£32,277	SB4: ≥£34,277 & <£43,325	SB5: ≥£43,325 & <£58,172	SB6: ≥£58,172
Number of EU staff	1,155	1,480	5,255	9,375	4,595	3,005
% of all EU staff	5%	6%	21%	38%	18%	12%

5.5 It is important to consider the constraints on universities, which make it extremely difficult to raise staff salaries:

(a) The majority of Russell Group universities participate in a system of national pay determination, along with most other universities in the UK. The purpose of this system is to promote stability and equality in the academic labour market, and to minimise the potential for industrial disputes. This means most universities do not have the ability to vary the salaries of staff below professorial level significantly themselves.

(b) In addition to being determined nationally, publicly funded academic roles within universities are also subject to government pay constraints. For example, salaries for those roles which are funded via the Research Councils are subject to restrictions on pay across the civil service, which is currently frozen.

(c) More broadly, university budgets are constrained by the availability of public funding for research and teaching, which is coming under increasing pressure along with a constant push from Government to achieve efficiency savings. Universities are also facing funding pressures in other areas such as the limited funding available for high-cost STEM subjects and the need to meet commitments to invest in access measures.

(d) Universities are charities with a remit to deliver for the public good. This also means they have a responsibility to remain accountable for their use of public funds and financial decisions must be scrutinised carefully to ensure they provide value for money.

5.6 EEA technicians are one group of staff that would be affected by a £30,000 salary threshold. According to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2014, the experienced salary rate for technicians is £30,764 or lower. On the whole, the salary of technicians at Russell Group Universities is in line with this survey, although some do earn more, with 24% on salaries of £32,277 or more. Given that many technicians, across all industries, will be on salaries below £30,000, they will not meet the minimum salary threshold for current Tier 2 eligibility.

5.7 Part-time staff are also likely to be affected by this salary threshold as their annual salary will be lower than their full-time equivalents. This would have a particular impact on academics on teaching-only contracts, who are critical for training a skilled UK workforce. Table 4 shows that 68% of EU staff on teaching-only contracts at Russell Group universities are part-time. Our analysis suggests members of staff within this heterogeneous group work, on average, just over 1.5 days a week on a teaching-only basis and would therefore be unlikely to meet the Tier 2 salary threshold.[25]

[25] HESA staff (excluding atypical) 2015-16, FTE EU staff at Russell Group universities on teaching-only contracts (545) as a proportion of FPE (1,755) = 31% = 1.55 days a week.

Table 4: EU staff by contract type at Russell Group universities (2015-16)

Contract type		Full-time	Part-time	% Part-time
Non-academic contract		**4,170**	**1,920**	**32%**
Academic contract				
	Research only contracts	8,735	970	10%
	Teaching only contracts	825	1,755	68%
	Research & teaching contracts	5,970	500	8%
	Neither research nor teaching contracts	10	10	50%
	All academic contracts	**15,540**	**3,235**	**17%**

Skill level

5.8 PhD-level positions are prioritised under Tier 2 and it is essential that this should continue in any new system. However, there are a number of roles at our universities below PhD-level and below the national qualification framework (NQF) level 6 skills threshold for Tier 2. For example, the SOC system classifies technician roles as being NQF level 3 and 4:

(a) Nine of the 12 HE-relevant unit groups within SOC 311, 312, 321 and 355 are classified as NQF level 3 and therefore ineligible for sponsorship in Tier 2.
(b) The remaining three occupations are classified as NQF level 4.

5.9 Technicians therefore aren't eligible under Tier 2 because they fall below the skills threshold. They also do not feature on the shortage occupation list.[26] However, we know that individuals in these positions are highly qualified:

(a) 88% of EU technicians and 89% of non-EU technicians are skilled to NQF level 6 or above
(b) 25% of EU and non-EU technicians hold a PhD

5.10 Although NQF level 6 qualifications might not be a prerequisite for technician roles, these qualifications are highly valued by university departments and will often be seen as desirable when hiring to these roles. Graduate and postgraduate qualifications enable technicians to better understand the theory behind research as well as the process including methodology and experimental design. This understanding means those more highly qualified technicians can contribute directly to research outputs and their impact, improve the efficiency of laboratory operations and play a more important role in training of staff and students.

Immigration skills charge

5.11 If the immigration skills charge for non-EEA nationals were applied to EEA nationals, this would increase the cost of our universities recruiting from the EEA. Given our universities are not-for-profit organisations and subject to funding constraints, increasing recruitment costs would have implications for their research, education and innovation activities.

5.12 Applying such a 'skills' charge to universities does not consider the fact that education is core to their mission. Universities already make significant investments to train a highly skilled

[26] Home Office (August 2017) *Immigration rules appendix K: Shortage Occupation List*

workforce for the UK, both through the provision of degree-level education and research training, and the delivery of apprenticeships.

5.13 Under the current system for non-EEA migrants, there is an important exemption from the immigration skills charge for PhD-level roles. This exemption benefits many academic roles at Russell Group universities. If any charge for EEA migrants were imposed in a future system, we consider it important a similar exemption is made for PhD-level occupations. We would also welcome a comprehensive cost/benefit analysis before any such charge is applied to recruitment of EEA nationals to non-PhD level roles.

The Tier 2 visa cap

5.14 If EEA staff were required to apply for Tier 2 skilled visas in future, this would place significant pressure on the current Tier 2 cap of 20,700 per year. Of new academic starters at universities across the UK in 2015/16, approximately 8,950 were non-UK nationals; 5,180 of these were EU nationals.[27] Staff at UK universities would be competing with many other migrants applying for visas to work in every other sector within the UK economy.

5.15 Such pressure on the cap is certain to affect recruitment of EEA and non-EEA staff employed in important non-PhD positions such as senior administrative positions, project engineers, software developers and technicians at Russell Group universities. Furthermore, although PhD-level positions are currently prioritised under Tier 2, and we would want this to continue, we are concerned that pressure on the cap could start to impact on recruitment of overseas staff to these positions.

Dependants

5.16 Being able to bring their family with them when relocating to the UK is of critical importance to staff at Russell Group universities. Currently, EEA staff can bring their direct and extended family members to the UK. If restrictions on their ability to do so were imposed, the UK's attractiveness to this pool of talent would decrease and many EEA academics and research workers may choose not to take up positions at our universities as a result.

5.17 Many non-EEA academics bring dependants including spouses, partners and children. During the recruitment process, prospective non-EEA staff frequently ask about their ability to bring dependants and their rights to work in the UK, indicating the importance of this issue. Indeed, an international survey has shown that the ability of dependants to work is one of the keys to any country's attractiveness for highly skilled international staff.[28] For respondents from UK universities and research institutes, the same survey found:

(a) Over 80% said if their spouse or partner did not have the right to work in the UK, it would have had a negative impact on their decision to accept their current post. Of these, over 40% would definitely not have accepted their post if their spouse or partner did not have the right to work.
(b) Almost 98% of their spouses or partners were skilled to degree level and above (NQF 6+), over 70% had at least a postgraduate qualification (NQF 7+) and a third had a doctoral qualification (NQF 8).
(c) Of spouses or partners working in the UK (around 65% of respondents), nearly 65% were working in a professional occupation.
(d) The majority stated the ability for their spouse or partner to work in the UK had a very positive impact on the following: adjustment and integration with life in the UK; family

[27] Calculated using HESA 2015/16 staff data. 30,925 new academics starters (all nationalities). Assumed proportion of EU and non-EU starters would be equivalent to proportion of EU and non-EU total academic staff (16.75% and 12.18% respectively (unknown nationalities not removed from total)).
[28] Permits Foundation, International Survey: Expatriate spouses and partners employment, work permits and international mobility, 2008

relationships (with partner, children); health or well-being; willingness of the Tier 2 employee to complete the current job or assignment.

5.18 Many of our universities also employ Tier 2 dependants in a range of roles including highly skilled research and academic positions at PhD level. Restricting EEA dependants' work rights would remove their ability to make a positive contribution to our universities and to the UK economy more widely through payment of National Insurance and income tax.

Visiting academics and temporary workers

5.19 Restricting the ability of EEA academics and students to visit the UK, and vice-versa, would make UK-EEA research collaboration more difficult.

5.20 There are two principal routes by which non-EEA academics looking to spend short periods teaching, researching or training in HE institutions (HEIs) can enter the UK:

(a) The standard visitor visa allows academics to stay in the UK for up to 12 months.
(b) The Tier 5 visa for temporary workers allows sponsored researchers to stay in the UK for up to 24 months

5.21 Bringing EEA nationals in on these visa routes would represent increased cost and administrative burden to applicants and institutions. Moreover, eligibility criteria might exclude some EEA students and academics from coming to the UK, restricting their interaction with UK HEIs.

5.22 We welcomed reforms to the non-EEA visitor system in 2014, which saw this replaced with a more streamlined and simpler process. However, the administration and decision-making processes which underpin the issuance of visitor visas is still problematic, with a lack of consistency outlined as a key issue among our members. It is a risk to the reputation of the UK and our universities when the burden of applying to visit is disproportionate and where academics, who have been invited by reputable UK institutions, are refused entry because Clearance Officers question the individual's credibility as an academic. We are aware of a few such examples from our members in the last month alone.

5.23 It is important that this system is improved for non-EEA visitors and that EEA nationals do not experience such difficulties in the future. One option to achieve this would be for EEA nationals to be treated as non-visa nationals for visitor visa purposes so there is no requirement for them to apply for a visitor visa in advance and they are permitted to seek entry at the UK border. This would mean no costs or waiting times for visas and a more welcoming approach to those wishing to visit the UK on a short-term basis. Furthermore, all EEA countries could be added to the Registered Traveller Scheme, which speeds up entry and negates the need for a landing card.

6. Our priorities for a future immigration system

6.1 The future immigration system needs to support UK universities to attract and retain researchers, academics and technical experts from anywhere in the world. They are essential for driving innovation, improving national productivity and maintaining the UK's competitive advantage in research and education. The system should:

- **Prioritise highly skilled people and those with specialist knowledge and expertise, including academics and other research workers.** This would involve continuing to prioritise those in PhD-level and other highly trained positions, perhaps through a separate light-touch route for academic, research and associated specialist/ technical positions.

- Acknowledge that **earnings thresholds alone are not fit for purpose as a proxy for the level of skill and specialisation necessary to undertake research, teaching and technical support** in universities. Universities are non-for-profit organisations and are subject to various funding constraints. They are also often unable to vary the salary offered for particular roles because of nationally agreed pay scales and government pay constraints for publicly funded roles. Salary thresholds also fail to capture the package of benefits that staff at our universities receive, including generous employer pension contributions. For these reasons, salaries alone should not be used as a proxy for skill level or to identify the highly expert roles in universities.

- Offer **options for long-term migration with flexible and low burden routes to residency** for EEA and non-EEA immigrants working in the UK and their dependants. This is particularly important for researchers and academics building a career here and will enable the UK's research base and HE system to retain the vital skills and experience of individuals over the long-term.

- **Facilitate short-term migration of visiting academics between the UK and countries around the world for knowledge-exchange, training and research collaborations**. Particular focus should be given to maintaining the ease in which this mobility occurs between the UK and the EEA to protect our deep and fruitful relationships with universities across the EEA.

- **Acknowledge universities as a key sector for delivering an ambitious industrial strategy**. Universities are an important sector in their own right but also serve to underpin other sectors of strategic importance to the UK; delivering a range of skills, qualifications and training for the economy and society, and ensuring the UK has the talent pool to meet the needs of employers. The immigration system must enable UK universities to work at the heart of the industrial strategy.

- Be simple to ensure **prospective employees from outside the UK and UK employers alike can confidently navigate the system and keep administrative burden and processing costs to a minimum**. In particular, it will be important to fully consider the potential complexity of implementing a separate system for EEA nationals, evaluate the cost/benefit impact of such an arrangement, working with all stakeholders to do so.

- Be **implemented gradually, ensuring the necessary lead time is given for UK institutions and prospective EEA and non-EEA staff to be able to plan and introduce any new recruitment systems**. The MAC should review how any new system for EEA nationals should be phased in and the appropriate time needed to do so, working closely with all sectors to inform this review.

- Any short-term measures introduced for the immigration of EEA nationals during the transition period immediately following our exit from the EU should be clear for prospective employees and easy for employers to introduce. **Appropriate guidance for arrangements during this period should be developed with employers at the earliest opportunity**. We consider transitional measures will be necessary to avoid a potentially damaging period of instability and to ensure that universities can continue to attract and retain international talent as we move towards a post-Brexit regime.

October 2017

Annex A – Illustrative examples of contributions EEA staff at Russell Group universities have made to the UK

Professor Zoltán Takáts, Imperial College London

A scalpel that tells surgeons immediately whether the tissue they are cutting is cancerous or not was developed by Hungarian researcher, Professor Zoltán Takáts, at Imperial College London – transforming cancer surgery and saving lives. Professor Takáts' **cutting-edge research was made possible by European Research Council grants that helped to take the original research idea through to market.** Surgery is often the most effective treatment for cancer. But even the best surgeons can find it impossible to know if they have removed all traces of cancerous material. The iKnife can tell surgeons whether the tissue they are cutting is cancerous or not. Diversifying the research, **the technology was sold to the US Waters Corporation in a deal that is expected to see tens of millions of dollars of new investment to the UK.**

Dr Roxana Carare, University of Southampton

At the forefront of research into neurodegeneration Dr Roxana Carare has been awarded the Dementia Research leader's Award by the Alzheimer Society. A Romanian national Dr Carare works from the University of Southampton, where she completed her PhD in 2006. Her work on neurodegenerative diseases that affect the ageing brain have also garnered her international recognition by demonstrating the ways that metabolic waste products are eliminated from the brain. She is now working on manipulating the pathways along which the waste drains with the ultimate goal of preventing personally and socially devastating conditions, like Alzheimer's. Dr Carare also teaches clinical anatomy to undergraduate and postgraduate medical students. She has been honoured by the Romanian Government as an Honorary Consul and is an advisor for Age UK.

Professor Sir Christopher Pissarides, London School of Economics and Political Science

Cypriot academic Professor Sir Christopher Pissarides is a Nobel laureate, economic trail-blazer and former president of the European Economic Association, who has worked at the LSE since 1976.

Awarded the Nobel Prize for economics in 2010 (jointly with Peter Diamond and Dale Mortenson) he currently holds the post of Professor of Economics and Political Science as well as Regius Professor of Economics. His work in the development of theories surrounding search frictions and macroeconomics helps us to understand the interactions between policy making and regulation with unemployment, job vacancies and wages. The economic theories he has helped to develop form the basis of most graduate curricula around the world. He is a Fellow of the British Academy, the Academy of Athens, the Academia Europaea and a Lifetime Honorary Member of the American Economic Association. He was knighted in 2013.

Dr Paola Crippa, Newcastle University

Italian national Dr Paola Crippa, from Newcastle University, **was awarded a prestigious L'Oréal-UNESCO National 'For Women in Science' Fellowship in 2015, a programme that promotes and rewards outstanding female early career scientists**. Her research integrates model results with ground and satellite-based observations to more accurately predict population exposure to harmful concentrations of hazardous particulate matter in the air. Results from her research will help to plan for strategies to mitigate impacts on human health in densely populated areas affected by wildfires. According to the World Health Organisation 3.7 million people, mostly in the developed world, die each year due to the

exposure to atmospheric air pollutants. Dr Crippa is working to understand how particulate matter from wildfires fires is transported over Equatorial Asia and contributes to regional air pollution phenomena. This project makes use for the first time of high resolution simulations from a state-of-the-art regional atmospheric chemistry model to capture both urban and regional scale air pollution features.

Professor Dimitrios Nikolopoulos, Queen's University Belfast

Professor Dimitrios Nikolopoulos is a Greek computer scientist working in the field of high performance computing. Professor Nikolopoulos joined the School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at Queen's University Belfast as Director of Research for the High Performance and Distributed Computing Research Cluster. His research has improved the performance and energy efficiency of new cutting-edge supercomputers with applications ranging from healthcare to meteorology. **His research has received more than £50 million in highly competitive research funding from a wide range of sources including the Royal Academy of Engineering, the European Commission and the private sector**.

Professor Manuel Salmeron-Sanchez, University of Glasgow

Professor Salmeron Sanchez holds a prestigious ERC Consolidator Award, and since arriving in Glasgow has built a now well-established research group of 20 highly skilled individuals who are working at the interface of engineering and the medical sciences. He has recently been awarded a £5M EPSRC Programme grant enabling him to draw together a team from three Universities (Glasgow, Imperial, Nottingham) as well as the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service to tackle major challenges in tissue therapy. Other examples of his research include work with charities, including The Leverhulme Trust and Cancer Research UK, and most notably on developing bone replacement for bomb-blast in land-mine victims where he leads a large programme of research which includes a multidisciplinary team of engineers, biologists and surgeons (Glasgow Royal Infirmary).

Professor Salmeron-Sanchez engages closely with industry (for example local SMEs such as BiogelX, Taragenyx and Collagen Solutions) with whom he has developed collaborations, co-supervise PhD students and is currently discussing licensing options for his technology.

Professor Harald Haas, University of Edinburgh

Professor Harald Haas is the German pioneer behind Li-Fi - a new technology that has been called the future of communications. Li-Fi is the use of light to transmit data wirelessly. The technology offers higher speeds than traditional wireless technology, greater security and the potential to deliver unprecedented bandwidth and data density.

Professor Haas received his PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2001 and became a Professor in 2007. He introduced his Li-Fi technology to the world at a TED Global talk in 2011. **In 2012, Professor Haas and his team at the School of Engineering created the spin-out company pureLi-Fi with the intention of brining this technology to market**. He established the world's first Li-Fi centre in 2013, when the Li-Fi Research & Development Centre opened at the University of Edinburgh.

He is Chair of Mobile Communications at the University of Edinburgh, co-founder and Chief Scientific Officer of pureLi-Fi Ltd, Director of the Li-Fi Research and Development Centre. **In the summer of 2016, pureLi-Fi raised £7.5 million in funding to grow the enterprise. PureLi-Fi now employs 20 people.**