BRITISH ACADEMY
for the humanities and social sciences

A submission from the British Academy to the House of Commons Exiting the EU Committee inquiry on the UK's negotiating objectives for the withdrawal from the EU

1. The British Academy, the UK's national academy for the social sciences and humanities, welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the House of Commons Exiting the EU Select Committee inquiry on the UK's negotiating objectives for the withdrawal from the EU.

2. The UK's world-leading research and higher education system should be key priorities for the UK's negotiating objectives as it withdraws from the EU. The British Academy has laid out four areas of focus for the Government in the negotiations: people, collaboration, resources, and regulation. These four areas are essential in maintaining and building on the current success of the UK's efficient, international and diverse research and higher education system. Research is an international endeavour, which by its very nature moves across borders with regular collaboration and exchange between researchers in nations across the world. The Government's aim to remain open to the world as the UK leaves the EU is fundamental to the continued success of UK research and higher education. Research and development are key to the UK's growth, prosperity and influence, considering the centrality of the knowledge economy and research engagement to current and future competitiveness.

3. Non-UK EU nationals make up 16% of the UK-based academic workforce; this is 20% at Russell Group universities.[1] There is also clear evidence that the excellence of researchers from outside the UK helps propel the success of the UK's top institutions.[2] The ability to attract a global talent pool to the UK has been vital in ensuring that with less than 1% of the world's population and 3.2% of global R&D expenditure, the UK produces 15.9% of the world's most highly cited papers.[3] Being embedded within the EU's freedom of movement and having complete access to world-leading research opportunities, such as through the European Research Council, have helped to facilitate the UK's attractiveness to researchers worldwide and to researchers already based here in the UK. The Government should be aiming to build on the UK's attractiveness to researchers already based in the UK and those who might come here in the years ahead. Certainty on their status today and the years ahead is fundamental. In the UK's negotiations, the Government should bear in mind that the service sectors represent about 80% of the UK's economy, which are underpinned by research and development and those people from around the world working in those sectors.[4] A negotiation that encourages researchers to remain in the UK and continues to attract able researchers from overseas is critical to the UK's continued research success and for future growth in this country.

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[1] British Academy, Written Evidence to House of Commons Science & Technology Select Committee inquiry on 'Leaving the EU: implications for science and research', 19 August 2016, http://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2016-08-16%20BA%20Response%20-%20HoC%20ST%20SC%20Inquiry%20-%20Leaving%20EU%20Questions%20Final.pdf

[2] British Academy, Written Evidence to the House of Commons Education Select Committee inquiry on 'The impact of exiting the European Union on higher education', 11 November 2016, http://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2016-11-11%20British%20Academy%20Education%20Select%20Committee%20Submission%20FINAL.pdf

[3] UK National Academies, *Open for Business: A nation of global researchers and innovators*, November 2016, http://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Open%20for%20business%20-%20a%20nation%20of%20global%20researchers%20and%20innovators_0.pdf

[4] UK National Academies, *Open for Business: A nation of global researchers and innovators*, November 2016, http://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Open%20for%20business%20-%20a%20nation%20of%20global%20researchers%20and%20innovators_0.pdf

4. Similarly, UK higher education institutions contribute significantly to the development and embedding of R&D expertise in the UK, as well as the UK's international reach and soft power,[5] through the training of high qualified individuals from nations across the world. 35% of all postgraduate students in the UK came from overseas in 2014-15 and that increases to 42.7% (with 13% of these coming from EU Member States – the highest amount from any location) for all those who were undertaking research higher degrees.[6] In the negotiations, the UK should ensure an arrangement whereby the pipeline of researchers from undergraduate to Masters to doctoral students is supported and continues to encourage people to both conduct study and research in the UK as well as build their careers after university here in the UK to our benefit. It is the British Academy's view that the Government should make a strategic decision to re-focus its objectives for migration figures. We would encourage the Government to move its focus away from students in its targets for net migration and instead look to encourage able students to come to the UK in the knowledge of the considerable benefits this brings to the UK. An important signal in this regard would be to provide time after the awarding of degrees for students to find employment here in the UK and apply for work visas (i.e. Tier 2 visas) here in the UK rather than having to leave the UK and apply from overseas.

5. Another challenge for the Government as it negotiates the UK's withdrawal from the EU is to create arrangements which continue to enable the UK to closely collaborate with partners in the EU as well as provide opportunities for collaboration with other partners around the world. International collaborations are fundamental to the success of UK research and higher education. Almost half of all UK academic papers are written with an international partner. It is imperative that the UK enters these negotiations with a core objective of remaining open to international collaboration, which includes continued collaboration outside the EU with our EU partners. Currently 60% of the UK's internationally co-authored research papers are with EU partners and it has been proved that such collaborations lead to research with greater impact.[7] The UK is going to have to redefine in its role in the world and we will also have to adapt our research and higher education collaborations and relationships. This, however, takes time. Collaborations can take many years to engender and flourish and the UK is currently well embedded in the EU's frameworks. A transitional arrangement once the UK leaves the EU will be important to manage the disruption and change that will be inevitable so that UK research and higher education can retain its current excellence and efficiency.

6. Funding from the EU has been important to UK researchers, particularly in recent years as this funding source has increased whilst funding in the UK has stagnated. A transitional arrangement will be central in ensuring that the resources available to research and higher

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[5] Christopher Hill and Sarah Beadle, *The Art of the Attraction: Soft Power and the UK's Role in the World*, The British Academy, p.43-44, http://www.britac.ac.uk/publications/art-attraction-soft-power-and-uks-role-world; Higher Education Policy Institute, 'Now that's what we call soft power: 55 world leaders educated in the UK', 1 October 2015, http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2015/10/01/now-thats-call-soft-power-55-world-leaders-educated-uk/

[6] HESA, 'Students in Higher Education 2014/15', Table C: Postgraduate students by level of study, mode of study, sex and domicile, https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/students-2014-15 (accessed 6 December 2016)

[7] British Academy, Written Evidence to the House of Commons Education Select Committee inquiry on 'The impact of exiting the European Union on higher education', 11 November 2016, http://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2016-11-11%20British%20Academy%20Education%20Select%20Committee%20Submission%20FINAL.pdf

education in the UK remain stable and the long-term foundations for the UK's adapted research and higher education relationships and partnerships after it leaves the EU can be put in place securely. Resource to undertake research is critical to this process and the British Academy has called for the Government to raise the UK's gross domestic expenditure on research and development to that of the OECD average, which is still well below France and Germany, as an initial step.[8]

7. In terms of the negotiations, however, particular sectors of research in the UK have been exceptionally successful in gaining funding from the EU and taking advantage of funding opportunities only available at an EU level. For example, from 2007-2015 UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences won just over €626 million from Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants from the European Research Council. This is just over a third of all total funding that was available in the humanities and social sciences. This is a far higher share than the physical, engineering and life sciences have won in the UK and illustrates that resources from the EU can play an outsize part in different areas of the UK research and higher education system. The Government should be aware of the potential differentiated impact across the research base of withdrawal from the EU. In the interim, retaining full access to key programmes, such as the European Research Council, through a transitional arrangement similar in characteristic to that of Norway and Switzerland, albeit shaped appropriately for the UK, will be key for laying future success in the UK. A situation where the UK had on its doorstep world-leading research opportunities, such as those provided by the European Research Council, which would only be available to researchers in the UK by leaving the UK for other countries, and the UK was not able to attract talented researchers winning European Research Council funding to the UK, could be potentially devastating for the UK's position as a global research leader.

8. Similarly, the common rules and standards of regulation across the EU provide a strong platform for the exchange of people, ideas and data for research, such as in data collection and protection, intellectual property, research protocols and other similar areas. In the negotiations, the Government should be mindful that considering the proximity and level of exchange between the UK and the rest of the EU, the UK will have to apply EU regulations and standards when working with EU partners, and working with EU partners will be critical to continued growth and prosperity. The negotiations should not create an unnecessarily divergent regulatory relationship between the UK and the EU which would place research in the UK in an adverse position vis-à-vis the far larger EU market.

9. In summary, the UK faces a challenge now in terms of growth, since we have to manage disruption and change, redefine our role in the world and look again at our comparative advantages and key relationships. Research and higher education lie at the heart of the growth opportunities in the UK. Universities, research institutions and researchers based in the UK are special sources of comparative advantage. Critically, we must bear in mind the potential contribution of the social sciences and humanities in an economy that is almost fourth-fifths services-oriented. A negotiation favourable to scholarship, research and

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[8] British Academy, Written Evidence to House of Commons Science & Technology Select Committee inquiry on 'Leaving the EU: implications for science and research', 19 August 2016, http://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2016-08-16%20BA%20Response%20-%20HoC%20ST%20SC%20Inquiry%20-%20Leaving%20EU%20Questions%20Final.pdf

innovation will have very high returns and can underpin a revival of growth in productivity. It will also help to underpin the Government's desired expanded international partnerships and relationships by supporting the outward-facing, internationally networked, efficiently run UK research base.