Vice-Chancellor's comment on the day the EU referendum results were announced (24 June)

UK votes to leave the EU - important information for staff and students

Today's result to leave the European Union has massive implications for us all - not just universities.

It certainly doesn't represent the views of most of us here at Sussex. In a poll of our staff and students, 82% of those who took part, wanted the UK to retain its membership of the EU.

I am very acutely focused on what this decision will mean for our staff and students who are from EU countries. They are a valued part of the Sussex community and it is a priority for us to ensure that they can continue to work and study with us. We will also be seeking to understand the long-term implications for our researchers and students who are currently involved in EU funded programmes.

At the moment, we know that barring unilateral action from the UK Government, there is not an immediate impact on the immigration status of current and prospective EU students and staff, or of the UK as a full member of Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+.

However we are now faced with dealing with the very serious and potentially significant ramifications of this vote. It will take time to fully understand what Brexit will truly mean for the higher education sector. However I am very clear about one thing - the contribution of universities to the economic and social life of Britain has never been more vital and we must do whatever we can to retain this.

In the lead-up to the referendum, the University’s Senior Management Group made up of heads of schools and members of the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group, met to discuss how a potential exit vote would affect universities and to explore the risks and opportunities; as well as the mitigating steps that we might need to undertake. I also had conversations with Professional Services colleagues about what this might mean in terms of the running and livelihood of the University.

Certainly a lot has been said about the potential impact on research funding and the recruitment of international students and staff. Not to mention, the implications relating to global league table positioning, the impact of the renegotiation of trade and financial relations on the sector, immigration more generally and the many knock-on reputational effects.

Over the coming weeks and months, the University’s leadership team will be spending time considering what we need to put in place to ensure the continued success of Sussex, and in a way that is true to the values of our University. Internationalism is a core part of Sussex’s heritage and collaborating with institutions, people and projects from across Europe is a key part of that.
We will also be working closely with Universities UK (UUK) to identify and better understand the timescales and processes the Government will be working to.

As many of you would have read, leaving the EU will not happen overnight. There will be a gradual, managed exit process with significant opportunities for UUK, and its members, to seek assurances and influence future policy. Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty foresees a two-year negotiation process between the UK and other Member States, during which time the terms of the UK’s exit from the European Union will be decided.

We know that UUK has already been engaging closely with the UK Government, the European Commission, the UK Research Office and other relevant agencies, and will be continuing to do so to ensure that our sector views come across loudly and clearly. UUK has undertaken to ensure that members will be kept up to date on next steps as they become clear.

We will be sharing detailed advice from UUK on prospective and currently negotiated projects, and any other information we receive, as soon as possible.

I know that many of you care passionately about staying in the EU. We will certainly be doing all that we can to come to grips with this historic change for the UK.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION – WHAT WE DO KNOW**

- **EU staff**: their immigration status has not changed as a result of the vote. This will remain the case until the Government decides otherwise.

- **Current EU students**: their immigration status and associated fee status, as well as their access to the student loan book, have not changed as a result of the vote. This will remain the case until the Government decides otherwise.

- **EU students with a place to start in academic year 2016/17 and 2017/18**: at this stage there is no reason to assume any change to their immigration status or access to student loan book.

- **EU students studying in the UK under the Erasmus programme**: their immigration status has not changed, and they continue to be eligible for their Erasmus grant until at least as long as we remain a member of the EU and could well be extended beyond this.

- **UK students studying in the EU and elsewhere under the Erasmus programme**: their immigration status has not changed, and they continue to be eligible for their Erasmus grant until at least as long as we remain a member of the EU and could well be extended beyond this.