

29 August 2019

The Rt Hon. Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing in my capacity as general secretary of the University and College Union to seek assurances about the status of non-UK EU citizens in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

The Home Secretary recently announced that the government hopes to end freedom of movement immediately should the UK leave the EU with no deal on 31 October. However, the Home Office's media factsheet claims that EU citizens currently residing in the UK will not be affected by such a move in a no-deal scenario. These contradictory statements have caused significant confusion and have done little to assuage the obvious concerns and objections that have been raised about the impact of no-deal on EU citizens' rights.

Many EU citizens are now concerned that if they travel abroad and try to return after the exit date they will be denied re-entry. They are also concerned about travelling abroad after the UK has left the EU in case they are not allowed to come back, especially if they are among the millions who have not yet been granted settled status through the EU Settlement Scheme.

This level of uncertainty for EU citizens is unacceptable. It reveals the government's complete disregard for EU nationals as workers and citizens, and has only been intensified by the government's decision to prorogue parliament, potentially making a no-deal exit more likely.

Restricting the right of EU citizens to work and study in the UK will damage the important work conducted by UCU members in post-16 education, damage the world-leading research and teaching provided by UCU members, and make it harder to attract the EU's leading academics to work in and with our universities. It will also intensify the "hostile environment" that the government has already been responsible for fostering.

The scale of the issue is huge; as a trade union, we represent thousands of staff from the EU in further and higher education who are deeply concerned about their futures. In the higher education sector alone, 12% of staff, and 18% of academic staff, are from other parts of the EU.

Our education sector needs to be more, not less, open to immigration from all parts of the world. It is already disproportionately expensive for non-UK nationals to live and work here. It is unacceptable and morally reprehensible that their security is now further threatened by this government's headlong pursuit of a no deal Brexit.

I would welcome a conversation with you about the ways in which further and higher education would benefit from a truly inclusive, global immigration policy. For now, UCU needs concrete assurances that your government will protect the rights of EU citizens from 31 October onwards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jo Grady". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

Dr Jo Grady  
General Secretary

*Copy: Priti Patel, MP, Home Secretary*

*Gavin Williamson, MP, Education Secretary ([sec-of-state.ps@education.gov.uk](mailto:sec-of-state.ps@education.gov.uk))*