University of St Andrews at Old College Gate

21 November 2016

Meeting hosted by:
Derek Watson, Quaestor & Factor
Professor Garry Taylor, Deputy Principal & Master
Professor Lorna Milne, Proctor
Andy Goor, Finance Director
Professor Verity Brown, Vice-Principal Enterprise & Engagement
Steve Bargeton, Corporate Communications
Dr Fiona Thompson, Executive Officer to the Principal’s Office

Members in attendance: Dean Lockhart

General

- 34th most international university in the world
  - Edinburgh is 58th, then no others from Scotland
  - “uncertainty is killer”
  - fear of immigration crackdown which will be “very hard” for the sector
- Priorities for UK Government:
  - freedom of movement of people
  - clarity over visas
- Priorities for Scottish Government
  - clarity over funding and numbers of EU students
  - access to EU funding
- very important to have free flow of individuals

Staffing

- Very international: 1/5 of staff from Europe, 1/5 from outside the EU, and 1/3 of research staff are EU
- in the Modern Languages department, this number is over 40%
- status of current EU staff is unknown
- immediately after referendum result, a feeling from EU staff that they weren’t wanted – although took some comfort from the fact that Scotland voted to remain
- University is very proud of its internationality. Hope to create enough incentive for staff/students to stay, but feel there is a threat.
- no immediate impact (no one is leaving) but there are many questions over status.
  - will be holding open forae over the next few weeks for staff and students
  - messages have gone out to all staff, not just EU, to try and counter worries over racism
  - perception that the UK is not very friendly is a big issue just now
University of St Andrews

- UK doesn’t produce enough scientists (and others) to fill the employment gaps left by a lack of EU staff

Research
- 1/4 of research money comes from the EU, and grant applications in both the sciences and humanities are successful. Much of this is in the form of ERC grants, which are transferrable between institutions (tied to an individual).
- can pay a subscription to apply for ERC funding (as Israel does), but there are many unknowns.
  - not sure how or if a subscription would work, and if so what sort of access it would allow
- if they can’t apply for/find funding, will the UK government fill the funding gap?
- hard to imagine replacement avenues for ERC/EU funding
- access to large pieces of European infrastructure, and the loss of the research community, are also major issues
- anecdotal evidence already that the UK are not being asked to lead on research bids because of the uncertainty

Students
- Erasmus funding is essential. Being part of the Erasmus network leads into future connections for students (research, teaching, professional)
  - Erasmus students receive 250-400 euros/week in funding: removing that would limit access to students
  - can’t see university being able to fund students to that level
  - Israel has some access, but unsure how that works
  - main users from St Andrews are in modern languages, but students coming into the university from all fields
  - skills gained by students (languages and otherwise) are immeasurable – and the opportunities are a major fair work aspect)
    - can’t reproduce the opportunities Erasmus creates
    - 165 students currently out on Erasmus
- 9% (of 8500 students) are EU
- student population is roughly 1/3 Scots/EU, 1/3 rUK, 1/3 non-EU 48% of students from outside the EU
- overseas students also have access to EU mobility – very appealing for them.
  - can’t currently answer questions for prospective students on EU access
  - expect numbers to drop dramatically if EU students became classed as international
  - EU students in England pay fees, but have access to grants
- Post study visas are an issue. Students expect the university will help them get their careers started. Increasing problems experienced with UK Visas and Immigration not issuing visas.
While the university is happy to say it ‘exports education’, for them that means students ‘come here and live on these three streets’.

Finance
- exchange rate already having an impact
  - library has seen an increase in subscriptions of £3000 from January
  - costs on students and academics attending conferences, travelling, buying IT equipment
- questions over funding: the Scottish Government fund EU students – will they withdraw funding/replace EU with Scottish students?
- do they need to cut costs, or will funding come from elsewhere?
  - currently a 12:1 staff:student ration – this can’t be maintained if funding is cut
- will EU students have access to grants? Or will the university have to recruit from other countries?
- need to have answers now for 2018 recruitment
  - students and families are planning even further ahead
  - issues for prospectus printing

Policy asks:
- freedom of movement of people
- post-study visas
- guaranteed future funding – need info now for post-Brexit
  - currently encouraging people to still put grant applications in, but there’s no guarantee of what will happen in 18 months time
  - and, often need an 18 month lead in for grants/research
- Erasmus guaranteed funding – for students coming in from the EU as well as going out