

## CROSS PARTY GROUP (CPG) ON SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

13.00 – 14:00 on Wednesday 5 October 2016, Committee Room 3, Scottish Parliament

### Note of Meeting

#### Present:

Ms Elizabeth Smith MSP	Scottish Parliament	CPG Convener
Mr Iain Gray MSP	Scottish Parliament	CPG Deputy Convener
Mr Peter Aitchison	University of Glasgow	
Mr Jeremy Balfour MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Ms Laura Barjonas	University of the West of Scotland	
Mr David Belsey	EIS	
Ms Carolyn Bowick	Edinburgh Napier University	
Mr Paul Bradley	Edinburgh University Students' Association	
Ms Joanne Buchan	Colleges Scotland	
Ms Roisin-Alana Di Giacamo	Glasgow Caledonian University	
Mr Robbie Francis	Thorntons Law	
Ms Moira Gibson	University of Edinburgh	
Ms Kirsty-Louise Hunt	Scottish Parliament	
Professor Charlie Jeffery	University of Edinburgh	
Ms Eleana Kazakeou	Scottish Parliament	
Mr Chris Land	Scottish Parliament	
Ms Susannah Lane	Universities Scotland	
Ms Fiona Larg	University of the Highlands & Islands	
Ms Eve Lewis	sparqs	
Mr Paul Little	City of Glasgow College	
Ms Veronica Lynch	Dundee and Angus College.	
Professor Matthew Maclver CBE		
Mr Murdo Mathison	UCU Scotland	
Dr Judith McClure	SCEN	
Mr Ryan McFadden	Glasgow Caledonian University	
Mr Duncan McKay	Universities Scotland	
Ms Theresa Merrick	University of Aberdeen	
Mr Alastair Merrill	University of St Andrews	
Mr Andrew Quickfall	Edinburgh Napier University	
Ms Vonnie Sandlan	NUS Scotland	
Ms Alison Shields	Heriot Watt University	
Mr Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland	
Ms Heather Sloan	Universities Scotland	
Mr Ross Thomson MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Mr Eóin Welsh	West College Scotland	
Mr Andrew Witty	Colleges Scotland	
Mr Jonathon Wilson	Scottish Enterprise	

Dr Gerry Webber                      Edinburgh Napier University

**Apologies:**

Mr David Anderson	University of Glasgow
Ms Amy Brown	Sills Development Scotland
Prof Alan Dearle	University of St Andrews
Prof Sir Pete Downes	University of Dundee
Prof Grant Jarvie,	University of Edinburgh
Ms Sheona Lawson	Edinburgh University Students' Association
Ms Monica Lennon MSP	Scottish Parliament
Mr Paul Little	City of Glasgow College
Prof Craig Mahoney	University of the West of Scotland
Dr Finlay MacCorquodale	Edinburgh Napier University
Mr Liam McArthur MSP	Scottish Parliament
Dr Judith McClure	Scotland China Education Network (SCEN)
Ms Pauline McNeill MSP	Scottish Parliament
Ms Bernadette Milligan	West College Scotland
Prof Ferdinand von Prondzynski	Robert Gordon University
Prof Sir Timothy O'Shea	University of Edinburgh
Ms Rebecca Scarlett	Lead Scotland
Ms Jane Scott	Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
Mr Tavish Scott MSP	Scottish Parliament
Ms Linda Somerville	NUS Scotland
Mr Martyn Spence	Heriot-Watt University
Mr Kenny Stewart	Open University in Scotland
Mr Brian Whittle MSP	Scottish Parliament

**RECONSTITUTION OF CPG ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

**1. Welcome and introduction from the CURRENT Convener**

The current Convener, Ms Smith MSP, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the CPG on Colleges and Universities in session 5 of the Scottish Parliament. Ms Smith explained that the meeting would be in two parts: firstly, the business of reconstituting the group and that the second part of the meeting would be a discussion on the topic of Brexit. The Convener welcomed the speakers: - Professor Charlie Jeffery, Professor of Politics and Senior Vice-Principal, University Edinburgh; and Ms Veronica Lynch, Director (External Relations), Dundee and Angus College.

Ms Smith thanked Alastair Sim and Universities Scotland for sponsoring lunch for the meeting.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

### **3. Explanation of reconstitution the CPG**

Ms Smith advised members on the re-registration process for previously recognised groups:-

- The group must be re-registered by 30 October.
- Election of two office bearers and secretariat.
- The inclusion of the most recent annual return
- MSP Membership – The Convener advised that the group met this criteria, with at least 5 MSP members.

### **4. Election of Office Bearers**

The Group **approved** the re-election of:

- Ms Liz Smith MSP as Convener of the CPG on Colleges and Universities.
- Mr Iain Gray MSP as Vice-Convener CPG on Colleges and Universities.
- Universities Scotland, with support from Colleges Scotland, to provide the Secretariat function for the group.

### **5. Discussion of the way forward for the Group and future topics**

The Convener advised the Group that the following dates have been scheduled for 2016/17.

- Wednesday 14 December 2016: 1- 2pm in Committee Room 3
- Wednesday 8 March 2017: 1- 2pm in Committee Room 3
- Wednesday 10 May 2017: 1- 2pm in Committee Room 3

Ms Smith informed the Group of topics that had been suggested by members for discussion at future meetings, and invited them to submit any other suggestions.

### **6. Close of reconstitution business part of the meeting**

The Convener concluded the business necessary for re-registration of the Group and moved onto the topic for discussion.

## **5 OCTOBER MEETING AGENDA**

**1.** The Convener welcomed everyone to the 5 October Meeting on topic of Brexit and implications for Scotland's colleges and higher education institutions.

**2. Introduction to topic of Brexit and its implications for Scotland's colleges and Higher education institutions.**

Ms Smith invited the speakers to make their presentations.

**Professor Charlie Jeffery, Professor of Politics and Senior Vice-Principal, University of Edinburgh.**

Professor Jeffery began his presentation, "**Brexit: key issues for universities**" stating that universities thrive on free movement of ideas and on recruiting the best academics and staff. He commented that although it is unclear what Brexit means yet, it does mean 'squaring the circle' around issues of access to the Single Market through EU research funding and Erasmus, and limits to free movement of people.

Members were informed that the last year, the University of Edinburgh received 10 per cent of research funding, equating to £25m from the EU, and that 25 per cent of its staff and 14 per cent of its students are from the EU. The University also Edinburgh has Erasmus agreements with 250 universities.

Commenting on the 'brilliance' of academics at his university and the importance of free movement, Professor Jeffery cited the work of Professor Harold Haas, the pioneer of Li-Fi (optical wireless communications) and Professor Christina Iannelli, a leading sociologist of education and social stratification based at Moray House School of Education. He commented that Professor Haas is German, but working at the University of Edinburgh, delivering transformative and ground-breaking work. Professor Iannelli is Italian but is working in Edinburgh and not in her home land. The Group also heard about examples of research work of EU students and the advantages that being part of the Erasmus exchange programme gives students.

In considering what the challenges for Scotland were and what to do, Professor Jeffery outlined three potential approaches:-

- Plan A – a bespoke association agreement for the UK which involves large-scale continuity of the existing relationship with the EU, with minimal controls on free movement.
- Plan B - make the case for a deal for higher education as a sector with privileged free movement and access to single market.
- Plan C - If there is a hard Brexit there would be a need to win UK government recognition of the benefits of highly skilled labour migration for higher education and the need to make a case for compensation for lost research funding.

**Ms Veronica Lynch, Director (External Relations), Dundee and Angus College.**

In her presentation on "**Implications of Brexit on Colleges**", Ms Lynch outlined a portrait of Scotland's colleges from an EU perspective. The Group was informed that: -

- Scotland's colleges receive £20 million a year through the European Social Fund (ESF) which funds 4,200 additional student places;
- colleges contracted by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and other authorities are enhanced by EU funding;
- there are 6,800 FTE EU Nationals studying at Scotland's colleges;
- capital projects are supported by £200-250million of EU funding over 10 year period;
- there has been significant growth in EU mobility (93 staff and 114 students) which is an increase of 50 per cent over 7 years.

Focusing on her own organisation, Ms Lynch stated that Dundee and Angus College (a medium sized College) has:-

- 16,000 learners with 750 FTE from EU countries
- 1,100 staff – 35 FT+10 PT EU nationals
- A turnover of £35m turnover and received £2m EU funding in 15/16
- Project Funding - £5m across 25 projects
- Has had a share of National ESF – 350-500 additional student HN places £1.5m - 2m EU funding per annum
- >£50m new investment in its estate in last 5 years - £2m ERDF.

Ms Lynch provided examples of where Dundee and Angus (D&A) College would use funds to their best effect including:- Capital funding to create a business incubator on campus alongside the development of an enterprise culture across D&A college; VoCoL Triangles The college is the lead partner in a two year UE Erasmus+ project which aims to bring together the worlds of work, vocational education and learners using co-operative learning techniques; creating facilities to bring renewables ; 4pwer – creating efficient regional policy for offshore wind energy and business incubation. Members were informed that these projects benefit EU nationals and create wealth within the Dundee and Angus area, as well as all strategically impacting on the College as without EU funding it would minimise opportunities for learners and staff.

In closing Ms Lynch commented on the overarching potential implications of Brexit on her organisation including: - possible job losses of between 40 – 100 staff; a financial gap of £2m per annum; a reduction in FT student places; uncertainty for the existing EU staff and students at the college; a reduction of wider social and cultural influences for staff and students; and the key issue around wider partnerships, i.e. 33 partnerships across a number of countries.

### **3. Discussion and questions**

A robust discussion followed on a range of issues including, the ability to attract talent and access to research funding; retaining staff; implications for student applications, and how Brexit was affecting EU students and staff.

Mr Balfour asked for figures of international (non-EU) students staff working in the college sector. Ms Lynch stated that that one quarter of their students were from the rest of the world. The college's international academic staff numbers were smaller than the proportion from the EU. Mr Aitchison followed up this point, and also commented on the impact on the wider economy, with Professor Jeffery remarking on the challenges of our ability to attract talent and access research funding. He informed the group that the university sector is the third most important industry in Scotland after energy and financial services.

Ms Sandlan asked whether the Edinburgh University had experienced a decline in EU applications following Brexit. Professor Jeffery advised it was too early to tell. He informed members that Edinburgh University had held a session on Brexit within a student open day. It had generated a large turnout, with students seeking clarity, but the university cannot give certainty on fee or

immigration status. He noted that clarification from the Scottish Government on the fee status of EU undergraduates for entry in 2017/18 would be welcomed.

Mr Belsey commented that the biggest challenge was retaining the 25 per cent of staff from the EU. He asked what plans the university and college had for supporting staff to remain in the UK. Professor Jeffery replied that it was a very important question for the university and that his institution had held open meeting to provide reassurance and concern and to come up with concrete suggestions. Surgeries with lawyers have been set up as well as self-help groups to share knowledge and understand the 'hoops they may have to go through'. Ms Lynch informed members that of the 35 full time staff and 10 casual staff, all have lived here more than five years. The college would be holding sessions, but it would be the 10 casual contracts that would be more affected.

Dr Webber drew a comparison with his institution, Edinburgh Napier University, informing the group that 20-30 per cent of students were from the EU and that 40 per cent of its research funding is dependent on EU. He commented that they have looked at the likely impact below institutional level where they suspect there will be a negative impact around STEM subjects. This will hit the Scottish economy hard. Professor Jeffery warned that some courses may no longer be viable because of their dependence on EU students. There may be a challenge to modern language courses. Ms Lynch agreed that certain courses would be adversely affected by the loss of EU students including the performing arts and dance; nursing, life sciences, hospitality and rural, land-based roles. This would impact on local businesses and therefore on the wider economy.

Mr Gray informed the group that the Scottish Parliament's Brexit debate the previous day had discussed the impact already seen on research partnerships and opportunities for research. However he pointed to programmes such as Erasmus and CERN which involve non-EU members such as Norway and Sweden. This should provide a basis on which to ensure continued participation for Scottish colleges and universities. Professor Jeffery pointed out that Israel and Switzerland are not in the EU, so there is the possibility of negotiating a Brexit that would give us funding, but freedom of movement is usually the determining factor here. Professor Jeffery advised that the University of Edinburgh has not been adversely affected in terms of EU research projects yet. It is taking the opportunity to apply for a lot more.

Ms Lynch also remarked on the uncertainty caused by the Brexit vote. She advised that her college is experiencing an impact. Where previously they have had high levels of success with bids for EU funding, recently two out of eight have been successful.

Mr Welsh raised the issue of the UK Government's consultation on immigration. Professor Jeffery replied that the consultation offers us an opportunity to counter views expressed most recently at the Conservative Party Conference. Professor Jeffery noted that representations made at party conferences were not the same thing as Government policy. He advised that the university sector will be making as strong a representation as possible to the consultation. It will take the opportunity to emphasise the value of HE exports, and the importance of access to the best people in the world. Brexit has direct implications for 27 states and raises questions about how open for business Great Britain is. He further commented that some people see this as the UK turning in on itself.

Ms Lynch endorsed this view, stating that we have always been outward looking country with freedom of movement.

Mr Witty mentioned that for every £1 invested, £6 comes from the college sector. He raised the question of the potential loss of capital investment from Europe as a source of income. Ms Lynch acknowledged the importance of EU capital funding for colleges and mentioned additional funds from the Scottish Funding Council as well as local trust funds as other sources, but she questioned how the gap in funding would be filled.

In closing the discussion Mr Day asked how the group could successfully translate these messages about the impact of Brexit into the public domain. Ms Lynch suggested that a campaign may be required and that MSPs have a role to communicate the message to MPs.

#### **4. Date and topic of next meeting**

Ms Smith reminded the Group that the next meeting of the CPG is: Wednesday 14 December 2016:  
1- 2 pm in Committee Room 3

The Convener advised that the topic of the next meeting would be communicated by e-mail, following suggestions from members.

Members were kindly invited to sponsor the lunch for the next meeting.

#### **5. Close**

The Convener closed the meeting with thanks to all for attending.

**Ends**