

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Office
2 Marsham St,
Westminster
London
SW1P 4DF
10th December 2020

Dear Home Secretary,

Impact of Brexit on incoming EU students

We are writing to you on behalf of incoming students from EU member countries who will, as a result of the end of the transition period and Brexit, face a deep financial burden due to the changing immigration policy. As a result of this new policy, those students are faced with the bleak choice of choosing to move to the UK before the 31st December, which would mean having to choose between being away from their loved ones in the winter break, or adding financial strain to them. These students are valued members of our educational community and their ability to come to the UK to study is of great benefit to all students. They enrich the student experience and bring international connections that enhance the educational experience of those around them.

Our international students are valued members of our university communities and have faced a lot of uncertainty and instability this year, not least because they have had to navigate this pandemic alongside the uncertainty of Brexit. Throughout this time, many have been left unsure of their future because they have been told very little about how to prepare and make plans, which has led to increased levels of anxiety. Many EU students currently not in the UK have had no little to no information about needing to be here before the 1st January to be able to apply for presettled status. These students have not been able to make all the necessary preparations and will be arriving to a situation that has come about due to no fault of their own.

In addition to this, those who have previously resided in the UK face the inability of being to apply. The conditions to apply from their Home countries has been hindered for a lot of them as they would not have had been able to travel to make the appropriate preparations to find and secure accommodation prior to their arrival in the UK to study due to COVID restrictions and uncertainty around the mode of delivery of studies by their institutions. The government restriction on travel also added to this, leaving a lot of these students left without the time to make the appropriate arrangements. This leaves them at risk of not being able to take up their places on their courses.

These are all issues we have repeatedly raised with Ministers and relevant bodies and whilst they have expressed the importance of students being treated fairly and the same as their counterparts especially in light of the pandemic. However, the lack of action in this regard is leaving students without the proper mitigations or safeguards that they so desperately need – especially as a show of good faith in showing them that they are still welcome to study in the UK. These students deserve compassion and fairness in being able to get what they were told they would get in coming to the UK to study. In a country where we proudly talk about our world-class education, it is in itself contradictory to have encouraged students to pursue the prospect of coming to study here and leave them insecure, unstable and at risk due to a lack of flexibility in a policy that creates barriers on their ability to learn, rather than open doors to their futures.

Therefore, we are asking for **an extension to the eligibility criteria for the EU Settlement Scheme until the end of the academic year** to enable all students who have enrolled on courses in UK universities this year to access them. This will also give them time to go through all the relevant processes to get the proper status in order to continue their studies here. This, we believe, is a common sense solution that will compassionately and appropriately mitigate the problems that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

These students are depending on you, now more than ever, for the clarity and safeguard

We look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials 'HG' with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Hillary Gyebi-Ababio
Vice President (Higher Education), National Union of Students