

## Chapter 12

### The rapid increase in faculty from the European Union in UK higher education institutions and the possible impact of Brexit

#### William Locke and Giulio Marini<sup>1</sup>

Professor William Locke, Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne (✉), email: [william.locke@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:william.locke@unimelb.edu.au)

Dr Giulio Marini, Research Associate, Centre for Global Higher Education, UCL Institute of Education, University College London, email: [g.marini@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:g.marini@ucl.ac.uk)

#### Abstract

In the decade or so before the Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union (EU), there had been a rapid increase in foreign faculty in UK higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly those from other EU countries. Many institutions had come to rely on academics from other EU countries, and those from outside the EU, for a significant part of their research, teaching and other activities. After the Referendum vote which determined that the UK should leave the Union, fears grew that there would be an exodus of foreign academics, and especially those from the EU, as Britain appeared to signal an isolationist and anti-immigrant turn in public opinion and government policy. This chapter will focus on the profile of foreign faculty in the UK, their characteristics and current situation, their influence on their institutions and HE as a whole and the issues facing them. 'Brexit' will be considered as a possible disruption to the internationalisation of UK academia.

#### Key words

United Kingdom, international academics, internationalisation, European Union, Brexit

### 10.1 Introduction

On June 23, 2016, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) voted to leave the European Union (EU) after having been a member of the EU and its predecessor, the European Economic Community, since 1973. This departure is commonly referred to as 'Brexit': Britain (*Br*) deciding to exit (*exit*) from the EU. This process was formalised in April 2017, when Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union was invoked, initiating UK-EU negotiations and speculation about the future status of EU citizens in the UK once the country had withdrawn from the EU. This eventually occurred in January 2020, followed by a transition period during which the UK continued to be subject to EU law and remained in the EU customs union and the single market, but was no longer part of the EU's political bodies or institutions.

---

<sup>1</sup> During the writing of this chapter, William Locke and Giulio Marini were, respectively, International Co-investigator and Research Associate of the ESRC/OFSRE-supported Centre for Global Higher Education (CGHE) – a partnership of six UK and nine international universities. Acknowledgement is given for the support of the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC award ES/M010082/1).

In the decade or so before this Referendum, there had been a rapid increase in foreign faculty in UK higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly those from other EU countries. This is not surprising, since an important principle of the EU is the free movement of citizens and their families within the Union, including for work and study (European Parliament 2019). In the period from 2004/05 to 2017/18, the number of EU academics in UK HEIs had almost trebled, and their proportion of the total academic population had almost doubled (HESA 2019a). Many institutions had come to rely on academics from other EU countries, and those from outside the EU, for a significant part of their research, teaching and other activities, although some HEIs were more reliant on them than others (Highman 2019b). While the proportion of professional, administrative and technical staff in HEIs from the EU was (at 7.3 per cent) lower than for academics, this also represented a significant minority. In common with many other employment sectors of the UK economy, there was concern about the status of EU workers following the Referendum and the overall impact of Brexit on higher education in the UK (Marginson 2017, Mayhew 2017, UUK 2017). This was exacerbated by uncertainty about the precise nature of Brexit, and whether this would be 'soft', 'hard' or the UK leaving with 'no deal' at all, and what the future relationship of the UK with the remaining 27 EU countries would be.

As a member state of the EU, foreign staff in UK HEIs were categorised as either 'other (non-UK) EU' or 'international', i.e. from outside the EU altogether. This followed a similar categorisation of students for tuition fee purposes: as members of an EU country, students had to be charged the same tuition as UK-domiciled students, whereas there is no limit to how much 'international' students can be charged. Likewise, academics and other HE workers from the EU had to be treated in the same way as UK-domiciled staff. After the Brexit Referendum, fears grew that there would be an exodus of 'other EU' staff – and, indeed, 'internationals' (non-EU staff) – as Britain appeared to signal an isolationist and anti-immigrant turn in public opinion and government policy. So, there has been serious concern about a potential 'Brexodus' of EU and other international faculty, which seemed to be supported by survey evidence (UCU 2017, Guthrie *et al* 2017). However, more recent evidence is inconclusive and suggests that any effect there may be will be differential according to factors such as age, level of seniority and family circumstances (Marini 2018) and the impact of this will differ by HE institution.

This chapter will focus on the profile of foreign (other EU and non-EU) faculty in the UK, their characteristics and current situation, their influence on their institutions and HE as a whole and the issues facing them. 'Brexit' will be considered as a possible disruption to the internationalisation of UK academia. The main source of data on staff in UK higher education institutions is the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), and we briefly describe this in the next section.

## **10.2 Data and definitions of foreign-born staff**

First, a note on the data referred to in this chapter. Much of this is taken from information collected by the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) direct from HEIs. HESA extended its coverage of data on staff in 2004, and the most recent academic year for which data are available is 2017/18. However, in this chapter the data on academic staff is treated differently from most other analyses published on this topic because it is based on a *headcount* of the actual individual academics

employed by UK HEIs (Full Person Equivalent or FPE) rather than a calculation of the *equivalent* number of full-time employees (Full Time Equivalent or FTE). Analysis by headcount or FPE is more appropriate than FTE when considering the mobility of workers, because this is a characteristic of an individual rather than an amalgam of two or more persons. It is *individuals* who make decisions about whether to stay or leave, and whether to move to a different country in the first place. It is individuals rather than equivalents that need to be considered in order to understand the decisions and motivations of academic migrants. However, having said this, the HESA data do not identify individuals and so do not provide information about any single person's movements, for example, into and out of the country, between institutions or from one role or function to another. The data offer an aggregated 'snapshot' each year at a census date, and do not allow us to track individuals. So, individuals' movements can only be inferred from the aggregate data.

UK higher education has a relatively high incidence of part-time and fixed-term academics. Although the extraction of FPE figures from the HESA dataset is more laborious than for FTEs, it produces a more accurate and meaningful result in the UK context. Nevertheless, the analysis by headcount produces different outcomes than that by full time equivalent. Given the nature of international mobility, visa and other immigration rules, it is more likely that foreign academics will be employed full-time than their UK-domiciled counterparts, who may have other jobs at other HEIs or outside of HE altogether. The financial and other commitments and sacrifices required to move to another country and the restrictions despite the principle of 'free movement for EU citizens' mean that part-time positions are not so attractive, at least at the point of entry. So, while the absolute numbers of other EU and international (non-EU) academics in UK HEIs as FPEs will be higher than the full-time equivalent numbers, their proportion as a percentage of the total number of academics is likely to be lower than in analyses by FTE.

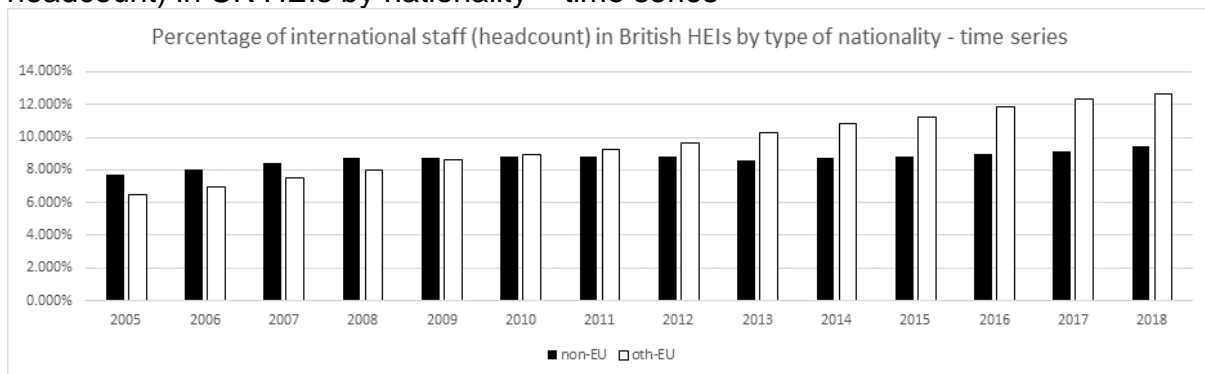
In the HESA data, nationalities are grouped as 'British', 'other EU', 'international' (i.e. non-EU) and 'not known'. The last of these categories presents difficulties for analysis, as the likely proportions in the other three categories cannot be estimated by other means. Furthermore, the proportion of academics whose nationality is 'not known' has reduced over time, as HESA and the HEIs have improved the quality of the data collected and submitted. So, in this chapter, we exclude those individuals whose nationality is 'not known'. It should also be noted that the data do not take account of dual nationality, or identify individuals who acquired British nationality during the period investigated, especially since the Referendum when the incidence of this may have increased as EU citizens sought greater security.

Finally, those academics not on permanent contracts who are working part-time and a small fraction of the working week, such as occasional lecturers, are defined by HESA as 'atypical' staff. These may include visiting lecturers, research students and people working in other professions as well as part-time academics. For these reasons, 'atypical' staff are also excluded from the analysis in this chapter.

### **10.3 The current situation and characteristics of international (non-EU) and EU academics in UK HEIs**

The decade or so prior to the Brexit Referendum in 2016 had seen a rapid increase in foreign (other EU and non-EU) faculty in UK HEIs, particularly those from within the EU, according to data from HESA. In 2017/18, 12.6 per cent (by headcount) of academics in UK HEIs were from other EU countries, as Figure 10.1 shows. This proportion had nearly doubled from 6.5 per cent in 2005/06, although the absolute number had nearly trebled from 31,961 in 2005/06 to 92,546 in 2017/18. By comparison, the proportion of international (non-EU) faculty had only increased from 7.7 per cent in 2005/06 to 9.5 per cent in 2017/18 (from 37,940 to 69,298) and grew in line with the overall expansion of the academic population between 2008 and 2016.

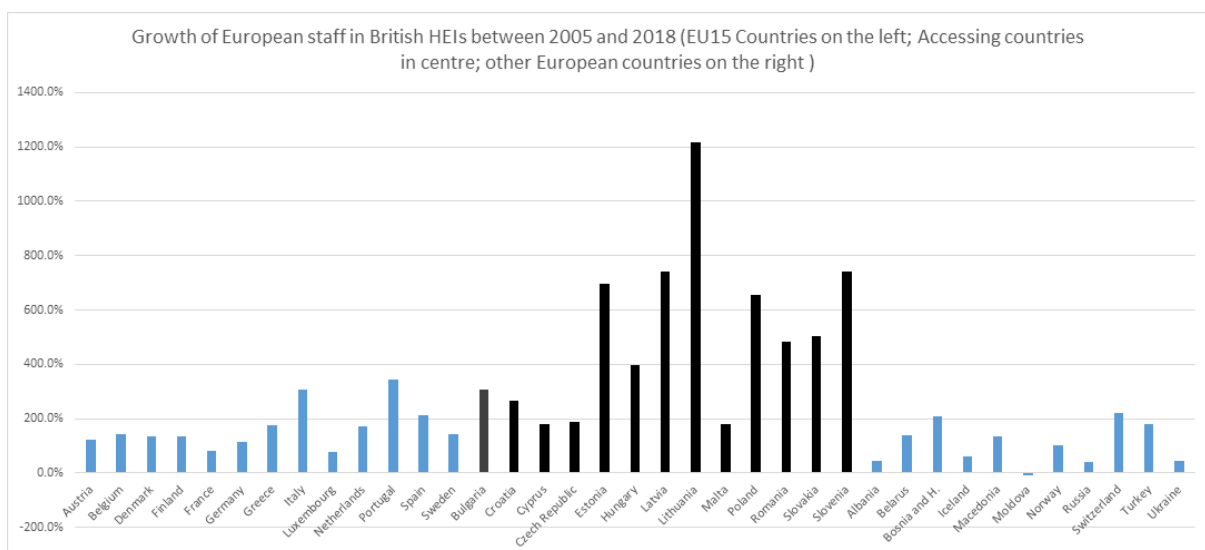
**Figure 10.1** Percentage of foreign (other EU and non-EU) academic staff (by headcount) in UK HEIs by nationality – time series



Source: HESA 2019a, extracted by the authors

Part of the reason for this was the expansion of membership of the EU, and therefore the number of countries whose citizens could move freely within the Union. In 2004, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, eight Central and Eastern European countries acceded to the EU (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), along with two Mediterranean countries (Malta and Cyprus). Romania and Bulgaria joined in 2007 and Croatia in 2013. Of course, some of the increase in EU academics in UK HEIs would simply be a result of them becoming EU citizens while already in the UK, rather than because they subsequently moved to the UK from these countries. Figure 10.2 shows the proportional growth of European (EU and non-EU) academic staff from European countries in UK HEIs during the same period, with the EU15 countries (as of 2003) on the left, the 13 Accession countries in the middle and non-EU European countries on the right. The top eight countries showing the highest proportional growth as sources of academic staff for UK HEIs all joined the EU during this period.

**Figure 10.2** Growth of European academic staff in UK HEIs between 2004/05 and 2017/18



Source: HESA 2019a, extracted by the authors

However, in absolute terms, these do not represent large numbers of academics from other EU countries, with Poland (2,980) and Romania (1,437) providing the largest volume of academics from EU accession nations in 2017/18. Those countries with the largest absolute increases during this period were Italy (an increase of 8,849), Germany (5,780), China (5,690), Greece (4,838), Spain (4,317), Ireland (4,313) and the US (4,159), as shown in Table 10.1.

**Table 10.1** Absolute number of foreign academic staff in UK HEIs, 2004/05 and 2017/18, ranked (EU countries in bold)

	2004/05		2017/2018
<b>Germany</b>	<b>4,655</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>11,576</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	<b>3,940</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>10,435</b>
China	3,729	China	9,419
United States	3,496	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>8,253</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>2,989</b>	United States	7,655
<b>Italy</b>	<b>2,727</b>	<b>Greece</b>	<b>7,362</b>
<b>Greece</b>	<b>2,524</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<b>6,202</b>
India	2,180	<b>France</b>	<b>5,537</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>1,885</b>	India	4,845
Australia	1,884	<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>3,076</b>
Canada	1,379	<b>Poland</b>	<b>2,980</b>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>1,090</b>	Canada	2,793
Russia	856	Australia	2,389
Malaysia	798	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>2,330</b>
New Zealand	681	Nigeria	2,203
Japan	674	<b>Romania</b>	<b>1,437</b>
<b>Poland</b>	<b>478</b>	Pakistan	1,360
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>478</b>	Mexico	1,310
<b>Portugal</b>	<b>466</b>	Russia	1,253
<b>Austria</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>1,209</b>

Source: HESA 2006, 2019a, extracted by the authors

During this period, the numbers of Australian academics increased by a quarter, Canadians doubled, and those from the US, China and India more than doubled, but several EU countries nearly trebled or even quadrupled their numbers. This pattern seems to support the thesis of brain drain from some of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) countries and from Southern Europe, particularly Italy, Greece and Spain (Van der Wende 2015; Leisyte and Rose 2017).

Of course, China, India and the United States have much larger populations than the other countries in this list. So, to get a better sense of how attractive UK HE is for the citizens of these nations, the numbers of academics in UK HEIs in 2004/05 and 2017/18 who were not UK citizens have been weighted by the respective working age populations of their countries of origin and ranked in Table 10.2.

**Table 10.2** Foreign academic staff in UK HEIs in the academic year 2017/18 (by headcount, atypical excluded), normalised by working age population in the respective country, ranked (EU countries in bold)

2004/05		2017/18	
<b>Ireland</b>	<b>0.00127194</b>	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>0.00266429</b>
<b>Greece</b>	<b>0.00035891</b>	<b>Cyprus</b>	<b>0.00116301</b>
Iceland	0.00025795	<b>Greece</b>	<b>0.00104687</b>
Malta	0.00024551	<b>Malta</b>	<b>0.00086573</b>
Cyprus	0.00024184	Iceland	0.00040916
New Zealand	0.00021884	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>0.00034875</b>
<b>Luxembourg</b>	<b>0.00013077</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>0.00030146</b>
Australia	0.00011702	<b>Denmark</b>	<b>0.00028911</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	<b>0.00010760</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>0.00028744</b>
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>0.00009820</b>	New Zealand	0.00028633
<b>Germany</b>	<b>0.00008604</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>0.00027712</b>
<b>Finland</b>	<b>0.00008413</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>0.00025013</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>0.00007607</b>	<b>Estonia</b>	<b>0.00024837</b>
<b>Austria</b>	<b>0.00007549</b>	<b>Luxembourg</b>	<b>0.00021553</b>
<b>France</b>	<b>0.00007185</b>	<b>Finland</b>	<b>0.00021280</b>
<b>Italy</b>	<b>0.00007102</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<b>0.00020202</b>
<b>Portugal</b>	<b>0.00006975</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>0.00019288</b>
Singapore	0.00006574	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>0.00019239</b>
Norway	0.00006287	<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>0.00019101</b>
<b>Spain</b>	<b>0.00006140</b>	<b>Latvia</b>	<b>0.00018343</b>

Source: HESA 2019a extracted by the authors, World Bank

The only country with a land border with the UK, Ireland (i.e. with Northern Ireland), was at the top of the list in both of these academic years. Those countries in bold in Table 10.2 were members of the EU in these particular years. At the start of the period, in 2004/05, 13 of the top 20 countries were in the EU. To emphasise the increasing importance of EU academic staff in UK HEIs, by the end of the period, in 2017/18, all but two of these nations were members of the Union. Normalised by working age population during this period, it is clear that the UK has been more attractive to academics from EU and other European countries than from other OECD nations and Commonwealth countries, even where English is the main language. In an age of globalisation, proximity seems to continue to have an influence on academic mobility (Highman 2019b).

Of course, the UK is not the only European nation to attract foreign academics. Austria matches the UK with around 25 per cent of academic staff made up of foreign nationals. Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands and Norway exceed this with 30 per cent, and Luxembourg and Switzerland with more than 50 per cent. These countries benefit from 'brain gain', whereas those that suffer 'brain drain' are in Central and Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, Latin America and some Asian countries, as well as many developing countries (Leisyte & Rose 2017).

What kind of roles do foreign academic staff undertake? Table 10.3 shows that they are much more likely to have research-only contracts than their UK counterparts, and less likely to be on teaching-only contracts. Indeed, the growth in EU faculty during

the period 2004/05 to 2017/18 has been among those with research-only and teaching and research contracts (Marini 2018). It also is worth pointing out that the vast majority of all those (UK and foreign) on research-only and teaching and research contracts are full-time, whereas a majority of those who are only contracted to teach are part-time.

**Table 10.3** Academic staff, by academic employment function, 2017/18

	<b>Non-EU</b>	<b>Other EU</b>	<b>UK</b>
Research-only	31.5%	29.5%	14.0%
Teaching-only	41.0%	40.4%	51.7%
Teaching and Research	26.9%	29.2%	32.4%
Neither Teaching or Research	0.6%	0.9%	1.9%

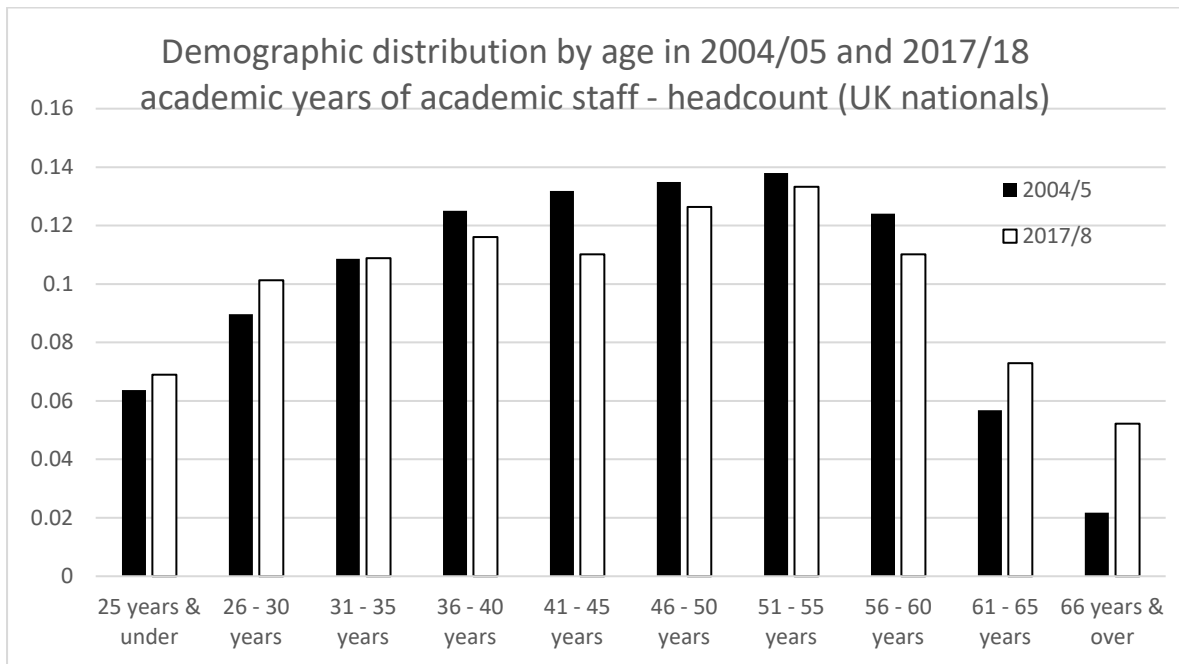
Source: HESA 2019a, extracted by the authors

Foreign academic staff are also more likely to work in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, in particular: Medicine, dentistry and health; Engineering; and Biological, mathematical and physical sciences. In the Social Sciences, they make up the majority of academics in Economics & econometrics and, in the Humanities, they do so in Area studies and Modern languages, for obvious reasons. They also make up large minorities of academics in Anthropology & development studies and Politics & international studies. UK HEIs are likely to continue to be reliant on foreign academics in STEM subjects, as over two thirds of students on full-time taught postgraduate courses in these subjects, and over half of all full-time postgraduate research students are from outside the UK (ASS 2016, UCEA-HEFCE 2017). This high level of international doctoral students is also true in Switzerland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, as well as New Zealand (OECD 2019).

Figures 10.3, 10.4 and 10.5 show the age profiles of academic staff from the UK, other EU countries and from outside the EU, in the years 2004/05 and 2017/18. On average, UK academics are older than their foreign counterparts, are spread more evenly across the age bands and there are more in their 60s now than in 2004/05. By contrast, foreign academics are younger and concentrated in the early and middle stages of their working lives. However, there are differences between those from the EU and those from outside, with the age of EU academics having increased during this period whereas there has been an increase in staff in the younger age bands among those from outside the EU. This may be because EU faculty arriving in the UK in the early part of this period and now in the middle of their careers have made the UK their home. It is arguable that settling in another EU country is easier than for those from non-EU countries.

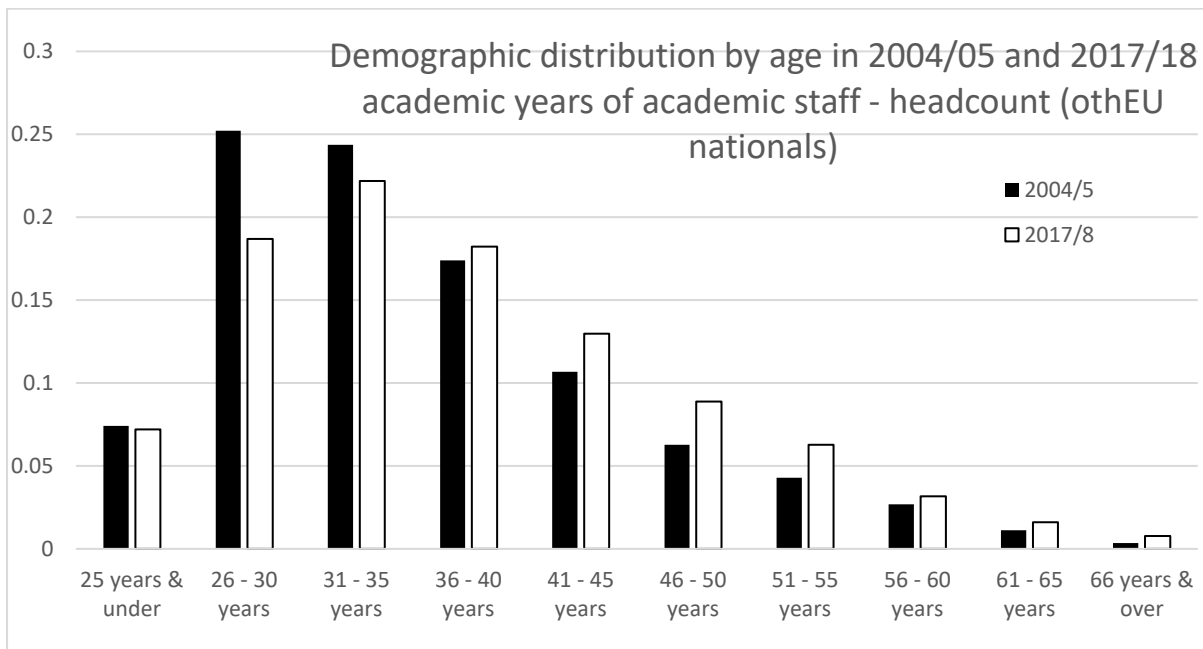


**Figure 10.3** Distribution of UK academic staff in UK HEIs by age band in 2004/05 and 2017/18



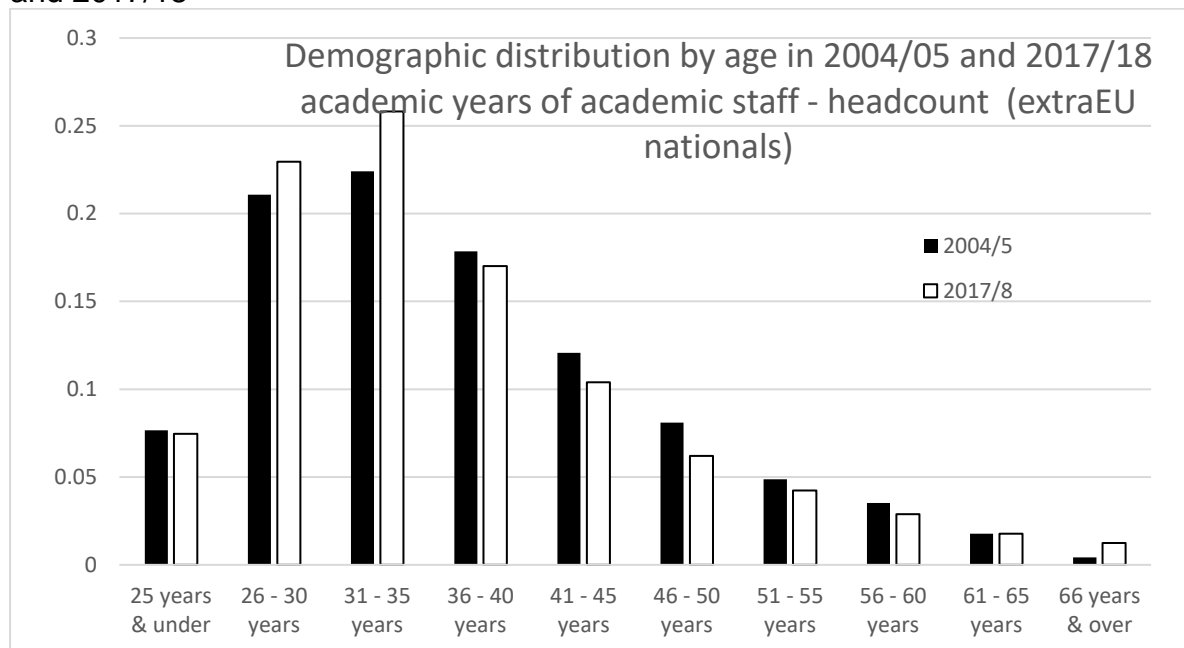
Source: HESA 2006, 2019a, extracted by the authors

**Figure 10.4** Distribution of other EU academic staff in UK HEIs by age band in 2004/05 and 2017/18



Source: HESA 2006, 2019a, extracted by the authors

**Figure 10.5** Distribution of non-EU academic staff in UK HEIs by age band in 2004/05 and 2017/18



Source: HESA 2006, 2019a, extracted by the authors

There is above average representation of foreign academics at lower occupational levels, such as research assistant (other EU: 22.6%; non-EU: 19.8%) and lecturer/researcher (other EU: 18.7%; non-EU: 16.9%), indicating a greater reliance on these staff in these early stages of academic careers (UCEA-HEFCE 2017: data from 2015/16). However, in parallel with the growing numbers of middle-aged academics from other EU countries, there has been an increase in the proportions of EU faculty in the higher salary bands (Marini 2018).

Which types of HEIs do foreign academics work in? Given the importance of research for academic reputation and mobility, it would be expected that the majority of foreign faculty are attracted to the more research-intensive HEIs in the UK, also known as the Russell Group of universities (Marini 2019). While this is the case in absolute terms, as a proportion of academic staff in individual HEIs, the picture is more mixed. Table 10.4 shows the top ten universities with the highest numbers of other EU academic staff in 2017/18, many of which are located in the 'Golden Triangle' of London, Oxford and Cambridge. The two Northern Ireland universities, Ulster and Queen's Belfast also have high proportions of other EU academics, many of whom have come across the border from the southern part of the island. Overall, then, while affiliation to Russell Group (all, except Ulster) is a fair indicator of attraction for other EU academics, it is the set of highly prestigious institutions in the 'Golden Triangle' that are the most attractive. A possible explanation for this is the cosmopolitan values that are more likely to be found in such cities (Florida 2012).

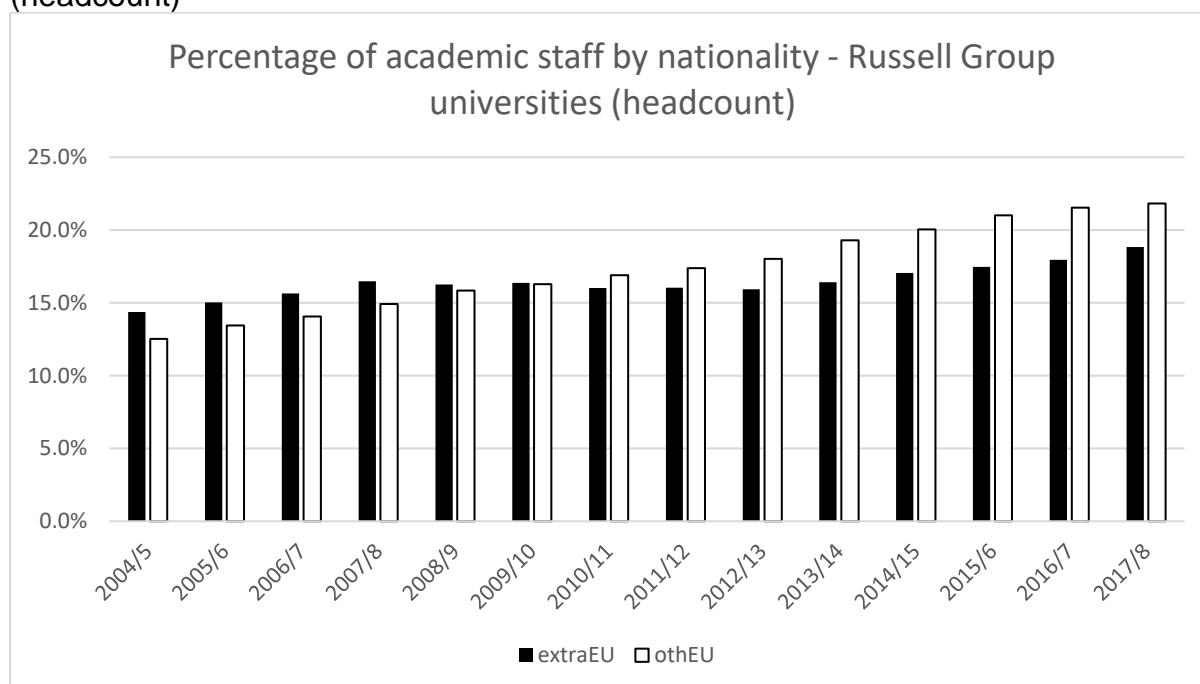
**Table 10.4** Top 10 universities in the UK for 'Other EU' academics (also showing 'Non-EU' academics)

Ranking by no. of Other EU academics	Institution	Other EU	Other EU %	Non-EU	Non-EU %	Total	Total %
1	University College London	4,237	21.5%	2,667	13.5%	6,904	35.0%
2	University of Edinburgh	4,099	19.9%	2,564	12.5%	6,663	32.4%
3	University of Oxford	3,911	17.1%	3,361	14.7%	7,272	31.8%
4	University of Cambridge	3,327	20.4%	2,295	14.1%	5,622	34.4%
5	Imperial College	2,547	24.8%	1,632	15.8%	4,179	40.6%
6	King's College London	2,464	22.4%	1,353	12.3%	3,817	34.6%
7	London School of Economics	2,180	28.1%	1,738	22.4%	3,918	50.6%
8	Queen Mary University of London	1,882	21.4%	1,560	17.8%	3,442	39.2%
9	Ulster University	1,400	31.1%	251	5.6%	1,651	36.7%
10	Queen's University Belfast	1,094	16.9%	375	5.8%	1,469	22.7%

Source: HESA 2019a, extracted by the authors

Figure 10.6 shows how the proportions of other EU and non-EU academic staff have grown in Russell Group universities during the period 2004/05 to 2017/18. As with the overall figures for all UK HEIs (Table 10.1) – albeit at a higher proportion – it is the numbers of academics from other EU countries that have accounted for most of the growth in foreign faculty in Russell Group universities during this time.

**Figure 10.6** Percentage of academic staff by nationality, Russell Group universities (headcount)



Source: HESA 2006-2019a, extracted by the authors

So, it seems the universities that attract the highest numbers of other EU academic staff are those with the highest research power as ranked in the last Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise in 2014, and which have had the best track record of securing EU research grants (Highman 2018). We explore this in more detail in the next section.

#### 10.4 The impact of foreign academics on UK higher education and its institutions

So, what impact has this influx of foreign academics, and particularly those from the EU, had on UK higher education and its institutions? There is little evidence about their influence on teaching, so our focus will be on research. We highlight teaching more in the following section on the issues and challenges facing international faculty in UK HEIs. First, we focus on international collaboration for research publication.

In terms of peer reviewed publications, the most productive academics tend to be those with the most international collaborations, including co-authored outputs and publications in a foreign country (Van der Wende 2015). These collaborations are inclined to lead to more numerous citations and greater impact, since international co-authored publications are on average more highly cited than UK domestic publications (Highman 2019a). Between 2009 and 2018, 55.2% of all UK research publications were co-authored with an overseas researcher – an increase of 16.2% during the period – which put the country third, behind France and Australia (UUK 2019). However, in terms of the overall publication output, academics in the UK were nearly twice as productive as their counterparts in these two countries in 2017-2018, behind only the US and China.

Who were they collaborating with? 13 out of the 21 countries (UUK 2017) from which researchers co-authored at least 1 per cent or more of the UK research outputs between 2007 and 2016 were EU member states (Highman 2019a). Two of the other seven were Norway and Switzerland, so all but six of these 21 were European. In 2018, the number of papers UK-based researchers co-authored with collaborators from Germany, Italy and France together exceeded those with researchers from the US and Canada. From the perspective of its partners, the UK ranked first for Greece and Ireland, second for the majority of its partners and third for Austria, Canada and Switzerland (UUK 2019). UK-based researchers exhibit a higher than expected propensity to collaborate with almost every country in Europe. This is not the case in North America, or in East Asia, Southeast Asia or South Asia (Marginson *et al* 2020). Furthermore, over the ten-year period between 2008 and 2017, the most rapid increase in UK researchers' co-operation with business was with firms in Europe, with an average annual growth of 12 per cent (Tijssen, van de Klippe and Yegros 2019). Even in this age of digital communications, it seems that geographical proximity with Europe is still important for UK academics in successful research collaborations.

However, to what extent can we attribute this productive research collaboration to foreign, and particularly EU, nationals working in UK HEIs? For an indication, we need to look at research performance and funding. Academics from other EU (75 per cent) and from non-EU countries (70 per cent) were much more likely than their UK colleagues (56 per cent) to be submitted to the last UK Research Excellence Framework (REF), an exercise which periodically reviews the quality of research in HEIs (HEFCE 2015). The six highest ranked universities in the 2014 REF were Oxford, UCL, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Manchester and Imperial College (*The Guardian* 2014) – five of which have the highest numbers of EU academics from outside the UK (Table 10.4 above). These same six HEIs also won the largest amounts of research funding from the EU. This consistency of performance is unlikely to be a coincidence (Highman 2019b).

Other EU nationals also won more than half of the European Research Council Consolidator Grants awarded to UK HEIs (Russell Group 2016). These grants, of up to €2m each, are available to any researcher with 7-12 years of experience since completing their doctorate who wishes to consolidate their independence by establishing a research team and continuing to develop a successful research career in Europe. This seems to be consistent with the growing number of mid-career other EU academics in UK HEIs noted in the earlier part of this chapter.

These indications of a high level of research performance among other EU academics are significant because the EU has been the major source of international research funding for UK HEIs in recent years, with 63.6 per cent of the total provided by the EU Government, charities, industry and other sources (HESA 2019b, UUK 2019). Overall, the EU provided 14.9 per cent of the total UK research funding in 2017/18, and this has grown rapidly, compared with 8.5 per cent from outside the EU. Since 2014, much of this EU funding has come from the Horizon 2020 programme and, until 2017, the UK was by far the largest net beneficiary of funding from this programme, with the Netherlands some way behind in second place. Those countries with the largest deficit included France, Germany, Italy and Poland. The UK's most numerous partner countries in Horizon 2020 projects have been Germany, France, Spain and Italy (UUK

2019), which are also four of the top six countries of origin of the largest numbers of other EU academics in the UK (see Table 10.1 above).

From this evidence, we might hypothesise that, as well as attracting high quality researchers from other EU countries and beyond, these foreign faculty may have provided access to other high quality EU and international collaborators and shown a strong propensity to work and publish with them. This may also have facilitated growing success for some UK HEIs in attracting EU research funding and European partners, and in leading Horizon 2020 projects. However, case study research on groups of other EU and other foreign academics in particular universities and university departments would be needed to confirm this. We now move on to suggest the issues and challenges facing international faculty in UK HEIs.

### **10.5 Issues and challenges facing international faculty in the UK**

The literature on the experiences of foreign academics in UK HEIs is emerging, but still very limited. Certainly, their voices are not clearly heard, even though their stay in the country is longer than most international students, on whom there is a much greater focus (QAA 2017, UKCISA 2018). Some researchers report foreign academics' anxiety and confusion when faced with unfamiliar processes, practices and terminologies, and especially when interpreting these in a second language. In some cases this can lead to cultural dissonance and bewilderment with the complexities and differences experienced (Walker 2015). This disorientation may be more likely to occur in the teaching domain, where cultural norms and mores can be less familiar than in the research environment. Walker (2015) quotes some international academic staff in a UK HEI confronted by students questioning their authority as a teacher and having to shift their notions of teaching from transmission to creating interactive learning opportunities and engaging in constructive relationships with students (Walker 2015: 72).

However, this perspective tends to focus on the individual foreign academic as deficient in some way, and needing to change – or be supported – to adapt to the dominant cultural practices of the host country. It tends not to recognise the academic capital they have gained and the success they feel in moving to a research-intensive university in a higher education system that is highly regarded internationally. Nevertheless, some researchers have argued that dominant discourses about foreign academics can position them as 'other' even as they reward and recognise them (Morley *et al* 2018):

The less romantic side of academic mobility is mainly felt through the experience of 'otherness'. Migrant academics may be motivated by the identity capital and capacity building gained through mobility; at the same time, the feeling of de-territorialisation, loss of fixed national identification and loss of stability can be part of the experience. In some academic settings, migrant academics may feel more like knowledge workers than knowledge producers, constrained to absorb the local ways of (re)producing knowledge instead of actively contributing to creating it. (Morley *et al* 2018: 550)

Yet, it is important to recognise the diversity of experiences of foreign academics, overlaid as they are by race, class, gender, language and colonial history. The experiences of academics from North America and Australia may be very different from those from Africa or South Asia. Some groups of academics, for example, from East Asian countries, appear to have taken proactive initiatives to surviving – and thriving – in a foreign context, developing forms of ‘ambidexterity’, such as linguistic trans-cultural skills and trans-disciplinary approaches (Kim & Ng 2019). By these means, they become ‘strangers rather than victims’, nevertheless contributing to the transnational work environment and multinational culture which is a feature of UK higher education that many international scholars have found attractive (Kim and Ng 2019).

This, more nuanced, conception of foreign academics’ experiences suggests further investigation is needed into the conditions in which they are included or excluded from the existing professional structures in UK HEIs. For example, Pustelnikovaite (2018) has constructed ‘modes of incorporation’ which designate the distinct ways in which the academic profession has responded to the growth of foreign academics, which can take the form of integration, exclusion, subordination and even indifference. The framework she elaborates helps us to understand the ways in which the academy has controlled the absorption of foreign academics, subtly regulating access, work and intra-professional relationships, selectively incorporating foreign-born academics while maintaining the status quo. More research and conceptualisation is needed in order to appreciate how these processes of integration articulate with foreign academics’ own positional identity formation, and in different institutional contexts.

There is no doubt that the Brexit Referendum and its aftermath have unsettled this dynamic of academic life, and it is to this that we finally turn in this chapter.

## **10.6 The Brexit Referendum and EU/international faculty**

Immediately following the Referendum in 2016, most UK HEIs sought to assure their other EU academic staff (and students) that they were welcome in their institution, and that the HEI would take whatever steps were necessary to support them and ensure they could continue to work (and study) there. However, initially, the UK Government did not confirm whether EU citizens residing in the UK would retain the right to remain in the country after Brexit, without additional visa conditions or further application processes. Of course, some other EU and non-EU nationals already had permanent residence or British citizenship, but the vast majority did not. This uncertainty has been blamed for increasing psychological strain among other EU and non-EU staff and damaged morale (Naseem 2019, UCEA-HEFCE 2017). In a 2018 survey of other EU academic and professional staff at English and Scottish universities, 90 per cent felt very or somewhat concerned about their rights, 88 per cent felt less welcome in the UK and 64 per cent had decided to leave the UK or intended to leave should the Government fail to secure their rights (Naseem 2019).

In a sector-wide survey of HEIs and qualitative interviews with senior Human Resources staff in 2019, the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA 2019) asked respondents about the impact of uncertainty about Brexit on the recruitment and retention of academics to date and what their concerns were about

the future. Around 25 per cent reported at least moderate impact on academic recruitment and retention, but the same proportion had a high or medium-to-high degree of concern about their ability to recruit and retain European staff over the following 12 months, with the majority indicating at least a moderate level of concern. This was an increase in anxiety over the previous version of the survey in 2017 (UCEA-HEFCE 2017). This concern had spread to EU academics bringing EU research grants to UK HEIs due to uncertainty about whether they could continue to live and work in the UK after Brexit (UCEA 2019). These difficulties have been exacerbated by the reduced international competitiveness of UK salaries resulting from a weakened currency due to the Referendum result and the subsequent prolonged negotiations with the EU over the terms of withdrawal.

It is too soon after the Referendum, let alone actual withdrawal from the EU, to determine whether this has had an impact on the flow of EU academics into and out of the UK, due to the lag in data. There are some indications of an increase in the numbers of other EU academics leaving UK universities and a reduction in the growth of those arriving from overseas, particularly among Russell Group universities (Chandler 2019). Marini (2018) has suggested that these trends may be among younger scholars leaving the UK early in their career, or deciding that the UK is not, currently, a good prospect. For the time being, it seems mid-career EU academics have decided to 'wait and see', but this could change quickly, depending on the residency and working rights offered by the UK following Brexit.

However, there is also concern about the continuing ability of UK HEIs to apply for, and receive, EU research funding, including from the successor programme to Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe. The UK Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation has commissioned independent advice on the design of future UK funding schemes for international collaboration (including beyond the EU) on research and innovation (DBEIS 2019), but there is scepticism about whether this would match the existing schemes Pound for Euro or provide the same quality of research collaboration (Morgan 2019). However, the damage may already have been done. In 2018, the UK's surplus and 'market share' of EU research funding declined in comparison with the first three years of Horizon 2020 and its predecessor, the Framework Programme 7, and the Netherlands took over first place as the highest net beneficiary (Fisch 2017, 2018). The most likely explanation for this sudden reversal is the outcome of the Referendum vote for the UK to exit the EU:

The figure seems to confirm that the pending uncertainty about the consequences of Brexit might have had a considerable negative impact both on the motivation of potential UK participants and/or on the willingness of coordinators to include partners from the UK in the consortia. (Fisch 2018)

Some senior research professors have warned that uncertainty over the UK's future access to European Union research funding prior to Brexit had already undermined grant applications and persuaded academics to move abroad. This included UK-domiciled academics with EU research funds and European colleagues in their research teams, as well as EU citizens in UK HEIs (Coveney 2019, Pells 2019).

Further, more fine-grained, research will be needed to explore the ultimate impact of Brexit – whatever shape it takes – on the future composition and experiences of faculty



in UK higher education institutions. Its impacts will be felt by UK-domiciled academics as well as other EU citizens and those from beyond Europe. This chapter suggests that it will also be differentiated by country of origin, age, level, role (teaching and/or research), type and geographical location of institution, and discipline.

## References

ASS (2016) 'Navigating Brexit: Supporting and safeguarding UK higher education'. Academy of Social Sciences Information bulletin, 11 November.

<https://campaignforsocialscience.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Navigating-Brexit-Supporting-and-Safeguarding-UK-Higher-Education-November-2016.pdf>.

Accessed 29 September 2019

Chandler H (2019) Brexit and EU academics. London: Russell Group.

<https://russellgroup.ac.uk/news/brexit-and-eu-academics/>. Accessed 29 September 2019

Coveney P (2019) UK academics should not rely on their universities to save them from Brexit fallout. 21 March, London: Times Higher Education.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/opinion/uk-academics-should-not-rely-their-universities-save-them-brexit-fallout>. Accessed 29 September 2019

DBEIS (2019) Future frameworks for international collaboration on research and innovation: independent advice. UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-frameworks-for-international-collaboration-on-research-and-innovation-independent-advice>. Accessed September 2019

European Parliament (2019) Free movement of persons.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/147/free-movement-of-persons>.

Accessed 29 September 2019

Fisch P (2017) Monetary distribution effects of Horizon 2020 – An updated analysis.

<https://www.peter-fisch.eu/european-research-policy/think-pieces/2-2017-distribution-2017/>. Accessed 29 September 2019.

Fisch P (2018) Monetary distribution effects of Horizon 2020 (up to mid-2018): Some remarkable developments...

<https://www.peter-fisch.eu/european-research-policy/think-pieces/2-2018-distribution-2018/>. Accessed 29 September 2019

Florida R (2012) The Rise of the Creative Class revisited. New York: Basic Books

Guthrie S, Lichten C, Harte E, Parks S, Wooding S (2017) International mobility of researchers: A survey of researchers in the UK. California US: Santa Monica.

[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1991.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1991.html). Accessed 29 September 2019

- HEFCE (2015) Selection of staff for inclusion in the REF 2014. Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England.  
<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/201517/>. Accessed 29 September 2019
- HESA (2019a) Staff in Higher Education 2017/18. Cheltenham: Higher Education Statistics Agency. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/releases>. Accessed 29 September 2019
- HESA (2019b) Finance Data 2017/18. Cheltenham: Higher Education Statistics Agency. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/finances/releases> Accessed 29 September 2019
- Highman L (2018) University staff demographics: the fabric of UK universities at risk from Brexit. Policy Briefing No. 6, London: Centre for Global Higher Education.  
<https://www.researchcghe.org/publications/policy-briefing/university-staff-demographics-the-fabric-of-uk-universities-at-risk-from-brexit/>. Accessed 29 September 2019
- Highman L (2019a) Future EU-UK research and higher education cooperation at risk: What is at stake? *Tertiary Education and Management* 25(1):45–52
- Highman L (2019b) The distribution of EU students and staff at UK Universities: patterns and trends. *Tertiary Education and Management*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11233-019-09037-w>
- Kim T, Ng W (2019) Ticking the ‘other’ box: positional identities of East Asian academics in UK universities, internationalisation and diversification. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education* 3(2):94-119
- Leisyte L, Rose AL (2017) Academic staff mobility in the age of Trump and Brexit? *International Higher Education* 89:5-6
- Marginson S (2017) Brexit: Challenges for universities in hard times. *International Higher Education* 88(Winter):8–10
- Marginson S, Papatsiba V, Xu X (2020) Feeling the Brexit shock: European connectedness and the existential crisis in UK higher education. In: Callender C, Locke W, Marginson S (eds) *Changing Higher Education for a Changing World*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Marini G (2019) A PhD in social sciences and humanities: impacts and mobility to get better salaries in an international comparison. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44:8, 1332-1343 DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2018.1436537
- Marini G (2018) Higher education staff and Brexit. Is the UK losing the youngest and brightest from other EU countries? *Tertiary Education and Management* 24(4):409-421. doi: 10.1080/13583883.2018.1497697
- Mayhew K (2017) UK higher education and Brexit. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 33(S1):S155–S161

Morgan J (2019) "Good luck with it": damning verdict on UK's ERC alternative plan. 28 March, London: Times Higher Education  
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/good-luck-it-damning-verdict-uks-erc-alternative-plan>. Accessed 29 September 2019

Morley L, Alexiadou N, Garaz S, González-Monteagudo J, Taba M (2018) Internationalisation and migrant academics: the hidden narratives of mobility. Higher Education 76:537–554

Naseem J (2019) UK universities' EU-born staff do not live in a Brexit-proof bubble. Times Higher Education, London, 23 May.  
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/opinion/uk-universities-eu-born-staff-do-not-live-brexit-proof-bubble>. Accessed 29 September 2019

OECD (2019) Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>. Accessed 29 September 2019

Pells R (2019) UK universities lose grants and staff as Brexit uncertainty grows. 9 April, London: Times Higher Education.  
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/uk-universities-lose-grants-and-staff-brexit-uncertainty-grows>. Accessed 29 September 2019

Pustelnikovaite T (2018) The working lives of migrant professionals: exploring the case of migrant academics. PhD Thesis, St Andrews University. <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/14129>. Accessed 29 September 2019

QAA (2017) Experience and Needs of International Students. Enhancement Themes, Quality Assurance Agency, Scotland.  
<https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/completed-enhancement-themes/student-transitions/experience-and-needs-of-international-students>. Accessed 29 September 2019

Russell Group (2016) Russell Group Universities and the European Union. <https://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/media/5417/russell-group-universities-and-the-european-union.pdf>. Accessed 29 September 2019

The Guardian (2014) Universities Research Excellence Framework 2014 – the full rankings. 14 December. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/ng-interactive/2014/dec/18/university-research-excellence-framework-2014-full-rankings>. Accessed 29 September 2019

Tijssen R, van de Klippe W, Yegros A (2019) Globalisation, localisation and glocalisation of university-business research cooperation: general patterns and trends in the UK university system. Working Paper 50, London: Centre for Global Higher Education. <https://www.researchcghe.org/publications/working-paper/globalisation-localisation-and-glocalisation-of-university-business-research-cooperation-general-patterns-and-trends-in-the-uk-university-system/> Accessed 29 September 2019

UCEA (2019) Higher Education Workforce Survey 2019. London: Universities and Colleges Employers Association (in press)

UCEA-HEFCE (2017) Higher Education Workforce Survey 2017. London: Universities and Colleges Employers Association.  
<https://www.ucea.ac.uk/library/publications/Higher-Education-Workforce-Survey-2017/>. Accessed 29 September 2019

UCU (2017) Academics' survey shows little support for HE Bill amid Brexit brain drain fears. <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/8584/Academics-survey-shows-little-support-for-HE-Bill-amid-Brexit-brain-drain-fears>. Accessed 29 September 2019

UKCISA (2018) Pilot projects and research into the international student experience in the UK 2017-18. UK Council for International Student Affairs.  
<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Research--Policy/Grants-pilot-projects/Pilot-projects-reports>. Accessed 29 September 2019

UUK (2017) International research collaboration after the UK leaves the European Union. London: Universities UK. <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/international-research-collaboration-post-exit.aspx>. Accessed 29 September 2019

UUK (2019) International Facts and Figures. London: Universities UK.  
<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/Intl-facts-figs-19.aspx>. Accessed 29 September 2019

Van der Wende M (2015) International academic mobility: Towards a concentration of the minds in Europe. Research and occasional paper series: CSHE.3.14, Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of Berkeley, US.  
<https://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/international-academic-mobility-towards-concentration-minds-europe>. Accessed 29 September 2019

Walker P (2015) The globalisation of HE and the sojourner academic - Insights into challenges experienced by newly appointed international academic staff in a UK university. *Journal of Research in International Education* 14(1):61–74