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Written evidence submitted by **University English** to the Education Committee Inquiry concerning “The Impact of Exiting the European Union on Higher Education”.

Introduction

1. University English is the representative body for English studies in UK Higher Education. English Studies (including Language, Literature, Creative Writing, separately or in combination) is one of the most popular areas of study in UK HE. We have member departments across the nation; we also collaborate with academic colleagues across Europe via the European Society for the Study of English.

2. The subject benchmark statement for English notes both the importance to the discipline of its engagement with other cultures and languages, and the significance of our discipline for UK economic and cultural activity noting that:

English attracts international interest in the UK's cultural heritage and creative industries, stimulating tourism and other economic activity. The status of English as a global language adds significance to the study of both English language and literature written in English, offering opportunities for international exchanges in learning and teaching.

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-English-15.pdf>

3. English Studies will continue to pursue these objectives, but we have serious concerns about the ways in which the consequences of leaving the EU may hamper our ability to do so.

Students

EU Students

4. Considerable numbers of EU students have elected to come to British universities to study at both under- and post-graduate levels. Their presence contributes to raising intellectual standards, enhancing the breadth of literary and cultural reference in classrooms, and makes viable the continued provision of specialized courses in language and linguistics that might otherwise have to close, reducing the range of subjects available to UK students. In particular students from those countries with a strong philological tradition in their literary training are crucial to the critical mass that enables literary linguistics to be taught in some UK institutions.

5. EU students currently have access to student loans at undergraduate and Masters-

level study. We are at risk of a sudden and catastrophic decline in this market. The government should publish an immediate commitment to allow EU students continued access to student loans. It should publish immediate assurances that EU fees will stay at their current level with respect to home fees.

Student Mobility: Exchange programmes such as Erasmus+

6. The benefits of student mobility to individual students, both incoming students from Europe and outgoing British students, and to the departments who host them at home and abroad, cannot be over-estimated. Diminution or cessation of formal exchange programmes painstakingly cultivated with European collaborators over decades would be hugely damaging to UK HE.

7. The Erasmus+ programme in particular is a much-valued means for supporting student mobility which for obvious reasons is particularly attractive to European students studying English. English departments host a large number of incoming students and encourage home students to take advantage of the Erasmus+ scheme. Both incoming and outgoing students are, almost without exception, hugely positive about their experiences. They tend subsequently to excel in their studies, often doing better than they did before. There are clear signs that the confidence and skills they gain is valuable in the employment market post-graduation.

8. Erasmus+ is an exceptionally efficient means of organizing cultural and intellectual exchange. As membership of the EU is not a requirement for Erasmus+ Programme Country status, there should be no reason for Brexit to affect our involvement, but the government must actively safeguard this valuable asset. Loss of access to Erasmus+ will damage the intellectual and cultural life of English departments in the UK. We urge the government to make an unqualified commitment to ensure full and continued membership in Erasmus+ as a Programme Country.

Postgraduate Students

9. Increasing numbers of EU students have elected in recent years to pursue masters and doctoral studies in British universities; many of them have gone on to successful careers in UK HE, where they contribute to the vitality of the discipline and to the UK research base. Some of these students have been funded by research councils such as the AHRC. We need to ensure we retain the ability to attract these students and employ them at the conclusion of their study. Moreover, as at 4., we note that the presence of EU students is critical to the continued viability of some specialized courses of study. We cannot expect that this cohort of students can simply be replaced with students from elsewhere in the world, as the cultural connections, ease of travel and shared rights under the EU make it significantly more convenient for an EU student to come to the UK.

Staff

9. Erasmus+ facilitates staff as well as student mobility. Staff participating in

exchanges gain valuable experience of working in other European contexts, and establish teaching and research collaborations with colleagues in European universities (a matter of increasing importance in our discipline, where funding increasingly follows collaborative bids rather than the traditional mode of lone scholarship).

10. Many of our colleagues are EU nationals, subject now to a very high degree of anxiety regarding the retention of their right to work in the UK after Brexit. We endorse Universities UK's call for a **transitional period** in which:

time-limited commitments can be made to provide stability, create confidence and address uncertainty during the pre-exit period and immediately afterwards.

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/brexit/Pages/short-term-priorities.aspx>

11. Specifically we seek clarification of residency status, and guarantees for all EU nationals currently in post that their right to live and work in the UK will not be withdrawn, and that they will be exempt from any future visa regime. We also urge the government to extend similar assurances to non-EU nationals married to EU nationals working in the UK.

12. We are hearing numerous reports that in the context of an increasingly hostile public discourse towards non-British workers, many EU colleagues are now actively seeking employment outside the UK. Our members' ability to recruit and retain the most excellent staff is at risk. We urge the Government to take active measures to counter expressions of hostility to migrants and non-UK citizens living and working in the UK.

Impact on Modern Language teaching in UK

13. Many of our students take joint degrees in Modern Languages, reflecting the strength of the link between language and intercultural understanding in the humanities. Like our colleagues, the Universities Council on Modern Languages, we support the All Party Parliamentary Group statement on the negotiation:

http://brexitlanguagesappgmfl.weebly.com/uploads/9/2/0/9/92099188/appgmfl-mfl_brexit_embargoto17oct.pdf

Other concerns

14. The remit of the Inquiry does not cover research but research and teaching are interlinked. Any impact on research will undoubtedly affect the quality of provision of teaching. The impact of loss of access to EU funding will have a strongly disproportionate impact in some subject areas, as the distribution of funding from ERC and Horizon 2020 programmes across disciplines is significantly different to that of RCUK funding. In particular, linguistics, modern languages, and language-based area studies have been particularly successful in gaining European Union funding,

and depend on these sources to a far greater extent than they do on RCUK funding. These disciplines will be particularly exposed in case of loss of access and many English departments will be directly affected, given the strong overlaps with these disciplines. More generally, loss of research income, from lack of access to EU funding will deplete university coffers, with deleterious consequences for class sizes, contact hours, funding for teaching resources and other factors which support excellent teaching and learning.