Dear colleagues,

Today the Home Office has laid Immigration Rules changes for a second pilot of the EU Settlement Scheme which will include staff working in higher education institutions. This is the scheme which will enable resident EU citizens and their family members to obtain the UK immigration status which they will need in order to remain here permanently. Staff at all higher education institutions registered as a Tier 4 sponsor will be eligible to participate.

The Rules changes have been laid in Parliament today but the launch of the scheme to higher education staff will not take place until mid-November. We will be in touch shortly with more detail about how eligible staff can apply and how universities as employers can best support and raise awareness of the scheme among non-UK EU citizens. No action is required at the moment.

As the United Kingdom prepares to leave the European Union, we know employers and staff from across the higher education system are looking for clarity and certainty over the status of EU citizens working in the sector. We recognise that this is absolutely essential to ensure staff feel secure and to allow the system to plan effectively for the coming years. I hope you will join us in welcoming this opportunity to provide this reassurance to EU citizens currently working in the higher education sector and work with us and the Government to ensure that eligible staff in the sector use this opportunity to secure their immigration status early in the EU Settlement Scheme process.

As you will already be aware the EU Settlement Scheme is the process for resident EU citizens and their family members to apply for settled status or pre-settled status, and therefore continue to live and work in the UK after the end of the planned implementation period on 31 December 2020. Those applying to the scheme will only need to take three key steps:

(1) prove their identity;
(2) show that that they live in the UK; and
(3) declare any criminal convictions.

The new online application system for the scheme will be accessible through phones, tablets, laptops and computers. The Government will provide support for the vulnerable and those without access to a computer and continues to
work with EU citizens’ representatives and embassies to ensure the system works for everyone.

As is now standard for the launch of new services in government, the Home Office is carrying out a series of private beta (pilot) phases ahead of the public launch to enable the Home Office to test the scheme, system and processes. The first phase of the pilot ran from late August until October. The second phase, in which higher education institutions will be able to participate from mid-November, will take place from 1 November to 21 December.

We will provide further information on what this means for your institution in the coming weeks. We are planning engagement events in collaboration with the Home Office to clarify the technical aspects of the scheme and answer any questions you have.

Yours sincerely,

Alistair Jarvis
Chief Executive