

Statement from the Vice-Chancellor issued at 09.50 on Friday 24 June 2016

This morning, 24 June 2016, we have received confirmation of the outcome of yesterday's Referendum on EU membership; 52% of those voting have voted to leave the EU and 48% have voted to remain members. The Rt Hon David Cameron MP has accepted the result and has tendered his resignation as Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party and plans to step down by October of this year.

The Referendum result has exposed deep divisions in our country's geography, demography, education and economy. The result will now pose uncertainty for many of our staff, students and stakeholders in addition to leading to a period of wider economic uncertainty nationally and internationally. The process has also revealed the changing public perception of 'experts' in informing political and economic debate and these experts include our staff who strive to discover and communicate knowledge for the greater good.

As you know, I have taken a very public and committed personal position in support of the Remain campaign and I have done so alongside every other Vice-Chancellor in the UK. I did so for many reasons including those issued in my local statement and copied here:

'The UK is a net recipient of EU research funding and universities received £1.23 billion in 2014-15. Our University secured over two-thirds of its research funding from the EU in 2015-16, mostly for research in health and education. The free movement of EU students enriches our culture, supports 34,000 jobs in the UK and contributes £3.7 billion to the UK economy with £558m to the South West where students are attracted by world-leading research in health and sport sciences, marine technology, environmental science and engineering.'

As an institution we have over 180 years' experience in discovering knowledge and in developing and delivering solutions to many of our country's most entrenched challenges and in leading global developments in education. We have produced generations of experts and we will continue to do so.

Our role today, and in the coming weeks and months ahead, is to remain objective, purposeful and hopeful. We must provide reassurance and hope for our students and prospective students. It is our clear duty to ensure that the next generation - those who did not have a vote and many of whom are attending our Open Days today and tomorrow - are supported to play their part as global citizens and we will seek alternative ways of providing experiences and resources that are currently tied to EU funding. We greatly value our EU staff members, our EU research, our EU students and our EU relationships and all will remain part of our valued tradition of respect for diversity and hope for the future.

Over the coming months we will consider, in more detail, the implications of the Referendum outcome for UK higher education and our own University. Today and tomorrow we will fly the Marjon flag!

Kind regards,

Professor Cara Aitchison
Vice-Chancellor