

# Arts & Humanities Alliance

5 November 2024

Professor Graham Baldwin, Vice Chancellor  
Professor Janice Allan, PVC Academic Leadership  
Dr Jamie Taylor, Dean of the School of Psychology and Humanities  
Mr Ken Lee, Chief People Officer  
University of Central Lancashire

Dear Professors Baldwin and Allan, Dr Taylor and Mr Lee

We write on behalf of the Arts and Humanities Alliance UK to express our concern at news of your current review of intake for programmes in a wide range of Humanities disciplines including European Languages (French, Spanish and Russian), TESOL, International Relations, Religion, Politics, and Philosophy.

We recognise that any decisions will not be made lightly and that much of the volatility in the Higher Education sector for arts and humanities disciplines has been brought about by the removal of the Student Numbers Cap and a funding model for home-fees-rated students that does not allow universities to make ends meet. Responsibility for these matters lies firmly with the Government. However, even in particularly difficult financial circumstances, we would like to emphasise the value of humanities disciplines to society and thus the importance of their being available for study at the nation's universities.

The University of Central Lancashire's current challenges must be set against an understanding of what the loss of these subjects will mean for the University and the communities it serves. These include substantial reductions in the capacity for generating critical thinking and creativity among the younger generation, and the total loss of opportunity for higher level education in a key range of disciplines for the diverse local demographic the University serves and a wider impoverishment of the cultural life of the area. Furthermore, all indicators point to the value of the arts and humanities to the global economy whatever the political rhetoric of the day. The World Economic Forum could not be clearer about the skills needed for the economies of the future, the majority of which are taught on humanities

programmes, with critical thinking and problem-solving – core skills in the humanities – topping the list.<sup>1</sup> There is also wide recognition that the arts, humanities and social sciences are needed alongside the sciences to address the human-created challenges of our time such as AI and climate change, and that an understanding of culture is the first step to change. The importance of the humanities to address this challenge was clearly made by Andy Haldane, the former Chief Economist, Bank of England, in an interview on Sky News on 23 April 2023: ‘What will protect us from the rise of AI is our creative capacity as human beings [...] we have seen the dwindling budgets for arts and humanities [...] that is a big mistake for the jobs and skills of the future’.<sup>2</sup>

We need our university leaders to honour the contributions made every year to national economies by arts and humanities graduates. We also need our university leaders to recognise the long-term social and economic consequences of allowing decline in these subject areas. In an ever more connected world that is facing unprecedented problems, we need university leaders to embrace more, not less, multidisciplinary, an approach which teaches students ‘to analyse, interpret, create, communicate and collaborate with rigour, clarity and energy’.<sup>3</sup> The opportunities are summed up in a recent British Academy report: ‘arts and humanities students are the “ideal entrepreneurs” of the future, digitally literate, ready to thrive in a globally diverse world, resilient, confident at analysis and team working, independently minded’.<sup>4</sup>

We are aware that the University of Central Lancashire prides itself on its breadth of choice, the employability of its graduates and the transformational potential of its programmes, as well as promotes itself as a ‘global university’ that encourages and facilitates contact with different countries and cultures.<sup>5</sup> We would hope that an institution with such aspirations will work through its current difficulties, in full recognition of the value of the arts and humanities to its mission. In particular, we call on you work together to revoke the immediacy of such changes and engage in constructive dialogue with the disciplines affected in order to develop sustainable solutions that are to the benefit of all concerned. Finally, we would be very happy to offer our support in helping think through any creative solutions to the current situation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/top-10-work-skills-of-tomorrow-how-long-it-takes-to-learn-them/>.

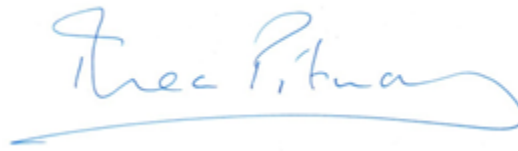
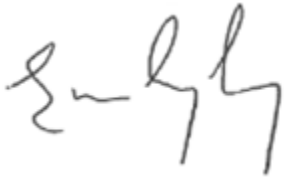
<sup>2</sup> <https://news.sky.com/video/limiting-skilled-controlled-migrant-labour-is-a-mistake-says-ex-bank-of-england-chief-economist-12864152>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/this-is-shape/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/flagship-skills-right-skills-arts-humanities-social-sciences/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.uclan.ac.uk/about-us>

Yours sincerely,



Professors Emma Cayley and Thea Pitman  
Co-chairs, Arts and Humanities Alliance

**On behalf of the affiliates of the Arts and Humanities Alliance:**

African Studies Association of the UK  
African Theatre Association  
Architectural Humanities Research Association  
Association of Adaptation Studies  
Association for Art History  
Association of University Professors and Heads of French  
British Association for American Studies  
British Association for Chinese Studies  
British Association for Jewish Studies  
British Association for Korean Studies  
British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies  
British Association for the Study of Religions  
British Society for the History of Science  
British Philosophical Association  
Council for British Archaeology  
Council of University Classics Departments  
Economic History Society  
English Association  
Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas  
Linguistics Association of Great Britain  
Music Mark – the UK Association for Music Education  
National Association of Writers in Education  
Oral History Society  
Philological Society of Great Britain  
Political Studies Association  
Royal Historical Society  
Royal Musical Association

Society for French Studies  
Society for Neo-Latin Studies  
Society for Old Testament Study  
Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies  
Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies  
Standing Conference of University Drama Departments  
The Folklore Society  
The Mind Association  
Theology and Religious Studies UK  
UK Association for Language Testing and Assessment  
University Archaeology UK  
University English

And with thanks to Professor Jennifer Richards for research in relation to the value of arts and humanities disciplines.

<https://www.artsandhumanitiesalliance.org/>