

2 February 2025

The Rt. Hon. Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

RE: The loss of Arts and Humanities Subjects across the UK Higher Education Sector

Dear Secretary of State for Education

In response to the shocking news reported widely in the UK press this week of up to [10,000 imminent job losses across the UK Higher Education sector](#), we write as co-chairs of the Arts and Humanities Alliance, an organisation that brings together representatives from fifty learned societies and scholarly associations, to underscore the degree to which arts and humanities subjects appear to be bearing the brunt of these cuts. The inadequacy of the current funding model for UK Higher Education, exacerbated by the previous government's removal of student numbers caps that put universities in direct competition with each other and its immigration policies which have put off the large numbers of international students whose fees were propping up the sector, means that around two-thirds of the UK's universities are currently engaging in [restructurings, course closures, voluntary severance schemes and compulsory redundancies](#). In the meantime, agencies like the Office for Students wargame how they might handle [the consequences of a whole institution going bankrupt](#). To say that this could be a catastrophic scenario, not only for staff and students, but also for local economies that rely on their universities for employment, is not an understatement.

In all these processes of contractions and closures, one common denominator is that arts and humanities subjects are too often first in line. This week it's ancient history, modern languages, music, religion and theology at Cardiff University. Not so long ago, it was English, history, music, theatre, performance and visual cultures at [Goldsmiths](#), and art history, music, philosophy and religious studies at the [University of Kent](#), to name just two on a growing list. The end result of all this – beyond job losses for staff – is an increase in [cold spots](#) across the country for these subjects, with a consequent loss of opportunity, and social mobility, for students interested in arts and humanities subjects who live in those cold spots and who don't want, or are not able, to study far from home. For future employers, there is the loss of a strong pool of graduates with the valuable [critical thinking and problem-solving skills](#) that arts and humanities degrees deliver so well and that those employers recognise as essential to address contemporary society's biggest challenges. Critical thinking skills also work to strengthen engagement with democratic forms of government. For society at large, there is the loss of the [social, cultural](#) and [economic benefits](#) that engagement with these subjects brings. And for universities themselves, there is the danger of reputational damage exacerbating their economic difficulties, potentially leading to the comprehensive loss of one of the nation's most valuable assets and sources of global soft power.

We therefore urge you, as Secretary of State for Education and someone who has benefitted directly from the cultural enrichment, social mobility and enhanced employability afforded by the study of these subjects, to coordinate an urgent review of provision across arts and humanities disciplines in the UK. Such a review should ensure that all our young people, wherever they come from, are able to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to support the current government's plans for growth and help maintain the UK's leading position in the global knowledge economy, as well as enable them to satisfy their own intellectual curiosity, wherever that may lead.

Yours faithfully,

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

On behalf of the affiliates of the Arts and Humanities Alliance,

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

African Studies Association of the UK	Linguistics Association of Great Britain
African Theatre Association	Music Mark – the UK Association for Music Education
Architectural Humanities Research Association	National Association of Writers in Education
Association of Adaptation Studies	Oral History Society
Association for Art History	Philological Society of Great Britain
Association for German Studies	Political Studies Association
Association for Publishing Education	Royal Geographical Society
Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland	Royal Historical Society
Association of University Professors and Heads of French	Royal Musical Association
British Association for American Studies	Society for French Studies
British Association for Applied Linguistics	Society for Latin American Studies
British Association for Chinese Studies	Society for Neo-Latin Studies
British Association for Jewish Studies	Society for Old Testament Study
British Association for Korean Studies	Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies
British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies	Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies
British Association for the Study of Religions	Standing Conference of University Drama Departments
British Society for the History of Science	The Folklore Society
British Society for Middle Eastern Studies	Theology and Religious Studies UK
British Philosophical Association	UK Association for Language Testing and Assessment
Council for British Archaeology	UK Council of Area Studies Associations
Council of University Classics Departments	University Archaeology UK
Economic History Society	University Council For Languages
English Association	University English
Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas	Women in Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies