

13 June 2026

Professor Anthony Woodman, Vice-Chancellor  
Dr Stephen Partidge, Dean of the School of Creative Arts  
Members of the Board of Governors  
University of Hertfordshire

Dear Professor Woodman, Dr Partridge and Members of the Board of Governors,

We write on behalf of the Arts and Humanities Alliance to express our serious concern regarding the reported decision to suspend recruitment to, and effectively close, a range of undergraduate programmes in Arts and Humanities disciplines at the University of Hertfordshire, including History, Philosophy, English Literature, English Language and Linguistics, and Creative Writing.

We recognise that universities across the UK are operating in an exceptionally challenging environment, and that difficult decisions are sometimes required to ensure long-term sustainability. However, the proposed removal of such a broad suite of Arts and Humanities disciplines represents a significant change in the academic profile of the University and raises important questions about its future mission and civic role.

This is particularly striking in the case of Hertfordshire, where these subjects – not least History – have demonstrated distinctive strengths in research, teaching, and public engagement in recent years. The proposed closures therefore risk not only the loss of programmes, but the dismantling of areas of established excellence and recognised contribution to the University's reputation and regional partnerships.

We are also concerned by the rationale and process surrounding these decisions. While the explanation of financial viability has been put forward, it has been reported that the University is not acting in response to an immediate financial crisis, but as part of a longer-term strategic reshaping of its academic portfolio. Decisions of this magnitude – particularly where they result in the near-complete withdrawal of Arts and Humanities provision – require the fullest possible transparency, robust evidence, and meaningful engagement with staff. Reports such as the

statement put out by the Royal Historical Society (21 May 2026) and others that suggest limited consultation and lack of clarity over the evidential basis for these changes are therefore troubling.

The implications extend well beyond the institution. The loss of these programmes risks creating a significant regional gap in access to Arts and Humanities education, particularly affecting students with strong local ties. It also contributes to a broader national pattern in which the cumulative contraction of Arts and Humanities provision is beginning to erode capacity across the sector, with long-term consequences for the skills, creativity, and cultural understanding that universities are uniquely placed to foster.

As we have emphasised in our work across the sector, the Arts and Humanities are not peripheral but central to the ability of universities to respond to complex global challenges, to sustain vibrant civic partnerships, and to educate critically engaged graduates. Their removal should therefore be a matter of last resort, undertaken only after all alternatives have been fully explored.

We therefore urge the University to reconsider the scope and pace of these proposals and to engage more fully with staff and their representatives in identifying viable, sustainable approaches that preserve elements of Arts and Humanities provision and mitigate the impact on colleagues, students, and the wider community.

The Arts and Humanities Alliance would be very willing to support such discussions and to contribute to thinking about constructive and forward-looking solutions in what we recognise to be a difficult context.

We ask that you reflect carefully on the long-term academic, social, and cultural implications of the current course of action, and to work collaboratively towards a more balanced and sustainable outcome.

Yours sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left is 'Emma Cayley' and the signature on the right is 'Thea Pitman'. Both signatures are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Professors Emma Cayley and Thea Pitman  
Co-chairs, Arts and Humanities Alliance  
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**On behalf of the affiliates of the Arts and Humanities Alliance:**

African Studies Association of the UK  
African Theatre Association  
Anglo-Catalan Society  
Architectural Humanities Research Association  
Association of Adaptation Studies  
Association for Art History  
Association for German Studies  
Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland  
Association of University Professors and Heads of French  
British Association for American Studies  
British Association for Applied Linguistics  
British Association for Canadian Studies  
British Association for Chinese Studies  
British and Irish Association for Jewish Studies  
British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies  
British Association for the Study of Religions  
British Society for Middle Eastern Studies  
British Philosophical Association  
Council for British Archaeology  
Council of University Classics Departments  
Drama HE  
Economic History Society  
English Association  
Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas  
History UK  
Linguistics Association of Great Britain  
Media, Communication, and Cultural Studies Association  
Music Mark – the UK Association for Music Education  
National Association of Writers in Education  
Oral History Society  
Political Studies Association  
Royal Geographical Society  
Royal Historical Society  
Royal Photographic Society  
Royal Musical Association  
Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies  
Society for French Studies  
Society for Italian Studies  
Society for Latin American 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

The Folklore Society

Theology and Religious Studies UK

TROPO UK: The Association of Teachers and Researchers of Portuguese Language in the UK

UK Association for Language Testing and Assessment

UK Council of Area Studies Associations

University Archaeology UK

University Council For Languages

University English

Women in Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies

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