



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

Dept. of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick, Gibbet Hill, Coventry, CV4 7AL

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Secretary of State for Education
The RT Hon Gavin Williamson CBE

Minister of State for Universities
Michelle Donelan

Minister for Education in Wales,
Kirsty Williams MS

Minister for Higher Education and Science in Scotland,
Richard Lochhead MSP

Minister for the Department of Education of Northern Ireland,
Peter Weir MLA

Minister for Science, Research and Innovation,
Amanda Solloway MP

17 June 2020

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to you as officers of 48 professional associations representing diverse research fields to express our profound concern about the future of higher education in the UK. COVID-19 has simultaneously highlighted the huge importance of university research to tackling the virus and its social and economic implications as well as the unsustainability of the current funding model for tertiary education.

Higher education makes a fundamentally [significant contribution](#) to society. It expands our knowledge and understanding of the world through an array of research discoveries, improves the life chances of individuals by [enhancing social mobility and opportunities](#), advances the economy by carrying out innovative research, and provides each new generation with cultural knowledge as well as cutting edge skills and expertise. Yet, currently, UK public spending on tertiary education amounts to only a quarter of university budgets, which is not only [the lowest](#) among OECD countries, but comprises considerably less than half of the average spending among the OECD's other 34 countries. It is therefore not surprising that nearly [25 percent](#) of all UK universities were in deficit even before the pandemic and that now, due to a dramatic drop in projected income, almost all higher education institutions in the country will face huge obstacles to carry out their mission and remain internationally competitive without government support.

Registered Charity number 289804

VAT registration number 828 5681 90

President
Baroness Haleh Afshar

Vice-President
Dr Nicola Pratt

Secretary
Prof John Chalcraft

Honorary Treasurer
Prof Tim Jacoby

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A vibrant and robust higher education system is absolutely vital for the UK's future. We believe that the current government funding model for higher education is inadequate for this task and we therefore call upon you to use the current crisis as an opportunity to create a **new deal for higher education**. Rather than providing a one-time bailout, it is paramount that the UK and devolved governments substantially increases public spending on tertiary education in line with the OECD average in order to ensure that our tertiary institutions remain at the forefront of global research, education and innovation.

Yours sincerely,

African Studies Association of the United Kingdom – Professor Ambreena Manji
Architectural Humanities Research Association -- Professor Jonathan Hale
Arts and Humanities Alliance -- Professor Susan Bruce
Association for Art History -- Professor Frances Fowle
Association for German Studies -- Professor Margaret Littler
Association for Welsh Writing in English -- Professors Kirsti Bohata and Matthew Jarvis
Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, UK and Ireland -- Dr John Miller
Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland -- Professor Claire Taylor
Association of Programmes in Translation and Interpreting Studies -- Dr JC Penet and Dr Olga Castro
Association for Publishing Education -- Professor Claire Squires
Association of University Professors and Heads of French -- Professor Marion Schmid
British Association for American Studies -- Dr Cara Rodway
British Association for Cognitive Neuroscience -- Professor Jamie Ward
British Association for Slavonic & East European Studies -- Dr Matthias Neumann
British Association for South Asian Studies -- Professor Patricia Jeffery
British Association for Study of Religions – Professor Bettina Schmidt
British Association for Victorian Studies -- Professor Dinah Birch CBE
British Association of Academic Phoneticians – Professor Jane Stuart-Smith
British Association of Critical Legal Scholars -- Professor Adam Gearey
British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies -- Dr James Leggott
British Comparative Literature Association – Professor Susan Bassnett
British International Studies Association -- Professor Mark Webber
British Philosophical Association -- Professor Fiona Macpherson, FRSE, MAE
British Society for Middle Eastern Studies -- Professor Haleh Afshar
British Society for the History of Science -- Dr Tim Boon
British Sociological Association -- Professor Susan Halford
British Universities Industrial Relations Association -- Professor Tony Dobbins
Council of University Classical Departments -- Professor Helen Lovatt
Economic History Society – Professor Catherine Schenk

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English Association -- Dr Rebecca Fisher
Feminist Studies Association -- Dr Laura Clancy and Dr Sara De Benedictis,
History UK -- Dr Lucinda Matthews-Jones, Dr Yolana Pringle and Dr Jamie Wood
Linguistics Association of Great Britain -- Professor Caroline Heycock
Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association -- Professor Anita Biressi
Modern Humanities Research Association – Dr Barbara Burns
Newcomen Society – Dr Jonathan Aylen
Oral History Society – Professor John Gabriel
Royal Musical Association – Professor Simon McVeigh
Royal Society of Literature -- Professor Marina Warner, DBE, CBE, FBA
Socio-Legal Studies Association -- Professor Rosie Harding
Society for French Studies -- Professor Judith Still
Society for Latin American Studies -- Professor Patience Schell
Society for Old Testament Study -- Dr Walter Houston
Society for Renaissance Studies -- Professor Richard Wistreich
Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry – Professor Frank James
Standing Conference of University Drama Departments - Professor Kate Newey
Theatre & Performance Research Association – Professor Roberta Mock
University Council of Modern Languages -- Professor Claire Gorrara
Women in German Studies -- Professor Ingrid Sharp

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