



# 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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[www.brismes.ac.uk](http://www.brismes.ac.uk)

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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.

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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  
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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 Ayles  
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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