

Sir Andrew Chan, Chairman for Board of Governors,
Birkbeck College, University of London.

Professor David S Latchman CBE, Vice Chancellor,
Birkbeck College, University of London.

Professor Matt Innes, Deputy Vice Chancellor,
Birkbeck College, University of London.

10th November 2022

Dear Professor David Latchman CBE, Sir Andrew Chan and Professor Matt Innes,

Proposed restructuring at Birkbeck and the Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies.

I am writing on behalf of the Executive Committee of the British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies (BAFTSS), which is a national subject association that represents HEI staff and students in the UK.

We are extremely concerned to learn of the proposed removal of the equivalent of 140 full time staff at Birkbeck College, cuts which would include academic and administrative staff. We understand that the potential reduction in staff numbers would affect up to seven posts in the Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies. We urge you to reconsider your plans. The impact of the proposed restructuring of several departments, each of which is distinct in its research and teaching expertise, would threaten the viability of programmes that are held in high esteem for their dedication and excellence in research and teaching at both national and international levels.

The research and reputation of staff in the Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies was ranked in the REF2021 as 4th in UOA32 Art and Design (History of Art and Film, Media and Cultural Studies), with 65.4% of the work submitted being assessed as world-leading. However, the implications of the proposed restructuring appears to overlook the research and commitment of staff which supports such a distinctive programme of higher education, lifelong learning and social mobility.

Research and teaching, such as that undertaken by scholars in the Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies is vital to public understanding of cultural value, heritage and policies alongside recognition of the considerable contribution that the film industry makes to the UK economy. The sector is recognised as having contributed £112bn to the UK economy in 2018 (as estimated by Oxford Economics). The World Economic Forum's 'Future of Jobs Report' in 2020 includes eight 'top skills for 2025' that are from the arts, humanities and social sciences. Film, media, communication are integral to the UK cultural industry, its histories and future and for which the work of Birkbeck College should be the site of further investment, not cuts.

BAFTSS asks that you recognise the importance of the research, educational impact and broader economic value of the Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies at Birkbeck. We encourage you to work to preserve jobs, the research culture and academic programmes in the Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies as subject areas that contribute to the UK's culture and economy and the reputation of Birkbeck College in research and education.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth I Watkins', written in a cursive style.

Dr Elizabeth I Watkins
Chair of BAFTSS

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies.