
BAFTSS

British Association of
Film, Television and
Screen Studies

British Association of Film Television and Screen Studies
BAFTSS <https://www.baftss.org>

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12th February 2024

Dear Professor Karen Cox

I am writing to you on behalf of the Executive Committee of the British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies. BAFTSS is a national subject association that represents UK Higher Education Institution staff and students in its subject areas.

BAFTSS' Executive Committee are extremely concerned to hear of the 58 compulsory redundancies that have been proposed for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Kent. We note that this threat to research and teaching occurs within less than 12 months of the Vice Chancellor Karen Cox and the Kent Executive Group's specific public statement (1st June 2023) that there would be 'no compulsory redundancies as part of the current review.'

The cuts proposed by the University of Kent in 2022-23 received a critical response from the UCU, a vote in favour of a ballot on Industrial Action (May 2023), and a 'no confidence' motion in the Arts and Humanities divisional leadership. BAFTSS' Executive Committee is concerned that this recurrent threat to the provision of research and teaching in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Kent fails to recognise the intellectual and practical contribution of the creative industries to graduate skills that valued by employers and part of the UK economy.¹ We direct you to the Prospects and HEPI 2023 reports, which recognise that Arts and Humanities students develop 'a firm foundation in critical thinking, independent research skills and sophisticated linguistic and textual-information handling, coupled with advanced communication skills' enabling them to work across a wide range of industries.²

The BAFTSS Executive Committee notes that the University of Kent's own report on the outcome of the REF 2021 celebrates the Arts and Humanities as one of 8 subjects ranked in the top 10 by the THE for

¹ UK Government's Creative Industries Sector Vision 2023 commits to £50 billion growth by 2030
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-sector-vision/creative-industries-sector-vision-a-joint-plan-to-drive-growth-build-talent-and-develop-skills#chapter-2-workforce> – accessed 6th February 2024

² See the Prospects report (71145492-99f4-4134-9e6f-8e694edb398f_what-do-graduates-do-2023.pdf (prismic.io) and <https://luminare.prospects.ac.uk/what-do-humanities-graduates-do> -accessed 8th Feb.2024. Further, the Graduate Outcomes dataset, states that within 15 months of completing their studies '12% of graduates studied a humanities subject - lower than social sciences at 24%, but higher than science at 10%.'

research quality and one of ten subjects in the sector's top quartile for world-class (4*) impact.³ We urge you to protect and invest in teaching and research in the Arts and Humanities as paramount to the future reputation and economy of the University of Kent. The BAFTSS Executive Committee is extremely concerned that the planned compulsory redundancies unfairly target the School of Cultures and Languages, a plan which has negative implications beyond the named programmes. A reduction in research and teaching in the School of Cultures and Languages would impact staff and students across the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and beyond. Research and teaching networks, which extend across academic programmes, Schools and Faculties are integral to the future economic and cultural strength of the University. For example, the interdisciplinarity of the Impact Case Studies that you celebrated following the REF 2021, evidences connections to a diverse range of subjects and industries that are vital to cultural and economic regeneration at regional and national levels and an investment in the history and future of the University of Kent.

The Arts and Humanities are of strategic importance to the 'creative industries' as has been acknowledged by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as accounting for 2.3 million jobs in 2021, a 49% increase since 2011. We ask you to recognise that research and teaching in the Arts and Humanities at the University of Kent contributes to the development of graduate skills in visual and textual analysis, research ethics, and the interpretation and communication of information across a broad range of media. The interdisciplinarity of this work is vital to effective and efficient communication in creative and other industries.

BAFTSS draws its membership from scholars working with audiovisual media across the arts and humanities. The work of colleagues in the subjects targeted by the planned cuts include specialists in Music & Audio Technology, Journalism, Anthropology, Comparative Literature, English Language and Linguistics, Modern Languages, Art History, Philosophy, and Philosophy Religion and Ethics, Health and Social Care. The interdisciplinarity of work with film, television, audiovisual and social media in across these subject areas matters.

The proposed reduction in staff - their research, collegiality and teaching – in the Arts and Humanities, will profoundly change the shape of the university at a regional, national and international level. The BAFTSS Executive Committee encourages you to work with students, staff and unions to identify alternative ways forward that demonstrate your understanding of the highly skilled work of colleagues across the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Kent.

Yours Sincerely



Dr Elizabeth I Watkins, Chair of BAFTSS.
on behalf of BAFTSS Executive Committee.

³ Gary Hughes, 'Kent celebrates outstanding REF2021 results.' <https://www.kent.ac.uk/news/kentlife/31490/kent-celebrates-outstanding-ref-2021-results> published 12 May 2022