



UCD Humanities Institute  
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Dear Mr Astle,

I am writing to express concern at current plan to cut more than 100 academic posts at the University of Manchester. These drastic measures seem to especially target the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, where 35 posts are to be cut. Apparently, all academic staff members in French and German Studies have been told that their jobs are at risk.

I am deeply shocked to learn that a leading Russell group university which, according to press reports, appears to be in a healthy financial position should embark on a programme of cuts that will diminish its reputation nationally and internationally. There seems to be no or little recognition of the contribution by Modern Language disciplines to education: the graduates of Modern Languages combine the critical thinking of the humanities subjects with in-depth historical knowledge, highly desirable language skills and intercultural understanding. Surely, in times of worrying populism and widespread ignorance about Europe and its institutions these competencies need to be harnessed rather than abandoned. The British Academy, the British Chamber of Commerce and the British Council are rightly concerned about declining language programmes at British universities. The British Academy is currently scoping a series of roundtables exploring the future of languages at UK universities.

As a German Studies scholar I also wish to emphasize that the German department at Manchester enjoys an excellent national and international reputation. Several of its current and former staff members have served as External Examiners in Irish universities, while also making outstanding contributions to important national and international fora. In terms of research and scholarship the Department is considered a leading centre of German Studies in the UK. Our colleagues in Manchester are working on urgent issues such as the literature of migration, diasporic cultures, translation and intercultural studies – areas that will become ever more important in the aftermath of Brexit. Manchester is an open-minded, outward-looking, diverse and multi-cultural city: surely the university wants to make its contribution to this great legacy by protecting the diversity of humanities subjects offered by the university.

The implementation of these ill-judged plans would set a terrible example in the context of the imminent Brexit negotiations which will require much intercultural understanding as well as considerable linguistic and diplomatic skills on all sides. I very much hope that the university management will withdraw these plans.

Yours sincerely

Anne Fuchs

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