

**From:** Hugh Willmott  
**Sent:** 19 March 2021 13:17  
**To:** Nishan Canagarajah <[vc@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:vc@leicester.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** Proposed redundancies at the School of Business

Dear Vice-Chancellor

I write as someone who has had a close involvement with Leicester's School of Business – primarily as an external assessor to appointments within the School.

The University has been fortunate in attracting highly respected scholars and establishing a forward-looking set of curricula and research programmes within the School. This has enabled the School of Business at Leicester to stand out from the pack of copycat, often backward-looking business schools.

The contemporary challenge for all business schools is to respond to a series of crises – of climate change and social justice, for example, that currently threaten to engulf humanity – by ensuring that future generations of executives are equipped to engage productively and effectively with them. That response requires the kind of 'outside-the-box' pedagogy and research that has been developed and delivered by specialists in critical management studies and political economy.

In the present context, it is precisely the contribution of heterodox scholars that demands recognition and expansion by University leaders. That is because heterodox scholars are amongst those most likely to provide the radical *innovation* and thought *leadership* relevant to addressing the most challenging of contemporary problems.

There is also the question of the reputation of the University.

It is not a 'good look' to be appearing to target academics for redundancy on the basis of their research activity. This appears to fly in the face of basic principles and expectations of academic freedom.

Nor is it a 'good look' when many of the targeted staff are actively involved in taking care of the best interests of their colleagues through their work as union representatives. Their targeting then unhappily appears either to be vindictive or to be designed to avoid accountability by weakening the legitimate voice of the union as a source of checks and balances on executive decision-making.

As a friend of the University and its business school, I ask that you avoid any further damage and embarrassment to the University by finding a more constructive and future-directed means of addressing the financial difficulties.

Sincerely

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