

Open Letter to the University of Leicester from Alumni Regarding Proposed Redundancies in the School of Business (January 27th 2021)

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN TO THE BOTTOM TO ADD YOUR SIGNATURE TO THE LETTER BELOW. SIGNATURES WILL BE MANUALLY ADDED TO THE PUBLIC VERSION OF THE LETTER REGULARLY.

Dear President and Vice Chancellor Professor Nishan Canagarajah,

We the undersigned are all alumni of the University of Leicester who have studied and researched at the School of Business (formerly School of Management) in critical management studies and political economy.

We are extremely concerned about the recently-announced redundancies in the School of Business, with a specific focus on removing scholars researching and teaching in critical management studies and political economy. None of us who have signed this letter would be where we are today, or indeed who we are as people, without the space the University of Leicester provided for critical scholarship on management and organisation and on political economy. We have each been enriched by the ability the University provided to us to research and learn about business, management, organisation and the economy in ways that are reflective of core values of academia and of the University.

The education we received, and the research we were able to conduct, at the University in critical management studies and political economy allowed us to realise the University's commitment to valuing people and developing individual and collective potential, to innovating in and solving the problems of the world creatively, to embracing stakeholder and collaborative approaches, to exploring ways to reinforce accountability, and to developing knowledge, understanding and expertise. Because the University acknowledged the importance of critical management studies and political economy, we have been able to embody these values in our research and learning in very real ways. We have been able to take these values forward in responding to the crises we face in the world, from the environmental crisis to the economic crisis, from the crises facing people of colour, women and LGBT+ people to the Covid-19 crisis that currently plagues us all. Without a critical education, and the space to pursue critical research, we would not have been in a position to make the positive interventions in these and other crises we have all made, in our academic work and in our day-to-day lives. The University of Leicester gave us a lens through which we could better understand what was happening and how we could be a part of creating a better tomorrow, for businesses and organisations, for our communities and for the world.

The plans to eradicate this space for critical management studies and political economy research and learning fundamentally undermine the capacity for the University to live up to its values in the areas of business, management and economics. Universities have a responsibility to their staff and students, but also to their wider community and to the world their alumni go out into. Eliminating critical management studies and political economy is a step backwards, a step away from that responsibility, and will undoubtedly single the University of Leicester out as an institution that has reneged on this basic educational responsibility. When the world is most in need of this kind of morally and politically sound governance, in all aspects of our lives, if the University pushes on with an abandonment of its commitment to helping shape the world for the better would be a sad indictment of its leadership.

It is safe to say that many of us who have signed this letter had never heard of the University of Leicester or even Leicester the city before we were attracted by the critical management studies and political economy components of the research and education that was being conducted at the University, certainly not before other events in recent years put Leicester on the international map. Indeed, many of us had no idea how to even pronounce Leicester. But now Leicester and the University will hold a special place in our hearts, because of the critical management studies and political economy education and research we have been able to be a part of. The international reputation of the University will be forever tainted if it pushes ahead with this strategy of consciously and deliberately removing critical management studies and political economy from the curriculum and from the research expertise of its staff. Students and researchers will come through their experience at the University the worse for not having had the opportunity to explore alternative approaches to the key problems they are likely to face in their lives.

In the past, when critical management studies and political economy was at the forefront of the business and management education the University offered, the School of Business (then the School of Management) excelled. This is as clear an indication as there could be that potential students recognise the need for an education that promises something different to what they might get at another business school, something different to 'business as usual'. Young people know that the world needs to change, and are desperately seeking ways to make that change a reality. Critical management studies and political economy education can be a part of that change, as it has been for all of us who have signed this letter.

As alumni who have benefited immeasurably from our experiences of critical management studies and political economy education and research at the University of Leicester, we would urge you to reconsider your decision to eliminate these areas of focus from the University and to make redundant the wonderful and accomplished scholars who have made the University a beacon of hope around the world. Without them, and without the space for this kind of research and learning, the University risks standing instead for a refusal to engage with progress and change when these are needed in the world more than ever.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Adeolu Adesanya, Lead Economist, National Grid
Dr Precious Akponah, Teaching Fellow, University of Leicester
Fahreen Alamgir, Monash University
Dr Nicholas Beuret, Essex Business School, University of Essex
Professor Abby Cathcart, Queensland University of Technology
Dr Ishani Chanderssekera, Programme Director Accounting and Management. Professional Accounting Accreditation Lead, Queen Mary, University of London
Dr Marco Checchi, Senior Lecturer in Organisation Studies, De Montfort University
Jinyu Chen, MSc in international management graduate
Professor Robert Chia, University of Glasgow
Dr Matteo Ciccognani, Teaching Fellow, University of Leicester
Franziska Dahlmeier, Hamburg University
Dr Pizio Daniele
Dr Stephen Dunne, University of Edinburgh
Laila Eldarwish, BA Management graduate
Dr Blandine Emilien, Assistant professor, École des sciences de la gestion, Université du Québec à Montréal

Dr Claire English, Lecturer in Management and Organisation, University of the West of Scotland

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Dr Chris Giotitsas, Tallinn University of Technology

Dr Margherita Grazioli, Gran Sasso Science Institute, Italy

Dr Donald Harper, Associate Dean, Institutional Enhancement and External Affairs, Associate Professor, Business and Management, College of Global Talents, Beijing Institute of Technology, Zhuhai, China

Dr Mandi Jamalian, Teaching Fellow, University of Leicester

Jashan Johal, graduate, Cloud Solution Architect

Dr Juliana Mainard-Sardon, Nottingham Trent University

Martina Martignoni

Dr Anthony O'Tierney, Lecturer in Accounting and Finance, University of Leicester

Dr Ayman Omar, Lecturer in Finance, University of Leicester

Fatos Ozkan Erciyas, MSc graduate

Dr Kevin Pijpers, Erasmus University of Rotterdam

Dr Chathurani Rathnayaka, General Sir Kotelawala Defence University

Dr Marco Sachy, Exploratory Research Project Officer, Scientific Development Unit, Cyber and Digital Citizens' Security Unit, Nuclear Security Unit, Joint Research Centre, European Commission

Dr Leandros Savvides, Global College, University of Roehampton

Dr Beth Suttill, Lancaster University

Dr Thomas Swann, Lecturer in Political Theory, Loughborough University, former Leverhulme Early Career Fellow

Dr Maddalena Tacchetti, Research Associate, University of Nottingham

Dr Bob Townley (FRSA), Work, Management and Organisations Group, University of York Management School

Dr Kenneth Weir, Heriot-Watt University

Dr Sophie Whitehouse, Teaching Fellow, University of Leicester

Dr Xanthe Whittaker, Postdoctoral research fellow, University of Leeds