

Update for colleagues
17th March 2021

Dear all,

In this update, let us tell you what has happened since we last wrote.

Last week, three people were taken out of the redundancy pool. This is great news – and it is partly thanks to your actions and interventions in opposition to the policies put forward by the University's leadership.

We still have some way to go: 13 of us remain under threat of redundancy.

The decision to remove three and keep 13 in the pool for redundancy was made by a so-called Review Group, consisting of the Dean and deputy Dean, along with Professor Baker (PRO VC Research), Professor O'Connor as Head of college and Professor Thomas, College Dean for Research.

The remit of the group was to review the initial 'pre-screening' that put 16 of us in the pool, and then at the evidence provided since in the consultation process. In practice there does not appear to have been an attempt to review decisions allegedly facilitated by the original 'pre-screening' exercise about which staff in M&O, W&E, and MISO ought to be in scope. Instead, the Review Group looked only at the work of those already placed at risk. In other words it only tested for 'false positives'; it did not consider 'false negatives' (where positive means at risk of redundancy).

In the following, we provide a summary of the work of the 'Review Group' tasked with confirming or not whether colleagues should be made redundant in the School of Business.

Their basic terms of reference started with the definition of the research areas CMS/PE used in the initial screening exercise (of which we wrote in earlier documents).

The Review Group has now redefined the criteria as follows:

The review group will consider each individual case to assess whether the person is conducting research **primarily** in the areas of Critical Management Studies and/or Political Economy (as defined) and/or other areas of research that are not aligned with future strategic direction.

In this context '**primarily**' is **not used as a quantifiable measure based on a specific proportion of outputs and/or grants but as a descriptor to determine the more significant or principal focus of research activity in an individual's overall research profile**. Each individual's research profile will be assessed according to the basket of indicators in making this assessment. Assessments will be made on the basis of whether or not a reasonable person would consider the person to be conducting research **primarily** in CMS/PE (as defined) and/or other areas of research that are not aligned with the proposed future strategic direction of the School rather than in an area that is aligned with the proposed future strategic direction of the School.

This qualitative use of 'primarily' as a descriptor of 'more significant' or 'principal focus' of research cannot be the basis of an objective selection process. If primarily is not quantified, then how is 'more significant' or 'principal focus' determined?

Consequently, the decision is the result of the subjective judgement of the assessors. A 'reasonable person' would therefore doubt assessments made on this basis.

In addition, the grounds for redundancy is not just about conducting research primarily in CMS/PE. Equally problematic are 'other areas not aligned with the proposed future strategic direction'.

An entirely new set of future priorities areas

This second criterion is entirely new, as is the list of positive alignments for the future direction of the School. Naturally the definition of these areas has not been in any way discussed in the school. No one in the school, apart from the Dean and deputy Dean, has had any say in making this list.

For us, this has concrete implications. No longer is this only about CMS/PE: ULSB researchers also will need to be aligned with:

- quantitatively orientated economics and finance research including aspects of risk management, macro-economics and finance and theoretical and applied micro-economics
- marketing and aspects of consumer behaviour and consumption
- accounting
- datafication of business, directly concerned with the interface between consumers and commercial organisations
- Innovation and entrepreneurship researched from mainstream, non CMS perspectives
- operations and logistics management and management information systems researched from mainstream, non CMS perspectives
- focus on research on contemporary issues where there is clear demand from users of research and from funders
- research expertise to enable us to offer professional education/CPD to sectors that are growing and/or are prevalent in the East Midlands such as Health Leadership, Data Science, Cyber Security, Transport/Logistics and Financial services
- strategy, sustainability, international business and the business environment researched from mainstream, non CMS perspectives
- business and management with advanced quantitative skills and a profound understanding of data analysis and applications
- data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence,
- the future of work and HRM, employment relations and labour policy analysis as well as increasing knowledge and skills in HR analytics to complement existing expertise.

In this listing, a number of subject areas including marketing, accounting and HR research are allowed to continue without any qualification, while strategy, sustainability, international business, business environment, logistics, MIS, innovation and entrepreneurship are only accepted from a 'mainstream' perspective. Naturally 'mainstream' is not defined, other than being 'non-CMS'.

Of particular interest is 'research on contemporary issues where there is clear demand from users of research and from funders'. This could include nearly everything and, in particular, research on contemporary concerns such as tax avoidance, intergenerational justice or climate change protests. All have significant 'user demand' but all would be considered 'not-aligned.'

Outcomes of the new screening/review

Equipped with the above terms of reference, the Review Group has made its decisions. In the following, we have documented a few examples of judgements received:

- 1) Articles are considered to be CMS/PE because they appear in certain journals such as *Organization, ephemera, Culture and Organization, Critical Perspectives on Accounting*
- 2) One colleague is targeted because they are 'widely quoted in CMS literature'
- 3) Ideas such as 'embedding the economy in the social and political' are not aligned with future strategy
- 4) An article discussing 'gender discrimination' is 'related to CMS/PE'.
- 5) A chapter on 'Foucault in the context of critical organizational research' is 'related to CMS/PE'
- 6) An article focuses on 'political philosophy' and is therefore 'related to CMS/PE'.
- 7) An article focuses on 'propaganda which suggests it is more concerned with politics than with business'
- 8) An article focusses on 'entrepreneurship and finance from a sociological perspective which is not aligned future School strategic priorities.'
- 9) An article that is 'mainly a sociological perspective which does little to contribute to debates connected to mainstream business and management understanding or to contribute to future School strategic priorities'
- 10) An article with 'media/cultural studies orientation and not mainstream Business studies.'
- 11) An article that 'incorporates a number of themes, but main elements include the political theory concepts of cynical irony and post ironic political detachment. Such foundations are extremely marginal to core business school interests, notwithstanding the fact that the article does in some areas discuss leadership, albeit in a highly context specific area which is not closely related to business and management'
- 12) One article 'takes as its point of departure the Anthropocene, a contested concept but one which is incorporated into the research of a small number of staff in ULSB. However, the main focus of this article is the practice of politics and analysis which is rooted in political theory and PE'.
- 13) An article 'looks at the organisation of solidarity initiatives dealing with a range of issues in their organisation and how they "invite alternative ways of working and organizing"' and is therefore not aligned.
- 14) An article that 'whilst not overtly critical *per se* it is a research output which is not aligned with future strategic direction of research in the School'
- 15) An article *on corporate tax avoidance* 'adopts a PE perspective and is aligned with the definition of PE as employed in the *prima-facie* screening exercise.'
- 16) In one case, research is considered to be 'binary split' between CMS/PE and work that 'cannot be viewed in the same light'. Despite the acknowledged split, the review group concludes that 'research is primarily CMS/PE' giving no reasons.
- 17) One article which highlights the importance of 'politics and of power to the study of organizations' is deemed, for this very reason, to be a case of unacceptable political economy
- 18) Another piece makes a 'critique of the emerging orthodoxy within organisational theory'. It is therefore seen as CMS, and thus grounds for redundancy.
- 19) An article is viewed as taking a 'PE view' for pointing to the collective and political character of entrepreneurship.
- 20) An article on Social Clinics that is using Barad and Foucault is viewed as having little to contribute to the School's strategic priorities for research.

We apologise for this lengthy email. However, given the implications of this new strategic focus, we believe that it is important that you were made aware.

Today, and in the coming days, many of you have been invited by the Dean to attend a meeting where an update is presented. We hope that at this meeting there will be an opportunity for you to ask questions about these changes and their implications for your work.

Best

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