

Open Letter from professors and other senior staff

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An open letter to members of the University of Leicester Executive Board, copied to members of Senate, Council and Court

We are a group of professors and other senior staff currently employed at the University.

We are writing to express our concern at the current plans for extensive compulsory redundancies within the University. We note that the damage extends far beyond the 26 colleagues who yesterday received notice of compulsory redundancy. We acknowledge the dozens of staff who have been pressurised into accepting 'voluntary severance' or who have resigned in disgust. We acknowledge that every single one of the 145 staff originally classed as 'at risk' have suffered harm, along with their families, friends, colleagues and students. These include academics in Business, English, Informatics, Mathematics and in the Department of Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour. They also include many professional staff, including colleagues in Education Services, Library User Services and Estates & Digital Services who support teaching and learning across the University.

We are concerned at the principle of compulsory redundancies. In the past, compulsory redundancies have generally been avoided at our University, while threatened redundancies on such a scale are almost unheard of in the sector as a whole.

We are concerned at the absence of a clear rationale for making redundancies, or for the selection of particular groups of staff. In particular, the relevance of the University's finances has been opaque to those concerned. As far as we are aware, all the groups of academic and professional services staff at risk have a valuable contribution to make to the functioning and success of the University going forward.

We are concerned at the inadequacy of the redundancy consultation procedure, which was experienced by those affected as lacking in engagement, with no meaningful consideration of, or response to, alternative proposals they put forward. This seems to reflect a wider and very worrying trend within decision making processes with the University which seem to be conducted without the usual expectations of consultation and participation with relevant stakeholders. It is of great concern to us that critical consideration and alternative perspectives appear to be overruled or silenced.

We are deeply concerned at the breach of academic freedom in the decision to select candidates for redundancy in the School of Business on the basis of the intellectual approaches imputed to their past writings and research. This is a compromising of academic integrity which is without precedent in other redundancy processes at the University and elsewhere.

Finally, we are concerned at the clear danger that the current redundancy process will damage the University's reputation, among both academics and potential students. The process has already led to widespread criticism within the sector, which in turn has attracted significant media attention, both locally

and nationally. This week, the University's UCU branch has initiated industrial action, while the national UCU has called an academic boycott of the University.

We recognise of course that there are financial pressures upon the University, due to its ambitious building plans, and the impact of the pandemic. Nevertheless, as senior academics who are committed to the University's success, we believe that, for its long-term health, these planned redundancies ought not to be proceeded with. We raise these concerns exactly because we are a group of senior staff who care deeply about the future of the University. We care about upholding values of integrity, respect and academic freedom and fostering the positive academic community which attracted us here in the first place and for many of us, has sustained long years of service. Looking to the future, as an institution we need to be able to repair and rebuild, and the restoration of trust in decision-making and governance process is at the heart of this.

For that reason, we invite you use your powers, as the University's leadership team, to reconsider the current course of action. We would urge you to pause, to reconsider, and to reverse the planned redundancies, and any related voluntary severance or changes of contractual status and to consider changes that need to be made to ensure that governance processes are participatory and consultative.

Signed by:

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Jo Appleby, *Associate Professor, School of Archaeology and Ancient History*

Subir Bose, *PGR Tutor, ULSB*

Michael J Branney, *Professor of Volcanology, School of Geography, Geology and the Environment*

Kimberley Brayson, *Associate Professor/Director of Education, Law*

Paul Brook, *Co-Director, Centre for Sustainable Work and Employment Futures (CSWEF) / Associate Professor of Sociology of Work and Employment, Work and Employment Division, School of Business*

Gavin Brown, *Professor of Political Geography and Deputy Head of School, Geography, Geology and the Environment*

William Gibson Burrell, *Professor of Organization Theory, School of Business*

Andrew Colman, *Professor of Psychology, Department of Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour*

Nicola Cooper, *Professor, Health Sciences*

Pablo Cortes, *Chair in Civil Justice, Law*

Matthias Dahm, *Professor in Economics, School of Business (EFA)*

Anne Marie D'Arcy, *Associate Professor in Medieval and Renaissance English, Arts*

Ruslan Davidchack, *Professor of Mathematical Modelling and Computation, Mathematics and Actuarial Science*

Sanjit Dhami, *Professor of Economics, School of Business/ Economics*

Frances Deepwell, *Director Leicester Learning Institute, Library, Learning and Information Services*

Francois du Bois, *Professor of Law (and past Head of School), Leicester Law School*

Ian Eperon, *Professor of Biochemistry, MCB*

Thomas Erlebach, *Professor of Computer Science, School of Informatics*

Corinne Fowler, *Professor of Postcolonial Literature, School of Arts*

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Peter Lunt, *Professor of Media and Communication, Media, Communication and Sociology*
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Bradley Manktelow, *Professor of Medical Statistics, Department of Health Sciences*
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Steve Milan, *Professor, Physics and Astronomy*
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Bernard Ryan, *Professor, Law*
Philip Shaw, *Professor of Romantic Studies, Arts*
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