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30 October 2020

Dear Professor Ezingeard, Professor Gough-Yates,

**Plans to Cut the Arts and Humanities at the University of Roehampton**

As the Executive Committee of the Association of University Professors and Heads of French+, we are writing to express our grave concern at the proposed plans to cut £3.2 million from staffing budgets in the School of Arts and the School of Humanities at the University of Roehampton. We note with dismay that 40 colleagues in these Schools are currently under threat of redundancy, while the University is hiring new academic staff in other Schools.

As two flagship Schools within the University, the Schools of Arts and Humanities offer an impressively wide and diverse range of courses in English/Creative Writing, History, Classics, Philosophy, Theology, Drama, Dance, Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Modern Languages, and Linguistics. Colleagues in Arts and Humanities at Roehampton are at the forefront of innovative teaching, and internationally respected for their research and the societal impacts they generate beyond the university. Graduate employability is high and the subject areas which will bear the brunt of the proposed cuts enjoy excellent satisfaction scores in recent NSS results. Cuts as deep as the once announced will inevitably result in the closure of programmes, resulting in a drastically reduced offer for future generations of students as well as an immediate deterioration of the learning conditions for the current student cohort.

The University of Roehampton rightly prides itself on its service to the community, as well as its partnerships with arts venues, creative institutions and industry leaders. As a University with a large proportion of students from working-class and BAME backgrounds, Roehampton has a particular responsibility in UK Higher Education. Reducing its Arts and Humanities provision will further reduce access for these communities and exacerbate the traditional under-representation of disadvantaged groups in the arts and creative industries.

We are furthermore concerned about the negative signals about the Arts and Humanities the proposed cuts would send in a highly challenging HE climate. There can be no doubt that the COVID-19 epidemic is currently resulting in an acceleration of closures and contractions of Arts and Humanities programmes across the sector. And yet these programmes have an essential role to play in helping us emerge from the current crisis and shaping the world of tomorrow. As noted by the collective SHAPE (Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy), ‘SHAPE subjects teach us to analyse, interpret, create, communicate and collaborate with rigour, clarity and energy – crucial skills for today. And together with STEM subjects, they help us make innovation work harder for the benefit of everyone. […] [T]here’s never been a more important time for them than now.’

 We urge the University of Roehampton to reverse its decision to cut the Arts and Humanities and to explore possibilities for alternative savings that will avoid any compulsory redundancies.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Marion Schmid

President of the Association of University Professors and Heads of French+

<http://www.auphf.ac.uk>