



11.02.19

To Professor Mark Fellowes, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Planning and Resources

Dear Professor Fellowes,

I am writing on behalf of the Society for French Studies (UK and Ireland) to express our dismay at the news that Modern Languages at Reading is under threat of radical and hasty restructuring involving the loss of between 8 and 13 academic staff FTE. We understand that Modern Languages as an academic unit might be reduced by up to a third. This is particularly worrying for the picture for languages nationally, granted the longstanding quality of research and teaching at Reading. It has an excellent reputation across the country and indeed internationally. While we are all aware of the need for universities to balance their books, the extent of the damage relative to economies which are modest in terms of the university's budget as a whole, suggests that savings might be better made elsewhere.

In the days when Brexit looms, the value of a degree in Modern Languages is all the greater, not only because of the language skills and high-level cultural competency acquired, but because of the opening of the students' minds to the significance and value of an informed relationship with other nations. Linguists and cross-cultural experts are urgently needed nationally and internationally, now more than ever. If Reading pushes through its plans regardless of protests, it will in the medium and longer term do the UK a very great disservice. In the short term it will send a powerful and astonishingly ill-timed signal about the value of European languages and area studies.

Yours Sincerely,

Judith Still

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