To:

The Secretary of State for Education

RT Hon Gavin Williamson CBE

Minister of State for Universities

Hon Michelle Donelan

Minister for Education in Wales,

Kirsty Williams MS

Minister for Higher Education and Science in Scotland,

Richard Lochhead MSP

Minister for the Department of Education of Northern Ireland,

Peter Weir MLA

Minister for Science, Research and Innovation,

Amanda Solloway

June 16, 2020

Dear Mr. Williamson, Ms. Donelan, Ms. Williams, Mr. Lochhead, Mr. Weir and Ms. Solloway:

We are writing to you as officers of 49 professional associations representing diverse research fields to express our profound concern about the future of higher education in the UK. COVID-19 has simultaneously highlighted the huge importance of university research to tackling the virus and its social and economic implications as well as the unsustainability of the current funding model for tertiary education.

Higher education makes a fundamentally [significant contribution](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/the-economic-impact-of-universities.pdf) to society. It expands our knowledge and understanding of the world through an array of research discoveries, improves the life chances of individuals by [enhancing social mobility and opportunities](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667690/Social_Mobility_Action_Plan_-_for_printing.pdf), advances the economy by carrying out innovative research, and provides each new generation with cultural knowledge as well as cutting edge skills and expertise. Yet, currently, UK public spending on tertiary education amounts to only a quarter of university budgets, which is not only [the lowest](https://data.oecd.org/eduresource/spending-on-tertiary-education.htm) among OECD countries, but comprises considerably less than half of the average spending among the OECD’s other 34 countries. It is therefore not surprising that nearly [25 percent](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/mar/21/england-universities-in-deficit-figures-financial-pressure) of all UK universities were in deficit even before the pandemic and that now, due to a dramatic drop in projected income, almost all higher education institutions in the country will face huge obstacles to carry out their mission and remain internationally competitive without government support.

A vibrant and robust higher education system is absolutely vital for the UK’s future. We believe that the current government funding model for higher education is inadequate for this task and we therefore call upon you to use the current crisis as an opportunity to create a **new deal for higher education**. Rather than providing a one-time bailout, it is paramount that the UK and devolved governments substantially increases public spending on tertiary education in line with the OECD average in order to ensure that our tertiary institutions remain at the forefront of global research, education and innovation.

Sincerely,

African Studies Association of the United Kingdom – Professor Ambreena Manji

Architectural Humanities Research Association -- Professor Jonathan Hale

Arts and Humanities Alliance -- Professor Susan Bruce

Association for Art History -- Professor Frances Fowle

Association for German Studies -- Professor Margaret Littler

Association for Welsh Writing in English -- Professors Kirsti Bohata and Matthew Jarvis

Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, UK and Ireland -- Doctor John Miller

Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland -- Professor Claire Taylor

Association of Programmes in Translation and Interpreting Studies -- Doctors JC Penet and Olga Castro

Association for Publishing Education -- Professor Claire Squires

Association of University Professors and Heads of French -- Professor Marion Schmid

British Association for American Studies -- Doctor Cara Rodway

British Association for Cognitive Neuroscience -- Professor Jamie Ward

British Association for Slavonic & East European Studies -- Doctor Matthias Neumann

British Association for South Asian Studies -- Professor Patricia Jeffery

British Association for Study of Religions – Professor Bettina Schmidt

British Association for Victorian Studies -- Professor Dinah Birch CBE

British Association of Academic Phoneticians – Professor Jane Stuart-Smith

British Association of Critical Legal Scholars -- Professor Adam Gearey

British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies -- Doctor James Leggott

British Comparative Literature Association – Professor Susan Bassnett

British International Studies Association -- Professor Mark Webber

British Philosophical Association -- Professor Fiona Macpherson, FRSE, MAE

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies -- Professor Haleh Afshar

British Society for the History of Science -- Doctor Tim Boon

British Sociological Association -- Professor Susan Halford

British Universities Industrial Relations Association -- Professor Tony Dobbins

Council of University Classical Departments -- Professor Helen Lovatt

Economic History Society – Professor Catherine Schenk

English Association -- Doctor Rebecca Fisher

Feminist Studies Association -- Doctors Laura Clancy and Sara De Benedictis,

History UK -- Doctors Lucinda Matthews-Jones, Yolana Pringle and Jamie Wood

Learned Society of Wales -- Professor Helen Fulton

Linguistics Association of Great Britain -- Professor Caroline Heycock

Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association -- Professor Anita Biressi

Modern Humanities Research Association – Doctor Barbara Burns

Newcomen Society – Doctor Jonathan Aylen

Oral History Society – Professor John Gabriel

Royal Musical Association – Professor Simon McVeigh

Royal Society of Literature -- Professor Marina Warner, DBE, CBE, FBA

Socio-Legal Studies Association -- Professor Rosie Harding

Society for French Studies -- Professor Judith Still

Society for Latin American Studies -- Professor Patience Schell

Society for Old Testament Study -- Doctor Walter Houston

Society for Renaissance Studies -- Professor Richard Wistreich

Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry – Professor Frank James

Standing Conference of University Drama Departments - Professor Kate Newey

Theatre & Performance Research Association – Professor Roberta Mock

University Council of Modern Languages -- Professor Claire Gorrara

Women in German Studies -- Professor Ingrid Sharp