

Dear Colleagues and members of the University of East Anglia (UEA) Council & Executive Team

JOINT LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS OF PSA, BISA & UACES ON RISKS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL, SOCIAL & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

We write as the chairs of the Political Studies Association (PSA), the British International Studies Association (BISA) and the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) – the three main learned societies representing scholars in politics and international relations (IR) in the UK. We wish to express our shared and very deep concern at your plan to cut staff costs by 30% in UEA's Faculty of Arts & Humanities, including the Department of Political, Social and International studies (PSI).

We fully appreciate the financial challenges facing some Higher Education Institutions in the UK, and the considerable pressures on university leaders to take business decisions in the best interests of their institution. Indeed, it is with this reality in mind that we would like to point out that the [number of students studying Politics at A-level is buoyant](#), and that there is considerable engagement among many young people with political and global issues (not least thanks to issues such as Brexit, climate change, and the war in Ukraine). Meanwhile, the British Academy have demonstrated ([see this report](#)) that the skills gained by politics and international relations graduates are very highly valued by many employers across all sectors of the economy. Any shortfalls in applications to study Politics and International Relations at UEA are likely to be temporary and easily addressed.

We can certainly assure you of the very high esteem in which PSI is held in our profession. The Department has a fully deserved reputation for both teaching and research excellence. In the Guardian 2023 ranking, Politics at UEA was ranked 25th and IR 16th.

The breadth of its teaching is impressive: from a core focus on theories and methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to specialist optional modules teaching students about pressing contemporary issues: Digital Politics, Gender, Energy & Climate Politics, Free Speech, Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism, Media politics, Journalism, and more. The Department is also recognised for the quality and innovation of its teaching, which provides students with a practical as well as conceptual and critical understanding of the subject. For instance, on Activist Campaigning, third year students learn collaboratively how to run their own campaign - and have even inspired questions to be asked in the Houses of Parliament. Notably, PSI is one of only 24 Departments in the country to have been selected to teach Parliamentary Studies in collaboration with the UK Parliament.

The research contribution of PSI is equally impressive. It was ranked 14th in the 2021 Times Higher Education REF rankings. 90% of its research was ranked as world leading or internationally excellent and it was one of only three Politics and IR departments across the UK to secure 100% 4* for research impact. Current Faculty have made major contributions to a wide range of subfields in our

discipline including Electoral Institutions, the European Union, Critical Security Studies, Media and Digital Politics, Global Political Economy, Area Studies, Political Theory, and Public Policy. Losing these contributions would be a blow to UEA's research and teaching reputation and felt by the international scholarly community with which PSI colleagues so closely collaborate.

It would be a blow too, to regional, national and global civil society. PSI staff and graduates make important contributions to ongoing debates about Brexit, populism, democratic backsliding, the power of the tech giants, energy and climate policy, international migration, nuclear security, tensions in the Asia Pacific, terrorism, global cities, and infrastructures, to name just a few areas of expertise. True to UEA's civic mission, they have brought these debates to publics across the East of England through prominent public lecture series such as 'The Too Difficult Box', 'Brexit means Brexit', and 'Big data, big questions'. They have contributed to the national press, attracted tens of thousands of views on The Conversation, and been interviewed on radio and television all over the world. They created innovative events such as the 'International day of the girl' and the PSA Student Political Speech Competition bringing politics to new publics in new ways.

Rather than downsize a financially, pedagogically and intellectually successful Department, UEA should be investing in it, capitalising on current and future opportunities for expansion. We urge you to work creatively with your staff and students to find a way forward without compulsory redundancies – one which protects UEA's reputation and future prospects and preserves an important part of the global infrastructure of Politics and International Relations.

Yours sincerely,

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Chair, Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom

Prof Ruth Blakeley

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