

Professor Lisa Roberts  
President & Vice-Chancellor

**Chair:** Professor Rose Gann  
**CEO:** Michelle Doyle Wildman

Professor Dan Charman  
Senior Vice-President & Provost

University of Exeter  
By email

3 July 2026

**Dear Professor Roberts & Professor Charman**

## **PROPOSED REDUNDANCIES FACING POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS STAFF**

We write as the chairs of the British International Studies Association (BISA), the Political Studies Association (PSA), and the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) – the three main learned societies representing scholars in Politics and International Relations in the UK.

As fellow senior leaders, we fully understand the financial pressures and other challenges facing universities in the UK such as the University of Exeter. We also appreciate that, as a consequence, university leadership teams are having to contemplate difficult business decisions to ensure the future sustainability of their institutions.

Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned about the proposed redundancies to those teaching and researching Politics and International Relations within the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences and are writing to ask you to think again as to whether these proposals and strategy are in the best interest of the University of Exeter especially in terms of its financial strategy and reputation.

The Politics and International Relations team at Exeter is held in very high esteem within our profession both in the UK and internationally and within our associations. The University of Exeter has long been regarded as **one of the UK's leading departments**; combining **excellence in research**, strong and growing student demand, and outstanding graduate outcomes. It is a successful embodiment of the strength and value of Politics and International Relations as a discipline, for example:

- The Politics and International Relations discipline at Exeter is **among the most highly rated departments in the UK** – ranked inside the top 100 globally for Politics (QS World University Subject Rankings 2026 and GRAS Shanghai Rankings 2025) and inside the top 10 in the UK for world-leading Politics and International Studies research (REF 2021).
- One of Exeter’s strengths is its pluralism and interdisciplinarity, with **specialist expertise across the [QAA Subject Benchmark Statement](#) areas** (including area studies; comparative politics; (post)conflict, security and war studies; feminism, gender and queer studies; international development; international relations; parties, elections and public opinion; political economy; political theory and ethics; public policy and administration; research methods; social movements; and sustainability and environmental politics) all areas pertinent to the successful delivery of the Government’s Industrial Strategy. Politics and International Relations scholars work closely with departments right across the university on **interdisciplinary** research and innovation which has also created flourishing learning environments and helped grow AI literacy – all of which may be at risk under the university’s wider proposals.
- These strengths also underpin Exeter’s success in realising **remarkable and sustained growth in student numbers**.
- The calibre of your Politics and International Relations colleagues and the research culture they have established is also demonstrated in successfully winning significant **research funding** including grants from highly competitive funders such as Horizon Europe, ESRC, AHRC, Leverhulme, ISRF, the British Academy, FCDO, and the Volkswagen Foundation.
- Politics and International Relations research at Exeter makes direct contributions to society and the economy via **research impact and external engagement**; advising and collaborating with a wide range of partners across government, the civil service, charities, think tanks, businesses and communities such as the World Bank, UK Parliament, the United Nations, various EU institutions and European governments, Google, Babcock International, the Centre for European Volunteering, the Eden Project and the National Trust. Exeter’s Political and International Studies research also has a strong public presence, with colleagues regularly contributing expert analysis to major local, national, and international media outlets (including BBC News, CNN, and CNBC).
- The Politics and International Relations department’s strengths have also translated into strong **graduate outcomes**. We note that Exeter made significant gains in the 2025 Graduate Outcomes Survey, rising to 12th in the UK, alongside other national and international recognition for employability. Exeter’s Politics and International Relations graduates have been successful in

pursuing a wide range of careers, from government to the private sector, and from international non-governmental organisations to start-ups. Exeter is a highly successful example of how the discipline equips [graduates with transferable skills](#) (such as critical analysis, communication, data interpretation, and the ability to understand complex social, political and economic systems) which underpin individual employability, wider economic and industrial success and help deliver the Government's skills agenda.

- Exeter has also been at the forefront of disciplinary **innovation in higher education**. Your *Systems Thinking* degree apprenticeship is a notable success, providing valuable skills and training across the public sector.

Cutting these academic areas may seem particularly short-sighted, given almost twice as many young people are now taking an A-level (and equivalent qualifications) in Politics compared to twenty years ago and are increasingly engaged in political and global issues. A recent British Academy [report](#) concluded that the skills gained by Politics and International Relations graduates are highly valued by many employers across all sectors of the economy. The University of Exeter should be in a strong position to take advantage of these **favourable opportunities** but will not be able to if the proposed redundancies at the level suggested are made. These changes clearly run the risk of both hitting imminent undergraduate recruitment and the student experience of current and future cohorts. A reduction in staff capacity and student-staff ratios also poses a serious risk to student outcomes.

Given the brilliant work being undertaken by your colleagues, we urge you to take the time to work constructively with staff and students to find a way forward without compulsory redundancies – one which protects Exeter's reputation and future prospects and also provides opportunities for students and academics, especially in this region, to study and further Politics and International Relations.

Yours sincerely



**Professor Rose Gann**

Chair, Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom

**Professor Juanita Elias**

Chair, British International Studies Association

**Professor Toni Hastrup**

Chair, University Association for Contemporary European Studies

cc

Professor Gareth Stansfield OBE: Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean for HASS.