

Open letter from members of staff from across the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, University of Manchester, 27th June 2017

To the senior leadership team:

We write to express our strong opposition to the measures announced by Prof. Dame Nancy Rothwell and Prof. Colin Bailey on 10 May in pursuit of the *Manchester 2020* agenda. They state that 'The University of Manchester has a bold ambition to be a world leading institution, with a reputation based on academic excellence.' We share that ambition. However, we reject the arguments made to justify the proposed job cuts in our own School and elsewhere, and condemn the manner of their announcement.

We take issue with two attempts at justification in particular:

- **The Student Experience.** The proposed 'reduction of 35 academic posts and posts involved in primarily academic activities' is in part driven by the belief that '[i]n the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, an increase in undergraduate student entry standards will lead to improved student experience and outcomes' (President and Deputy President). However, we have seen evidence neither of a correlation between higher entry requirements and increased levels of student satisfaction, nor that higher entry tariffs will help the School to score more highly in the Teaching Excellence Framework. Indeed, in order to succeed in the TEF the University will need to demonstrate its ability to make high-achieving graduates out of more modestly successful school leavers. Furthermore, raising entry tariffs across the board is likely to hinder the institution's capacity to deliver one of the core strategic goals of the M2020 strategy to which members of SALC are especially committed – Social Responsibility. Overly restrictive entry tariffs potentially present a barrier to access to education for people coming from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds.
- 'Sustainable Excellence'. SALC is rightly proud of its international reputation for excellence in teaching and research. Amidst current political and economic uncertainties, it is more important than ever 'to safeguard the core mission of the University and its integrity as a collegiate community', as the President and Deputy President put it. The announced job losses, the failure to consult with campus trade unions, and the designation of individual members of staff as 'in scope' will already have damaged the University's reputation as an employer and its capacity to attract and retain the best-qualified staff in future, not least through its proposal to 'create 100+ new, early-career academic appointments' and 'a £1million "Investing in Success" fund for existing staff'. Furthermore, we echo the dismay expressed by our PhD students and early career researchers who note the divisive nature of this exercise ('Open letter from the PhD students and early career academics of the University of Manchester to the management').

So far we have received no convincing explanation of why, given the relatively small savings that will be made by the proposed job cuts and the University's current apparently sound financial position, these steps have to be taken. In any case, we consider the steps themselves to be brutal; they represent a further powerful blow to both the principle of collegiality and the institutional goodwill members of the School have always prided themselves on.

We call on the Senior Management Team of the institution to withdraw its threats to the job security of our colleagues, to consult with the UCU over its plans for the future in the

appropriate manner, and to pursue the M2020 agenda in a way that fosters and encourages academic excellence, rather than through the draconian measures it is now pursuing.

Sincerely,

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