



LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

28th June 2022

Dear Professor Cryan and Professor Thornton,

I am writing to you as President of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (LAGB) to express our deep concern at the announced redundancies in Linguistics in the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Huddersfield.

The Linguistics & Modern Languages department in Huddersfield has an enviable reputation for teaching, research and wide-ranging and impactful work on practical applications and public outreach, the last of these including the production of the unique magazine *Babel*. As you must be aware, Huddersfield is a major stronghold for the study and applications of stylistics, for corpus linguistics, conversation analysis, and pragmatics, among other areas. The proposed closure of the Linguistics subject area flies in the face of much current research into the value, both cultural and economic, of the humanities, social sciences and arts (see for example the reports in the British Academy's SHAPE Observatory <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/policy-and-research/british-academy-shape-observatory/>). As that research has shown—and as you must be aware—participation in advanced study in these areas is still skewed away from students with working class backgrounds and from Black and ethnic minority communities. It is then particularly devastating that Huddersfield, with its expertise and track record in attracting students from these under-represented groups, should be proposing to reduce the options and opportunities of such students in this way—including students speaking minority languages such as Pahari-Pothwari, spoken by the Mirpuri Pakistani community concentrated in West Yorkshire).

While we appreciate that student numbers in linguistics dropped in 2014-15 (as happened in many places due to changes in student quotas), we understand that recruitment has been relatively stable since then, despite the effects of the pandemic and the associated cancellation of school examinations. And as you are aware, the population of 18-year olds is now due to rise, making it likely that applications will be on the increase.

More narrowly, this closure will do serious damage to the excellent reputation of the University of Huddersfield for original research, for teaching, and for community outreach. This damage is already taking place, certainly among the international community of linguists, but well beyond that community, as can be seen from the petitions and also the news articles that it has already prompted—but there is still time to undo it.

I represent the LAGB in therefore urging you, in the strongest possible terms, to reconsider your plan to close the Linguistics subject area, and to immediately remove the threat of redundancy from associated staff.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Heycock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

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