

Professor Iain Gillespie
Principal and Vice-Chancellor
v.a.dorward@dundee.ac.uk

Mr Ronnie Bowie
Chair of Court

University of Dundee
courtadmin@dundee.ac.uk

Professor Ruth Blakeley
British International Studies Association
Head of Politics and IR
University of Sheffield
r.blakeley@sheffield.ac.uk
+441142228377

Professor Roger Arwan-Scully
Political Studies Association
awanscully@hkbu.edu.hk

1 March 2022

Dear Professor Gillespie and Mr Bowie,

As representatives of the leading learned societies representing the vast majority of the Politics and International Studies academic profession in the UK, we are extremely concerned to hear that there are plans to dissolve the Politics and IR unit at the University of Dundee, or otherwise make it impossible for it to function in a meaningful way, or to sustainably run its degree programmes. We understand that this puts at risk a range of Undergraduate and Taught-Postgraduate programmes involving Politics and International Relations at the University of Dundee,¹ as well as raising concerns about the future employment prospects for academic staff in the fields of Politics and International Relations. We also understand that the University has not approved two replacement open-ended academic posts in the fields of Politics and International Relations, which will put further pressure on existing staff and increase the likelihood of having to hire temporary teaching staff, potentially diminishing the student experience.

We fully understand the business imperatives of the HE sector, and we certainly appreciate the considerable pressures on universities to take business decisions in the best interests of their institution. We are informed that the current threat to Politics and International Relations at Dundee emanates principally from concerns about the performance and potential of these disciplines. And yet, across the UK, student demand for Politics and International Relations degrees is increasing, at a

¹ We understand that staff in the Department of Politics and IR currently contribute to the following programmes, but that the long-term future of these is now uncertain. Undergraduate: Arts & Social Sciences MA; Economics and International Relations MA (Hons); Economics and International Relations MA (Hons); Economics and Politics MA (Hons); Geography and Politics MA (Hons); History and International Relations MA (Hons); History and International Relations MA (Hons); International Business and International Relations MA (Hons); International Relations and European Languages MA (Hons); International Relations and Politics MA (Hons); Liberal Arts MA (Hons); Philosophy and International Relations MA (Hons); Politics and European Languages MA (Hons); Politics and Psychology MA (Hons); Politics MA (Hons); Politics with Spanish MA (Hons). Postgraduate Taught: MSc Human Rights and Conflict; MSc International Relations.

time where demand for University places is also rising, both in Scotland and across the UK. The growth of Politics and International Relations reflects the growth in political engagement among young people - in areas as diverse as climate change, social and economic inequality, electoral representation, Scottish independence, Brexit, and armed conflict and peace. There seems little prospect that these sorts of issues will diminish in salience over the next decade.

We would hope that the University of Dundee would see the importance of an education in Politics and International Relations, given the significance of the many complex and protracted political, social and economic challenges the world faces. Further, having an understanding of Politics and International Relations is very much consistent with, rather than an alternative to, the development of a skilled workforce. Specifically, there is significant evidence from around the HE sector of the employability of Politics and International Relations graduates, and the need for the transferable skills that these degrees offer in the business, charitable and public sectors. For instance, the 2020 report by the British Academy, *Qualified for the Future*, documents just how strong are the employability prospects of graduates across AHSS subject, including Politics and International Relations (see <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/skills-qualified-future-quantifying-demand-arts-humanities-social-science/>). As learned societies with knowledge of the trajectories of these disciplines, we would be happy to discuss this evidence with university leaders, and to explore further how the teaching and Politics and International Relations can be a beneficial investment as the University of Dundee restructures its academic units financially and strategically.

BISA and the PSA are not trade unions, but we are committed to the welfare and professional wellbeing and prospects of our members, and to the pursuit of teaching and research in Politics and International Relations especially. We will be monitoring the situation at Dundee, listening to our members, and offering any relevant support at this situation unfolds.

We look forward to working with our colleagues in Dundee to see how we can best provide support and avert closure or undermining of Politics and International Relations at Dundee.

Yours sincerely

Professor Ruth Blakeley, Chair, British International Studies Association

Professor Roger Awan-Scully, Chair, Political Studies Association