

24<sup>th</sup> November 2025

Dear Professor Canagarajah and Members of the University Council,

On behalf of the Association of Hispanists for Great Britain and Ireland I wish to express my deep concern regarding the announcement on 3 November of plans to close the University of Leicester's Department of Modern Languages.

As a profession association of academics and researchers working in all areas of Hispanic and Lusophone Studies in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, we are particularly concerned by the threatened loss of disciplines in Spanish and Latin American Studies and the effect on our excellent colleagues. We recognise the recruitment challenges currently facing the Modern Languages sector; however these difficulties require strategic solutions, not the removal of established and strategic provision. We also understand the vital importance of multilingualism and intercultural understanding in a globalised society.

The wider regional context is especially relevant. With Modern Languages programmes recently closed at De Montfort University and Nottingham Trent University, and provision under review at the University of Nottingham, removing provision at Leicester would risk turning the entire East Midlands into a languages "cold spot." This would be a marked loss, given that Leicester is the region's only provider of degree-level Italian and offers the unique programme Law with Modern Languages.

Evidence continues to show the value of linguistic, cultural, and creative competencies, especially as technological change accelerates. Nationally, the UK faces a well-recognised shortage of trained linguists, and the protection of language education is a stated priority for government and sector bodies. Leicester's Modern Languages department has performed strongly in this regard: it achieved the highest "overall positivity" score in the NSS among UK Modern Languages programmes and was highlighted in the University's TEF Gold 2023 submission for exemplary support for students. The department also plays an important role in sustaining local language education through long-standing partnerships with schools—including Beauchamp College, Castle Mead Academy, and Wyggeston & QE College—as well as collaborations with the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust. Its closure would weaken this pipeline and diminish regional capacity. Other disciplines at Leicester, such as English, Media and Communications, Film Studies, Law, and Business, also work closely with Modern Languages; the proposed closure would have a substantial impact on these areas.

We would additionally like to emphasise the department's strong research profile and financial contribution. In REF2021, its staff contributed to UoA 27, ranked 11th nationally out of 92—a standout performance for the University. The department also produced one of

the unit's 4\* impact case studies, and its 10.5 FTE staff generated £19,591 per person per year in QR income, totalling £205,705.50 annually. This significant income does not appear to be factored into operational calculations. These achievements make the proposed closure especially difficult to understand.

Given Leicester's position as one of the UK's most culturally and linguistically diverse cities, continued investment in languages aligns closely with the University's civic and academic responsibilities. For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Council pause the proposed closure and explore alternative options that would enable Modern Languages to remain a sustainable and integral part of the University. The department's contributions—to research, teaching, regional engagement, and national capacity—are substantial and should be preserved. The department has long been a centre of excellence, and its overall contribution far outweighs the minimal savings its closure might produce.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Sarah Wright". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter 'S' being particularly large and stylized.

Sarah Wright

President of the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland (AHGBI)