



LINGUISTICS & ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY & LANGUAGE SCIENCES

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SCOTLAND

*Caroline Heycock*  
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Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear President and Vice Chancellor Professor Nishan Canagarajah,

I'm writing on behalf of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (LAGB) to voice our concern at the recently announced decision to cut English Language and Linguistics at the University of Leicester.

We understand that the stated aim of the closure of the BA in English with Language, the MA in English Language and Linguistics, and the job losses associated with these cuts is “to offer a suite of undergraduate degrees that provide modules which students expect of an English degree, as well as a range of modules which are excitingly innovative and thematically driven: a chronological literary history, a selection of modules on race, ethnicity, sexuality and diversity and contribute to a decolonised curriculum.”

We are deeply concerned at the implication that students would not expect an undergraduate degree in English to include modules devised and taught by experts in English Language and Linguistics, given the role that such scholars and teachers play in providing students with the tools and knowledge to explore how social and political structures structure and are structured by language use. Indeed, staff at Leicester are deeply engaged with sociolinguistics and how language is implicated in social inequality, in terms of language policy, work on political discourse analysis and ideologies, and work on language and gender and on various types of linguistic bias. This focus on using real language data to understand societies of the past, present and future seems already aligned with your stated aims to develop modules on race, ethnicity, sexuality and diversity. And teaching in this area necessarily involves students being trained in data analysis skills that both encourage critical thinking and are empowering transferrable skills.

We feel that making such a fundamental cut to the English curriculum will not only impact on the university's research profile, but also on the experience and success of its current and future students. The announcements already made must surely be experienced as disheartening by current A-level students studying English Language and Linguistics at this particularly precarious time for their cohort. Forcing redundancies amid the current crisis will


be seen by many as short-sighted and self-defeating and exposes the university to significant reputational damage.

We therefore urge you to reconsider these proposals, for the sake of your students, your staff, your university and the UK HE landscape of which it is part.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Caroline Heycock, FBA  
President, Linguistics Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (LAGB)

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.

Caroline Heycock, FBA  
Professor of Syntax, University of Edinburgh  
President, Linguistics Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (LAGB)