

Lord Douro, Chair of Council  
Professor R. Trainor, Principal  
King's College London,  
The Strand,  
London WC2R 2LS

11 February 2010

Dear Lord Douro and Professor Trainor,

We, the Heads of Philosophy at Russell Group universities, were dismayed to hear that King's College London is projecting 22 redundancies within the School of Arts and Humanities and proposing to declare all academic posts within the School at risk of redundancy. We are particularly shocked to learn that the proposal includes projected compulsory redundancies for two members of its Philosophy Department, whilst a third is being forced into retirement contrary to a previous agreement. We hope that the following considerations will encourage the College to abandon this damaging proposal.

The Philosophy Department at King's College is one of the leading Philosophy Departments in the world. It is ranked third in the UK in the Times Higher Education's table based on the 2008 RAE results. It is also ranked in the 2009 Leiter's Report as an excellent department in which to study both the philosophy of language and the philosophy of mind.

The proposed redundancies of Prof. Lappin and Dr Meyer-Viol, and the decision to force Prof. Travis into retirement will have a negative impact on the Department's cluster of expertise in these two specialisms. Prof. Travis is the author of seminal work in the philosophy of language and of mind, and he is an internationally renowned authority in these fields. Prof. Lappin is a world-leading researcher in computational semantic and natural language processing while Dr Meyer-Viol has produced important work in several branches of logic. Their expertise in the philosophy of mind and in the formal underpinnings of the philosophy of language is central to the Department's specialisation in these areas of philosophy. Hence, the motivation given for the proposed redundancies appears misplaced. If these redundancies go ahead, King's will divest itself of advanced logic and formal

semantics which are often regarded as essential parts of the philosophy of language. If Prof Travis is forced into retirement King's will also lose one of the most eminent philosophers of mind and language world-wide.

In this context, there is no doubt that the department's ability to recruit and retain international postgraduate and undergraduate students will also be impacted. Besides the immediate concern with regard to the teaching of advanced formal logic, students might also be concerned about the possibility of further staff loss in the near future.

The proposal to put all academic posts at risk of redundancy, together with these planned compulsory redundancies and forced retirement, will also have far reaching negative effects on the morale of current academic staff, and on the Department's ability to recruit internationally excellent staff in the future. The current proposal has already been widely discussed in philosophical blogs and email lists where it has been received with increased disbelief at what appears to be the short-sightedness of making cuts in areas with a proven track-record and expertise when proposing to give academic priority to new areas of untested strength. The implementation of the current proposal would certainly do irremediable damage to the reputation of the College as a place that cherishes and supports its excellent research in the Arts and Humanities, including Philosophy.

We appreciate that the sector is currently facing tough choices and that King's College London is no exception. However, in the interest of the preservation of its centres of excellence, we would urge the College to undertake a review, in consultation with staff, students, unions and external academics, both of its provision in the Humanities and of their interdisciplinary contribution to the research undertaken in the social and natural sciences.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Alessandra Tanesini, Head, Philosophy Research Group, Cardiff University

And on behalf of:

Prof. Alex Miller	Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Birmingham
Prof. Samir Okasha	Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Bristol
Prof. Simon Blackburn	Chair, Faculty of Philosophy Board, University of Cambridge
Prof. Andy Clark	Head, Philosophy Subject Area, University of Edinburgh
Prof. Alan Weir	Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Glasgow

Dr Jim Parry	Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Leeds
Dr Michael McGhee	Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Liverpool
Prof. Luc Bovens	Head, Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method, London School of Economics
Prof. Julian Dodd	Head, Discipline Area of Philosophy, University of Manchester
Dr Penelope Mackie	Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Nottingham
Prof. Cynthia Macdonald	Director of Research, Philosophy Research Area, Queen's University Belfast
Prof. Martin Davies	Chair, Philosophy Faculty Board, University of Oxford
Dr Daniel Isaacson	Chair, Philosophy Faculty, University of Oxford
Prof. Rob Hopkins	Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Sheffield
Dr Aaron Ridley	Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Southampton
Prof. Paul Snowdon	Head, Department of Philosophy, University College London
Prof. Quassim Cassam	Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Warwick