British Philosophical Association

Prof. Nigel Seaton, Interim Vice-Chancellor and Principal
Prof. Jeff Blackford, Vice-Principal (Arts and Social Sciences)
Prof. Linda Martindale, Vice-Principal (Education and Student Experience)
Dr. Murray Frame, Head of Division
and
Esther Roberton, Chair of Court

25th June 2026

Dear Professors Seaton, Blackford, Martindale and Dr. Frame,

We are writing to you in our capacities as President and Director of the *British Philosophical Association* (BPA). Both of us also have senior HE leadership experience, as have others on our Executive Committee. The BPA is the UK learned society representing all Philosophers in a professional capacity. We write this letter with the support of all University Philosophy Departments and all other Philosophy learned societies. We also have concrete links with the *Association of Philosophy Teachers*, representing all school and college Philosophy teachers. We write with the knowledge and support of the Philosophers at the University of Dundee.

The *BPA* understands that Dundee senior managers are proposing to close Philosophy at the university, Single and Joint Honours, and that it is unclear, as yet, what this means exactly for the employment of the Philosophers at Dundee. This lack of specific clarity is itself highly concerning, as is the general tenor of the proposals that see Philosophy and Philosophy faculty seriously threatened. **We strongly urge you to arrive at proposals and decisions that ensure that Philosophy and its current staff can continue to thrive in the short- and the long-term at Dundee. We propose meeting with you as a matter of urgency to discuss the situation to try to find a positive way forward.**

First, we urge you to make clear the **financial reasons** for any proposals that threaten Philosophy. It is important – in this case and in any case – that institutions appreciate all the teaching and other income-generating activity that departments have. We note, for example, that the Philosophy programme currently works with **152** undergraduates on named Philosophy pathways and **27** PhD students (many of whom are international), and has just **6** members of faculty.

With regards to **teaching**, we note that *The Guardian* lists Dundee Philosophy's undergraduate staff-to-student ratio at **19.8** in 2026. That figure positions them as the Philosophy programme with the fourth highest staff-to-student ratio in the UK, and in 2025 it was the highest. The mean ratio for UK Philosophy in 2026 was **14.94**. Crucially, such consistently high staff-to-student ratios do not result in reduced quality. The situation is in fact the contrary: in the *Complete University Guide* 2026 Dundee Philosophy registered the highest 'student satisfaction' score in Scotland, and the 6th highest in the UK. In NSS 2025, Philosophy was 2nd in Scotland for Overall Satisfaction.

Philosophy at Dundee supports **a diverse community of students**, including many who are the first in the family to attend University. Testifying to **this transformational effect,** it was recently ranked 1st in

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Scotland (and 2nd in the UK) in *The Guardian* for 'valued added score'. The Philosophy programme currently offers **13 honours** pathways (12 MAs and 1 BA). Philosophy is therefore **an exemplary bridging discipline/institutional connective tissue**: in a context where JH degrees are increasingly popular, Philosophy at Dundee supports some of the highest numbers of JH students in the University. Further, Philosophy does exemplary outreach work. Since 2020, Dundee Philosophers have worked in partnership with Dundee schools to provide an enhanced primary to high school transition offering **(2300+ pupils to date)** and world-facing internship and employability opportunities for graduating Philosophy students **(37 careers-supported graduating students to date).**

It is worth noting here that **Philosophy is a thriving discipline in the UK**, with a healthy and stable demand for courses, so long as they are visible and promoted. Philosophy UG degrees across the UK have seen recent year-on-year growth in applications. Indeed, Philosophy A-Level exam entries have risen by just over 37% between 2019 and 2025 with further increases predicted by AQA; there have been similar proportionate increases in Scotland. We are confident that this speaks to a growing sense of the importance of the subject across many parts of our society. Indeed, Philosophy has a successful record of promising prospects for graduates; in recent years over 85% of Philosophy graduates were in work or further study within six months and twelve months of graduation.

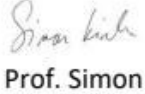
Our central concerns are as follows:

- Immediate clarification on if and how Philosophy as a discipline is threatened at Dundee and the extent to which Philosophy colleagues are under threat of redundancy.
- A clear financial rationale for any proposal, which should take full account of *all* the teaching (and teaching income) that the Department undertakes across *all* programmes.
- Senior Managers should work with colleagues in Philosophy (and the BPA, as appropriate) to ensure a positive future for the discipline, faculty and students at the University of Dundee.

We are mindful of the stresses and strains that universities are under, and the difficulties facing senior leaders. However, we urge you to consider the current situation and to take steps to protect your Philosophy offering and your colleagues. **As we mention, we would like to meet with you as a matter of urgency to find a positive solution to the situation.** We have worked with departments under threat to devise successful plans for long-term sustainability. We believe we can assist you and your Philosophy colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Fiona Macpherson, FRSE, MAE
President of the *British Philosophical Association*



Prof. Simon Kirchin
Director of the *British Philosophical Association*

on behalf of the BPA Executive Committee and the broader UK Philosophy community

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