

Subject: Institute of English Studies

To Sir Adrian Smith, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London

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Cc: Professor Roger Kain, Dean and Chief Executive of the School of Advanced Study,
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Dear Sir Adrian

The Institute of English Studies is a key element in the University of London's School of Advanced Study. It represents one of the largest humanities research subjects at a national and international level, playing a particularly important part in the promotion of the subject through seminars, lectures, conferences, summer schools, research projects, an MA, and by providing training to graduates and scholars. Its lively research environment attracts scholars from all over the world.

I am very surprised therefore that the University should contemplate closing such an effective and prestigious research centre with a high international profile.

Three developments in the last couple of weeks are particularly shocking: first, the cancellation, at short notice, of interviews for the directorship; second, the proposal to break up IES and to apportion its fellows between two other institutes; third, the resignation of David McKitterick as chairman of the Advisory Council.

Some questions spring to mind, and I should be grateful for your answers to them:

1) English, like History, is one of the two largest Arts disciplines across the country and the University. Why therefore has the VCEG decided to disband IES, which serves a huge community across the UK's entire provision for HEI, and thus to abandon a national commitment?

2) If the VCEG thinks it inappropriate to go ahead with all appointments to directorships in the light of a sudden financial crisis, why were there interviews for IMLR on Tuesday, 20 May 2014? Further, did those to be interviewed know of the proposals to extend the remit of the directorship of IMLR?

3) We note that the HEFCE funding review specifically states that if 'there are major changes in the functioning of the School, its libraries or its component Institutes which materially affect its ability to deliver against its strategy' the Strategic Advisory Group 'would be expected to advise HEFCE accordingly'.¹ This recommendation is clearly such a change. Given this is the case, does the VCEG expect HEFCE funding to decrease further if, as proposed, the SAS no longer supports research facilitation for one of the largest disciplines? And if so, how will it deal with this further reduction of resource?

¹ From paragraph 61 of the *Acton Report*, cited in minutes 'Outcomes of the review of HEFCE funding for the School of Advanced Study, University of London (SAS)', 6 December 2012, p. 4.

4) How is the successful and widely respected graduate teaching in Book History to continue without a senior academic appointment to ensure its continuance?

5) Please comment on the disparity between the descriptions of English and Music in the Dean's letter that was circulated to some members of IES. The letter states 'IMR remains financially fragile' but it says nothing of the finances of IES. There is need for a statement on the overall financing of IES, and on the reserves built up under its highly successful former Director.

6) Given the immediate resignation of the Chair of the IES Advisory Board, what structures have been put in place to maintain the proper governance of the Institute, and to advise Acting Director of IES?

7) In the present financial situation, why has the Institute's Research and Academic Development Reserve not been drawn upon?

I am sure that you do not need to be reminded that it is just two years since the British Academy awarded the President's Medal to Professor Warwick Gould in recognition of his services to English Studies. Part of the citation for the award read:

Under his leadership the Institute of English Studies has gathered increased national and international prestige as a centre for research project innovation and promotion, and the hosting of important conferences, as well as pedagogical and outreach activities of all possible kinds.

Those of us who support the Institute of English Studies and all its activities are very proud of this well deserved honour and are appalled at the prospect of its being broken up in such an arbitrary and ill-considered way.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely