

Tuesday 22 July 2025

The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP  
The Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

I am the newly-elected President of [The British Academy](https://thebritishacademy.ac.uk), writing with an urgent call to Government to strengthen and champion our world-leading universities. This letter also contains a practical offer of help.

UK universities are a [significant asset](#). Every £1 of public money invested in the higher education sector across the UK puts £14 back into the economy. The total economic impact of this sector on the UK economy is more than £265 billion.

The British Academy's Economic Strategy Programme confirms that the UK's university sector also confers a [comparative advantage](#) and will play a critical role in securing the UK's industrial future. Universities are thus key to productivity and resilience, amongst many other things.

However, cuts and contractions across higher education are putting scholars under pressure, compromising research capacity and, for the humanities and social sciences in particular, creating [cold spots](#) that further decrease learning opportunities and erode capability in subjects that are crucial for the future.

The British Academy is therefore calling for an urgent review of higher education, to protect the UK's research and innovation excellence, and to recognise how integral the humanities and social sciences are to this. The UK's creative industries alone – fuelled by these disciplines – are an economic and cultural success story, contributing £124.6 billion in output to the UK economy while enriching all our lives.

There is no quick fix, but I can offer the convening power of The British Academy to move debate to the next level. In particular, I would be pleased to arrange a roundtable for you, at your convenience, in the autumn, ahead of the publication of the Government's Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper. Using our refurbished headquarters in Carlton House Terrace, we can host senior figures from across the higher education and research sector –

individuals well-placed to evidence and explore the actions needed to protect and enhance our universities.

This kind of debate can help maximise the value all disciplines bring to economic prosperity, public wellbeing and the fortunes of the next generation.

As President of The British Academy, I shall, of course, champion in particular the vast potential of the humanities and social sciences, and I look forward to working with your Government to advance our shared priorities.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan J. Smith', with a stylized, cursive script.

Professor Susan J Smith  
President

*Cc Minister for Universities*