

# Statement of Solidarity and Support with Ulster University Colleagues

30th April 2026

Irish Humanities Alliance



The Irish Humanities Alliance writes to express its deep concern and unequivocal solidarity with colleagues at Ulster University in light of the recently announced plans to reduce staffing by up to 450 posts.

The proposed redundancies represent a significant proportion of the university's workforce. Such a proposal is not only devastating for individual staff and their families, but also constitutes a profound threat to the intellectual, cultural, and civic life of the island of Ireland. As reported, these measures arise from a convergence of systemic pressures, including chronic underfunding of higher education in Northern Ireland, constrained domestic fee structures, and declining international student income. We recognise that universities across these islands are operating under acute financial strain. However, the scale and speed of the proposed cuts at Ulster University risk irreparably damaging disciplines that are foundational to democratic society.

The IHA is particularly concerned by potential cuts within arts and humanities which are not ancillary; they are essential infrastructures of critical thought, historical understanding, linguistic diversity, and cultural expression. The Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Ulster has long played a pivotal role in fostering cross-community dialogue, creative practice, and socially engaged research within Northern Ireland and beyond. At a time when public discourse is increasingly polarised, and when the legacies of conflict remain active, the erosion of these capacities would be particularly harmful.

We are especially concerned that such cuts will disproportionately affect early-career scholars, precariously employed staff, and disciplines already operating with limited institutional protection. The long-term consequences will include diminished research capacity, reduced student choice, and the weakening of vital regional and cross-border academic networks.

We therefore call on:

- The Northern Ireland Executive and the Department for the Economy to urgently address the structural underfunding of higher education and to intervene to protect academic provision.
- The leadership of Ulster University to pursue all possible alternatives to compulsory redundancies, and to engage transparently and meaningfully with staff and unions.
- Colleagues across Ireland, the UK, and internationally to stand in solidarity with those affected and to advocate for the protection of humanities education.

This moment demands not contraction, but renewed commitment to the public value of higher education. The humanities, in particular, are indispensable to navigating the complex social, political, and ecological challenges of our time.

We stand with our colleagues at Ulster University and affirm our collective commitment to defending the integrity and future of arts and humanities scholarship.

## **Further information**

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