

IHA Statement

**In response to the UK Government
Department for Education's Press
Release "Crackdown on rip-off
university degrees"**

July 2023

On 17 July 2023, the UK Department for Education published a [press](#) release “Crackdown on rip-off university degrees,” which was shared by the UK Prime Minister’s Office via an inflammatory tweet depicting a sledgehammer. The announcement became a matter of heated debate in the UK Parliament that same day, when the Education Minister, Robert Halfon, defended the new policy to put a cap on “poor-quality University courses”.¹ Specifically linking certain University degrees to higher or lower skilled employment prospects underpins the UK government’s marketized approach to higher education.

In the absence of a meaningful response as to which courses are going to be capped, the fear is that the creative arts and humanities will be targeted. This would contradict the government’s recent commitment to supporting the creative industries, an engine to UK economic growth (“[Creative Industries Sector Vision](#)”, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, June 2023). What is more, the March 2023 report by the Higher Education Policy Institute, [The Humanities in the UK Today](#), shows that traditional humanities is one of the UK’s most distinctive and potent strengths.

The Irish Humanities Alliance stands in solidarity with our colleagues in arts and humanities in Northern Ireland and the UK. We address our response to the UK Government urging it to reinstate its commitment to supporting the creative sector, arts and humanities. The critical role the humanities and creative arts play in understanding the human past, present and future cannot be underestimated; they are crucial to overcoming the environmental and societal challenges we currently face. The Irish Humanities Alliance, an all-island organisation, urges the UK government to focus on building productive working relationships with universities and engaging widely with multiple stakeholders, nationally and internationally, to resolve these challenges.

¹ “The idea originated in a 2018 review [that] suggested that more money needed to be pumped into education and that tuition fees needed to be cut – but these are not being implemented” (source: [BBC](#)).

Further information

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