

SCUDD

The Standing Conference of
University Drama Departments

Professor Ian Campbell, Interim Vice-Chancellor, University of Wolverhampton
Professor Clare Schofield, Acting Dean, Faculty of Arts, Business and Social Sciences, University of Wolverhampton
David Reeve, Interim Chief Financial Officer, University of Wolverhampton
Angela Spence, Chair of the Board of Governors, University of Wolverhampton

19 May, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing on behalf of the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD), the nationally recognised Subject Association representing the interests of Drama, Theatre and Performance in departments and institutions across the United Kingdom.

We are alarmed to hear that the School of Performing Arts at the University of Wolverhampton is under threat, owing to your recent publicly announced plans to suspend recruitment to all Level 4 and Level 7 courses in the School for the academic year 2022-23. The list of courses affected in the School extends across all BA and MA provisions in Drama/Acting and Theatre, Dance, Musical theatre, Music, Popular Music, Music and Community Practice, Audio technology and Digital Production Arts for Theatre. Added to this, we understand that the University plans to reduce the staff in the School of Performing Arts by introducing a 'Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme', with possible subsequent compulsory redundancies in case not enough members of staff apply for the voluntary scheme.

I am therefore writing on behalf of the SCUDD Executive, and our wider membership of 79 UK drama, theatre and performance departments and institutions, to convey our objection to these debilitating plans. We strongly urge you to reconsider your stance and to engage in meaningful dialogue with staff of the School of Performing Arts with a view to establishing a mutually agreeable approach to address any underlying challenge.

These plans, should they be implemented, will have a detrimental impact on hardworking staff and students, as well as the HE disciplinary communities represented within the School. It will result in long-lasting damage to the University and School's reputation, which has been carefully cultivated by staff over the years.

The School of Performing Arts at the University of Wolverhampton has traditionally offered opportunities for study to young people who are often first generation HE students from the Black Country/West Midlands. The suspension, which looks more like a euphemism for the demise and eventual closure, of these courses removes a crucial gateway into the performing arts and the

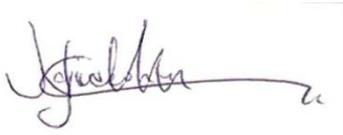
chance to study at University which has been cherished by so many socially and financially under-privileged students over the years.

It is particularly devastating that proposals to cut Drama, Theatre and Performance will have an impact on the very industries – the performing arts and cultural sector – in the UK which have sustained the nation’s mental health and well-being throughout the privations of Covid-19 lockdowns and the current cost of living crisis under which we all live. The proposed plans will also have a direct economic impact, as graduates from the School of Performing Arts feed into an industry which contributes £10.6 billion to the UK economy each year ([‘Why Arts and Culture Matters,’](#) Arts Council England).

We urge you to reconsider these disproportionate plans, and instead, develop a courageous and long-term strategy which acknowledges the central contribution the School of Performing Arts make to the University of Wolverhampton, as well as the contribution creatives graduates make to the arts and creative industries in the region and wider UK. Now, more than ever, UK universities need to invest in the development of skilled and creative graduates from diverse backgrounds, in order to help us re-imagine our post-pandemic world.

We are looking forward to your response to the concerns expressed in this letter, and hope that you will use this opportunity to reconsider your stance on the matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kene Igweonu', is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Professor Kene Igweonu

Chair, [Standing Conference of University Drama Departments](#)
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