

A manifesto for the humanities and social sciences

The British Academy sets out
six ways the UK can harness the
vast potential of the humanities
and social sciences

The UK is a world leader in the humanities and social sciences: attracting students from around the world and punching above its weight in international research competitions.

From revolutionary theories that have shaped our economy and welfare state, to feminism and free speech, to pioneering new ways of understanding our past, this country has given rise to many of the most ground-breaking ideas in history.

Insights from the humanities and social sciences have been and will remain essential to our success as a nation.

Here, the British Academy sets out six ways government can harness the vast potential of the humanities and social sciences and ensure the UK maintains its global reputation for excellence in these disciplines.

1

Speak up for the humanities and social sciences

We believe that the insights our disciplines yield are among the UK's greatest strengths and are crucial to tackling the most significant challenges we face in the world today, from climate change to meeting the needs of an ageing society and tackling poverty.

We call on the government to speak up for the humanities and social sciences, alongside science, technology, engineering and mathematics, to make policy decisions grounded in evidence and to be vocal in its support for academics, practitioners and students of these disciplines.

2

Bolster our relationship with Europe and the rest of the world

We believe that the UK benefits hugely from close ties with its neighbours both in Europe and the international research community.

We call for a close future relationship with our partners elsewhere in Europe, ensuring

the closest achievable association to future EU Framework Programmes. The government must support the humanities and social sciences to lead the way on global challenges and in doing so strengthen and enhance collaborative opportunities with countries across the world.

3

Foster the right research environment

We believe that public investment in research and innovation is taxpayer money well spent: driving productivity, raising living standards and boosting our international reputation.

We call on the government to support increasing investment in UK research and development to 3% of GDP distributed across all disciplines and to ensure that we maintain a diverse funding landscape.

4

Attract and retain global talent

We believe that a breadth of research and innovation talent allows us to pioneer new approaches and be a hub for the world; almost 3 in 10 UK academics are non-UK nationals.

We call for a fast, efficient and affordable future immigration system that welcomes researchers and their dependants, led by trusted organisations in the sector, that allows institutions to attract and retain talented individuals from overseas.

5

Support a sustainable higher education system

We believe that the UK should play to its strengths by sustaining the pipeline of skilled arts, humanities and social science graduates that fuel the economy's largest sector – the service sector – which accounts for 80% of the UK's economy.

We call for a sustainable system of funding for our world-leading universities, which maintains a breadth of subjects and sufficiently funds both excellent further and higher education.

6

Build a broad and balanced curriculum for everyone

We believe our young people need a range of skills, knowledge and insights. Our rapidly changing world of work calls for a flexible, multilingual workforce that communicates and collaborates, excels at analysis and problem-solving and thinks critically and creatively.

We call for a broad, balanced and interconnected school curriculum, allowing and encouraging students to study a range of disciplines and languages, including the arts, humanities and social sciences alongside science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

We would love to talk to you about the
humanities and social sciences and the
British Academy's work.
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