

A manifesto for the Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts

The UK has an enviable and long-held global reputation for excellence in the humanities, arts and social sciences. This allows us, in collaboration with scientific disciplines, to enact change and pioneer new ways of understanding what it means to be human: our past, our present, and how we might shape our future.

Today, societies around the world face challenges that are greater than ever before. There is a pressing need for deep understandings of cultures, histories, geographies, languages, institutions, economies, behaviours, laws and beliefs – all of which are the subjects of the social sciences and humanities.

With the evidence and insight drawn from these subjects, Governments can act with urgency and confidence.

Our manifesto sets out three ways the next Government can utilise the vast potential of the humanities and social sciences. From artificial intelligence to climate change, our disciplines provide crucial insights to address today's complex challenges and shape a better future for us all.

1

Support an educational system that is sustainable, sparks creativity and offers opportunities to all

Our rapidly changing world requires a flexible, creative and multilingual workforce. In sectors where the UK is a global leader, skills learnt from studying SHAPE disciplines (Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy) power imaginations and foster understanding of other people, places and times. This is exemplified when technology and the arts meet, as they do in the creative industries.

However, universities are under financial pressure – with the value of tuition fees having eroded over a decade – resulting in cuts to courses and departments, particularly in the SHAPE disciplines. This is restricting student choice and is threatening our world-leading reputation for research. These threats to the humanities and social sciences are impacting our ability to maximise the economic and social value from research across all disciplines.

To address these challenges, we call for:

- **An urgent review of higher education funding** to deliver a sustainable model that delivers a wide breadth of subjects and is resilient to regional inequalities in provision.
- **A broad, balanced and interconnected school curriculum**, which will enable and encourage all students to study a range of disciplines and languages for as long as possible.
- **A commitment to a responsibly open immigration system for international students** which recognises that the strength of our universities lies in their international character.

2

Use insights and evidence – from all disciplines – to address society’s biggest challenges

Research from all disciplines – SHAPE and STEM (Science, Maths, Engineering and Technology) – will be vital in tackling the most significant challenges in the world today. Both working together are critical to realising the potential and maximising the value and public benefit of new technology and innovation. But we need new research and data infrastructures, and better join-up across the institutions which support the whole system.

To address these challenges, we call for:

- **The UK to be a leading country in the G7 on R&D** (research and development) intensity with increased public sector investment delivered through stable funding which is more fairly distributed across all disciplines to ensure we unlock the public and economic benefits of innovation.
- **Government to use insights from SHAPE disciplines** in thinking about key technologies to ensure innovation is safe, ethical, well-regulated, inclusive and sustainable.
- **Improved support for museums, libraries and archives** which provide valuable research infrastructure for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.
- **Greater collaboration across the ministerial portfolios** responsible for universities and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, so that there is recognition of the strong synergies across the system.

3

Collaborate with partners abroad and nurture research talent in the United Kingdom

The UK has made good progress in investing in R&D in recent years and we welcome the association to Horizon Europe. We now need cross party consensus to maintain and increase steady investment in research. Long-term funding settlements and clearly articulated strategies create a stable environment valued by researchers, innovators and investors. Research is an international endeavour and global collaboration is essential for the UK to maintain its thriving innovation environment.

To address these challenges, we call for:

- **The UK to play an active role** in shaping the development of the next round of European Framework Programmes and to rejoin the Erasmus Plus scheme.
- The next Government to **restore and protect its Official Development Assistance budget** to 0.7% of Gross National Income with immediate effect.
- **The reduction of barriers to international collaboration** and research mobility with a substantial cut to the costs of visas and associated fees, the end to the need to pay upfront for these costs, the removal of the Immigration Health Surcharge and for sanctuary to be provided to researchers at risk around the world, as the UK has done in relation to Ukraine.

We would love to talk to you about the SHAPE disciplines and the British Academy's work.

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