



Monday 26th October 2020

Professor Wendy Thomson
Vice-Chancellor
University of London
Vice-Chancellor@london.ac.uk

Professor Jo Fox
Acting Dean of the School of Advanced Study
University of London
jo.fox@sas.ac.uk

CC: SAS organisational restructuring: sas.orgchange@sas.ac.uk

RE: Possible closure of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies

We, the undersigned, are writing to express our concern at the unexpected announcement to close the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICwS) early next year. While consultation is still on-going, we urge the relevant stakeholders to reconsider this decision.

The Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICwS) is at the heart of the Commonwealth 'family' and many Commonwealth organisations have worked with the Institute over the years on different projects and programmes. Founded in 1949, ICwS is one of the only dedicated resources of its kind in the Commonwealth devoted specifically to the study of the contemporary Commonwealth. The Institute is a national and international centre of excellence for policy-relevant research, research facilitation and teaching.

Commonwealth organisations benefit hugely from its world-class research library, from key projects like the Human Rights Consortium and the Refugee Law Initiative, and the ICwS's many interdisciplinary academic events, workshops and conferences, which many of our organisations have spoken at, attended and supported. Commonwealth citizens from across the world have also benefitted from the invaluable support given to early career scholars through the ICwS's competitive fellowships and grants schemes.

The threatened closure of both ICwS and the Institute of Latin American Studies would be a huge loss to the Commonwealth 'family' and to the wider study of Commonwealth and Post-Colonial Studies.

We are acutely aware of the very difficult circumstances that all institutions and organisations are finding themselves due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. However, we would urge that any decision on the ICwS is carefully considered in the context of the importance of the strong international links and research interests across the Commonwealth. Commonwealth studies are vital to maintaining these connections and to the ongoing relevance of the Commonwealth in many countries.

As signatories to this letter, we would kindly ask for consultation with stakeholders across the Commonwealth, and with the staff and students at the university, on the possible closure of

the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICwS) and its long-term future and viability. We would be very happy to offer our feedback to any consultation into the future of the ICwS in a collaborative and constructive way, either via email, survey or a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

- Lord Howell of Guildford, President of the Royal Commonwealth Society and Chair of the Council of Commonwealth Societies
- Stephen Twigg, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)
- Lord Chidgey, Co-Chair, Commonwealth All-Party Parliamentary Group, UK Parliament
- Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP, Chair and Lord Foulkes of Cumnock, Vice-Chair, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch
- Dr Nicholas S. J. Watts, FRSA, Chair, Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO)
- Lord Black of Brentwood, Chairman, Commonwealth Press Union Trust
- Rita Payne, Chair, CJA-UK and President Emeritus, Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA)
- Owen Tudor, Deputy General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation on behalf of the Commonwealth Trade Union Group
- Beth Kreling, Honorary Secretary, Commonwealth Consortium for Education (CCfE)
- Sonny Leong CBE, Chair, Council for Education in the Commonwealth
- Brigid Watson, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Lawyers Association
- Dr Karen Brewer, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association
- Dr Greg Munro, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)
- Richard Rieser, General Secretary, Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum
- Professor Kathleen McCourt, President, Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation
- Arif Zaman, FRSA, Executive Director, Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBWN)
- David Gomez, Director, The Ramphal Institute
- Andrew Larpent OBE, Chairman, CommonAge
- Mabutho Cele, Convener, Commonwealth Teachers' Group (CTG)
- Trevor Peel, Chair, National Liberal Club Commonwealth Forum
- Sanjoy Hazarika, International Director and Sneh Aurora, Director, London Office, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
- Mark Robinson, Chairman, Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC)
- Victoria Schofield, Chair of the Editorial Board, *The Round Table*, The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs
- Judge (R) Sandra E. Oxner, Founding President of the Commonwealth Judicial Education Institute

Please contact communications@cpahq.org regarding this letter.