

The Humanities in Modern Britain: Challenges and Opportunities

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About the Author

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Gabriel's interest in the politics of the humanities began with the publication of the Browne Review in October 2010. Since then, he has reviewed numerous books on the topic for publications including the *Times Literary Supplement* and has researched the state of the humanities in the post-Browne era.

The proposals made at the end of the report are informed by Gabriel's experience of teaching the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme and the Extended Project Qualification over the last six years.

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Executive Summary

This report originated in a survey of the health of the humanities in the UK. It found that the popular idea of the humanities being in crisis is at best a simplification. In reality, the humanities are highly successful in some areas, such as research quality, and may be highly successful in others, such as research impact, although evidence is lacking. In some areas, however, the humanities do face challenges.

This report analyses three of these challenges and makes proposals for how they can be overcome. It focuses on the related areas of student enrolment, graduate employment and funding, as well as on the relationships between secondary schools and sixth-form colleges, universities and employers.

It finds that:

- In terms of student numbers, the humanities expanded considerably between the 1960s and the present day but shrank proportionately in the same period. Between 1961/62 and 2019/20, the proportion of UK students studying Humanities subjects fell from around 28 to around 8 per cent of all students.
- The employment prospects of humanities graduates are weaker than those of graduates in some other areas but the picture is mixed. Humanities graduates are just as likely as graduates in other areas to be employed, and when subjects are ordered according to the average salaries of graduates five years after graduation, humanities subjects fall in the middle of the range.
- Funding for the humanities has been mostly stable in recent years, but there are significant challenges approaching related to Brexit, the policies of the current UK Government, the COVID-19 pandemic and the situation in Scotland which is particularly challenging.

The report proposes that:

- A-Levels should be reformed so that pupils continue a humanities subject, Mathematics and a foreign language until the end of compulsory education and so that they study more subjects in Years 12 and 13.
- Professionally valuable skills should be more fully embedded in undergraduate humanities degrees.

1. Introduction

Aims

This report seeks to understand some of the key challenges facing the humanities in the UK and to propose how they can be overcome by policymakers and higher education leaders. To do this, it defines the humanities, considers their development over time and analyses their current performance in three key areas.

These are:

1. student enrolment;
2. graduate employment; and
3. funding.

The report is not an argument for the value of the humanities. Many of those have been written already, and it is not clear that another one is needed. Rather, it is an attempt to understand the situation the humanities are in and what can be done to support them, assuming this is a desirable goal.

Why now?

There are three main reasons for writing this now. First, the humanities are entering a period of turbulence. Brexit, the policies of those in charge across the UK and the COVID-19 pandemic all present challenges. Debate, however, has been muted, especially compared to the years following the 2007/08 financial crash. Hence, the time seems right to reflect.

Secondly, it has often been claimed that the humanities are in crisis, but few writers have identified distinct challenges or set

out concrete proposals for how they can be overcome. There is, therefore, an opportunity to add something new.

Thirdly, although there is a large body of academic writing about the humanities which treats them exclusively, much of the policy-oriented writing about them treats them alongside the arts or the social sciences, even though the situation of subjects in these areas is often different. Again, therefore, there is an opportunity to add something new.

Scope

This report is primarily concerned with the humanities in UK higher education. This means that the focus is on higher education institutions, even though the humanities are studied and researched in other settings. It also means that international comparisons are drawn on only insofar as they illuminate the UK situation and that the history of the humanities is drawn on only to the same extent. The report considers future events in the medium-term, which is taken to be the next five to 10 years. It covers both teaching and research and both undergraduate and postgraduate study.

2. Background

Definition

There is no standard list of which academic subjects count as humanities, although any such list would be likely to include:

- Ancient and Modern Languages;
- Classics;
- English or Literary Studies;
- History;
- History of Art;
- Music;
- Philosophy; and
- Religious Studies.¹

The phrase 'arts and humanities' is sometimes used to classify the same subjects.² Forms of artistic practice such as singing, playing musical instruments, dancing and working in visual media are sometimes counted among the humanities or are classified alongside them, but neither approach is taken here.³ This is because the challenges and opportunities facing higher education institutions providing artistic training, such as conservatoires, are different to those teaching and researching the humanities.

Some writing on the humanities also groups them with the social sciences.⁴ Again, this is not the approach taken here. This is because of differences between how the humanities and social sciences are practised (on which, see below) and because some social sciences (for example, Law and Economics) fare differently to humanities subjects in areas such as graduate employment.

There are also subjects which combine approaches typical of the humanities with those typical of the social and natural sciences. These include Anthropology, Archaeology, Architecture, Geography, Linguistics and Politics, all of which are sometimes classified as humanities. Law is also sometimes classified as a humanity, although the vocational nature of the training which it provides may count against this.⁵ None of these subjects are specifically considered in this report. It should also be noted that there are many individual scholars and research teams whose work is interdisciplinary in nature.

There is some variety of opinion about what humanities subjects have in common. The philosopher Onora O’Neill, for instance, emphasises the interpretation of representations as a common feature of humanities subjects whereas the intellectual historian Stefan Collini additionally emphasises the characterisation of individual or cultural distinctiveness.⁶

Nevertheless, it is commonly claimed that humanities subjects involve some or all of the following:

- a focus on humans and the products of human cultures;
- the engagement of scholars’ aesthetic, emotional and imaginative capacities as well as their analytical skills;
- only limited use of techniques common in the sciences, such as quantification, experimentation under controlled conditions and randomised testing; and
- limited focus on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding for application in specific professional contexts.

This is how the humanities are understood in this report.

History

Humanities subjects have been practised in the West at least since the time of the ancient Greeks. Aristotle, for instance, made influential contributions to Philosophy and Literary Studies while writers such as Herodotus and Thucydides wrote seminal texts in History. Some subjects, such as Theology, are arguably even older than that, and many – if not all – have origins outside the West.⁷

The conception of the humanities as a distinct group of subjects was a product of classical Rome, where the statesman and orator Cicero coined the term 'studia humanitatis' to mean the study of culture.⁸ In medieval universities, humanities subjects, including Ancient Languages, grammar, Philosophy and Theology were studied intensely, although with little emphasis on the humanities as a connected group of subjects.⁹ With the Renaissance, the classical sense of the humanities was revived and a new emphasis was placed on literature.¹⁰ From then until the 19th century, the classics were central.¹¹ A broader definition of the humanities encompassing all subjects related to humanity, and a distinction between the humanities and the sciences, developed in the 19th century.¹² The phrase 'the humanities' in its modern sense only became common in the UK in the middle of the 20th century.¹³

From the 19th century, the traditional place of the humanities in British universities was increasingly challenged by the medical, natural and social sciences, even while some humanities subjects, like English, were being developed.¹⁴ The enormous expansion of British higher education after World War II meant that the humanities expanded considerably, but they were still relatively less important than they had been in

earlier centuries.¹⁵ The 20th century also saw the opening up of the humanities to women, so that today the majority of humanities students are female.¹⁶ This contributes to the fact that the majority of all students are female.¹⁷

After World War II, a sense of crisis began to set in. In early 1959, when C.P. Snow diagnosed a divide between scientists and literary intellectuals in his 'two cultures' lecture, commentators worried about the humanities being irrelevant, underappreciated or made redundant by work in other academic subjects.¹⁸ The mood was caught by a collection of essays published in 1964 entitled *Crisis in the Humanities*.¹⁹ There was also a feeling that the humanities were favoured less highly by government than areas relating to science and technology.²⁰ This deepened in the 1980s, when there was a general sense that the Government was hostile to universities.²¹

After 1997 and the beginning of the New Labour period, the humanities saw their profile raised by the foundation in 1998 of the Arts and Humanities Research Board and then, in 2005, by its replacement by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).²² This put the humanities on the same footing as other subject areas. The decision in 2002, however, to abolish compulsory language learning for UK secondary school pupils beyond the age of 14 began a period of concern about languages which continues to this day.²³

The situation intensified towards the end of the New Labour period with the inclusion of an 'impact' criterion in the Research Excellence Framework (REF), which was seen by many to disadvantage the humanities.²⁴ Then, after the Coalition Government came to power, the Browne Review of the English higher education system, which had been commissioned

by the previous Government, was published. This led to an increase of undergraduate tuition fees to a maximum of £9,000 a year.²⁵ The new system still involved a public contribution to the cost of humanities teaching because much of the money needed to pay the new higher fees would come from government-subsidised student loans and because the cost of unrepaid loans would be met by government. It was seen, however, to disadvantage the humanities by encouraging prospective students to choose courses on the basis of their likely financial return – a measure by which the humanities fared less well than some other areas.²⁶ More generally, the new system was thought by many – though not all – to weaken the humanities' position.²⁷

Throughout the New Labour and Coalition Government eras, explicit criticism of the humanities was rare.²⁸ There were signs, however, that ministers favoured areas with more obvious economic value. In 2003, for instance, the then Secretary of State for Education, Charles Clarke, seemed to suggest that only subjects that had a 'clear usefulness' should be publicly funded and that medieval historians were 'ornamental'.²⁹ Likewise, in 2014 the then Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, argued that 'the subjects that keep young people's options open and unlock doors to all sorts of careers are the STEM subjects'.³⁰ More recently, since the election of the current Conservative Government, commentators have suspected an anti-humanities subtext in statements about the need for higher education to serve the interests of employers.³¹ In particular, references to 'low-quality' and 'dead-end' courses and moves by the Government to use graduate employment statistics in evaluations of teaching quality have been taken by many as indirect attacks on the humanities.³²

3. Enrolment

Enrolment statistics have played a large part in debates about the humanities. The assumption has usually been that falling numbers would be a problem. A lot depends, however, on how the data are disaggregated.

Overall numbers

Since 2009, humanities enrolments have fallen both in absolute and relative terms. This continues the historical trend since the 1960s, noted earlier. There was a particularly sharp decrease in absolute terms in 2012/13, the first year that higher fees were charged in England, although this was not reflected in the proportion of students studying humanities subjects.³³

Table 1: Humanities students as a percentage of all students 2009/10 to 2019/20

Year	Total students	Humanities	% humanities
2009/10	2,493,415	234,380	9
2010/11	2,501,295	231,480	9
2011/12	2,496,645	235,150	9
2012/13	2,340,275	217,020	9
2013/14	2,299,355	207,275	9
2014/15	2,265,980	197,670	9
2015/16	2,279,430	193,605	8
2016/17	2,317,880	192,495	8
2017/18	2,343,095	187,660	8
2018/19	2,383,970	181,330	8
2019/20	2,532,385	192,000	8

Source: HESA. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

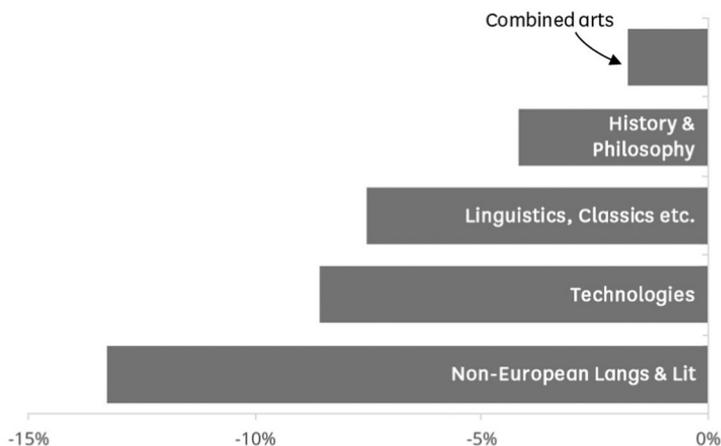
Data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) also show that there were fewer accepted applications for undergraduate degrees in all subject areas, including humanities subjects (that is, 'humanities and liberal arts (non-specific)', 'language and area studies' and 'historical, philosophical and religious studies') in 2019/20 than in the previous year.³⁴ This was despite the total number of accepted applications for all subjects increasing by 29,235 or 5.4 per cent.

Moreover, of the five undergraduate subject areas that experienced the largest proportionate fall in accepted applications from home students in 2019/20, three encompassed humanities subjects.³⁵

Graph 1: Undergraduate subject areas experiencing the largest proportionate falls in accepted applications from home students in the 2020 UCAS application cycle

Biggest subject 'losers' in 2020

Annual change in home students accepted through UCAS



Source: Paul Bolton, *Higher Education Student Numbers, 2021*, p.13.

Graph 1 shows that Non-European Language and Literature courses experienced the largest fall in applications from UK students. This is in line with other evidence suggesting that language courses have experienced particular difficulties with recruitment in recent years. A 2017 report by the British Academy, for instance, found that enrolments in language courses had been declining for a decade and that many departments had downsized or shut in this period.³⁶ This may reflect the removal of the requirement for GCSE students to take a language qualification, noted above. The British Academy report did note that language courses had become more popular where they could be taken alongside a degree in another subject, but recent developments still give cause for concern. The UK's withdrawal from the Erasmus+ scheme as a result of Brexit makes it highly likely that fewer UK students will have the opportunity to improve their language skills by studying outside the anglophone world.³⁷

Postgraduates and international students

Other trends are either neutral or positive. The number of humanities postgraduate students has marginally increased since 2014 and the proportion of all humanities students studying as postgraduates has increased by three percentage points in the same period.³⁸

Table 2: Humanities by level of study 2014/15 to 2019/20.

Year	Total humanities	Postgraduate humanities	Postgraduate humanities %	Undergraduate humanities	Undergraduate humanities %
2014/15	197,670	31,715	16	165,950	86
2015/16	193,605	30,565	16	163,040	84
2016/17	192,495	32,990	17	159,505	83
2017/18	187,660	33,435	18	154,225	82
2018/19	181,330	33,060	18	148,270	82
2019/20	192,000	37,270	19	154,730	81

Source: HESA. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

Likewise, the number of international humanities students (including EU students) has stayed roughly constant since 2014/15 and the proportion of all humanities students who are international has increased by two percentage points in the same period.³⁹ Growth has largely been because of increasing numbers non-EU international students. The situation may reflect the UK's strong international reputation for higher education and / or UK universities recruiting internationally in order to increase fee income or offset falls in domestic demand. However, the UK's exit from the EU is currently decreasing international demand and the COVID-19 pandemic may have a similar effect, although this has not been evident in recent data.

Table 3: Humanities students by domicile 2014/15 to 2019/20

Year	Total humanities	UK-domiciled humanities	UK-domiciled humanities %	International humanities, including EU	International humanities, including EU %
2014/15	197,670	168,535	85	29,120	15
2015/16	193,605	164,620	85	28,980	15
2016/17	192,495	163,110	85	29,375	15
2017/18	187,660	158,095	84	29,560	16
2018/19	181,330	151,500	84	29,825	16
2019/20	192,000	159,635	83	32,360	17

Source: HESA. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

Diversity

Humanities enrolment is not the same at all universities or in all parts of the UK. In particular, recent falls in humanities student numbers have been greatest at post-1992 universities, which have traditionally enrolled fewer humanities students than pre-1992 universities.⁴⁰ Given that pre-1992 universities generally attract students from more advantaged backgrounds and with higher levels of prior attainment, there is the possibility that the humanities will increasingly become the preserve of a narrow section of society. This is in addition to the fact that many humanities courses at leading universities receive fewer applications from the state school sector and socio-economically disadvantaged pupils than other courses at the same universities.⁴¹ There are also concerns that humanities provision may be weakening in Wales and Northern Ireland.⁴²

As well as wishing to attract applicants in general, humanities departments are also likely to wish to attract applicants who are representative of UK society in terms of sex and ethnicity. In 2019/20, around 64 per cent of humanities students were female, compared to 57 per cent of students overall.⁴³ Both figures have remained roughly the same since 2014/15.⁴⁴ If there is a desire to make humanities courses representative of the wider population according to sex, progress has not been made towards achieving this. As for ethnicity, in 2019/20 around 14 per cent of UK-domiciled humanities undergraduates were BAME compared to around 26 per cent of UK-domiciled undergraduates overall and around 17 per cent of young people in the UK.⁴⁵ The first figure has increased by two percentage points since 2014/15 while the second has increased by five percentage points, suggesting that humanities courses remain behind the national trend in attracting BAME applicants. Recent efforts to decolonialise degree courses may perhaps have an effect on this, especially as humanities subjects like English and History are areas where questions of representation may be particularly important.⁴⁶ It is notable, however, that practitioners in some humanities subjects, such as Classics, still have a lot of work to do on equality, diversity and inclusion.⁴⁷

Schools and Sixth Form Colleges

Although this report is about higher education, enrolment in humanities degree courses cannot be understood without also considering schools and colleges, where humanities courses are declining in popularity. Since 2016, almost all humanities subjects have seen a fall in A-Level entries that has been larger than the fall in the 18-year old population.⁴⁸

Table 4: Percentage change in humanities A-Level entries 2016 to 2020 and percentage change in humanities A-Level entries minus percentage change in 18-year old population from 2016 to 2020

Subject	% change in entries 2016-2020 (2017-2020 for English Language and English Literature)	% change in entries 2016-2020 (2017-2020 for English Language and English Literature) minus the change (-7.9%) in the 18-year old population in the same period (-7.3% for English Language and English Literature)
Classics	-27	-20
English Language	-29	-22
English Literature	-11	-4
French	-15	-7
German	-26	-18
History	-18	-10
Irish	-5	+3
Music	-20	-12
Religious Studies	-35	-27
Spanish	+3	+11
Welsh First Language	+12	+20
Welsh Second Language	-37	-29
Other Modern Foreign Languages	-47	-39

Source: FFT Education Datalab. Data for English Language and English Literature covers only 2017 to 2020.

Since studying at least one A-Level in a humanities subject is usually a prerequisite for studying a humanities subject at university, and since students studying multiple humanities A-Levels are more likely to apply for humanities degrees, it is reasonable to suppose that falling humanities A-Level enrolments are a cause of falling humanities enrolments at degree-level.⁴⁹

Causes

The causes of the decline in the popularity of humanities subjects are complex and not all of them could easily be reversed, even if there were a political will to do so. The expansion of the UK higher education system and the movement of training in areas such as education and nursing into universities, for instance, explain a large part of the humanities' fall in relative popularity, but they are structural changes and are widely seen as successes.

Some clues about factors which policymakers and higher education leaders may wish to affect, however, can be gained from studies of young people's decisions about what to study at school and in higher education. When choosing school-level subjects, they seem to choose subjects based on their enjoyment of them and interest in them, their prior and expected attainment and the access they think they will provide to desired degree courses and well-paid employment.⁵⁰ There is also some evidence that the cultural capital associated with subjects is important.⁵¹ When choosing a subject or subjects for a degree, young people seem to choose on the basis of enjoyment and career prospects, although studies have reached different conclusions about the relative importance of these. Research conducted by UCAS found that enjoyment was

key, while research by Advance HE and HEPI found that among undergraduates the most commonly cited reason for choosing a university course in 2020 was 'to get on the career ladder' (53 per cent of respondents), followed closely by 'to follow interest in a subject' (47 per cent of respondents).⁵² Both studies found differences depending on students' backgrounds, however. The UCAS research found that students from disadvantaged backgrounds ranked career prospects more highly than other students while the Advance HE and HEPI research found that career progression was more important to state than privately educated pupils.

The importance of enjoyment and career prospects is also underlined by research carried out in 2019, which found that subject interest and building a career were the two most commonly cited reasons among undergraduates and recent graduates for having attended university.⁵³ The same research also found, however, that students attend university for a wide range of reasons and that university attendance was perceived to have a wide range of benefits beyond enhancing one's career.⁵⁴

It is difficult to know whether students have found humanities degrees and A-Levels relatively less interesting or enjoyable in recent years or whether their perception of the cultural capital the courses provide has changed. Given that the professional value of degrees is clearly a factor in prospective students' decision-making and given that the cost of attending university has increased for many students in recent years, it seems plausible that this has been a factor in decreasing enrolments. However, it should be recognised that complicated background factors involving attitudes towards humanistic, scientific and vocational study are also likely to be involved.

Conclusions

Overall, it seems that the humanities face a long-term recruitment problem, even if this does not affect all institutions, courses and levels of study equally. The declining numbers of applicants for language courses, the declining numbers of UK-domiciled applicants for humanities courses and the comparatively slow growth in the number of BAME applicants for humanities courses seem to require particular attention.

Studies of young people's choices suggest that humanities enrolments might increase if humanities subjects were made more interesting and enjoyable to young people and if humanities graduates' employment prospects improved. Pursuing the first of these might conceivably undermine the second, however, if it meant making courses less challenging, and there is some evidence that young people who are interested in the humanities are less concerned with their careers than the average.⁵⁵

Enrolments might also increase if positive information about humanities graduates' employment prospects was made available to prospective applicants, although there is limited research on prospective students' perceptions of the career value of different degrees compared to the reality. Nor is it clear how sensitive prospective students are to the wider personal and social value of degree-level study and how information about this might influence their decisions.

4. Employment and skills

Another recurrent topic in debates about the humanities is the employment of humanities graduates. For government and taxpayers, this is important because graduates earning high salaries are more likely to pay off their student loans in full, decreasing the public cost of higher education. For universities, it is important because it may, as noted above, affect the attractiveness of humanities courses to prospective students and because it may affect future alumni giving. And for humanities graduates, it is important because many would probably prefer to be employed and in jobs which make good use of their skills and pay good salaries rather than not.

Writing about the employment of humanities graduates has often covered the arts and the social sciences as well as the humanities. Whether these subject areas are included makes a difference because the employment prospects of arts graduates tend to be worse than humanities graduates on average, while the employment prospects of graduates in some social science subjects, notably Economics and Law, are significantly better. It should also be noted that much of the evidence about graduate employment concerns the first few years after graduation and so may not reveal the longer-term impact of university study. Yet studies of the longer-term effects may be more informative of the experiences of past cohorts than future ones.

Short-term effects

A study by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) of students who graduated in 2017/18 found that those who had studied science-based subjects were more likely to be

in full-time employment, employment and study or full-time study 15 months after graduation than those who had studied Languages and Historical and Philosophical Studies (the subject areas including many humanities subjects) and non-science subjects generally.⁵⁶ It found, however, that rates of unemployment were low among graduates in all subject areas.

Table 5: Graduate outcomes by subject area of degree, academic year 2017/18

Subject area	% in full-time employment	% in employment and further study	% in full-time further study	% unemployed or due to start work
All science subject areas	60	9	10	1
Languages	49	11	12	1
Historical and Philosophical Studies	47	11	12	1
All non-science subject areas	58	10	8	1
All subject areas	59	10	8	1

Source: HESA.

The same survey also found differences in the proportion of graduates in different subject areas who were in skilled jobs 15 months after graduation. Whereas 82 per cent of graduates in science subject areas who were employed were in high-skilled jobs, the equivalent figures for Languages and Historical and Philosophical Studies were 64 and 61 per cent respectively.⁵⁷

The equivalent figure for all non-science subject areas was 76 per cent (a figure which was pulled up substantially by graduates in Law and Education) while the equivalent figure for all graduates was 78 per cent.⁵⁸

The same survey also looked at earnings. Here, it found that the average salaries of graduates in Languages and Historical and Philosophical Studies who were in low, medium and high-skilled jobs 15 months after graduation were generally equal to, or better than, the average for graduates in equivalent jobs. The only exception were Languages graduates in high-skilled jobs, who earned slightly less than average.⁵⁹

Table 6: The median salaries of full-time graduates who obtained first-degree qualifications and entered full-time paid employment in the UK by subject area of degree and skill marker, academic year 2017/18

Subject area	Low-skilled	Medium-skilled	High-skilled
All science-based subjects	£18,000	£19,000	£25,000
Languages	£18,000	£20,000	£23,500
Historical and Philosophical Studies	£18,000	£19,000	£24,000
All non-science-based subjects	£18,000	£19,000	£24,000
All subjects	£18,000	£19,000	£24,000

Source: HESA. Particular attention should be paid to salaries for high-skilled jobs because most graduates who were in work at the time of the survey were in high-skilled jobs.

Long-term effects

Other studies have looked at longer-term effects. From 2018 to 2020, a series of reports by the Institute for Fiscal Studies did this by making use of Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) administrative data, which became available after 2015.⁶⁰ The first study looked at UK-domiciled graduates five years after graduation and found that humanities subjects had a poor effect on graduates' likelihood of being employed, self-employed or in further study compared to other subjects.⁶¹ It also found that graduates in Economics, Engineering, Maths, Medicine, Pharmacology, Physics and Veterinary Science earned the highest salaries.⁶² Humanities subjects were generally placed in the middle third of the range when subjects were ordered according to average graduate earnings.⁶³ When the backgrounds and prior attainment of students were controlled for, the results were similar.⁶⁴

The second report continued the analysis by examining the employment of graduates at the age of 29. This again found that humanities subjects placed in the middle third of subjects when they were ordered by average graduate earnings.⁶⁵ When controlling for background and prior attainment, however, it found that English, Languages and Philosophy had a negative effect on earnings for men, compared to them not going to university, while all humanities subjects had a positive effect on earnings for women, again compared to them not going to university.⁶⁶ It found that this effect was particularly pronounced for male humanities students with high prior attainment and at least one science, technology or mathematics (STEM) A-Level.⁶⁷

The report also investigated what pupils with roughly

the same school exam results could expect to earn if they chose different university subjects. Here, it found that some humanities graduates would probably be earning a higher salary if they had chosen another subject to study at university. Male History and Philosophy graduates who had lower prior attainment and no STEM A-Levels and male graduates in many humanities subjects who had higher prior attainment and at least one STEM A-Level were found to be in this situation.⁶⁸

The third report considered the effect of higher education on graduates' lifetime earnings, although the graduates studied were born in the 1980s and were therefore mostly still pursuing their careers at the time the report was written. This found that when subjects were ordered by the net lifetime earnings of graduates, humanities subjects tended to fall in the middle third of the range, although English placed noticeably lower than History and (for men only) Languages.⁶⁹ The results were somewhat worse for the humanities when subjects were ordered by the net lifetime return of studying them (taking into account not only earnings but also maintenance loans received, student loan repayments and taxes) and by the proportion of students who would get a positive net return on their investment.⁷⁰ Languages and Philosophy, for example, were two of the three subjects offering the lowest net return for women, while only just over 50 per cent of men studying English or Philosophy could expect to receive a positive net return.⁷¹

All three reports noted that the labour market returns on degrees in particular subjects varied widely between institutions. This is corroborated by research conducted in 2013 which found that students who graduated in humanities

subjects at the University of Oxford between 1960 and 1989 went on to have much better remunerated careers than the typical humanities graduate careers described by the Institute for Fiscal Studies.⁷²

Other studies

Other analyses of the employment prospects of humanities graduates have been more optimistic. A report published by the British Academy in May 2020, for instance, found that graduates in the arts, humanities and social sciences moved more readily between different careers than graduates in other subjects and that many of the fastest growing sectors of the economy employed arts, humanities and social science graduates more than graduates in other subjects.⁷³ The report made little attempt to disaggregate data on arts, humanities and social sciences, however, and – where it did – it found that the employment prospects of graduates in social science subjects like Economics and Law were stronger than those of graduates in the humanities.⁷⁴ The Academy's conclusion that humanities graduates are flexible in their careers is supported by research from Australia, which found that humanities graduates have better transferable skills than graduates in other areas.⁷⁵

There is also evidence that humanities degrees provide good access to specific areas of employment, such as politics. Research conducted in 2019 found that of MPs who had been to university, at least 23 per cent had humanities degrees (compared to about 8 or 9 per cent of graduates gaining a humanities degree from 2009/10 to 2019/20).⁷⁶ Research into the educational backgrounds of heads of state has also found that the humanities are well represented.⁷⁷

Skills

The employment prospects of humanities graduates are connected to the skills that they have on graduation and how these relate to the needs of employers. Here, there is evidence that humanities graduates have both a wide range of skills and specific skills, such as communication and empathy, that are likely to be desired by employers in the coming decade. The British Academy found that the skills identified by employers and labour market analysts as being crucial for work in the 21st century, including adaptability, problem-solving and collaboration, were largely the same as those that arts, humanities and social science students thought their degrees developed.⁷⁸

However, recent research also points to the importance in the coming decade of digital skills and, to a lesser extent, numerical skills and complex analytical and cognitive skills for employment.⁷⁹ These are areas where humanities graduates may be in a weaker position. Recent research has found that arts and humanities graduates rate 'analysing numerical and statistical information' as their weakest skill, that many humanities graduates work in areas requiring numerical reasoning and that digital skills may not be strongly embedded in humanities teaching.⁸⁰ Research on skills also reveals the continuing need for fluency in modern foreign languages.⁸¹

Conclusions

Based on the evidence considered in this section, it seems that career outcomes for humanities graduates are less favourable than for graduates in some other subject areas and this becomes more pronounced as graduates' careers develop.

There is wide variation, however.

When it comes to skills, it is clear that humanities graduates have many of the skills that employers are likely to be seeking in the medium-term but also that there are distinct areas relating to digital technology and numerical skills where improvements could be made.

5. Funding

The future of the humanities will be shaped in part by what funding is made available, and this will be affected by factors such as the health of the economy, which lie beyond the scope of this report. It is possible, however, to describe what the funding landscape has been like in recent years and how it may develop.

Quality-related funding for humanities research comes from Research England and alternative bodies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and project funding comes from the AHRC. These bodies are overseen by United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) and also manage some smaller funding streams. Significant funding for humanities research has also come from the EU, from universities themselves (often in the form of cross-subsidies from the fees of international students) and from independent or semi-independent funding bodies, such as the British Academy, the Leverhulme Trust and the Wolfson Foundation.

Funding for humanities teaching comes overwhelmingly from tuition fees, which are in turn financed largely by government-subsidised student loans (although some students self-fund). Some teaching funding is also provided by universities, for instance in the form of grants towards the cost of taught Master's courses and by other funding bodies.

Research funding

The amount of humanities research funding distributed via Research England and equivalent bodies does not seem to have changed substantially in recent years.

Funding is allocated according to a formula which takes account of the number of researchers in a subject at a university, the quality of the research being conducted (as assessed in the REF) and the cost of research in that subject. To estimate the last of these, subjects are placed in groups, with weights ranging from 1.0 to 1.6. Humanities subjects fall into the least expensive group.

These weightings have not been revised in recent years, except that in England some non-humanities subjects were moved into more costly groups in 2019 and that, in Scotland, some non-humanities subjects, including subjects in the allied area of 'Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts', are being moved into more costly groups from the start of the academic year 2022/23.⁸²

Moreover, the amount and proportion of mainstream quality-related funding distributed to humanities research by Research England (and its predecessor, the Higher Education Funding Council for England) have stayed remarkably constant in recent years, ranging between £137.5 million and £142.4 million and between 12.8 and 13.7 per cent respectively since 2015/16.⁸³

AHRC funding has also remained stable in recent years. Table 7 shows that AHRC expenditure on research and innovation marginally increased as a proportion of all Research Council expenditure in this area between 2017/18 and 2019/20.⁸⁴

Table 7: AHRC and total research council expenditure on research and innovation in £m 2017/18 to 2019/20

Year	AHRC expenditure on research and innovation (in £m)	Total research council expenditure on research and innovation (in £m)	% AHRC
2017/18	109	3,105	4
2018/19	124	3,272	4
2019/20	134	3,178	4

Source: UKRI. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

Prior to the UK's departure from the EU on 31 January 2020, the EU provided funding for UK research via EU Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development, via European Structural Investment Funds and via loans from the European Investment Bank.⁸⁵ The humanities did comparatively well out of this: in 2014/15, for example, Classics, Philosophy and Modern Languages were among 15 subject areas which received more than 20 per cent of their total research income from EU sources.⁸⁶ As a result of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), signed in December 2020, UK researchers will be able to participate in the ninth EU research framework, Horizon Europe, more or less in the same way as researchers in EU member states.⁸⁷ They will not, however, have access to more specific funds and the UK will not be a net beneficiary or be able to benefit from European Structural Investment Funds or the European Investment Bank. The implication of these developments for humanities research funding in the UK is still unclear.

Universities also make considerable investments in research. Much of this comes from fees paid by international students.⁸⁸ As a result, fluctuations in international student recruitment may affect universities' ability to invest in humanities research.⁸⁹ The effects of COVID-19 on this will need to be watched carefully.

Humanities research funding from independent or semi-independent bodies has increased or stayed stable in recent years.⁹⁰ The British Academy substantially increased its expenditure, the vast majority of which goes on research grants, from £32.9 million in 2015 to £60.8 million in 2020.⁹¹ This is likely to be diminished by the UK Government's decision to reduce Overseas Development Assistance spending, which could lessen the British Academy's income by around £13 million.⁹² Charitable expenditure by the Leverhulme Trust, in contrast, fluctuated between 2015 and 2019, peaking at £109 million in 2015 and falling to a low of £77.1 million in 2017.⁹³ Overall, however, it showed no clear upwards or downwards trend. Charitable expenditure by the Wolfson Foundation has also been volatile, ranging between £28 million in 2015 and £43 million in 2019.⁹⁴ Between these dates, the proportion of this funding assigned to the arts and the humanities also fluctuated, falling to a low of 19 per cent in 2015 and reaching a high of 42 per cent in 2018. Again, however, there was no clear overall trend.

Teaching funding

As noted, funding for humanities teaching is overwhelmingly derived from student fees and is therefore affected primarily by considerations covered above. There are, however, several other factors which may affect teaching funding.

One is the level of tuition fees.⁹⁵ At the time of writing, these are capped at £9,250 a year for non-accelerated undergraduate degrees in England. In Northern Ireland, fees are capped at £4,530 a year for Northern Irish students and at £9,250 a year for students from other parts of the UK. In Scotland, fees are capped at £1,820 a year for Scottish students, although they are normally paid by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland, and at £9,250 a year for students from other parts of the UK. In Wales, fees are capped at £9,000 a year.

Whether fee levels will change is currently unclear. On the one hand, fees have not kept track with inflation, meaning that the 'unit of resource' – the amount of money universities have to spend per student per year – has reduced. Raising the tuition fee cap may require changes to the terms of student loans in order to constrain the cost of writing off unrepaid loans.⁹⁶ On the other hand, the Augar review of the English post-18 education system recommended in May 2019 that the cap should be lowered to £7,500 (although Augar also recommended that the shortfall in the unit of resource should be made up by an increase in the teaching grant).⁹⁷ The Government has not yet responded substantively to this.⁹⁸

There is also the possibility that funding for humanities teaching could be affected by the introduction of differential fees.⁹⁹ Boris Johnson signalled his interest in this in 2020 in an interview with *The Sunday Telegraph*.¹⁰⁰ A system like this has operated for some time in Australia and is set to include higher costs for humanities disciplines.¹⁰¹ The introduction of differential fees in the UK could increase funding for the humanities, so long as the extra income was used for humanities teaching and not for cross-subsidies to other

areas. On the other hand, differential fees could mean less for humanities, if any new fee caps were lower than £9,250.

Another factor is the size of the grants given to universities in England by the Office for Students for the teaching of high-cost subjects and subjects relating to particular policy areas and government priorities. Humanities teaching, as defined in this report, does not generally receive a grant in this way.¹⁰² Direct funding for most high-cost subjects allied to the humanities – namely Art and Design, Dance, Drama and Performing Arts, Media Studies and Music – has, however, been cut by 50 per cent for the academic year 2021/22.¹⁰³

Things work differently in other parts of the UK. In Northern Ireland, humanities subjects do receive a teaching grant, although this may not be enough, combined with fees, to bring the unit of resource to the same level as at universities in England.¹⁰⁴ In Scotland, the teaching grant for humanities subjects is set at £5,492 for the academic year 2021/22, a figure which includes the £1,820 that Scottish universities charge in fees to home students.¹⁰⁵ The unit of resource is therefore much lower than in England, although humanities teaching may be subsidised from the fees of international and UK students to a greater degree. In Wales, humanities subjects do not generally receive a teaching grant.¹⁰⁶ There is no indication that these arrangements are likely to change significantly in the near future.

Finally, there is the question of cross-subsidy. It is widely accepted that fees from low-cost subjects, including most if not all humanities subjects, are used to subsidise high-cost subjects, although precise information is not readily available.¹⁰⁷ Research conducted by KPMG in 2019 for the

Department for Education did show, however, that in 2016/17 the average cost of teaching a humanities student at many universities was lower than £9,000, suggesting that these universities were directing fee income from humanities students to other areas.¹⁰⁸ If cross-subsidy were banned, this would probably lead to an increase in teaching funding for the humanities although there is no indication of a change such as this in the near future.

Conclusions

The evidence reviewed in this section suggests there have been no striking changes in funding for humanities research and teaching in recent years, although the gradual erosion of the unit of resource by inflation is a cause for serious concern and it is notable how Scottish institutions have a much lower unit of resource for humanities students. Moreover, there are significant uncertainties about future funding, relating to Brexit, the policies of the current UK Government and the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Conclusions and proposals

Conclusions

Based on the evidence surveyed, it seems that:

- The humanities in UK universities face a long-term recruitment problem, especially regarding Modern Languages courses and UK-domiciled students. Progress in attracting BAME students also appears to be weaker than in other areas.
- Employment statistics for UK humanities graduates are weaker on average than for graduates in some other areas, but there is wide variation. The difference between the salaries of humanities graduates and graduates in some other fields appears to widen as graduates' careers progress. Humanities graduates are well-equipped for the current and future labour market, although there are some gaps in their skills, particularly in digital technology and Mathematics.
- Funding for humanities teaching and research in the UK has been relatively stable in recent years, but there are significant challenges ahead related to COVID-19, Brexit and Government policies.

There are also important connections between the three areas surveyed:

- Rising enrolments for humanities degrees would increase funding for humanities teaching (in total, if not per student) and make course closures less likely.
- Improving humanities employment statistics could make humanities degrees more attractive to prospective applicants, which might increase or stabilise applications, especially from disadvantaged and state school sector pupils. Improving employment statistics might also

improve the perception of the humanities in government, thus protecting future funding. This could be especially important if the English tuition fee cap is raised or if the terms of student loans are changed.

- Increased funding for humanities teaching and research might improve the quality of teaching, making humanities degrees more attractive to prospective applicants, and might allow humanities academics to create larger and more recognised benefits for society, contributing to the same result.

Proposal 1

Reform A-Levels so that pupils taking an academic path continue a humanities subject, Mathematics and a foreign language until the end of school and so that they study more subjects in Years 12 and 13.¹⁰⁹ This could also include making a science subject compulsory.

There are five main reasons for adopting this proposal.

- 1) Requiring pupils to continue a humanities subject until the end of school might increase the number of applicants for humanities courses, by preventing pupils who might study a humanities course at university from dropping humanities subjects after GCSE. Further research is needed into how many pupils end up not studying humanities degrees because of this, but there is evidence both that the current system limits choice and that a significant number of undergraduates regret their choice of degree.¹¹⁰
- 2) The requirement would also mitigate the costs to society of relatively few students studying humanities subjects at university, by ensuring that humanities-related skills and

knowledge were widely acquired at school. There is already evidence this kind of breadth is advantageous and the studies of the future of the skills market discussed above emphasise the need for broad adaptable workers, with the strong social and emotional skills typically cultivated by the humanities.¹¹¹

- 3) Requiring pupils to continue Mathematics until the end of school would improve the numerical abilities of humanities graduates, which might have positive effects on their careers. Further research is needed into whether humanities graduates in work would do their jobs better if they were more numerically skilled and whether better career options would be available to them if their numerical skills were stronger, but the increasing importance of Mathematics in the workplace is widely recognised.¹¹²
- 4) Requiring pupils to continue a foreign language until the end of school might stem the decline in applicants for Modern Languages courses at university and lessen the social exclusivity of Classics and Modern Languages courses at leading universities. It would also address the long-term shortage of linguistic skills identified by employers, have wider benefits for pupils' educational attainment and help compensate for the loss of international links likely to result from Brexit.¹¹³
- 5) Requiring pupils to study a wider range of subjects to the end of school would respond to the widespread opinion that A-Levels are too narrow and that a broader system is needed for the final years of secondary education.¹¹⁴

There are many systems of post-16 secondary education which are broader than A-Levels. One is the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, which requires pupils to study six subjects to the end of school, including a foreign language, a humanities subject, Mathematics and a science. Though the IB Diploma has been criticised for being unsuitable for less academic or more vocationally-minded pupils, it is widely recognised as providing excellent preparation for study at higher-tariff universities and could be used as a model for reforming A-Levels.¹¹⁵ Likewise, although the IB has not grown in popularity in the UK in recent years, this is arguably a result of competition with A-Levels and the current focus of UK university admissions on students' achievement in specific subjects.¹¹⁶ The former problem would not affect a reformed A-Level system and the latter is discussed below.

There are also Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers. Under this system, pupils have a free choice about what to study, but typically study four or five subjects rather than the two, three or four, as happens with A-Levels.¹¹⁷ The Scottish system does not provide an example of how compulsory subjects might work beyond age 16 but it does show that pupils can successfully maintain breadth in their academic studies in the years before university.

Many other countries also have a system of post-16 secondary education like the one proposed. Of 20 foreign countries analysed by the Royal Society, 14 required pupils to study Mathematics and a foreign language to the end of school.¹¹⁸

Finally, in recent years the growth of popularity in Extended Project Qualifications, which allow pupils to conduct a

sustained research project alongside their A-Levels, suggests there is an appetite for broadening the traditional three A-Level system.¹¹⁹

The proposed change to language teaching would require a substantial increase in the number of Modern Languages teachers, probably with teachers being recruited from overseas and with specific steps being taken to retain trained language teachers in the profession. It would therefore be more practicable to begin by reintroducing the requirement for pupils to study a language to GCSE. Ideally, this would form part of a wider set of measures to strengthen language learning in the UK, as set out in recent research published by HEPI.¹²⁰ More generally, the introduction of a wider number of subjects and some compulsory ones after GCSE would require a rebalancing of the teaching workforce. Schools and colleges would therefore need to be given time and also money to plan their provision and would need to be fully consulted before any proposal went ahead.

Reforming A-Levels might require a reform of GCSEs as well. In particular the requirement that A-Level pupils take a humanities subject and a foreign language would probably only work if an equivalent requirement existed at GCSE, which would in turn have implications for the number and range of GCSE subjects that pupils take. There are, however, calls for GCSEs to be reformed and models have been proposed which might make it easier to create the continuity described.¹²¹

A shift towards a broader post-16 education system would require universities to revise their admissions system, which currently tends to focus on attainment in specific subjects, and

their undergraduate teaching, which typically presupposes a high-level of subject-specific knowledge. Unless degrees were lengthened, the proposed changes might lead to lower levels of subject-specific expertise among graduates, although more broadly educated undergraduates might progress as quickly as undergraduates educated under the current system. In any case, universities, like schools and colleges, would need to be given time to plan for the change and would need to be fully consulted.

Proposal 2

Embed professionally valuable skills more fully in undergraduate humanities degrees. These should include digital and numerical skills.

There are five main reasons for adopting this proposal.

- 1) Improving the digital and numerical skills of humanities graduates might improve their employability and therefore attract more applicants for humanities courses, especially from the state school sector and disadvantaged pupils.
- 2) Improving the employment prospects of humanities graduates might strengthen government support for the humanities and help to protect future funding. This would be particularly valuable if the Government goes ahead with its plans to use employment metrics in assessments of teaching quality.
- 3) Improving the employment prospects of humanities graduates might promote economic growth, decrease the cost to the Government of student loan write-offs and boost alumni giving to universities.

- 4) Improving the digital and numerical skills of humanities graduates would answer repeated calls for progress in this area.¹²²
- 5) Improving the digital and numerical skills of humanities graduates might enhance their ability to contribute to areas of interdisciplinary research.

Additionally, this proposal would work in synchrony with proposal 1 because students who had studied a wider range of subjects in their post-16 education might be better adapted to humanities degrees courses which included digital and numerical elements.

There are already many examples of work in the humanities which cultivate skills of the kinds described. Most obviously, the digital humanities has been an area of considerable growth in recent years. However, it does not seem that research in this area has fully percolated into undergraduate teaching. Research conducted in 2017 found that only four UK universities ran an undergraduate course with 'digital humanities' in the title and that only around a third of those surveyed offered digital humanities modules at undergraduate or Master's levels.¹²³ Research conducted in 2020 also found that 'There are few (albeit increasing) opportunities for teaching [digital humanities] at an undergraduate level.'¹²⁴ There are also specific fields, such as historical statistics and the ethics of AI, which have received considerable attention in recent years and which could be taught more routinely at undergraduate level.¹²⁵

Despite this, there are universities where the integration of digital skills into undergraduate humanities teaching is

advancing rapidly. Some, such as King's College London, offer undergraduate courses in digital humanities, while others, such as SOAS, provide digital skills modules on foundation years. Many universities, such as Leeds and Manchester Metropolitan, also provide support with digital skills alongside mainstream teaching.

Additionally, the last 10 years have seen a surge in demand for interdisciplinary undergraduate teaching, as offered by universities such as Bristol, Durham, Exeter, Leeds, Nottingham and Sussex and other institutions such as the London Interdisciplinary School. In many cases, these institutions have offered interdisciplinary teaching within the humanities and social sciences, but there are examples, such as UCL's Arts and Sciences BAsc, Birmingham's Liberal Arts and Natural Sciences programmes and the degrees offered by the New College of the Humanities, which show how this can be done more broadly.

If professionally valuable skills were to be routinely integrated into humanities teaching, then a balance would need to be struck between preserving the academic quality of degrees, imparting traditional humanities skills and approaches and working with employers to identify areas where specific skills are needed. Careful consultation with academics and employers would be needed to do this effectively. Likewise, many humanities academics would need training to help them integrate digital and numerical skills into their teaching.

At least some humanities degrees of the kind described would need to be accessible to students with technical qualifications, such as T-Levels, which the Government plans to become the standard post-16 technical qualification in the UK. As things are,

many students (and especially those from under-represented backgrounds) attend university after having studied at least one technical qualification.¹²⁶ Unless some humanities degrees of the kind described were accessible to students with technical qualifications, universities would be unlikely to meet their targets for widening participation. However, the more vocational nature of the humanities degrees proposed might make them more accessible to students with technical experience.

If the proposed change had the effect of increasing humanities enrolments, then it might jeopardise humanities graduates' career prospects by increasing competition for jobs. Given that relatively few humanities graduates work in areas which require humanities-specific knowledge and that humanities graduates with strong digital and numerical skills would be employable in a very wide range of areas, it seems unlikely that this would be a problem.¹²⁷

Finally, it could be argued that improving the career prospects of humanities graduates would be a less effective way of creating economic growth than encouraging more students to study STEM subjects. This may be true in some cases. As noted above, there are some pupils who have a realistic choice between studying a humanities or a non-humanities subject at university and who would do better professionally to take the latter option. But these cases may be rare. Pupils typically need to specialise in STEM subjects after GCSE in order to study a STEM subject at university, and pupils who end up studying the humanities rarely specialise in this way.¹²⁸ Moreover, the shortage of STEM graduates in some areas is a product not just of the number of STEM graduates but also of their propensity

to work in non-STEM fields and of the number of STEM students specialising in particular areas.¹²⁹ It does not seem, therefore, that the proposals made in this report represent any threat to STEM. In fact, STEM might benefit if there were more humanities graduates with strong digital and numerical skills.

A qualification

Against what has been argued in this report, it may be argued that the real problem facing the humanities is that there is too little understanding in government and among the general public of the personal and social benefits that they create, especially where these fall outside what can be captured through crude measures like graduate earnings and traditional measures of research impact.

There is certainly evidence to show – among other things – the propensity of humanities graduates to volunteer and participate in the democratic process and the often slow, dispersed, unpredictable and cumulative ways in which humanities research creates positive results.¹³⁰ The proposals made here are compatible with promoting a greater understanding of the humanities and refining the measures used to assess them. But to imagine that the situation of the humanities in the UK can be improved through measures of that kind alone seems naive, based on the evidence considered.

Endnotes

- 1 For different but overlapping lists of humanities subjects, see Anthony T. Kronman, *Education's End: Why our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*, 2007, p.66; Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, 1997, p.11; and Donald Phillip Verene, *The Art of Humane Learning*, 2002, p.x. Religious studies is also sometimes known as Theology or Divinity.
- 2 In these contexts, the word 'art' means either the study as opposed to the practice of an art or an academic subject, as in the medieval framework of the seven liberal arts, some of which would now be called sciences.
- 3 The Arts and Humanities Research Council, for instance, funds research into forms of artistic practice.
- 4 See, for instance, J.H. Plumb (ed.), *Crisis in the Humanities*, 1964. It is also relevant that the British Academy represents the humanities and the social sciences.
- 5 Law, for instance, is funded by the AHRC and is included in Jonathan Bate (ed.), *The Public Value of the Humanities*, 2011, but is not part of the Oxford Humanities Division or the UCL Faculty of Arts and Humanities. It was, moreover, like all vocational subjects, excluded from the humanities as they were originally conceived in ancient Rome.
- 6 Jonathan Bate (ed.), *The Public Value of the Humanities*, 2011, p.vi; Stefan Collini, *What are Universities for?* 2012, p.64.
- 7 A point emphasised by Rens Bod in *A New History of the Humanities*, 2013.
- 8 See Eric Adler, *The Battle of the Classics*, 2020, pp.35-39.
- 9 Eric Adler, *The Battle of the Classics*, 2020, pp.43-45.
- 10 Eric Adler, *The Battle of the Classics*, 2020, pp.45-49.
- 11 For an example of how this worked in practice, see Mordachai Feingold, 'The Humanities', in Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford Volume IV: Seventeenth Century Oxford*, 1997, pp.211-358.

- 12 See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, entry for 'humanity', definition 2b. Available at: <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/89280?redirectedFrom=humanities#eid311537170>.
- 13 Rens Bod, *A New History of the Humanities*, 2013, pp.2-3; Stefan Collini, *What are Universities for?* 2012, p.63.
- 14 On the former development, see Björn Wittrock, 'The Modern University: The Three Transformations' in Sheldon Rothblatt and Björn Wittrock (eds), *The European and British University since 1800*, 2006, pp.303-362; on the latter, see Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness*, 1989.
- 15 For overviews of the post-war reforms, see David Willetts, *A University Education*, 2017, pp.40-60 and, with more specific reference to the humanities, Peter Mandler, 'The Two Cultures Revisited: The Humanities in British Universities since 1945', *Twentieth Century British History*, Volume 26, Issue 3, 2015, pp.400-23. Precise figures for the changing number of humanities students in this period are difficult to access, although an indication can be gained by comparing figures for 1961/62, the most recent year covered by data in the Robbins Report, and 2003/04, the first year for which reliable overall figures are available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency. (There are problems in the data for earlier years relating to the classification of degree courses at universities which had been polytechnics before 1992.) In 1961/62, there were 31,700 full-time humanities students at UK universities (undergraduate and postgraduate combined), representing 28 per cent of all students. By 2003/04, the equivalent figures were 237,195 and 10.55 per cent. See Lionel Robbins, *Higher Education Report*, 1963, p.26 and HESA, *Students in Higher Education 2003/04*, undated. The latter is available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/students-2003-04>.
- 16 Again, precise statistics in this area are difficult to access. For data on the increasing number and proportion of women gaining degrees in UK universities, see Paul Bolton, *Education Historical Statistics*, 2012, p.20. For data showing that female humanities students were in the majority in 2019/20, see HESA, *What Do HE Students Study?*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/>

[what-study](#). Women overtook men in humanities subjects before they overtook them overall: student numbers data for 1994/95, the earliest year for which HESA publish open-access data, show more male students overall but more female humanities students. See HESA, *Students in Higher Education 1994/95*, 1996. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications>. In all of these figures, numbers of undergraduates and postgraduates are combined.

- 17 HESA, *Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2019/20 - Subjects Studied*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/27-01-2021/sb258-higher-education-student-statistics/subjects>.
- 18 C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, 1959.
- 19 J.H. Plumb (ed.), *Crisis in the Humanities*, 1964. As noted, some of the essays were about the social sciences.
- 20 See Peter Mandler, 'The Two Cultures Revisited: The Humanities in British Universities since 1945', *Twentieth Century British History*, Volume 26, Issue 3, 2015, pp.400-423.
- 21 Peter Mandler, 'The Two Cultures Revisited: The Humanities in British Universities since 1945', *Twentieth Century British History*, Volume 26, Issue 3, 2015, pp.400-423. For an example, see Bernard Williams, 'What Hope for the Humanities?' in idem., *Essays and Reviews 1959-2002*, 2014, pp.267-273.
- 22 See James Herbert, *Creating the AHRC*, 2008.
- 23 See Megan Bowler, *A Languages Crisis?*, 2020 and Selina Chen and Anne Breivik, *Lost for Words: The Need for Languages in UK Diplomacy and Security*, 2013.
- 24 Details were first published in Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), *Research Excellence Framework: Second Consultation on the Assessment and Funding of Research*, 2009. Further details were published in stages up to January 2012. For a discussion of the initial proposals, see Stefan Collini, 'Impact on the Humanities', *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 November 2009.
- 25 John Browne, *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education*, 2010.

- 26 Details of the new system were first set out in Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*, 2011.
- 27 For significant defences of the humanities from this period, see: Bate, 2011; Collini, 2012; and Helen Small, *The Value of the Humanities*, 2013. For arguments that the new system was neither intended to harm the humanities nor likely to damage them, see David Willetts. *The Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in the Modern University*, 2011. Available at: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publishing/review/17/arts-humanities-and-social-sciences-modern-university/>. Similar views were also expressed by Nick Hillman in an interview with the *Guardian*, for details of which see Alex Preston, 'The War against the Humanities at Britain's Universities', *Guardian*, 29 March 2015.
- 28 For a rare example of direct criticism, see Toby Miller, *Blow up the Humanities*, 2012.
- 29 Laura Peek, 'Medieval History is Bunk, says Clarke', *The Times*, 9 May 2003.
- 30 Nicky Morgan, *Secretary of State for Education Speaks about Science and Maths at the Launch of Your Life Campaign*, 2014. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nicky-morgan-speaks-at-launch-of-your-life-campaign>.
- 31 For a speech in which such a subtext was suspected, see Gavin Williamson, *Education Secretary FE Speech with Social Market Foundation*, 2020. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/education-secretary-fe-speech-with-social-market-foundation>. For commentary, see Nestor de Buen and Conrad Hamilton, 'The Crowding out of a Humanities Education', *Merion West*, 3 October 2020. Available at: <https://merionwest.com/2020/10/03/the-crowding-out-of-humanities-education/>.
- 32 The phrase 'low quality courses' appears in the Conservative 2019 Election Manifesto, and it and the phrase 'low-value courses' have been associated with the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson. Williamson has also used the phrase 'dead-end courses' and placed it in suggestive contrast with 'Science and Engineering'. See Gavin

Williamson, 'Skills, Jobs and Freedom: My Priorities for this Week's Queen's Speech – and the Year Ahead', *Conservative Home*, 14 May 2021. Available at: <https://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2021/05/gavin-williamson-skills-jobs-and-freedom-my-priorities-for-this-weeks-queens-speech-and-the-year-ahead.html>. For a proposal that assessments of teaching quality should include graduate employment data, see Shirley Pearce et al., *Independent Review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)*, 2021. For concern about how the use of employment data might affect the humanities, see British Academy, *Latest Office for Students' Proposals Threaten Humanities and Social Sciences Courses*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/news/latest-office-for-students-proposals-threaten-humanities-and-social-sciences-courses/>.

- 33 Data in Table 1 are taken from: HESA, 'Table 52 - HE Student Enrolments by Subject of Study and Domicile 2019/20', 2021; HESA, 'Table 9 - HE Student Enrolments by Subject of study 2014/15 to 2018/19', 2020; and HESA, 'Students in Higher Education 2009/10-2013/14', 2011-2015. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-52>; <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-9>; and <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications>. Figures for humanities students are compiled from figures for 'Humanities and liberal arts (non-specific)', 'Languages and area studies' and 'Historical, philosophical and religious studies' for 2019/20 and from figures for 'Languages' and 'Historical and Philosophical Studies' for earlier years. This reflects a change made in 2019 in how HESA classifies subjects and means that the data are discontinuous. It should also be noted that some area studies courses may be more like the social sciences in character and that some arts courses, which are not covered here, may be academic rather than creative in character.
- 34 Figures taken from UCAS, *Undergraduate Sector-level End of Cycle Data Resources 2020*, 2020. Available at: <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-sector-level-end-cycle-data-resources-2020>. UCAS organises data according to the application cycle, so that the end-of-cycle data for 2020 includes everyone who applied for university in the academic year 2019/20.

- 35 UCAS, *Undergraduate Sector-level End of Cycle Data Resources 2020*, 2020.
- 36 British Academy, *The Landscape for Humanities and Social Sciences in Higher Education: The Current Picture*, 2017.
- 37 See David Carter, *Five Questions to Ask about the Turing Scheme*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2021/01/11/five-questions-to-ask-about-the-turing-scheme/>.
- 38 Data in Table 2 are taken from HESA, 'Table 52 - HE Student Enrolments by Subject of Study and Domicile 2019/20', 2021 and HESA, 'Table 9 - HE Student Enrolments by Subject of study 2014/15 to 2018/19', 2020. All the qualifications to the data in Table 1 apply here. The way that HESA figures are rounded means that some totals do not sum. HESA data for years before 2014/15 are organised so that equivalent figures to those provided here cannot be easily compiled.
- 39 Data in Table 3 are taken from HESA, 'Table 52 - HE Student Enrolments by Subject of Study and Domicile 2019/20', 2021 and HESA, 'Table 9 - HE Student Enrolments by Subject of study 2014/15 to 2018/19', 2020. All the qualifications to the data in Tables 1 and 2 apply here.
- 40 British Academy, *The Landscape for Humanities and Social Sciences in Higher Education: The Current Picture*, 2017, p.11.
- 41 See, for instance, University of Cambridge, *Undergraduate Admissions Statistics: 2020 Cycle*, 2021 and University of Oxford, *Annual Admissions Statistical Report*, 2021. In these data, Classics, Modern Languages and Music are particular outliers. The former source is available at: https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/files/publications/ug_admissions_statistics_2020_cycle.pdf.
- 42 Harriet Barnes, *Are We Seeing New Cold Spots Emerge in Humanities Provision in the UK?*, 2021. Available at: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/are-we-seeing-new-cold-spots-emerge-in-humanities-provision-in-the-uk/>.
- 43 Figures compiled from HESA, *Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2019/20 – Subjects Studied*, 2021.

- 44 HESA, *Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2019/20 – Subjects Studied*, 2021.
- 45 Figures for student enrolment here and in the following sentence of the main text are compiled from HESA, 'Table 45 – UK Domiciled HE Student Enrolments by Subject of Study and Ethnicity 2019/20'; 2021 and HESA, 'Table 8 - UK Domiciled HE Student Enrolments by Subject of Study and Ethnicity 2014/15 to 2018/19'; 2020. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-45> and <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-8>. The qualifications described in note 33 above apply here. The figure for BAME young people is taken from Office of National Statistics, *Young People by Ethnicity in England and UK*, 2018. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/adhocs/008436youngpeoplebyethnicityinenglandanduk?uri=peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/adhocs/008436youngpeoplebyethnicityinenglandanduk>.
- 46 See Hugo Dale-Rivas, *The White Elephant in the Room: Ideas for Reducing Racial Inequality in Higher Education*, 2019 and Mia Lyanage, *Miseducation: Decolonialising Curricular, Culture and Pedagogy in UK Universities*, 2020.
- 47 See, for instance, Victoria Leonard and Helen Lovatt, *Equality and Diversity in Classics Report*, 2020.
- 48 FFT Education Datalab, *Results Day Analysis: A-Level*, 2020. Available at: <https://results.ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/a-level.php?v=20200923>. Not all UK sixth-form pupils who study the humanities in the sixth form do A-Levels (some do AS-Levels, Pre-Us, Extended Project Qualifications, the International Baccalaureate or Scottish Highers or Advanced Highers), so these figures are only indicative of real trends.
- 49 On the link between secondary school pupils' choice of A-Level subjects and their choice of a degree subject, see Matthew Bursnell at al., 'Young people's education choices and progression to higher education', *Institute for Employment Studies*, Report 514, 2019, p.35 and Tom Sutch at al., 'The effect of specialism and attainment in secondary school on the choice of Higher Education institution and field of study', *Research Matters*, Issue 21, 2016, pp.2-11.

- 50 See Carmen L. Vidal Rodeiro, 'A Level Subject Choice in England: Patterns of Uptake and Factors Affecting Subject Preferences', *Cambridge Assessment*, 2007, p.30 and, with respect to STEM specifically, Janice Tripney et al., 'Factors influencing young people (aged 14-19) in education about STEM subject choices: a systematic review of the UK literature', *Wellcome Trust*, 2010, p.66-77.
- 51 See Peter Davies and Tian Qiu, 'Labour market expectations, relative performance and subject choice', *Centre for Higher Education Equity and Access at the University of Birmingham*, 2016. This study also emphasises the importance of expected future earnings.
- 52 UCAS, *Where Next? What influences the choices school leavers make?*, 2021, pp.10-13; Jonathan Neves and Rachel Hewitt, *HEPI / Advance HE 2020 Student Academic Experience Survey*, 2020, p.25.
- 53 ComRes, *Universities UK–Students and Recent Graduates Research–September 2019*, 2019, pp.1-8.
- 54 ComRes, *Universities UK–Students and Recent Graduates Research–September 2019*, 2019, p.25.
- 55 See Rodeiro, 2007, p.33 and Neves and Hewitt, 2020. For a contradictory finding, see Davies and Qiu, 2016, p.8.
- 56 Data in Table 5 are taken from HESA, *Higher Education Graduate Outcomes Statistics: UK, 2017/18. Outcomes by Subject Studied*, 2020. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/18-06-2020/sb257-higher-education-graduate-outcomes-statistics/study>. The same qualifications concerning subject classification apply here as in the previous section.
- 57 HESA, *Higher Education Graduate Outcomes Statistics: UK, 2017/18. Outcomes by Subject Studied*, 2020. The current system for classifying jobs according to skill-level is not unchallenged. For criticism, see David Kernohan, *Is it time to change our SOCs?*, 2021. Available at: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/is-it-time-to-change-our-socs/>.
- 58 HESA, *Higher Education Graduate Outcomes Statistics: UK, 2017/18. Outcomes by Subject Studied*, 2020.

- 59 Data in Table 6 are taken from HESA, *Higher Education Graduate Outcomes Statistics: UK, 2017/18. Outcomes by Subject Studied*, 2020.
- 60 The LEO data have been widely criticised, so claims made in this section should be treated with caution. See, for instance, Rachel Hewitt, *Getting on: graduate employment and its influence on UK higher education*, 2020, p.19.
- 61 Chris Belfield et al., 'The relative labour market returns to different degrees', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2018, p.59. For men, only History among humanities subjects was ranked in the top half of subjects according to this measure; for women, all humanities subjects were in the bottom half of the ranking. None of the IFS reports calculated the likelihood of humanities graduates being in skilled employment, but the first surmised that the different labour market returns of degrees in different subjects were significantly related to the skills imparted.
- 62 Chris Belfield et al., 'The relative labour market returns to different degrees', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2018, p.24.
- 63 Chris Belfield et al., 'The relative labour market returns to different degrees', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2018, p.24.
- 64 Chris Belfield et al., 'The relative labour market returns to different degrees', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2018, pp.36-37.
- 65 Chris Belfield et al., 'The impact of undergraduate degrees on early-career earnings', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2018, pp.19-20.
- 66 Chris Belfield et al., 'The impact of undergraduate degrees on early-career earnings', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2018, p.42. The more positive effect of university on women's earning was a result of the much better career prospects of non-graduate men compared to non-graduate women, rather than of male graduates earning less than female graduates.
- 67 Chris Belfield et al., 'The impact of undergraduate degrees on early-career earnings', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2018, pp.45-46.
- 68 Chris Belfield et al., 'The impact of undergraduate degrees on early-career earnings', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2018, p.48.

- 69 Jack Britton et al., 'The impact of undergraduate degrees on lifetime earnings', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2020, pp.40-41.
- 70 Jack Britton et al., 'The impact of undergraduate degrees on lifetime earnings', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2020, pp. 48, 51-55. The report was not about rates of employment, but these were factored into the estimates of lifetime earnings, so that, for instance, the greater likelihood of an English graduate having periods of unemployment than a Medicine graduate affected the estimated lifetime earnings for graduates in these subjects.
- 71 Jack Britton et al., 'The impact of undergraduate degrees on lifetime earnings', *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 2020, pp.51-55.
- 72 Philip Kraeger, *Humanities Graduates and the British Economy: The Hidden Impact*, 2013.
- 73 British Academy, *Qualified for the Future: Quantifying demand for arts, humanities and social science skills*, 2020, p.5.
- 74 British Academy, *Qualified for the Future: Quantifying demand for arts, humanities and social science skills*, 2020, p.18.
- 75 Deloitte Access Economics, *The Value of the Humanities*, 2018, p.5 and throughout.
- 76 Laura Rettie, 'MPs and their degrees: here's where and what our UK politicians studied', *Studee*, 2019. Available at: <https://studee.com/media/mps-and-their-degrees-media/>.
- 77 Barbara Davidson, *What the World Leaders Studied at College*, 2018. Available at: <https://www.cashnetusa.com/blog/what-world-leaders-studied-college/>.
- 78 British Academy, 2020, p.6. The report did not disaggregate data according to area of study. For other research emphasising the value of skills developed by humanities subjects, see: Hasan Bakhshi et al., *The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030*, 2017, p.14 and Deloitte, *Talent for Survival: Essential Skills for Humans Working in the Machine Age*, 2017, p.3 and Industrial Strategy Council, *UK Skills Mismatch in 2030*, 2019, pp.16-17; OECD, *OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030 Concept*

Note, 2019; and Mark Winterbotham et al., *Employer Skills Survey 2019: Summary Report*, 2020, pp.5-6 and throughout.

- 79 On the current shortage of digital skills and their likely value in the coming decade see: British Academy, 2017, p.13; British Academy, 2020, p.23; Industrial Strategy Council, 2019, pp.26-27; Julia Nania et al., *No Longer Optional: Employer Demand for Digital Skills*, 2019; OECD, 2019, p.8; and Winterbotham et al., 2020, pp.8-10, pp.44-59. On the value of numerical skills, complex analytical and cognitive skills, see: Bakhshi et al., 2017, p.14; British Academy, 2017, p.54; Deloitte, 2016; Warwick Mansell, *Count us in: Quantitative skills for a new generation*, 2015; and Winterbotham et al., 2020, p.6.
- 80 On arts, humanities and social science graduates' perceptions of their numerical reasoning skills, see British Academy, 2020, p.24. On humanities graduates' use of numerical skills in employment, see Clare Lyonette et al., *Occupations and Skills of Arts, Humanities and Social Science Graduates and Postgraduates*, 2017, p.49. On digital skills, see the final section of this report.
- 81 See British Academy, 2017, pp.55-56 and Alice Grimes et al., *Education and Learning for the Modern World: CBI / Pearson Education and Skills Survey Report 2019*, 2019, pp.26-27.
- 82 See Research England, *Circular Letter: Funding for Higher Education Institutions for 2019-20*, 2019 and Scottish Funding Council, *SFC Review of Subject Weights*, undated. Available at: <https://re.ukri.org/sector-guidance/publications/circular-letter-funding-for-higher-education-institutions-2019-20/> and <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/university-funding/university-funding-research/subject-weights-review.aspx>.
- 83 Figures compiled from: HEFCE, *HEFCE Data for 2015-16 Mainstream Quality-Related Research (QR) Funding and London Weighting*, 2016; equivalent spreadsheets for 2016/17 and 2017/18; Research England, *Research England Data for 2018-19 Mainstream Quality-Related Research (QR) Funding and London Weighting*, 2019; and Research England, *2019-20 July Grant Tables: Sector: All Institutions*, 2020. Available at: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180103180555/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/funding/annalocns/1516/research/>; <https://>

[webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180103175913/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/funding/annalocns/1617/research/](http://www.webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180103175913/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/funding/annalocns/1617/research/); <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180103174927/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/funding/annalocns/1718/research/>; <https://re.ukri.org/funding/quality-related-research-funding/>; and <https://re.ukri.org/search-results/?keywords=2019+july+grant+tables+&siteid=re>. These figures are only loosely indicative of real trends, first because they only cover England; secondly because they cover only mainstream QR-funding as opposed to all funding; and thirdly because they depend on classifying all research in the subject groupings 'Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory' and 'Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts' as humanities research and on excluding all research in the subject groupings 'Area Studies' and 'Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management'. These figures are not adjusted for inflation. It has not been possible to compile equivalent figures for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

- 84 Data taken from UKRI, *Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19*, 2019, p.115, and UKRI, *Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20*, 2020, p.109. Again, these figures are not adjusted for inflation.
- 85 For details, see Kalle Nielsen et al., *The Role of EU Funding in UK Research and Innovation*, 2017. UK researchers continued to be eligible for funding from the EU's eighth Framework Programme, Horizon 2020, after the UK's departure from the EU.
- 86 Kalle Nielsen et al., *The Role of EU Funding in UK Research and Innovation*, 2017, p.16.
- 87 See Universities UK, *The Implications of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement for UK Participation in EU Research and Innovation Programmes*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/brexit/Pages/uk-eu-agreement.aspx>.
- 88 See Nick Hillman, *From T to R revisited: Cross-subsidies from teaching to research after Augar and the 2.4% R&D target*, 2020.
- 89 See Vicky Olive, *How much is too much? Cross-subsidies from teaching to research in British universities*, 2018.

- 90 In addition to the bodies considered in this paragraph, the Wellcome Trust gives sizable grants (£27 million in 2019/20) for humanities and social science research. Data on how these have changed in size over time are not available, however; nor can grants for humanities research be easily disaggregated from the total. See Wellcome, *Grant Funding Data Report 2019/20*, 2021, p.6.
- 91 Figures taken from the British Academy, *Annual Report*, 2016, p.21 and *Annual Report*, 2020, p.31. These figures cover the arts and social sciences as well as the humanities and are not adjusted for inflation. The principal source of this extra funding has been the UK Government.
- 92 British Academy, *The British Academy's Foreign Secretary Comments on the Research Funding Landscape, Including the Impact of Budget Cuts to ODA Funded Research*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/news/the-british-academys-foreign-secretary-comments-on-the-research-funding-landscape-including-the-impact-of-budget-cuts-to-oda-funded-research/>. The figure of £13 million is reached by combining figures here with those in the Academy's most recent accounts.
- 93 Leverhulme Trust, *Annual Review 2018*, 2018, p.13 and Leverhulme Trust, *Annual Review 2016*, 2016, p.13. For the whole series, see the annual reviews from 2015 to 2019. These figures cover the arts as well as the humanities and are not adjusted for inflation.
- 94 Figures compiled from Wolfson Foundation, *2014-20 Grants Awarded*, 2020. Available at: <https://www.wolfson.org.uk/funding/what-weve-funded/>. Expenditure on humanities research cannot be easily disaggregated from the data available. Again, these figures are not adjusted for inflation.
- 95 Details in this paragraph are taken from the Complete Universities Guide. Available at: <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/finance/university-tuition-fees-and-financial-support-in-england>; <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/finance/university-tuition-fees-and-financial-support-in-northern-ireland>; <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/finance/university-tuition-fees-and-financial-support-in>

in-scotland; <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/student-advice/finance/university-tuition-fees-and-financial-support-in-wales>.

- 96 See Mark Corver, *High Inflation Could Devastate Universities and Leave Students Feeling Overwhelmed by Debt*, 2021 and Nick Hillman, *No Easy Answers: English Student Finance in the Spending Review*, 2021. The former is available at: <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2021/07/14/high-inflation-could-devastate-universities-and-leave-students-feeling-overwhelmed-by-debt/>.
- 97 Philip Augar et al., *Independent Panel Report to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding*, 2018.
- 98 The Government's response to Augar is due to coincide with the next Comprehensive Spending Review. For details, see Department for Education, *Interim Conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding*, 2021.
- 99 For a summary of the situation, see Paul Bolton, *Cost of University Courses in England*, 2019. Bolton draws the link between differential fees and cross-subsidy mentioned below.
- 100 Edward Malnick, 'Boris Johnson Exclusive Interview', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 19 July 2020. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2020/07/18/boris-johnson-exclusive-interview-will-not-need-another-national/>.
- 101 On the former point, see Nick Hillman, *A Comparison of Student Loans in England and Australia*, 2014; on the latter, see Conor Duffy, 'University Fees to be Overhauled, Some Course Costs to Double as Domestic Student Places Boosted', *ABC News*, 18 June 2020. The latter source is available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-19/university-fees-tertiary-education-overhaul-course-costs/12367742>.
- 102 Office for Students, *Guide to Funding 2020-21*, 2020, p.21.
- 103 Gavin Williamson, *Guidance to the Office for Students – Allocation of the Higher Education Teaching Grant Funding in the 2021-22 Financial Year*, 2021 and *Notification to the Office for Students (OfS) by the Secretary of State for Education to Set Terms and Conditions for the Allocation by OfS of Strategic Priorities Grants Funding for the 2021/22 Academic Year*, 2021.

- 104 Information obtained via correspondence with the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland.
- 105 The funding available for subjects in different price groups is set out in Scottish Funding Council, *Final University Funding Allocations AY 2021-22*, 2021, p.11. Details of which subjects fall into which price groups has been obtained via correspondence with the Scottish Funding Council. All humanities subjects, as defined in this report, are in price group 6.
- 106 Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, *HEFCW's Funding Allocations 2020/21*, 2020, pp.10-11.
- 107 On cross subsidy, see Philip Augar, 'The Time is Ripe to Reform UK University Finance', *Financial Times*, 8 May 2020; on the cost of teaching humanities subjects, see Universities UK, *Universities UK Response to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding Call for Evidence*, 2018, p.10. The former source is available at <https://www.ft.com/content/ee513144-8f79-11ea-bc44-dbf6756c871a>.
- 108 KPMG LLP, *Understanding Costs of Undergraduate Provision in Higher Education*, 2019, p.18.
- 109 The UK Government is currently conducting a review of post-16 qualifications in England, but this is not expected to affect A-Levels. See Department for Education, *Review of Post-16 Qualifications at Level 3 in England: Government Consultation Response*, 2021.
- 110 See Sutch, Zanini and Rodeiro, 2016, p.9, Catherine Dilnot, 'How Does the Choice of A-Level Subjects Vary with Students' Socio-Economic Status in English State Schools?', *British Educational Research Journal*, Volume 42, Issue 6, 2016, pp.1081-1106, and Jonathan Neves and Rachel Hewitt, *HEPI / Advance HE 2021 Student Academic Experience Survey*, 2021, p.2.
- 111 On the benefits of humanities-related skills for non-humanities students, see Salvatore Mangione et al., 'Medical Students' Exposure to the Humanities Correlates with Positive Personal Qualities and Reduced Burnout: A Multi-Institutional U.S. Survey', *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, Volume 33, Issue 5, 2018, pp.628-34 and Alan

Schamroth, Hayley Berman and Neil Spencer, 'Can Medical Humanities Impart Empathy and Resilience skills to Medical Students?', *Nurse Education Today*, Volume 9, Issue 1, 2020.

- 112 See, for instance, Warwick Mansell, 2015.
- 113 On the second point, see British Academy, *The Cognitive Benefits of Language Learning*, 2019.
- 114 See, for instance: British Academy, 2020, pp.25-28; Tom Richmond and Eleanor Regan, *Re-Assessing the Future: Part 2: The Final Years of Secondary Education*, 2021; Royal Society, *Jobs are Changing, So Should Education*, 2019; Tom Sherrington, 'To Solve the Exams Mess, Go Bacc to the Future', *Schools Week*, 27 August 2020; and Willetts, 2017, pp.340-359. The Royal Society's factsheet is available at: <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/Publications/2019/12-02-19-jobs-are-changing-so-should-education.pdf?la=en-GB&hash=CFE0514A843243C2A60823E76616E3>; Sherrington's article is available at: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/to-solve-the-exam-mess-we-need-to-go-bacc-to-the-future/>.
- 115 See Willetts, 2017, pp.340-359 and Department for Education, 2021, p.41.
- 116 See Willetts, 2017, pp.340-359.
- 117 UCAS, *Scottish Highers*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.ucas.com/further-education/post-16-qualifications/qualifications-you-can-take/scottish-highers>.
- 118 Royal Society, 2019, p.2. Some of the interdisciplinary and liberal arts degree programmes discussed below also require mathematics and a language to be continued alongside other studies.
- 119 Around 30,000 pupils currently do an EPQ each year. For details, see Tim Gill, *Uptake and Results in the Extended Project Qualification 2008-2015*, 2016 and UCAS, *Extended Project Qualification*, 2019. The latter is available at: <https://qips.ucas.com/qip/extended-project-qualification-epq>.

- 120 See Megan Bowler, *A Languages Crisis?*, 2020 and Selina Chen and Anne Breivik, *Lost for Words: The Need for Languages in UK Diplomacy and Security*, 2013.
- 121 See Tom Richmond, *Reassessing the Future: Part 1 – How to Move Beyond GCSEs*, 2021.
- 122 See, for instance, Warwick Mansell, 2015 and British Academy, 2017, pp.12-13.
- 123 Marketwise Strategies Limited, *Digital Humanities Research: Teaching and Practice in the UK*, 2017, p.8. Over a third of the 92 universities surveyed reported an optional digital humanities module in undergraduate or Master's teaching, but the sample was not representative of universities generally because the universities included were ones known to be active in the digital humanities.
- 124 Giles Bergel et al., *Sustaining the Digital Humanities in the UK*, 2020, p.15.
- 125 For a call for historians to embrace big data, see David Armitage and Jo Guldi, *The History Manifesto*, 2014. On the ethics of AI, see Stuart Armstrong, *Smarter than Us: The Rise of Machine Intelligence*, 2014.
- 126 See Nicole Gicheva and Kathryn Petrie, *Vocation, Vocation, Vocation: The Role of Vocational Routes into Higher Education*, 2018.
- 127 On humanities graduates' employment, see HESA, *Graduate Activities and Characteristics: Previous Study Characteristics*, 2021. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/graduates/activities/study>
- 128 See Sutch, Zanini and Rodeiro, 2016.
- 129 See Emma Smith and Patrick White, *The Employment Trajectories of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics Graduates*, 2018.

130 On the wider benefits of the humanities, see Deloitte Access Economics, 2018 and S.D. Hillygus, 'The Missing Link: Exploring the Relationship between Higher Education and Political Engagement', *Political Behavior*, Volume 27, Issue 1, 2005, pp.25-47. On the measurement of the impact of humanities research, see Zoe Bulaitis, 'Measuring Impact in the Humanities: Learning from Accountability and Economics in a Contemporary History of Cultural Value', *Palgrave Communications*, Volume 4, Issue 1, 2017, pp.1-9; and Claire Donovan and Magnus Gulbrandsen, 'Introduction: Measuring the Impact of Arts and Humanities Research in Europe', *Research Evaluation*, Volume 27, Issue 4, 2018, pp.285-286.

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In this report, Gabriel Roberts looks at the current challenges facing the humanities. The author analyses the humanities' performance in three different areas – student enrolment, graduate employment and funding – and explores how any challenges might be overcome.

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