

Dear Friends of Cardiff University,

I am hopefully writing unnecessarily, as voices opposing the loss of the Religion and Theology programme (and other programmes) at Cardiff University are hopefully already being raised.

I would like to share my view and call on those with influence to take action.

(If this is not in your wheelhouse, please forward to those for whom it might be.)

I am a secondary Religious Education teacher who has often sent good students to study at Cardiff. I also care about Wales and its institutions.

My objection to the university's plans is as follows:

If a university wants to study the totality of the human experience, as opposed to just being an expensive technical college, it would support the teaching of our past (ancient history), our beliefs (religion and theology), our languages (modern languages), our culture (music), and our health (nursing). It would also not combine STEM subjects into blobs like the "School of Data Science."

For Wales's flagship university to do this is particularly outrageous. The university will leave unstudied the place of Wales in ancient history, its rich religious heritage, its music, and the place of Welsh among other languages. It will weaken the NHS in the land of its birth. Some subjects may not seem to contribute much on a spreadsheet, but they all contribute to a "university" as we once understood the word.

Regarding religion, Wales is the land of David and the Age of the Saints; of Bishop Richard and the Reformation; of William Morgan's Welsh Bible; of non-conformity and the Christian revival; and it is now the land of vibrant multi-faith communities. We do not study and teach religion because we are necessarily religious, we do it because religious literacy is vital in a world where religion still makes at least half of us tick. Where will Wales's voice be heard?

A canard that needs dismantling is the idea that some degrees have little value in monetary terms. Setting aside the argument about the inherent good of learning, this is untrue for Cardiff. The average salary for a Cardiff Theology and Religion graduate is the same as the national average and the same as a student studying something "practical" like Accounting at a non-Russell Group university. What matters is the *reputation and quality of the university*, which Cardiff has. As a school teacher I can tell you that if you lose that reputation, it is gone forever. These savage cuts are a threat to exactly that.

It is not Cardiff's fault that there has been a catastrophic drop in foreign student numbers and a refusal to tackle university finance given stagnant domestic fees, but with cash reserves of £188m, Cardiff should ride out the storm. If it has to make cuts it should do so cautiously and protect learning above all else. It should also probably not pay its VC 10x the salary of its lecturers, but that's an issue that goes beyond Cardiff.