

By email: gavin.williamson.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Secretary of State for Education,

RE: Proposed Funding Cuts to Higher Education

I am writing from the Association of Illustrators. The AOI is a membership organisation founded in 1973 to support and sustain illustrators and the illustration industry. The AOI is based in London, with 2,800+ members across the UK and a small percentage globally.

Our members include leading universities and colleges in the UK, with graduating students working across the creative industries- in publishing, editorial, advertising, gaming, animation, medicine and research. They are sought by commissioners in the UK and worldwide and many are recognised as leaders in their field.

The announcement of proposed funding cuts to arts courses would significantly negatively impact illustration and wider creative sector. We have serious concerns about the short, and long term impact of this proposal, which will impact on the overall health of the UK and our economy. These courses are not low priority, they are vital to the financial and social security of the UK.

The Creative Industries, of which illustration is a vibrant and multi-disciplinary part, are one of the UK's greatest assets, both in terms of soft power and economically. In February 2020 [DCMS announced](#) that the Creative Industries were growing five times faster than the national economy, and contributed £111bn to the UK economy in 2018. Advertising and marketing were noted as two key drivers both of which use substantial amounts of illustration.

Reducing funding to courses will reduce the efficiency and strength of the creative industries.

The Creative Industries Council Creative [Media Workforce Survey](#) report shows that 78% of respondents working in the creative industries have a degree, demonstrating the importance higher education plays in developing the next generation of creative workers.

The majority of creative students and practitioners, especially illustrators, work throughout society, undertaking fundamental roles contributing to healthcare, infrastructure, financial growth and care and education systems. The impact of these funding cuts will be felt negatively throughout the UK's communities and economic sectors. In addition, creative courses such as illustration nurture sophisticated problem solving and critical thinking skills, which have been identified as core skills for future jobs ([World Economic Forum](#)).

The reduction of funding will have the unacceptable consequence of compromising diversity within creative courses. The cuts will have a disproportionate effect on disabled, Black, Asian and minority ethnic students and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. This lack of diversity will not only impact individuals' life options, but will tangibly reduce the cultural and economic strength of the creative industries.

I would be grateful for a response by [email](#) and would be delighted to engage further on these and other issues to find a solution to keep our wonderful industry thriving.

Yours Sincerely



Ren Renwick
CEO