



Title	Proposal to consider an expanded School
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UEG conclusion	UEG approved the request to engage with stakeholders through the UEG consultation process on the subject of moving from four entities to one unit.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We propose to launch an engagement process, which would consult on bringing three geographically adjacent Schools – History, Art History and Philosophy (HAHP); the School of English (comprising English Literature, English Language and Linguistics and Drama) (SoE); and Media, Film and Music (MFM) – together with the Sussex Centre for Language Studies (SCLS), into a single unit. See **Appendix 1** for current structural information for these four areas.
- 1.2 The engagement process would, as required, follow the new UEG consultation procedure and include both:
 - 1.2.1 Consulting with identified stakeholders;
 - 1.2.2 The commissioning of evidence or analysis for the subject of this proposal.
- 1.3 Should the result of the engagement process prove affirmative, i.e. support to come together in one unit, we would proceed to a collaborative implementation phase, some suggestions for which are included in this paper.
- 1.4 If there was ever an opportune moment for such a consideration, it is now, given the extreme pressures in the sector on our disciplines and their value, and the value of the university itself – but also because Sussex is, perhaps of all universities - able to vociferously answer back, in Ali Smith’s words, in transformative ways. We need to lead, and set the agenda.
- 1.5 In the context of the 2025 strategy, vision for reinvestment, and targets for surplus, with this proposal we are looking to explore opportunities for taking agency and an academic lead.

2. Rationale

- 2.1. With this proposal we aim to build on the visionary foundation that saw Sussex define fields of study from the outset. This is a critical public inheritance of radical pedagogy, engagement and research with impact. It includes, transforming relations between art and science, ERASMUS, establishing postcolonial studies and inaugurating the study of sexual dissidence. The Sussex Experiment has always had transdisciplinary knowledge at its heart, and it requires reinvention to meet the global needs identified for Sussex 2025 and beyond.
- 2.2. Our proposal therefore is about building on that valued inheritance to achieve a powerful future vision – at scale – of what we can bring about for our staff and students, and for Sussex beyond 2025. Our vision for working at scale unlocks potential across all areas by creating critical mass, visibility, community and voice.
- 2.3. We aim to provide a strong and internationally renowned platform for the Arts, Humanities and Digital Media at Sussex, which will be outward looking and ambitious, with a loud and respected voice in the debates now shaping the sector, and in our global futures.
- 2.4. The proposed engagement process would allow us to consult more fully as well as to gather further evidence for what we believe is critical to achieving progressive academic benefits such as those outlined below, in addition to opening up many others as yet unexplored.
- 2.5. Our hypothesis is that coming together would further liberate the interdisciplinary energies already at work in our research and teaching, and that this would, in turn, provide greater potential for success in academic terms to the benefit of our students, staff and the university, including our national and international reputation.
- 2.6. We already share a number of programmes and teach across disciplinary barriers in a limited way. Our current timetabling structures, academic framework and communication systems inhibit teaching across schools in the UG curriculum, impacting significantly on the student experience. Therefore, liberating these structures with one open structural framework would benefit the student experience, and allow us to address key areas such as the experience of our joint degree students.
- 2.7. We believe that coming together would enable us to deliver on student choice and the interdisciplinary promise in the curriculum. For example, a Liberal Arts Degree provision which is currently almost impossible across schools due to the current structures and frameworks. We also believe that joint degree provision would deliver a significantly enhanced student experience dimension, as students would be freed from having to negotiate multiple school structures with the frustrations that this currently brings.
- 2.8. We have strong research synergies, many of which remain untapped. We anticipate that areas such as digital and ecological humanities, AI, performance and visual arts could be significantly scaled up, enabling strategic grant building and the new transdisciplinary demands implied by challenge led research, which require new forms of support and delivery if the research cultures were brought together.
- 2.9. The structures we propose bring together the highest performing research areas at Sussex in REF 2014. Our combining of academic excellence and depth of research expertise has the potential to accelerate the best possible outcomes for REF2021, and beyond.

- 2.10. Existing structural divisions currently impede these benefits, including genuinely interdisciplinary research activities, by creating barriers to communication, event planning, grant building and other aspects of research culture.
- 2.11. Moreover, in coming together, our shared ecology would contain major assets: from the CHASE doctoral consortium (Humanities and the Arts in the South East); to the Sussex Humanities Lab (which puts innovative digital practice and knowledge production at our heart); to the teaching of international languages central to the production of global citizens on campus; and the reach of new international summer initiatives which our combining makes possible. All of these initiatives could be much richer, more productive, cutting edge and economically efficient if scaled differently.
- 2.12. Our combined effort has the potential to strengthen our external engagement if we coordinated working relationships across impact trajectories with valued partners such as the BBC, ACCA, The Globe, the V&A, The British Museum, the Keep, Brighton Festival and a range of regional, national and international partnerships. We would expect such strength to enhance our outward facing identity, enhance our visibility as a distinct Sussex entity in the world, inform best practice for the KEF, and support our aim of being a strong and internationally renowned location for creative engagement and innovative outreach across all fields. We could consider setting up an advisory board with key supporters, alumni and partners.
- 2.13. Other opportunities potentially include the reconfiguration of space across the Arts cluster to open up more student and staff spaces beyond GTS. We believe this would address demands that we can't currently meet for better work spaces for PhD students, staff wellbeing areas, student social and study spaces, studio and pop-up spaces for innovative curriculum.
- 2.14. We aim for the 3,000-4,000 students in this potential new entity to be part of its co-creation, exploring combined opportunities, possibly as part of a school wide student advisory board. Further possibilities might include a shared doctoral school, enhancement in student voice and structures for student engagement that come with critical mass, and scaling up of meaningful engagement with the new Sussex Award.
- 2.15. Our vision for working at scale unlocks potential across teaching, research, student and staff experience and makes possible our ambition for leading and setting the agenda within the global and national context through delivering on our Sussex 2025 vision and strategy.
- 2.16. We are proceeding to an engagement phase in order to consult on our hypothesis and commission any further substantive evidence on this subject; we would then conclude this period with a clear, evidence-based recommendation.

3. Principles

- 3.1. Having received approval from UEG to proceed with our proposal, we are committed to working within the Sussex 2025 framework and in line with the new UEG consultation procedure to be:
 - Transparent
 - Collaborative: consultative and deliberative
 - Inclusive of staff and students
 - Accountable and acting with integrity when making decisions informed by consultation

- 3.2. Within any proposals for an expanded school structure:
- We commit to being mindful that this is first and foremost about people and their place of work and education
 - We aim to retain a personalised connection with our students, whilst growing our overall scale
 - All structural boundaries are up for discussion without prejudice either way
 - We aim to be mindful of legacies and histories in tandem with looking for opportunities to rethink and transform the way we do things

4. Engagement Process

- 4.1. Central to our approach is the opportunity to engage and consult with staff – faculty and professional service colleagues, and with students – building on discussions we have had in the last 18 months about the potential of Dhaba Square, which generated ideas for the Liberal Arts initiative as a first move.
- 4.2. In addition to this, the engagement process would include the commissioning of evidence or analysis for the subject of this proposal, as outlined in point 8.1 of the UEG consultation process that this proposal is required to follow.
- 4.3. The engagement process would enable us to explore the academic model which would need to be clearly articulated should we proceed with more practical discussions about structures and processes as this will drive decisions about these matters.
- 4.4. The engagement process will be managed by an Engagement Group comprising the four heads of School/ Centre, other staff (academic and professional services), students, and chaired by the Provost.
- 4.5. The planned engagement process will proceed in line with the new UEG consultation procedure.