Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing further to the decision to reduce high-cost subject funding in higher education (HE) by 50 per cent for academic year 2021-22, and to urge you to delay the implementation of this change.

As you will be aware, this funding reduction will impact courses in music and other creative arts subjects. The ISM and other stakeholders in the creative industries (and beyond), expressed serious misgivings about these proposals when they were put out for consultation.

We remain concerned that these cuts will have a devastating impact on the provision and accessibility of creative arts education. They should not go ahead unless a more thorough consultation and supplementary proposals from Government can effectively investigate and allay the concerns of our sector.

Confirming this change just a few weeks before the start of the academic year in which they take effect, gives HE providers virtually no time to plan for, or mitigate, their impact on students. If you are determined to press ahead with these damaging cuts to arts courses, I ask that you reconsider the timeframe for their implementation, delaying until at least 2022-23.

During this time, it would be possible for the Department for Education to work with stakeholders in HE and the creative arts to understand how these changes will impact the delivery of arts courses. It will also give HE providers more time to plan for, and adapt to, these budgetary changes.

The ISM’s concern is primarily how you ensure these changes do not impact the quality and availability of arts courses to students from all backgrounds. We would be happy to provide any assistance in developing proposals which could help reduce the detrimental impact of these funding cuts.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you, or officials leading on this in your Department, at the earliest possible opportunity.

Once again, I want to stress the harm this change could do to the talent pipeline for the UK’s world leading creative industries - a sector worth £111bn to the UK economy – which has already suffered heavily during the pandemic.

I look forward to your response.
Yours sincerely,

Deborah Annetts
Chief Executive
Incorporated Society of Musicians
deborah@ism.org