

**Professor Nishan Canagarajah  
Vice Chancellor  
University of Leicester**

**10 February 2021**

Dear Professor Canagarajah,

I am writing on behalf of the Royal Statistical Society in response to news that the University of Leicester plans to cease research in Pure Mathematics in order to invest and extend research activities in AI, computational modelling, digitalisation and data science. Part of the RSS mission is to advocate for the importance of statistics and data and we naturally welcome an increased focus on research in data science. However, Statistics is both a data science and a mathematical science and we understand that a world class research environment across a breadth of data science flourishes best when it co-exists with significant strength in fundamental Mathematics. It should not be either/or.

This is particularly true at the level of undergraduate training. Many of the Mathematics graduates of today are the data scientists of tomorrow. The most successful mathematical sciences programmes are those which expose students to the breadth of mathematical sciences, pure, applied and statistics, taught by leading researchers, and allow students to find their mathematical niche. Many students naturally find their way into data science, AI or related disciplines over the course of their degree programme, without having set out on that path. This cannot be achieved effectively by a narrow programme which is too focussed on one particular application area.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sylvia Richardson  
President, Royal Statistical Society