

20th March 2019

Professor Sherira Hoskins
Dean of Science
University of Portsmouth
University House
Winston Churchill Avenue
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO1 2UP

Dear Professor Hoskins

Re: BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy and Oncology

I was very disappointed indeed last week to receive Dr Markham's letter dated 13th March 2019 informing the Society of Radiographers of the University's intention to close the Therapeutic Radiography programme after 2020.

As you may be aware, therapeutic radiography is a small professional group within the Allied Health Professions but one which occupies a strategically vital place within healthcare provision as the only profession dedicated to the delivery of radiotherapy in cancer treatment. The relatively small workforce size and limited number of training programmes available across the UK, combined with known difficulties in recruitment and retention is causing concern at national level. The Society of Radiographers is collaborating with colleagues in Health Education England, The Office for Students, and the Council of Deans for Health, in ensuring that urgent work is undertaken to ensure security of provision of this vital workforce for the future. The government is backing the NHS long Term Plan which sets a priority to improve health outcomes for cancer patients. This is unachievable without therapeutic radiographers.

Consequently Dr Markham's letter is particularly disappointing.

As is set out in the letter, I understand that the School of Health Sciences and Social Work has experienced difficulties in the recruitment process in common with colleagues elsewhere. However I am also aware that the work of the therapeutic radiography team at the University of Portsmouth had been particularly successful in increasing the profile of therapeutic radiography and that this had resulted in increased recruitment. The fact that these prospective students are now to be disappointed is a devastating blow, not only for the individuals concerned, but also for the inevitable loss to the profession of therapeutic radiography and consequently damage to cancer care.

The Society of Radiographers is naturally also concerned for our members in the University, along with those that provide clinical placement support for students in local radiotherapy departments. It would be helpful to know what arrangements are being made to protect employment for these individuals. What contingency plans are in place should skilled staff elect to seek employment elsewhere in the country before your programme finally closes?

Radiotherapy centres in hospitals along the south coast, which provide clinical placement support as part of the therapeutic radiotherapy programme at Portsmouth face challenges every year in recruiting to vacancies in their teams. The ability to look to the cohort of graduates from the university as a source of recruits is very valuable and in many cases is a route for local people to remain in the area on graduation. The closure of this recruitment source in 2020 will present a very significant challenge for these services in continuing to be able to recruit adequately in order to provide vital radiotherapy. It would be helpful to understand what discussions the university had with radiotherapy service leaders as it considered closing the programme. Dr Markham indicates that this was a particularly difficult decision, so I presume all of the principal stakeholders were consulted.

The most important stakeholders, however, are the public of Portsmouth and the whole of the South of England who will see their prospects of cancer treatment compromised by the closure of the therapeutic radiography programme. I doubt that these people had a say in the decision.

Dr Markham's letter presents the course closure as a *fait accompli*. Nevertheless I naturally hope that the University will take the opportunity to reconsider the decision. I suggest that we arrange to meet soon, potentially along with colleagues from Health Education England so that we can understand the reasoning and, if nothing else, seek to learn from the unfortunate turn of events in Portsmouth.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



RICHARD EVANS
Chief Executive Officer

Copies to:

Professor Graham Galbraith – Vice Chancellor
Dr Jason Oakley – Associate Dean, Faculty of Science
Dr Chris Markham, Head of School of Health Sciences and Social Work
Penny Mordaunt MP, Portsmouth North
Stephen Morgan MP, Portsmouth South
Tim Farron MP, Chair APPG, Radiotherapy
Professor Pat Price, Chair Action Radiotherapy