Dear Mr Skidmore,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Minister for Universities to express my concern about the recent decision by the Office for Students (OfS) to turn down the registration application for Spurgeon’s College.

The OfS determined that the College did not meet its financial sustainability test. The College fundamentally disagrees with this decision, believing it to have been made on “seriously flawed assumptions.” The College Principal Philip McCormack has gone on public record to state that the College does have funds in its account to deliver its core ministry “comfortably” over the next three years. I am therefore supporting Philip McCormack’s call for you to review the decision.

I am particularly concerned for the wellbeing of the students who are affected by the OfS decision. I understand that a number of students have given up jobs to follow what they believe to be God’s call on their lives to train for Christian ministry, but are now unable to access the student loan system that will enable them to take this next step at Spurgeon’s. This is clearly placing a worrying and unbearable strain on their lives, particular as the OfS decision was made after Clearing. Furthermore, existing students who have changed courses over the summer are being treated as new students and are also unable to access the loans.

Spurgeon’s College has a distinguished 163 history in training men and women for Christian ministry and mission (indeed, the OfS determined that the College passed 4 of its 5 tests for registration). Its students have a commitment to addressing social concerns and go on to make hugely valuable contributions to their communities across the UK and beyond.

*{If you have personal reflections or experiences of Spurgeon’s College, or know of people who have been trained there, it would be good to include those here.}*

I fear this apparently flawed decision will negatively impact the College’s ability to attract and train such people. The OfS decision therefore appears to be contrary to Government policies encouraging diversification of the higher education market.

Thank you for taking the time to read my appeal, and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

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