

On the future of the University – Humanities and Social Sciences in Japan

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The International Social Science Council (ISSC) is gravely concerned by proposals to restructure and reduce humanities and social science courses in national universities in Japan. Relevant university departments have been instructed to take active steps to reduce activities and re-orient their research towards other areas of societal need.

The ISSC promotes and strengthens the social sciences, including the economic and behavioural sciences, highlighting the contributions of the social sciences to help solve global priority problems.

In this light the ISSC welcomes the Statement by the Executive Board of the Science Council of Japan (SCJ) on securing the future of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Japan. The SCJ, which is a member of the ISSC, maintains that the humanities and social sciences are integral to advancing knowledge on the challenges facing society today, both in Japan and internationally. They play a unique and vital role in critically thinking about and assessing the human condition, and for the understanding, foresight, governance and continued development of contemporary societies.

The ISSC and SCJ's shared vision to promote cutting-edge research from multiple disciplines is exemplified by the international symposium on social transformations in Japan, hosted by the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) as a collaboration between JST, the ISSC and the National Research Foundation (NRF), which took place at the United Nations University in Tokyo on 29 January 2015. The event was supported by the SCJ to encourage Japanese social scientists and humanities scholars to participate more actively in the global networks and activities of the ISSC's Transformations to Sustainability programme and of Future Earth.