



**Cónaidhm Éireannach na Múinteoirí Ollscoile  
Irish Federation of University Teachers**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Universities are ‘fit for purpose’,  
says IFUT President**

16 April 2011

Recent suggestions regarding the public service being ‘not fit for purpose’ do not apply to the universities and their academic staff; instead, levels of productivity are being increased amid income cuts of up to 25%, Dr Hugh Gibbons, President of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT), states in an address to be delivered to the organisation’s Annual Conference in Dublin today (Saturday, 16 April).

“Over the last two years, university staff numbers have been cut by six percent. This figure does not include staff who retired early under the Incentivised Scheme for Early Retirement (ISER), who cannot be replaced. There is now a drastically reduced number of academic staff in the Universities, most departments are struggling to overcome the reduced level of staff and some departments are near closure.

“While it was traditionally the case that Irish Universities operated at half the cost per student of compared to the UK, over the last two years a combination of public service pay cuts, the pension levy other levies and the recent universal social charge, has resulted in pay cuts in the order of 25%.

“In addition, due to the ban on promotions, many international academics who came to Ireland have begun returning to their home country, depleting resources still further.

“During the Benchmarking process rank and file academics got the lowest pay rise. The real gain for the Government then was the breaking of a long-established relativity of University staff with the Civil Service who got better Benchmarking awards and better increases since then. Are we now being asked to give back what we never received?

“These staffing and wage cuts are occurring at a time when ever-more students are enrolling at third-level. Yet the efficiency and quality of the Irish Higher Education sector is acknowledged by the EU in a recent ECOFIN report, which states that, considering their size, Finland, Ireland and Sweden are the countries with more universities pointed out by peers as being excellent,” Dr Gibbons said.

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