

Mister for Education's Budget cuts proposals risk delivering a fatal blow to third-level education, says IFUT

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Reports that the Department of Education is proposing cuts of up to 5% on third-level education in the forthcoming Budget would be disastrous for universities, students and the Irish economy if implemented, Mike Jennings, General Secretary of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT), has said.

“Does the current Minister for Education intend to deliver what could be the fatal blow to our third-level institutions and their ability to continue delivering education of the highest standards?”

“Funding for the sector has already been cut by over 14% in real terms in the past decade, with most of the reduction in the past three years. Actual funding per student at third-level fell below that of second-level for the first time ever last year, according to official CSO stats.

“The Minister for Education must not allow education generally to become the scapegoat for ‘savings’ and cuts in the October Budget. HEA figures show that lecturer numbers have already declined by at least 15% as a result of government policy, at a time when enrolment in third-level has increased by at least the same amount.

“The commitment by lecturers to provide the highest standards of teaching for students remains as strong as ever, despite the drastic cuts in staff numbers and a surge in the number of students enrolling in third-level. But they cannot achieve the impossible, which is what would be expected of them if further cuts are imposed.

“The Minister for Education must stand up on this one. He must act to ensure that education for our young people is defended. Our society and economy require highly educated pupils and graduates to help overcome the current recession and rebuild our communities and society,” Mike Jennings said.

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