

Replace cuts mentality with targeted investment in education, says IFUT

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The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has said that the Department of Education's approach of swinging all-round cuts in the next budget should be replaced by a realistic policy of targeted increases in key areas of education, including many areas of third-level.

Commenting on a Department of Education Report which identifies a range of 75 options for cuts in education, IFUT General Secretary, Mike Jennings, said that the requirement for efficiencies must be matched by a determination to provide increased funding where this is the necessary and right thing to do.

“Despite five years of recession, the Department has yet to produce a viable set of proposals to take education forward in the new economic climate.

“The paucity of thinking and lack of forward planning is perhaps most clearly shown in the convenient round-figure percentage cuts being mooted for third-level funding in the next Budget.

“What is the justification for selecting a round percentage figure, equivalent to €11.8 million for each percentage cut? It takes no account whatever of actual requirements or the impact on colleges, staff and students.

“It is crudely designed purely to save money, not to protect our education system.

“Funding for the third level sector has already been cut by over 14% in real terms in the past decade according to CSO figures; lecturer numbers have declined by 15% according to the HEA. The fabric of education cannot accept further arbitrary cuts as student numbers continue to increase.

“The Department of Education should devote some energy to producing proposals to ensure the survival of a viable education system in Ireland instead of falling in line with an apparent cuts-for-cuts-sake mentality,” Mike Jennings said.

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