

New innovation strategy required to preserve teaching standards, assist graduate employment and promote economic recovery, says IFUT

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The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has called for implementation of a five point strategy to develop third-level education, to ensure that staffing levels in colleges are adequate to cater for the increasing number of third level entrants and to cater for the demands of a post-recession economy and society.

Mike Jennings, General Secretary of IFUT, said that the newly appointed Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation, Damien English, can play a pivotal role in ensuring such a policy is developed and implemented.

“As a Minister in both the Departments of Education and Skills and in Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation, and with the additional experience of previously serving as Chairperson of the Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, he should seek to tackle the many issues impeding education, research and innovation at present,” Mike Jennings said.

IFUT has called for five key areas to be addressed as a matter of urgency:

- A strategy to tackle the factors leading to the emigration of 29,000 graduates last year, accounting for almost half of total emigration
- Removal of anomalies in salaries, contracts, job conditions and security that is demoralising both existing and new research and innovation staff, including the issues of temporary contracts and pay discrimination
- Removal of the embargo on university staffing levels and recruitment of sufficient staff to take account of the huge increase in third-level student numbers over the past five years.
- Ensure that education is excluded from the terms of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) Agreement, to ensure that innovation is retained in our education system and to prevent expansion of private education companies seeking to turn education into a profit-making business.
- A reversal of Haddington Road Agreement provisions on lecturers’ pay and conditions, to maintain and ensure delivery of third level education at world class standards for the post recession era.

“Minister Howlin has already signalled an intention to review pay restraint in certain areas. The Minister for Finance has signalled an intention to tackle taxation levels.

“We need a clear and coherent commitment to tackle the root causes of the increasing malaise in our education system, to ensure provision of world-class education standards into the future,” Mike Jennings said.

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