

IFUT call for increased direct funding of education by government in advance of Cassells Report

July 10th, 2016

The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has called for increased direct government funding for Higher Education in advance of publication of the Cassells Report on funding for the sector.

Mike Jennings, General Secretary of IFUT, said that the phenomenal rate of growth in third level student numbers, combined with the staff and funding cuts of the past decade, is driving universities and academic staff almost to breaking point.

“Between 2008 and 2014 full-time enrolment in the seven universities in Ireland showed a consistent year-on-year increase of 18% - from 78,577 in 2008 to 93,023 in 2014.

“This growth in numbers was accompanied by a decline of 28% in state funding for universities, from €722.8m in 2007 to €522.2 in 2014.

“Student to staff ratios in Irish universities also increased from 19.4: 1 in 2007 to 23.0: 1 in 2011. It is shocking to realise that the ratios were worse in 2011 than those described in the report of the Commission on Higher Education (1967). The situation has been seriously exacerbated by the introduction of the ECF (Employment Control Framework) in 2009.

“In addition recent surveys suggest that close to half of the ever-increasing number of casual contact lecturers are paid less than €10,000 annually, forcing them to survive below the poverty line.

“This Report should serve as a major wake-up call to government and the political system generally that education funding can no longer be ignored.

“Countries like France, Austria and Sweden and already reversing education cuts introduced during the recession. The Department of Education here should do the same,” Mike Jennings said.

ENDS

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