

## **Addressing Leaving Cert results debacle poses major issues on lecturing staff numbers, says IFUT.**

*Emergency Budget funding to resolve crisis must include extra staff*

*Thursday Oct. 01, 2020*

The likely creation of significant additional higher education places for students denied college entry due to errors in Leaving Cert calculations will make an already bad lecturer:student ratio even worse and undermine the credibility of higher education delivery, the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has warned.

Joan Donegan, General Secretary of IFUT, said that indications of 1,000 - 1,500 additional places being required to address the debacle, on top of the 2,200 top-up places already announced due to the altered Leaving Cert process, means that colleges must now factor in teaching thousands of additional students, with no additional staff resources provided.

"This is not a simple case of offering online classes to more people. Essays and exams must be processed, individual consultations and contacts with students are required, practical and tutorial work must be delivered. Students also require and deserve a level of individualised attention that will simply become impossible in situations where thousands more students are added to the system with no improvements in lecturer or tutor numbers.

The situation will be exacerbated to breaking point if some faculties absorb disproportionate numbers of additional entrants."

"Recent studies show that the impact of the 2008 recession has not been addressed in higher education. Current student to staffing ratios have already declined to more than 23:1 compared to an OECD average of 16:1, placing often unbearable strain on teaching staff and tutors. Our lecturer to student ratio has deteriorated to worse than the figures outlined in the Commission of Higher Education report in the 1960's."

"Even more alarmingly, IFUT is processing cases involving ending of contracts for many precariously employed lecturers, whose contracts are being ended as colleges struggle to balance the books - making the ratio of student to staff member worse for the current year before the additional student numbers are added."

“IFUT wants to see an expansion of higher education access and numbers. The forthcoming Budget, therefore, must allocate emergency funding to universities to ensure their continued viability. A prime focus in this must be recruitment and reemployment of lecturing and tutorial staff to enable adequate education delivery,” Joan Donegan said.