

IFUT call for immediate inclusion in review of PhD researchers

The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) today wrote to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) demanding to be included in the National Review of State Supports for PhD Researchers announced this week by Minister Harris.

IFUT Deputy General Secretary, Miriam Hamilton, said “In IFUT we welcome a serious consideration of the current arrangements for PhD researchers. We note one of the purposes of this review is to consider the status of PhD researchers as students and/or employees. The review, as we understand it, will include engagement with key stakeholders.”

“IFUT are perplexed that a review of the status of a group of people in Higher Education vis-à-vis their employment status is proposed to proceed without trade union involvement. IFUT, as the only union in Ireland that exclusively represents academics, including researchers, in Higher Education, has many PhD researchers in our membership. We understand the issues and concerns of PhD students and we understand the ways in which they have been exploited and treated unfairly to provide unpaid labour. All the while PhD researchers develop research of significant contribution and value to our Higher Education Institutions while many PhD researchers themselves are living below the poverty line.”

“IFUT are also members of Education International, which represents more than 32 million education workers across the world, and we are active members of the Higher Education and Research Standing Committee (HERSC). We therefore engage with our International and European colleagues frequently and understand the different approaches and frameworks for the engagement and employment of researchers across Europe.”

“We are calling for immediate inclusion in the terms of reference of this review and to be a central player in discussions on the conditions on which PhD researchers are engaged across the sector.”

“For this review to truly reflect the needs of PhD researchers it must include the trade union voice. A review which comprises only of the very bodies who have created the current deplorable conditions of PhD researchers will not deliver the real change PhD researchers deserve. We intend to make a vital and constructive contribution and to work with all other stakeholders to identify a fair method of engaging PhD researchers which affords them an opportunity to support themselves with dignity while pursuing their PhD research.”

ENDS

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