

Cardiff University announces sweeping cuts, just days after High Court injunction banning protest on campus

Henry Lee
3 July 2025

A restructuring plan at University of Cardiff means that courses in Ancient History, Religion and Theology face the axe, with teaching of German, Italian and Portuguese also targeted as “unsustainable”.

The university announced the cuts on June 18 with its “Our Academic Future Business Case”. It wrote to students claiming the plans were “designed to improve your student experience and make our university financially and academically sustainable.”

Earlier, in January, the university had mooted plans to cut 400 jobs and close courses in nursing, music, modern languages and ancient history. Cardiff’s revised plans will see student numbers reduced in each, with the loss of 220 full time equivalent jobs, or nearly 12 percent of the workforce.

No area of the university will be left unscathed:

- Three full time equivalent posts (FTE) have already been lost from the School of Music, with another six planned for elimination in the next academic year, almost 40 percent of the workforce.
- The School of Modern Languages has eliminated 7.6 FTE through “voluntary” redundancies and plans to cut 17 FTE more in future years, over 45 percent in total.
- 26 FTE roles have been cut in nursing, with more cuts planned in coming years. Another 23 FTE positions have been lost at the School of Medicine, and 13 in Biosciences.
- In chemistry, mathematics and computer science 13 FTE were lost, and 14.4 FTE will be cut from engineering in the next three years.
- The School of English, Communication and Philosophy cut 14.4 FTE through a combination of “voluntary” job cuts, expiry of fixed-term contracts, and reducing workers’ hours.
- Almost 24 FTE were cut from Cardiff Business School, with another 24 FTE saved because they were “ringfenced to deliver new commitments in Kazakhstan [where the university has a campus]”.

The “Business Case” sets targets for each department to increase the student-staff ratio and reduce optional modules available to students, claiming the current level of subject choice means “unsustainable levels of optionality”.

Cardiff’s cuts were announced on June 18, just days after a High Court Injunction targeting protest against the Gaza genocide on university property. The injunction means that students and staff must seek permission for any protest, occupation or other form of assembly, including literature stalls, or risk a two-year prison sentence.

The injunction lasts until July 2026, covering the entire first academic year after the cuts. The university sought the injunction to repress protests over its complicity in the Gaza genocide, but it could also be used against striking workers picketing their workplaces in defence of their jobs, and students protesting cuts to their education.

Opposition stifled

In March, University and College Union (UCU) members at Cardiff voted by 83 percent to strike against the planned cuts, on a 64 percent turnout. But on April 30, just days before the first 24-hour strike, the UCU, Unite and Unison unions put a proposal to their members cancelling industrial action in return for a temporary withdrawal of compulsory redundancies until the end of 2025.

The equivalent of 151 full-time posts had already been cut through “voluntary” resignations, but the minor revisions were promoted by the UCU as a victory. The Media and Communications Officer of the union’s Cardiff branch told the Stalinist *Morning Star* in May that “Cardiff University has blinked”.

But the UCU’s strike cancellation gave university management a free hand to press ahead with cuts. The UCU’s declaration of victory over no compulsory redundancies in 2025 is effectively meaningless, since courses marked for closure need to be “taught out”. The planned cuts will fall in future years. The total number of job losses was reduced by clawing savings elsewhere in the budget. Cuts to mathematics were only withdrawn as the department received a £500,000

external grant.

The university's original plan to end nursing courses by 2028 would have breached its contract with NHS Wales to supply trained nurses, incurring a £5 million penalty, according to *Nation Cymru*. This raises the possibility that the course will be eliminated after the contract expires in 2029.

Labour's cuts nationally

Over 5,000 job cuts across UK universities have already been announced this year, with thousands more in the pipeline, according to figures from the University and College Union (UCU). But the UCU is isolating struggles on a campus-by-campus basis, allowing major cuts to proceed, while citing agreements negotiated over no forced redundancies to call off action.

After long-running strikes, **Newcastle University** announced it was no longer seeking compulsory redundancies, celebrated by the UCU as "a big win for all those across the UK challenging job losses in higher education". But as *Times Higher Education* reported, the threat of compulsory redundancies was lifted after Newcastle met its target of cutting £20 million through voluntary redundancy and redeployment.

The UCU's **University of Dundee** branch posted a message last week on social media announcing there would be "NO REDUNDANCIES at the University of Dundee." This is entirely untrue, with Dundee's Principal confirming there is still a voluntary severance scheme which will cut 300 jobs. This is less than the 700 originally planned, after Dundee received a £40 million bailout from the Scottish Government.

The UCU has stated that universities should "work with us or face sustained disruption". The union is happy to help universities make whatever cuts they like without "disruption" provided they offer the fig leaf of consultation and a "voluntary" scheme.

Higher education workers are facing a jobs massacre.

Lancaster University is seeking to cut 400 jobs, the equivalent of almost one-fifth of academic staff. **Cardiff Metropolitan University** is planning between 30 and 50 compulsory redundancies.

Bangor University is seeking 78 more job cuts and says it has made "good progress" on cutting the 200 jobs it announced at the start of the year.

Birmingham City University has put 342 workers in professional services at risk of redundancy, telling them to apply for one of 320 newly advertised positions, according to the *THE*. It is effectively a mass fire-and-rehire.

The **University of Bristol** is planning massive cuts to its Centre for Academic Language and Development, which runs pre-sessional courses preparing international students for

graduate courses.

Fully funded public education, not marketisation and cuts!

Cardiff University's cuts have exposed a management committed to running the university like a profitable business. At a Senedd committee on June 12, chair of the university's Council, Patrick Younge, emphasised that "universities do not have a viable business model" and were losing money through research and inadequate tuition fees for home students.

He held up the appalling state of student accommodation and crumbling facilities as an argument against spending money on staff, insisting that the university's £140 million in reserves "is to invest in the future of the university" and that "the rest of the university," i.e. workers, "need to learn to live much more within our means, because we haven't been".

Staff were rightly enraged by Younge's claim that faculty consultation had somehow endorsed the University's ideas "which I think everybody bought into... that Cardiff University needs to be a slightly smaller, more focused university with better experiences for staff and students." He added, "I think everybody buys the vision, but nobody wants their bit to be the bit that gets smaller".

In fact staff across the university voted overwhelming to strike, and not a single member of the university's Senate voted in favour of the proposals.

The universities funding crisis has been produced by decades of underfunding by Tory and Labour governments alike, under the banner of marketisation. Labour's anti-immigrant measures are also severely impacting universities. The National Centre for Universities and Business reported last month that recent changes to international student dependent visas "have already led to an 85% reduction in issued visas and a significant decrease in international fee income, estimated at £1.1bn over two years."

Against the UCU's efforts to negotiate with university managements over where the cuts should fall, staff and students must take matters into their own hands and organise united action to demand the abolition of tuition fees and a fully funded public education system. Rank-and-file committees of students and staff must be created to launch a fightback, breaking the grip of the financial oligarchy and ending the subordination of education to the capitalist market, in the fight for socialism.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact