

2009-04-24

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Recommended Citation

Flynn, Sean, "Funding Crisis of Third-Level Colleges Set to Deepen" (2009). *Media*. 42.
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News

Funding crisis of third-level colleges set to deepen

Sean Flynn

Fri, Apr 24, 2009, 01:00

EDUCATION:THE FUNDING crisis facing third-level colleges is set to deepen as a result of cuts detailed in the revised estimates yesterday.

The figures come only weeks before the Government considers an options paper prepared by Minister for Education Batt O’Keeffe that this could herald the end of “free-fees”.

Grants for current spending for all third-level colleges is cut.

TCD is cut from €101 million to €93 million; UCD from €136 to €128 million; UCC from €90 million to €85 million; NUI Maynooth from €33 million to €32 million; UL from €63 million to €57 million; DCU from €54 to €49 million; and NUI Galway from €79 million to €75 million.

The figures also show the huge dependence of third-level colleges on exchequer funding paid by the State in lieu of free fees.

UCC, for example, receives €44 million in lieu of fees but even this figure has been trimmed back from €47 million last year.

There has been speculation that the Government may scale down or even abandon plans for a new €1 billion DIT complex at Grangegorman in north Dublin. However, funding for the project remains on track until 2010 at least.

Other features in the estimates include;

A 14 per cent cut in funding for buildings, equipment and furnishing of national schools;

A 50 per cent cut in the Department of Education budget for consultancy services;

A 31 per cent cut in support for educational disadvantage initiatives supported by dormant account funding.

Last night the INTO said the published figures exposed the myth of increased investment in school buildings.

“Funding for primary school buildings is being cut at a time when the need for new schools and classrooms has never been greater,” said INTO general secretary John Carr.

“With more than 10,000 extra pupils set to enrol in primary schools next September, it beggars belief that funding for buildings is to be cut.”

He added: “Telling teachers that Government was ‘giving particular priority to the capital programme’ when at the same time cutting the budget by 14 per cent is spin of the highest order.”

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