

Cuts to the higher education teaching grant and removal of London weighting

A briefing from the University and College Union – February 2021

- Any cut in funding will inevitably **increase job insecurity** in London higher education.
- Cuts likely to lead to proposals for **job cuts and redundancies**.
- The argument of this being a '**levelling up**' exercise is **unrealistic and unconvincing**.
- Money to other regions is not new funding but funding being removed from the capital.
- The decision was a **surprise to the sector**, and initially presented as a fait accompli.
- The **timing is appalling**, in the middle of a pandemic that has impacted negatively on universities, with pressure to deal with student demands for rebates and refunds, and a wide range of extraordinary arrangements having to be put in place.

Changes to the higher education teaching grant and the negative impact on London universities

Last month the Department for Education published a variety of consultation responses, reports and policy documents on issues ranging from further education reforms to higher education funding. Amongst these announcements was a **guidance letter** to the Office for Students on the teaching grant (T-Grant) for 2021-22. This letter includes **cuts to the teaching grant** and pledges to '**remove weightings for London providers** from across the T-Grant, including students attending courses in London supplement, and weightings within the student premium'.

This surprise decision to cut funding for London universities is being pitched as part of the government's levelling up agenda but the decision to cut funding by 13.7% will result in around **£64 million being taken from London** and redistributed across England. There is no guarantee, however, that it will be given to the institutions most in need of funding. This seems to many in the sector as more a case of levelling down than providing new funding to level up.

London is the UK's most expensive city to live, study and work in and as such **London weighting is not additional money but a way to bridge the gap** and ensure high quality education can be delivered to an often more diverse community than in the rest of the country.

To cut funding for universities that are working hard to widen access and participation across London will hit students and staff from some of the most diverse, and often disadvantaged communities. It is not fair to **hit them harder, purely because they live in London.**

Universities across the country are already struggling financially due to the current pandemic and many, including a number in London, are proposing to cut jobs. We are gravely concerned that cuts to funding during this pandemic could result in institutions looking to make further cuts to staff and courses.

We are disappointed that the government chose to push ahead with this decision without consulting the staff, students and institutions that will be negatively impacted and we are calling on MPs of all parties to encourage the Department for Education and Treasury to look again at the cuts that will hit the sector hard as we recover from the current pandemic.

University and College Union key concerns:

- any cut in funding will inevitably **increase job insecurity in London higher education**, and is likely to lead to proposals for redundancies at a time when universities are already cutting jobs
- the argument of this being a '**levelling up**' **exercise is unrealistic**. By taking money from London to spread amongst the rest of England, the government is simply levelling down
- the decision was an **unwelcome surprise for the sector**. It has come out of nowhere, with no consultation
- the **timing is appalling**, in the middle of a pandemic when university funding is in a questionable state already
- universities are already having to deal with pressures of online learning, student demands for rebates and refunds, and with a wide range of extraordinary arrangements having to be put in place.

How you can help

We are asking politicians from all parties to put pressure on the government to reverse this decision and provide a proper funding to protect London's universities against damaging losses.

Helpful actions could include:

- **writing to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chancellor of the Exchequer** to raise your concerns about the impact of the cuts on your constituents and universities in your region
- publicly call for the government to **reverse these cuts** and ensure higher education is properly supported in our city

- joining other London MPs to campaign for adequate funding for London universities
- sharing the concerns of staff and students on social media to raise awareness of these issues using the **#SaveLondonWeighting** hashtag
- **get in touch with UCU direct** if you are able to support our campaign or would like additional information.

Further information

If you would like further information about anything contained in this briefing or assistance with work around post-16 education please contact Will Pickering at wpickering@ucu.org.uk or on 07581 186517.

About UCU

The University and College Union (UCU) is the UK's largest trade union for academic and academic-related staff in higher and further education, representing over 100,000 members working in universities, colleges, training providers, adult education settings and prisons.