



Dear Mike Reader, Lucy Rigby, Lee Barron, Stuart Andrew, Rosie Wrighting, Sarah Bool, Gen Kitchen,

### **Proposed restructure to the University of Northampton**

We are writing to draw your attention to the plans for restructuring which are being proposed by senior leadership at the University of Northampton (UON). These proposals, labelled RISE (Resilience & Institutional Sustainability Exercise) were drawn up based on recommendations by KPMG and will lead to £12,973,894 in savings by 2029, but by this date UON would still be operating a deficit of £2,613,106. RISE affects all areas of UON, with limited consideration of the long-term human and social damage that reducing learning provision and the University portfolio will have on the county of Northamptonshire.

The 'requirement' for such cuts has been presented as resulting largely from lower recruitment of international and UK students to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Other universities face similar challenges, exacerbated by VISA requirement changes which have deterred international applicants from studying in the UK. However, the situation at UON has been worsened by the terms of the repayment plan agreed with the Treasury-owned Public Works Loan Board for the Waterside Campus, which opened in 2018. The terms of the loan were agreed by previous UON leadership with little regard to future consequences, and the financial benefits of Waterside, as a space for study, work and sociability, have not yet been maximised.

If RISE goes ahead remaining staff will shoulder heavier workloads increasing their susceptibility to physical and wellbeing issues. This may impact the ability to attract talent and hinder the University's ability to retain quality staff. Students will have fewer subjects to choose from, may have to study in larger classes, and will likely have less contact time with staff. Most UON students take out loans to cover course fees and substantial numbers undertake paid employment to cover subsistence costs.<sup>1</sup> If universities are to be funded largely through fees which students must borrow to cover, it cannot be acceptable for universities to make substantial changes to degree programs after students have enrolled on them, as happened at UON in 2023/4, 2024/5, and which risks happening in 2025/26.

Shrinking UON will also limit the social and economic contributions it can make across Northamptonshire. In 2021-22 UK universities generated between £33.9m and £41.6m in additional revenue due to purchases by universities and their employees, and supported 77,500 jobs through knowledge exchange programmes.<sup>2</sup> At UON 46% of students are the first members of their family to attend university, so will be higher earners than their relatives and peers, with those graduating in 2021-22 predicted to contribute £49,000 more to the Treasury across their working lives than those who did not attend university.<sup>3</sup> In 2021-22 overseas students alone made net contributions to

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<sup>1</sup> Save the Student (2024). 'Student living costs in the UK 2024'. Accessed 1December 2024.

<https://www.savethestudent.org/money/student-budgeting/what-do-students-spend-their-money-on.html>

<sup>2</sup> London Economics (2024). 'The economic impact of higher education, teaching, research and innovation'.

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/economic-impact-higher-education>

<sup>3</sup> Universities UK (2023). 'The benefits and costs of international higher education students to the UK economy'.

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/universities-uk-international/insights-and-publications/uuki-publications/costs-and-benefits-international-higher-0>



Northampton North of £46.2m; to Northampton South of £66.0m, and to South Northamptonshire of £43.0m.<sup>4</sup>

It also must be noted that the timing of the redundancy consultation will cause significant anxiety to effected staff over the holiday prior and prevent them from relaxing and recuperating from a stressful period. Furthermore, staff who are made redundant may have difficulty finding alternative employment in 2025 as the labour market is predicted to remain competitive<sup>5</sup>, potentially increasing the number who are economically inactive in Northamptonshire.

Whilst its pleasing to learn that the UON was recognised for its impact to the local economy during a Commons debate on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December, urgent action is needed to ensure this positive contribution is not lost.

The purpose of this letter is thus to ask you:

- to assist UON leadership in negotiating a new repayment plan for Waterside with the Treasury-owned Public Works Loan Board.
- to lobby the government to remove the restrictions on international student visas.
- to work with stakeholders across the county to maximise the financial capabilities of UON.
- to push for renewed debate in Parliament on how HE should be funded in England.

If the UK higher education sector is allowed to substantially contract in the immediate future, then it will be the result of a political choice to allow it to do so. For the majority of students and some staff, this will be the first political event to significantly impact them in their adult lives, something which they are likely to remember when they are voting decades into the future.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read this letter, and we look forward to working with you to protect the only university in Northamptonshire, an organisation which has a vital role to play in the current and future social and economic development of the county.

Yours Sincerely,

University of Northampton University and College Union Branch and UNISON West  
Northamptonshire Local Government Branch



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<sup>4</sup> Universities UK (2023). 'The benefits and costs of international higher education students to the UK economy'. <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/universities-uk-international/insights-and-publications/uuki-publications/costs-and-benefits-international-higher-0>

<sup>5</sup> Kennedy, J (2024). 'Indeed's 2025 UK Jobs & Hiring Trends Report: Labour Market Could Prove the UK Economy's Achilles Heel'. <https://www.hiringlab.org/uk/blog/2024/12/10/indeed-2025-uk-jobs-and-hiring-trends-report/>