

UWS Union – All Student Meeting on Staff Cuts

Date: 12 June 2025

Location: Teams

Chair: Union President

Minutes Taken By: Eilidh Riddell

Attendance: 185

Introduction

The Union President opened the meeting, sharing reassurances received from a recent meeting with the University Principal and Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Students were assured they would be protected throughout their studies and would be supported to complete their courses, even if low student numbers resulted in changes such as transferring to another university. However, exactly what will happen is unknown right now as UWS continues to work out the details of their plans.

Key contributing factors to the funding cuts include the Scottish Funding Council requesting funding back from spaces UWS have not filled, and the impact of the cyber-attack on university finance. UWS claims to be making several efforts to save costs, such as renting unused spaces, transnational education, and renting campus spaces for filming, which also brings benefit to creative industries students.

The university is also reviewing purchasing and professional services processes. Staff-student ratios are being scrutinised, with the university opting not to rehire where student numbers are low.

Questions & Responses

Completing Degrees

No courses have been confirmed for closure yet. Students currently enrolled will be accommodated; however, from 2026–27, it is likely that some courses will no longer accept new students.

Courses and Faculties Affected

At this stage we don't know precisely which courses will be affected and we do not have any timescales. The most affected areas will be Education and Social Sciences. Some staff have begun receiving letters about being at risk of redundancy, though no final decisions have been made.

Job Losses Per School:

- Education and Social Sciences (ESS): 35.7 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff
- Business and Creative Industries (BCI): 19.5 FTE staff
- Computing, Engineering, and Physical Sciences (CEPS): 18 FTE staff
- Health and Life Sciences (HLS): 2 FTE staff

Postgraduate Studies

All currently enrolled postgraduates are expected to be supported through their studies. Further clarification is being sought by the Students' Union on exactly how the current climate will impact postgraduates' supervision, which relies heavily on the specific expertise of individual lecturers. We would expect all master's students to be able to complete their degree at UWS since the courses are short term.

Course and Module Cuts

From conversations with UWS senior management, we believe that eventually, some courses will be cut due to no and/or low number of applications. Some under-selected optional modules may be removed.

Strike Action

Staff unions have conducted indicative ballots showing strong support for strike action, but no formal ballots have occurred yet. The Staff Unions have 6 months from the indicative ballot to hold the formal ballot. Any possible strikes may align with high-impact periods such as enrolment and marking (as we are seeing at other universities such as Edinburgh), but until the Unions hold their votes, we will not be able to confirm specific times. Other Staff Union actions include working to rule and holding successful votes of no confidence in the Principal and the University's Senior Leadership Team.

Consultation Concerns

So far there has been no formal consultation with students by UWS's Organisational Change Process team. The Staff Unions feel that they have not been meaningfully consulted during this process.

Campus-Specific Impact

The impact of the cuts will vary by campus depending on course location – for example, Computer Engineering is a Paisley-specific course. So, if an affected

course is specific to one campus, that campus will be affected differently. It is impossible at this stage to say which campuses will be most affected.

Academic Quality Concerns

Students raised concerns that staff redundancies will result in higher workload as well as low morale in teaching staff, therefore, the quality of teaching is likely to be affected. So far UWS has not addressed these concerns, but your Student Presidents will add this to the questions to ask.

Why ESS is Hardest Hit

A decline in student numbers and loss of over 2,000 funded places over the last five years (many from ESS and BCI) is a major factor.

Accreditation Risk

The Students' Union does not currently know whether the accreditation of courses is at risk. However, we would expect that if you came onto a course because it was accredited and it stops being accredited before you finish, you have been miss-sold, and the Union Advice Team will be able to help you, as the University will be obligated to give you the degree you signed up for.

Agreements with Other Universities

If UWS is unable to facilitate the completion of your course, you are likely to be offered a move to a similar course at UWS, or alternatively, UWS may liaise with other institutions to guarantee acceptance onto an equivalent course to complete your studies. If a move to another specific university is suggested, it will be for UWS to negotiate on your behalf with that institution – students would not be expected to do this themselves.

Support Services

Current cuts affect academic staff only. However, professional services (including disability, learning support and accommodation) will be reviewed over the next eighteen months. Support service staff vacancies already account for around 75% of the vacancies which have not been re-filled in recent academic years.

3. Student Demands

It was agreed that Your Student Presidents should create a list of demands to place on the university to ensure that students are not negatively affected by the current conditions. So far, these include:

Students should not face a financial burden for any changes made to their studies as a result of the university restructuring. (For example, additional travel costs if their campus of study changes).

There should be clear communication in plenty of time with students about course changes and support options.

Students also wished to know what they could do to support staff who may be at risk. Your Student Presidents will work with the Staff Unions and share call to actions for support when they can.

4. Conclusion

The Union President reaffirmed their commitment to supporting students and advocated for transparency and accountability from the University. They noted that a dedicated page on the Students' Union website will provide updates and encouraged students to stay connected via the Union's social media.

Meeting closed.