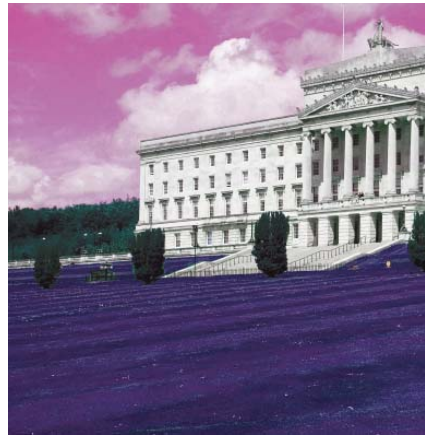
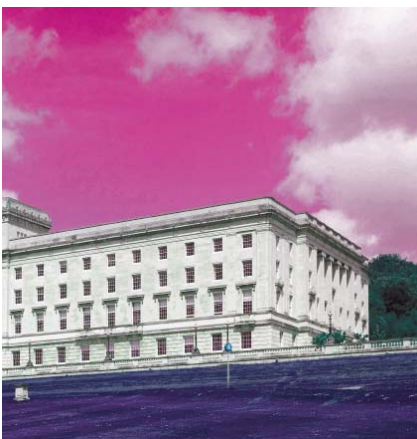


Assembly Candidates

Where do you stand
on further and higher
education?



The new Assembly faces massive challenges as a result of the Westminster Comprehensive Spending Review. But election candidates need to be more than voting fodder for the outgoing Executive. The Executive's draft budget is about cutting public services – but we need more investment in public services and support for measures to develop skills, education and training. **The draft budget for the Department of Employment and Learning will have devastating consequences for students and their families and for colleges and universities.**

Higher education

- The DEL budget states: ‘Student fees will need to increase if capacity and service quality in that sector is to be maintained.’ What it proposes is to remove state funding for teaching in higher education and replace it with student fees – that means students and their families forking out to fill the funding gap or incurring a lifetime of debt. Where’s the fairness in that? Higher education is a social good from which we all benefit – the state has a duty to make it affordable and accessible.

Do you agree?

Forcing students to pay for their education will restrict access and lower participation. Higher education will become once again the preserve of the rich



- The higher education budget is to be cut year on year for the next four years by £7.5m; £22.5m; £46m and £68m. Our HE colleges and universities cannot sustain current levels of service with such massive cuts. Teaching and support jobs will be lost. Courses will be cut as institutions make efficiency savings of 22% over the next four years. Students will fund their teaching through increased tuition fees. **Do you support that?**
- On 9 December 2010, Northern Ireland’s MPs, DUP, SDLP, Alliance and one independent voted against raising student fees. Sinn Fein has also stated its opposition to increased fees. Yet the outgoing Executive has put in place a budget

based on increased fees. **Do you support that?** Forcing students to pay for their education will restrict access and lower participation. University education will become dependent upon an individual’s ability to pay. That will deter people from less well-off backgrounds accessing higher education and leave talents underdeveloped – that will not help economic regeneration. Higher education will become once again the preserve of the rich. **Do you support that?**

Further education

- The DEL budget will cut further education by £4m for each of the next four years. The sector has been subjected to massive ‘efficiency’ measures. Each college in Northern Ireland this year is sacking teachers, increasing class sizes and cutting teaching time to students. More cuts will bring more redundancies for teachers and more students short-changed. Quality education needs proper resourcing. Our economy needs a skilled workforce qualified to international standards – cutting provision is damaging to our future. **Do do you support that?**
- Academic studies show teachers are the most important resource in a student’s development – yet across Northern Ireland teachers are being sacked by college managers who see their colleges as businesses rather than educational providers. In Belfast, over 200 teachers are being sacked to address a deficit and to create an ‘investment fund’. The North-West is sacking 15 teachers, South West four, Northern five, Southern 12 and South East 96 part-time lecturers. The business incorporation model focuses solely on financial outcomes – it is a

failure and should be scrapped. The educational welfare of students must be restored as the primary purpose of our FE colleges. **Do you support that?**

- Education maintenance allowances (EMAs) are to be scrapped. This payment has helped thousands of our most disadvantaged young learners stay in education. Scrapping it will result in more young people becoming NEETS. **Do you support that?** One lecturer told UCU: ‘Up to 40 % of our students rely on EMA – if that goes, so will hundreds of courses and jobs.’

Cuts in living standards

The draft budget will not only cut jobs but it will cut living standards. Pay will be frozen for the next two years while inflation will greatly increase household bills. People who work in further and higher education will be forced to accept real cuts in living standards. Whatever the reasons for the so called ‘credit crunch’ it is grossly unfair that workers in education and their families should have to bear the costs for many years into the future. But cutting pay in real terms is foolish – it lowers the amount of spending in the economy and puts further downward pressure on jobs and services.

Do you support that?

Cuts in research and innovation

Because of paying for increased unemployment DEL is likely to cut other services to enhance skills:

- 300 PhD places for leading scientists are to be scrapped.



Scrapping of innovation funding will lead to more teaching and research jobs being lost

- Funding of adult apprenticeships will be withdrawn.
- Scrapping of innovation funding will lead to more teaching and research jobs being lost.
- High level cross border research projects are being axed.

The cuts outlined in DEL’s draft budget will harm our international reputation, lessen our chances of inward investment and damage the life chances of thousands of our young people.

UCU asks candidates to make a stand against mortgaging the future of generations of our young people.

For further information contact:

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Note: The University and College Union (UCU) is the largest and leading trade union representing members in further education, higher education and the lifelong

learning sectors in Northern Ireland. The union has 120,000 members across the UK and 4,200 in Northern Ireland. UCU campaigns for excellence in teaching and research and the promotion of social justice through access for all to good-quality education and to truly democratic governance within institutions.