

Press Statement 16.05.2019.



Today, Keele University and College Union is releasing its Position Paper on the Universities Financial Sustainability Plan ([executive summary here](#)).

We represent almost 500 academic, academic related, and professional services staff at Keele University. Many of us are long-term colleagues who live and have raised children on the campus, or in Newcastle-under-Lyme or Stoke-on-Trent. We believe in the unique attributes of campus living, interdisciplinary scholarship and stellar research that Keele has offered since the vision of Lord Lindsay 70 years ago. It is no exaggeration to say that we love this University, and regret that the current situation has caused us to take action.

As a collective voice, UCU, the Student Union, Keele Postgraduate Association, UNISON and UNITE have opposed the current staff cuts as counterproductive and unlikely to achieve their aims. (joint statement here)

The Position Paper explains why. It acknowledges that the need for financial restructuring is real, but demonstrates that Keele's financial position is the result not of staff costs, tuition fee freezes, or long-known changes in demography.

Indeed, the University's own publicly available accounts demonstrate that staff costs have been falling, fee income has continued to grow, and student numbers are healthy. The University is severing staff at a time of record income and student numbers, which have grown significantly in the last five years.

Instead, the university's financial figures reveal that indebtedness has soared, so that even with a rising income, operating cash surpluses are not sufficient to service the debt burden, and the University has been forced to rely on other, one-off sources to avoid breaking bank covenants.

The debt has been accrued largely to pay for new buildings on campus, effectively a speculative gamble that relied on student numbers increasing by an ambitious 30%, as planned in the 2015 strategy document. The failure to plan for even a modest shortfall in this growth was further exacerbated by the collapse – mid-construction – of some building projects, leaving holes on campus as well as in University finances. Staking Keele's financial future on achieving such growth in a short timeframe was an irresponsible gamble that will affect the education of our students and led directly to the current staff cuts.

It is for these reasons, along with the failure of both senior management and the Vice-Chancellor to acknowledge responsibility, that UCU members have concluded that the current management team no longer hold our confidence.

Keele University and College Union