

Student Letter to the Department of Higher and Further Education

TCDSU has been grappling with the outcomes of austerity policies forced on us by the government for far too long. We know the facts; youth homelessness is on the rise, one in ten young people in Ireland have attempted suicide, and our College can't afford extra teaching staff; let alone counsellors. Our officers see students sleeping in cars, couchsurfing with friends or dropping out of education day in and day out. We have students from unsafe housing conditions begging us to get them on campus when we know there is no room at the inn. And staff are doing no better than students as they are forced to commute for hours, are unable to afford groceries and are quitting life-long careers in academia.

These policies are imposed from above by Fianna Fail and Fine Gael for over 10 years. This exact system that casualizes and outsources the workforce and puts staff on insecure contracts is the same one that hikes fees, rents, cuts welfare services and refuses to grant postgraduate researchers workers' rights and a living stipend. This is because the right to an education and the free exchange of ideas through research has been seen as secondary to the profit motive. It is so much easier for the government to sell out our universities and Ireland's youth than do their jobs. And that's why we are organising.

We are organising because we are tired of the government taking the easy path. We can no longer afford to be quiet about the terrible conditions currently impacting students and staff that are breaking the futures of Ireland's youth; so we are speaking out.

We demand:

- Counseling to meet 1000:1 ratio (17.5 million) and permanent state investment on this front (6 million)
- Increase in Core Grant to plug the 307 million euro gap
- Abolish tuition fees and move to a fully free education system
- Seize vacant housing, restore eviction ban and rent controls to affordability (1/3rd of national minimum wage income per month should be the monthly rent)
- End precarity in universities, both academic and professional workers including PGRs
- Democratize the university and bring it under student and staff control

With best regards,

Trinity College Dublin Students' Union