

STUDENT WORKER FIGHTBACK

Issue 2: September 2026

Bulletin of the Campaign Against Cuts, Fees, and Debt

STOP THE CUTS! DEFEND EDUCATION!

**Labour conference demo:
1.30pm Sunday 27th September.
Keel Wharf (outside ACC/
Exhibition Centre) Liverpool**

The Campaign Against Cuts, Fees, and Debt (CACFD), a coalition of combative groups from over 20 universities, is off to a strong start after our founding conference this summer. Students and staff from universities around the country came together to organise the fight against the relentless attacks on education. Now, as the academic year begins again, we will be hitting Freshers' week hard by distributing our message to staff and students at various Freshers' events and ongoing strikes. Cuts are destroying our education and livelihoods.

Take first what has been done to staff. In the last 18 months, over 15,000 jobs have been cut and up to 25,000 more are at risk, and to compound that, we have perhaps the worst job market in decades. The staff who remain are facing greater workloads, heightened stress, and shrinking resources. They are on their knees, burdened with job insecurity and underfunding. The unions, divided by sectors and professions, have been unable to put up an effective fight against any of it. The "respectable professions" many university staff have dedicated their lives to seem to be getting hunted to extinction.

Then we must look at what has been sold to students. This year, half a million new students will walk onto campuses which are substantially different from what was promised to them since they were young. Universities are no longer a secure path to

great jobs. Frozen maintenance loans and thresholds mean more and more students are working longer hours to support their studies, with tuition fees set to rise every year! The courses they will take are worse than those taken by students before them, with worse job prospects than ever before. They now have a restricted selection of modules and fewer staff to support their growing workload. Students pay enormous fees for the privilege of watching their universities crumble, and then they leave their courses with mountains of debt, all for jobs that no longer exist. It seems there is not much of a future in the current economic system.

The same hand does both. Our universities crumble under the weight of apathetic bosses who only see us as numbers on a spreadsheet, and behind those bosses stands a state that sets the fees, freezes the loans and guts the funding, making the cuts inevitable. The state would rather funnel funds into arms, to facilitate genocide around the globe. The state closes your department and spends £182 million on the Defence Universities Alliance. The sacking of school and university staff and the indebting of students are the same crime, committed by the same perpetrators against the same working class.

We will also take action at the Labour Party Conference at the end of September. Education Secretary Lucy Powell said that fees and funding are a priority issue, and yet the government have done nothing on this since Burnham's coronation. Powell said she

"can't make any promises", while staff are on their knees burdened with underfunding and students feel their futures sifting through their fingers. We protest to show the government that their apathy and lack of action on this issue will not be tolerated.

What we need is to initiate conversations with our other students and staff, not to just lecture them on what they have lost, but because those conversations are the first step to us realising our power itself. The student working nights to cover rent, the lecturer on a rolling contract, the professional services worker whose whole team has been placed at risk, are not fighting separate battles. They are of the same class, divided by the institutions in place. We must build our movement by shouting our message loud and clear. There is no alternative to staff and students striking as one, as a class.

No cuts! No fees! No debt!

Students and Workers, unite and fight!

By CACFD Steering Group

Conference Report

We gathered in Sheffield for the Anti-Cuts Conference on 1 August, which had been organised by a network of anti-cuts activists from around the UK. More than 15 universities were represented by 38 activists.

Anti-cuts groups have formed at a number of universities. Our task is to link up these groups and spread the movement to more campuses, so that organising lessons can be shared and joint days of action can be taken against university managements and the government.

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We see ourselves as intervening in the existing current, and seeking to establish from that a new organisation that will prosecute the campaign against cuts, and fees, and for funding restoration.

Our Programme:

- Oppose all cuts, be they to staffing, courses, student support or otherwise.
- Demand the abolition of tuition fees, for all students home

and international, education at all levels of society is a social good.

- Demand the introduction of a universal maintenance grant, paid at the level of the living wage.
- Demand the restoration of funding across all constituent parts of the UK and NI. In Scotland the precept that is paid for home students has not risen since 2008.
- Demand the abolition of fees

Local Reports

University of Dundee

20 months ago UoD revealed a £30m deficit. Since then, the uni has lost 959 staff members, seen all executive roles replaced, and received £62 million* in an unprecedented public bailout.

UoDSAC launched in protest of the 2nd voluntary severance scheme, disrupting principal's question time with 390 posters representing 390 lost jobs.

June's shocking announcement of 190 more redundancies grew SAC to 150 members – leading to a SAC-UCU-TUC demo in September with 250 attendees. SAC will stand with the UCU on their 5 weeks of strike action, ensure staff-student solidarity, and oppose all of management's cuts.

Leicester

Little has happened at UoL after the 31-day strike ended in May. Despite our efforts, dozens of jobs were gutted, while Modern Languages and Film closed entirely. However, one silver lining was a staff-student demo at DMU, which brought UoL and DMU students and staff together.

Future cuts are certain down the line - and could happen as soon as the oncoming academic year. Unfortunately, cross-sector unity is still incredibly lacking.

University of Edinburgh

University management has planned £140 million in cuts. Across the board: voluntary severances, mass redundancies, cuts

to every department, and huge divestment of funds towards arms and military spending. The university is preempting huge drops in funding from declining international student numbers – the real cash-cows to be bled dry for the Scottish education system. Staff have been on strike recurrently for the last 12 months, scheduled to resume from September 28, but UCU is neither militant nor embedded within the wider workers' movement.

University of Northumbria

Management have relentlessly battered staff with cuts to their pension throughout 2026. Uni management admits to having healthier finances to much of the sector, and yet they continue to gouge staff's wages, pensions and free time. After costing the uni £50 million with the North East Space Skills and Research, management now plans £25 million in cuts before December. Recent years at Northumbria have thus been bleak for staff; Northumbria students want quality teaching, but this can only be achieved by increasing staff job satisfaction at the university, not with vanity building projects.

University of Nottingham

UoN is conducting a multi-year cuts programme called 'Future Nottingham' as they cling to their place in the Russell Group. 300+ administrators went through voluntary redundancy last year, and now it's 'the turn' of academics and technicians, with 500FTE staff targeted. Moreover, depart-

ments such as Music and Languages close completely. The University Council will make a final decision on 1st October. UCU has voted to strike for the whole autumn term if there are any compulsory redundancies.

- For a society where education is for satisfying needs, not profits. For a reduction of working hours for all staff.

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University of Cardiff

Near the end of last year, a student campaign thwarted (for now) a UoC plot to quietly replace the third floor of the uni's largest library with new teaching spaces, which would have put thousands of books at risk, including significant items in the Salisbury Collection, which our uni has held for over 100 years. We are currently registering the newly formed Cardiff Students Against Austerity as a society.

University of Glasgow

UoG is facing widespread cuts and a uni-wide voluntary severance scheme. Social Sciences and Education faces disproportionate cuts, with Social and Political Sciences having the Graduate Teaching Assistant budget cut by 62%. Senior management have warned that further "reshaping" might take place, indicating worse cuts to come.

Royal Academy of Music

The financial situation at RAoM remains ahead of many other universities, largely due to public arts funding and private donations. However, at a time when students are struggling financially, £30m has been donated for building renovations, including a new site purchased on London

City Island. With international students taking on £120,000 of debt for an undergraduate education, SU funding cuts of 10%, astronomical London housing prices, and lack of entry-level music jobs, a world-class education is increasingly unreachable for young working-class musicians. Positively, high levels of unionisation amongst music students and the example set by Unison strikers at the Royal Northern College of Music in March show there is still fight left in the sector.

University of Bath

Bath hasn't seen the same cuts as other universities. The big issue on campus for non-academic workers is the decade and a half of below-inflation pay-rises. Unite won a £1000 pay increase for the majority of workers over a two-year period and has pushed

the University to negotiate higher pay.

The three campus unions - UCU, Unite, and Unison - work closely together on a range of issues, including holding a joint rally with staff networks and the SU opposing attacks on trans rights.

Goldsmiths

Management announced £22 million worth of cuts to both academic and professional services in March 2026. The local UCU branch began a marking and assessment boycott in May, to which management responded by cutting 100% of participating staff's pay. This resulted in a strike declaration in early June, which is ongoing and is currently in its 14th week. No motion to discontinue the strike as the Autumn term begins. In April, the student campaign 'Free Goldsmiths' oc-

cupied the library in support of staff. The occupation lasted for 32 days before management threatened students with suspensions and exclusions.

University of Sheffield

UoS is planning staff cuts in Materials Science, Chemistry, and East Asian Studies – and threatening more cuts in 4 other academic disciplines. The VC also announced back in June that the number of faculties would be cut from 5 to 3, which may result in more redundancies down the line. Sheffield UCU estimates that the VC has overseen over 45 uni-wide restructures since taking office in 2018. The UoS Anti-Cuts Coalition is meeting to plan our fightback against the cuts in the coming semester.

Open Submissions

Self-organisation or bust!

A year into the latest wave of resistance to cuts, we should reflect on what has happened and what it suggests for us going forwards. So far, the balance sheet is bleak (for us, not the execs). Despite our best efforts, most cuts have gone through. This only confirms what us internationalists have been saying for half a century: we will continue suffering nothing but defeats as long as we remain disunited.

Even the staff and students who already realised the need for the strike were separated. Firstly, by the walls of the unions. The bosses don't even have to bother with the 'divide' part of 'divide-and-conquer' when the unions already divide our campuses into as many as five segments, not least students who are excluded from all of them. Secondly, by not realising the need for seriously fighting together as one force, rather than just 'showing support' for each other and leaving action to someone else. Thirdly, by timingly obeying the

rules set by the bosses – which, naturally, are designed to split us up and leave us wandering down bureaucratic labyrinths – rather than coordinating with other segments of the workforce to take decisive action at the same time. Huge portions of the workforce never joined the strikes at all. Moreover, if we are not able to go beyond fighting individual university leaderships, we won't only get nowhere near challenging the root cause of the crisis, we won't even be able to fend off the attacks. Let's face it, the fat cats living in rent-free Vice Chancellor's mansions can't do anything themselves: they're just carrying out the orders of the government, which has been stripping university funding for decades at the orders of its own master, the capitalist system. Our overwhelming vote to protest outside the Labour Party conference is a great start.

Sectoral sympathy, SU societies, and trade unionism have proved insufficient for the fight we're up against. To go forward, our only option is to organise ourselves. Fortunately, we al-

ready have some practice with this. Where other forms of (dis-) organisation failed us, we set up our own anti-cuts groups to fill in. Through them students in completely different courses, political groups, and walks of life have been able to channel their energies together, and even students and staff have begun to unite. Everything hangs on whether we self-organise to unite across all union lines and sectors (academic staff, students, professional service staff, and beyond), explain to our passive co-workers and fellow students why the struggle involves them too, and form a nationwide phalanx to take the fight all the way to the state! **ZAH**

Fair capitalism?

We're all here to fight against cuts of course, but what are we fighting for? Good jobs? Fair pay? Well, we can't achieve fairness within capitalism - only the illusion of it. We shouldn't fight for better wage slavery, but instead envision a system outside of it, and build our struggle around that aim. And whilst still fighting for our rights within this system, we can't hand over control to the

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bosses to decide what's "good" or "fair" for us - instead we must make clear, concrete demands.

Raven

Militarisation on campus - The Fight Against War is One With the Fight Against Cuts!

The student movement has a long history of opposing the war industry on campus - from students opposing Vietnam in the 60s to the 2024 wave of encampments. That's going to become more and more important as the ruling class, delving into war after war as the profit well runs dry over the world, pushes more arms company integration on campus. Career fairs are full of military recruiters and weapons manufacturers, all of which are financially intertwined with our universities.

Between big surveillance payments, increased security presence, and student arrests, it's clear uni management will never budge on this issue - so it's time to change tack. We must not surrender ourselves and our fellows to the murder machine, but we must renew our theory and practice - and realign our fight on the lines of class struggle, the only philosophy that can end this institutionalized worship of slaughter.

First, we must base our analysis in the terms of class. Universities are obviously in the business of profit, but they are part of a larger system of profit-seeking - that being the system of capitalism. Within capitalism, there is always a diminishing amount of profit to make, as the threat of competition brings with it a race to the bottom, as the owning class scrapes and scraps for every last iota of profit. This leaves little room for concession, hence why cuts keep flowing and prices keep rising - and when that stops working, the ruling class turns to war, setting workers against each other to destroy lives and property to make way for new investment opportunities. Whether it's

happening in Sudan, Palestine, Ukraine, Iran, or anywhere else, the ruling class of every country are turning more and more towards war - a call no country and no government will refuse; we must not fight these wars on the lines of solidarity with nations, but solidarity with our fellow humans, against the ruling class of every country, the butchers of the world.

To reflect this in tactical terms, we need to organise not just as isolated students hoping for statements of solidarity, we need to work directly with our community on and off of campus. The struggles of staff against cuts is the same as the struggle against warmongers - for both are symptoms of capitalism's decline. Rather than pursue small targets, like campus Starbucks outlets or Coca Cola sales, we need to pour our energy into protests and DA against arms fairs or arms recruitment events - and we need to talk with staff, academic and otherwise, when we do. We have freedoms that staff don't, while staff have economic levers we can't pull directly. Talk with staff at your uni, get people together in singular spaces, and stand on the picket lines.

There is no nation worth dying for. The only war worth fighting is for our class, and we have to unite across sectors and across occupations to win - today at university, tomorrow beyond. **Bones**

Student Housing

As the almost half a million freshers arrive on campus the welcome mats are being taken away. We are now unfortunately used to stories of students arriving to find out their accommodation isn't finished, isn't the standard they were sold, isn't in the location they were offered, or that there simply isn't enough of it.

We haven't yet had the issues that faced some international students last year when arriving at

UCL were told that they university had 'ran out' of student visa sponsorships and they would have to return home, only for the home office to step in. Or in the case of Nigerian students who's currency had temporarily collapsed meaning they were unable to pay all of their fees, being deported, only again for the home office to say the universities actions were unnecessary.

For students at Bristol, the city with the UKs fastest rising cost of living and according to a recent report, the most expensive to rent in, students who contacted the Students Union were told to speak to Shelter. Record numbers of home students have been accepted to University this year, purpose built student accommodation has not kept pace with demand, and many universities no longer own their own. The constant drive of privatising has continued, with costs soaring and quality continuing to decline.

In Exeter, against all of managements own attempts, student numbers have continued to increase. Management made the decision to cut more courses and announce on the day of A Level results. The University has said that they will meet their statutory requirements to offer accommodation to those with a guaranteed place. Not much help for students who are heading to university without accommodation, where private rents outstrip even the top maintenance loan.

Shamefaced shadow tory education minister has called on the government to intervene, and they should. The Tories bare a vast amount of responsibility for the shocking state of higher education, and accommodation. Lucy Powell can and should intervene, not just in the housing crisis for students, but also the generalised crisis in higher education that has seen over 15000 jobs cut, and countless courses gone. **SC**

