# Dundee University art show becomes platform for protest against job cuts



A fine art student from Dundee's Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design is using his degree show as a platform to protest the university's plan to implement significant job cuts in response to a £35 million budget deficit. This year’s degree show, a prominent event that typically attracts thousands of visitors, will not only celebrate artistic talent but also serve as a canvas for dissent, featuring posters throughout the exhibition that convey the collective discontent of students regarding senior management's financial decisions.

Initial plans indicated that upwards of 700 staff members might lose their jobs, a figure that has since been negotiated down to around 300 full-time equivalent roles. This drastic reduction has caused considerable concern among faculty and students alike, particularly as the proposed cuts threaten to upend educational quality and stability at the institution.

The protesting students, led by the initiator of this vibrant form of activism, have collaborated with campus unions to compile a range of materials that depict the financial crisis encountered by the university. Their display aims to encapsulate not just the statistics of job loss but also the human stories behind it, including "misleading" communications from senior management, and the tangible anxiety felt among the staff and student body.

Mr Millar, the art student leading this initiative, expressed a desire for the degree show to make a lasting impact on the institution’s future. “This is an opportunity for our year to not only save the jobs and livelihoods of those who have taught and guided us but to ensure future students receive the best education possible,” he stated. His sentiments echo broader concerns raised by various stakeholders—local politicians, faculty members, and student unions—who have urged the university’s administration to reconsider its approach to managing this financial crisis.

The activism surrounding the degree show has captured the attention of prominent figures, including Maggie Chapman, the North East MSP and rector-elect of Dundee University. Chapman reiterated the essential role of art in activism and urged the university to heed the students’ message as a call for reform.

The situation reflects a wider trend within the higher education landscape in Scotland, where institutions are grappling with budget constraints and the repercussions of financial mismanagement. The University and College Union has pointed to these cuts as a form of "academic and economic vandalism," warning that they carry dire implications for both the university and the city of Dundee. The Scottish government has provided emergency funding in an attempt to alleviate some of the pressure, though continued advocacy is necessary to safeguard jobs and educational standards.

Criticism of the university's plans has intensified, with staff voices echoing concerns over the potential for compulsory redundancies—a prospect that the university has claimed will be a last resort. Nevertheless, the scale of the proposed cuts, which could see nearly one in five positions axed, has led to fears about the future viability of Dundee University.

As the DJCAD Degree Show commences on May 24 and runs until June 1, it becomes clear that this will not just be an exhibition of artistic expression but a potent act of resistance advocating for the preservation of educational integrity within the university. The collective effort of students to merge art and activism serves as both a powerful statement and a poignant reminder of the critical intersection between education, financial sustainability, and community engagement.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/politics/5252178/dundee-university-degree-show-protest/), [[2]](https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/politics/5252178/dundee-university-degree-show-protest/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/fears-scotland-scottish-government-dundee-snp-b1219993.html), [[6]](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/university-dundee-axe-632-jobs-plug-ps35-million-deficit), [[7]](https://news.sky.com/story/university-of-dundee-to-cut-over-600-jobs-to-plug-16335m-deficit-13326384)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/mar/11/dundee-university-faces-hammer-blow-amid-plans-to-cut-635-jobs), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-12675564)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/politics/5252178/dundee-university-degree-show-protest/), [[1]](https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/politics/5252178/dundee-university-degree-show-protest/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/politics/5252178/dundee-university-degree-show-protest/), [[6]](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/university-dundee-axe-632-jobs-plug-ps35-million-deficit)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/politics/5252178/dundee-university-degree-show-protest/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/politics/5252178/dundee-university-degree-show-protest/> - A fine art student at Dundee's Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design is using his degree show to protest the university's plan to cut jobs to address a £35 million budget deficit. The protest involves displaying posters throughout the two-week degree show, aiming to highlight the financial crisis and its impact on staff and students. The initiative has garnered support from campus unions and local politicians, emphasizing the importance of art in activism and the need for the university to reconsider its financial decisions.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/fears-scotland-scottish-government-dundee-snp-b1219993.html> - Dundee University has been accused of 'academic and economic vandalism' after announcing plans to cut 700 jobs due to a £35 million deficit. The University and College Union (UCU) criticized the cuts, expressing concerns about the potential impact on the city of Dundee and the surrounding area. The Scottish government has provided emergency funding, but further support is being urged to prevent the cuts and protect education and jobs in the region.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/mar/11/dundee-university-faces-hammer-blow-amid-plans-to-cut-635-jobs> - Dundee University plans to cut over 600 jobs and reduce teaching by a fifth to address a £35 million deficit. The university's interim principal stated that nearly 200 academic staff and 435 support staff would be made redundant, affecting every department. The proposed measures have been described as a 'hammer blow' by teachers' unions, raising concerns about the future of the institution and the quality of education provided.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-12675564> - Lecturers and students at Dundee University staged a day of action in protest over job cuts. The University and College Union (UCU) expressed concerns that about 193 people could be made compulsorily redundant in the drive to cut costs. The university stated that compulsory redundancies would only be used as a 'last resort' and that most job cuts would be made through 'natural wastage' and a voluntary severance scheme.
6. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/university-dundee-axe-632-jobs-plug-ps35-million-deficit> - The University of Dundee announced plans to cut 632 full-time equivalent jobs to address a £35 million deficit. The cuts are the largest announced in the UK higher education sector this year and are equivalent to about one in five posts at the Scottish institution. The university committed to an external investigation into the financial mismanagement that led to the crisis and pledged to accept and act on the findings.
7. <https://news.sky.com/story/university-of-dundee-to-cut-over-600-jobs-to-plug-16335m-deficit-13326384> - The University of Dundee plans to cut 632 full-time jobs to address a £35 million deficit. The staffing reductions will affect every school and directorate within the university, amounting to about 20% of the workforce. The university admitted that the scale of the cuts meant that it is 'very unlikely that the need for compulsory redundancy will be mitigated entirely' and is moving formally into collective consultation on redundancy.