

Subject: Future Nottingham Phase 2: Please read before any Council endorsement

*Governance team: please ensure this message is received by all external members of University council*

Dear Council Members,

I'm writing to share the attached UCU report on Future Nottingham Phase 2.

I would strongly urge you, particularly our external members, to read this in full before endorsing the University Executive Board's plans.

UEB's current strategy is being presented as risk reduction. In reality, it is a **high-risk** approach that relies on cutting deeply into the University's core academic capacity while assuming that student demand, research income, and reputation will somehow hold up. The evidence in this report suggests that is not a safe assumption.

What is being proposed is very fast, very large-scale change. The likely consequences are not abstract:

- student–staff ratios pushed well beyond Russell Group norms, with clear implications for rankings and recruitment (and no evidence to support UEB's claim that such extreme SSRs will be replicated across the sector, despite a union request)
- reduced research capacity, with direct consequences for grant income and long-term reputation (the strategy speaks of "academic growth" but sets out no credible plan for achieving it, while actively cutting the capacity required to deliver it)
- loss of staff that is unlikely to be "controlled", particularly among those most able to leave
- a real risk of a self-reinforcing cycle, where cuts reduce income, leading to further cuts and ongoing institutional decline

Put bluntly, there is a credible scenario here where the strategy meant to stabilise the University instead pushes it into decline. Our report sets out an alternative that still delivers substantial savings, but does so in a much more controlled way. In particular, it shows how savings can be made through natural attrition and workforce rebalancing, delivering on the order of:

- ~£6–7m per year
- ~£20m over three years
- ~£34m over five years

These figures are grounded in observed staff turnover and avoid the costs and disruption associated with large-scale redundancies. Crucially, in contrast to UEB's proposal, they do not depend on weakening the University's core teaching and research capacity.

There are also serious concerns about governance which, frankly, should give Council pause.

The report documents repeated instances where:

- key decisions have been pushed through without proper process
- the information provided to Council has lacked the detail needed to test the proposals properly
- Heads of School have not endorsed plans that are being presented as if they have
- Equality Impact Assessments are incomplete or absent

More broadly, there is a growing disconnect between what is being reported upwards and what is being experienced across the University. Many school leaders are deeply concerned about the direction of travel. That is not being reflected clearly in the narrative reaching Council.

You should also be aware of the wider context. All three campus unions have passed votes of no confidence in the University's leadership. UCU has now balloted for industrial action and secured strong support, with over 86% in favour of action. We also secured the highest turnout across the sector this year, reflecting widespread and escalating concern across the institution.

Council's role here is critical. These are not routine decisions, and the consequences are not easily reversible. Endorsing a plan of this scale without properly stress-testing its assumptions, and without seriously considering alternatives, carries its own risks. Our ask is straightforward:

- please read the report in full
- ask for clear evidence, at school level, that the proposed cuts are deliverable without damaging core functions
- question whether the financial projections properly account for the risks set out above
- and give proper consideration to the alternative approach

There is still time to take a more measured path. There may not be a second chance to undo the damage if we get this wrong.

Yours sincerely,

UoN UCU Branch Committee