

Another 200 staff to go in further UTS cuts



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More than 200 professional staff at the University of Technology are set to lose their jobs after executives revealed its latest proposal to cut its workforce – a move expected to help save the institution \$85 million a year.

The proposal is subject to consultation but, if successful, will slash 209 full-time equivalent professional jobs. It comes after the university last month unveiled plans to cut [about 160 full-time and casual academic roles](#).



UTS staff are highly stressed about potential job cuts. OSCAR COLMAN

University executives say the savings are necessary to put the institution on stable financial footing, but its proposal to cut some courses – including teaching degrees – has been criticised by the NSW government.

The additional plans, unveiled on Thursday, propose making 97 faculty professional staff redundant as well as 22 from student support and administration, 28 from the learning and teaching unit and 13 from the library.

It proposed purchasing electronic journals and ebooks instead of print books and journals. “The work related to the physical items such as opening boxes, stamping books, receiving items, putting stickers on items and checking physical invoices will be significantly reduced,” it said.

Student wellbeing services and diversity and inclusion initiatives will also be affected. Not every change included in the proposal involved job losses, with some areas expected to see staff transition to new functions.

It says the university will find \$20 million in non-staff savings as part of the proposal.

Numerous meetings were held across campus to break the news to staff on Thursday morning, including one in the university’s great hall in the institution’s tower building.

Community and Public Sector Union NSW UTS branch president Andreas Dalman said staff at one meeting felt there was little scope for meaningful engagement about the proposal.

“From the questions asked afterwards, the mood was pretty tense – people asked questions which were quite pointed,” he said.

He also noted that staff had said academics who had put forward alternatives to the proposal to slash jobs had been dismissed by the university, giving professional staff little faith that alternatives to the current proposal affecting professional staff would be meaningfully considered.

“People were saying there had been a lack of transparency,” he said.

In an email to staff on Thursday afternoon, UTS vice chancellor Andrew Parfitt said the changes would reduce duplication, streamline operations and refocus the institution’s resources on its areas of greatest impact.

“Our approach to savings has been informed by a strategic, considered approach to optimise how we operate rather than salary savings alone,” he said.



University of Technology Sydney vice chancellor Andrew Parfitt. GETTY

“While we do have some level of flexibility in the savings required to be achieved as part of the Operational Sustainability Initiative, a shortfall of this extent will need to be managed by identifying additional non-salary savings where possible,” he wrote.

“Where we cannot identify additional savings, the university will consider a higher level of financial risk and further constrain our immediate capital investments to preserve cash.”

UTS recorded [a deficit of \\$78 million last year on its balance sheet](#) and is attempting to refinance its debts in a bid to maintain a good credit rating. Unlike other universities, [UTS has enrolled a record number of lucrative foreign students this year](#).

CPSU NSW branch assistant secretary Troy Wright said staff had been in limbo for the past 12 months.

“If any other organisation had got into this much financial trouble, whether it was a union or a business, you’d see those at the top held to account, yet the executive team at UTS are seemingly immune from responsibility,” he said.

“The calamity at UTS should be a catalyst for a major change in governance in the higher education sector.”

Numerous universities across the country have in the past 12 months announced plans to axe staff, including Australian National University, Macquarie University, Western Sydney University, The University of Newcastle and the University of Wollongong.

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