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THE JUTE JOURNAL

Freshers Edition!

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University Crisis Timeline

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ISSUE 004

Your Campus, Your Truth, Your Paper

19 / 09/ 2026

FIVE WEEKS OF STRIKES:
WHAT THIS MEANS FOR STUDENTS

BY CONNOR BERTIE & NIRMI PAREKH

Staff are due to begin five weeks of industrial action from Monday 21 September, following the university's decision to commit to Compulsory Redundancies.

This is the longest consecutive period of industrial action that staff have taken since the beginning of the Financial Crisis, which has gripped the university for almost two years.

Strikes mean that some disruption will likely take place to classes and learning across campus.

But how will you be affected?

As it stands, only one of the three campus staff unions is set to participate in the strikes. The Dundee University College Union (DUCU) have confirmed their participation in the five weeks of strikes, whereas **UNITE** and **UNISON** have stated they will not.



Staff unions protest outside court PHOTO: JACK BEAL

What this means for you

DUCU staff will be striking until October 23, meaning that 50% of classes throughout semester one may be affected.

DUCU accounts for around 25% of university staff, meaning that classes on your course may be cancelled with little or no notice.

By law, members of staff that choose to participate in industrial action are under zero obligation to inform the university, or their students, that they will be striking. The university also cannot legally ask a member of staff if they are striking. However, staff can still choose to inform students of their own free will.

If you do go to class and no lecturer turns up, they are most likely actively participating in the strikes. In this situation, don't worry, especially if you are an international student: attendance records will not be impacted from classes affected by strikes.

However, your class may still take place even if nothing has been said about it prior to its commencement, and so in this scenario, you should go and attend to confirm.

Tom Christison, the President of the Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) wanted to reassure students over this time.

He said: "Five weeks of strike action at the begin



DUSA President Tom Christison IMAGE: DUSA

ning of semester one could cause significant disruption, and we will be closely monitoring its impact.

"We understand why staff have reached this point. The risk of compulsory redundancy has created further uncertainty for colleagues about their jobs and futures at Dundee.

"For us, supporting students and recognising the concerns of staff are not competing principles. Students deserve the education and support they came to Dundee for, and staff deserve dignity, fair treatment and certainty about their employment.

"Throughout the strike, DUSA will continue to represent and support all students. We will raise disruption directly with the University and challenge it where students are not receiving the support they should.

"We will also continue engaging with the campus trade unions to maintain an open dialogue with staff throughout what will undoubtedly be a difficult period for the whole University community.

"If you feel you wish to, we urge students to talk with staff, share messages of morale, and even join them on the picket lines."

The Jute Journal will do its best to keep you informed over the strike period.

Welcome to our first ever Jute Journal Fresher's Edition newspaper!

To kick start the year, we at The Jute Journal intend to use this issue to tell you about the current state of your university, and what to expect going forward.

Dundee Uni has gone through some major changes in the last few years due to the Financial Crisis. The Jute Journal was formed nearer the beginning of that time in March of 2025, when, for many across the institution, the future was shrouded in uncertainty.

It was within that time that we set out with the sole intention to keep you, the people of Dundee University, in the loop of everything that may affect you.

We may at times be the bearers of bad news, but we also aim to shine a lasting light in the darkness, with uplifting stories around campus, and beyond.

Either way, we will do our best to hold power to account, and to keep you informed or entertained every step of the way.

To everyone at the University of Dundee this year: a fresher, returning student or member of staff, welcome or welcome back!

- The Jute Journal Team

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Got a pitch, tip or just want to get involved? See our Instagram:

Check out our website where we post even more stories, some of which don't make it to print!

We are a self-regulated student-led news group affiliated with DUSA.

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Meet the Team!

Staff union hits back at Compulsory Redundancies decision

BY CONNOR BERTIE

University Court approved Voluntary and Compulsory Redundancies this month, aiming to axe another 154 staff roles.

This is the third round of redundancies proposed by Court since the university's financial crisis was revealed back in November 2024.

This round of staff cuts was announced in the Strategy to Recovery, which aimed to save £20 million annually for the University by cutting around 187 full-time equivalents (FTE).

That number was reduced to 154 after a consultation period. Although the university has received several Voluntary Redundancy (VR) applications, if less than 154 are approved, then they will seek to offload staff by Compulsory Redundancy.

The Dundee University College Union (DUCU), one of the three staff unions on campus, has stated their abhorrence against this decision.

A DUCU Spokesperson said: "The University Court missed on an opportunity to show that they really care for students and staff.

"The high level of VR applications should have been sufficient to convince a more compassionate group of people that significant financial savings could be achieved without resorting to compulsory redundancies.

"Once again, UEG and Court have chosen to blindly pursue their short-term financial gains without concerns around the impact that these decisions have on the livelihood of affected staff and the future of the university.

"These cuts will bring the overall number of job losses above the numbers recorded after the closure of the Michelin factory in 2020, the only difference being that these cuts will be directly supported by public money.

"Ultimately, the fact that management is allowed to use public funding to support such unacceptable levels of job cuts constitutes in itself a failure of the Scottish Government and the SFC to hold the University Court and Executive Group accountable for their decisions.

"DUCU is also appalled at the decision to include references to the 60th anniversary of the University of Dundee in an email confirming to many members of staff that they will lose their jobs soon. This choice is unequivocally tone deaf and demonstrates the lack of empathy that staff have been treated with over the past two years.

"The large demonstration outside of Court shows that our members are resolved to take any necessary action to stop compulsory redundancies, with the support of our students, the Scottish Trade Unions community, and the wider public."



Staff unions protest outside University Court session
PHOTO: JACK BEAL

The university was approached for comment but declined on this occasion. As it stands, DUCU are the only staff union on campus to take part in industrial action from September 21 to October 23.



Staff and students protest against Compulsary Redundancies PHOTO: JACK BEAL

Accept decisions or "resign", University Court members told

BY JACK BEAL

Members of University Court were told they had to accept the decisions of Court or "have the option to resign."

On July 16, Court members were handed an unsigned and undated piece of paper, which referenced different governance documents related to Court. The paper stated that Court members had three choices if they believed a decision passed by Court to be "the 'wrong' decision."

The three options are: accept the decision as the majority of members support it, record an objection but accept they cannot publicly criticise as they are bound by collective responsibility or, if they feel they cannot accept the decision, "they have the option to resign."

University Court is the highest governing body at the University and is responsible for finances and strategy. Court members are subject to collective responsibility, which means they must accept that decisions in Court are collective and they cannot dissent from those decisions.

Esther Roberton, Chair of Court, reminded Court members of their responsibilities when she became Chair in December of last year.

The minutes state that she "reminded staff members in particular that, notwithstanding their route to membership, they were now charity trustees and members of a body corporate with responsibilities to the institution over and above their loyalties to the constituency which had nominated or elected them."

Ms Roberton emailed Court members to reiterate their collective responsibility after the Strategy to Recovery was released. She later emailed four individuals who she believed had "brought the University and the University Court... into disrepute".

Tánaiste Custance, one of the four who were emailed, resigned from Court on July 21. He told TJJ that he was told it was an offence to speak publicly against the cuts. When he asked Ms Roberton what "public" meant, he was told it meant anyone — not just the media but staff and students too, in private or public.

University crisis timeline

BY CONNOR BERTIE & JACK BEAL



PHOTO: HOLYROOD

Gillespie Grilling with TJJ EIC Connor Bertie

TIMELINE OF CRISIS

YEAR ONE

November 2024

12th: Then-Principal Iain Gillespie informs University Court that they are in debt by £30m, and that job cuts were inevitable. The Crisis begins.

December 2024

5th: Principal Gillespie resigns only three weeks after announcing the crisis, and just days after it was discovered he had not only given himself a pay rise to £305k but had spent around £7000 on a "business trip" to Hong Kong on the university's dime.

March 2025

13th: New Principal Shane O'Neill announces that 632 jobs are to be axed, sparking fierce resistance among affected staff.

25th: An independent investigation into the university's finances is launched to find out what went wrong, named "The Gillies Report."

April 2025

29th: University senior management announce a U-turn on redundancies, reducing the original 632 proposed job losses to 300.

"I'm certainly not corrupt, so I have to choose incompetent."

- Ex-Principal Iain Gillespie

June 2025

19th: Principal O'Neill resigns in shame after The Gillies Report finds him partially responsible for the crisis.

20th: Former Abertay University Principal Nigel Seaton is appointed as Dundee's Interim-Principal.

25th: Three University Executive Group (UEG) members who had resigned over the crisis appear for questioning in the Scottish Parliament to determine their involvement. They are found by MSP's to be incompetent.

26th: Ex-Principal Iain Gillespie, who had not been seen since his resignation, is grilled in the Scottish Parliament for his role in causing the crisis. When asked if he was "incompetent or corrupt", he admitted he was the former. Afterwards, he is never seen in public again.

August 2025

13th: Dundee University Students' Association's (DUSA) annual budget is cut by over a third.

19th: The Scottish Funding Council, the government organisation which agreed to give the university £40m if adequate financial recovery conditions are met, reject the UEG's recovery plan.

YEAR TWO

March 2026

Principal Nigel Seaton admits that the University will become bankrupt by mid-2027 if no more jobs are cut. He announces that a second round of redundancies aims to cut a further 180 roles at the university.

June 2026

9th: Court approves the Strategy to Recovery, a plan that aims to save a further £20 million a

year. The minutes say: "the implementation of the plan would be developed and presented subsequently". The Scottish Funding Council approves the plan on 15 June.



Principal Professor Nigel Seaton

PHOTO: ALEXANDER STEWART

16 to 18 June 2026

Staff are invited onto a Teams call where colleagues are told at the same time that their roles are "at risk". The University plans to cut 190 jobs through Voluntary Redundancy, which would take the number of staff lost over two years to near 1,000. It also becomes clear that the Botanic Garden, the University Nursery, the Counselling Service, Cooper Gallery, the Chaplaincy, the Global Room and the Philosophy, Mathematics and Languages courses are all at risk.

16 to 21 July 2026

Court meets at Bonar Hall while staff protest outside. Members are handed an unsigned piece of paper telling them they can accept decisions, record an objection or resign from Court. Dundee University and College Union (DUCU) announces a fiveweek strike the same day. Tánaiste Custance, ex-DUSA President, resigns from Court five days later.

August 2026

25th: The consultation period ends. The University changes 10 of its 14 business cases, reducing the number of planned job losses from 187 to 154 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE). Mathematics is kept until 2027/28, the Botanic Garden is funded until July 2027, and three Philosophy pathways survive after international backing for the course.

September 2026

8th: Court approves Voluntary and Compulsory Redundancies as unions and students protest outside Bonar Hall. Staff from DUCU are due to strike for five weeks from the start of semester one.

Architecture students speak out on "pay to win" culture

BY MATTHEW REES

Architecture at the University of Dundee has been ranked 3rd in the UK by The Guardian newspaper, but problems still lie under the glossy surface.

Architecture students claim culture of "pay to win" projects have led to a drop in overall degree experience.

Students enrolled in Dundee's Architecture degree have told The Jute Journal (TJJ) just how pressured they feel by their peers and lecturers alike to spend money on their projects, outside of expenses already allocated to them, in order to attain a good grade or cover those who do not contribute to the project physically or in monetary terms.

Students who had displayed their work at the 2026 Degree Show said they had found the experience valuable and were grateful for the opportunity to display.

However, the costs they incurred while feeling like this was a mandatory part of the project has marred the experience for them.

An anonymous student said: "It has been a good exercise [to display at the Degree Show] and we have learned a lot from it, it has been beneficial."

A large portion of the students that spoke with TJJ agreed with one student who described Architecture at the University as "pay to win" when referring to the need to pay additional costs.

Some students had to take up extra jobs to fund their projects. There are also accounts of tutors dipping into their own pockets too to fund projects.



DJCAD Building on campus PHOTO: UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

A group of students had also been told by a tutor that they "should not have a work life balance."

This was a statement that many found to be problematic and did not encourage them going forwards. They also felt their opportunity to display was a self-congratulating move by their tutor rather than to show the talent of students.

Students have asked for change to this process, hoping "it does not happen to anyone else studying architecture."

The University has already stated that material fees are covered at the start of the year by all students and paying any more towards materials is an optional extra and is not necessary. Students strongly deny this and say that they could not have passed without paying extra.

They also reiterated its commitment to financial support for students, and that academic success is not related to financial costings of displays and will never be rewarded on this basis.

Concern for future of Botanic Garden Memorials

BY JACK BEAL



Steel tree with leaves of loved ones lost PHOTO: FI BEAL

The threat to axe Dundee's Botanic Gardens has raised concerns over the survival of the venue's family memorials.

The Botanic Garden, funded by Dundee University, is home to a wide range of plant life.

It also houses the "Good Grief Memorial Garden", which was described by Dundee newspaper The Courier as the world's first bereavement garden honouring victims of the pandemic in 2020.

The Memorial Garden includes stones with messages from loved ones honouring those who have passed, along with many trees, each having a small silver plaque to honour those who have died as recently as 2022.

There is also a steel tree decorated with glass leaves called the "Tree of Tranquillity", set up with the charity SiMBA, which supports families who have experienced the loss of a baby.

The tree's inscription reads: "This tree offers bereaved families a gentle and positive way to honour their baby who has died." Each leaf was added in memory of a baby.

Despite the Memorial Garden's significance, funding is due to be withdrawn from the Botanics by July 2027 due to the Dundee University's ongoing financial crisis.

However, a community-led plan could allow the Botanic Garden to continue running.

The Jute Journal spoke to Dundee's Liberal Democrat councillors, Fraser Macpherson and Michael Crichton, about a community-led plan to save the Botanics, proposed by The Friends of the Botanic Garden and the Dundee Civic Trust.

After talks with Prof. Nigel Seaton, Mr Macpherson said that the principal had said the university "would not stand in the way" of another group taking over the Botanics.

Mr Macpherson also stressed that the University should put plans in place for the future of the garden rather than just be "open" to plans.

Mr Crichton spoke hopefully for the future of the Botanic Garden:

"If we meet here in January, we're not discussing it's going to close down, we're discussing when it is going to be operational, and that's our focus."

Towards the future, a Dundee University spokesperson said: "We are in conversations with various local groups, organisations and individuals and continuing to explore options for the future of the garden beyond the summer of 2027.

"We have also written to all families we have contacts for who have memorials in the garden, and are in contact with SIMBA, to keep them informed of any developments."



Memorial Garden inside Botanic Gardens PHOTO: FI BEAL

Uni astrophysics student shooting to professional wrestling fame

BY MATTHEW REES



Ruaridh Williams in action earlier this year

PHOTO: KIRSTEN LOUISE PHOTOGRAPHY

A former University of Dundee student is rapidly rising to Scottish wrestling fame as Jumpin' William McLeod sets his eyes on tag team gold.

Ruaridh Williams, the real name of William McLeod, has split his time between studying Physics with Astrophysics at undergrad and a master's in applied data science and AI at Dundee, and training to become one of the hottest prospects in Scottish professional wrestling today.

Along with his Pretty Jumpin' tag team partner Pretty Boy Sam Mcmillan, Ruaridh has enjoyed some early wrestling success including being crowned Dundee and Angus Professional Wrestling's (DAPW) King of the Class in the main event at the Queens Hotel earlier this year.

Pretty Jumpin' is also widely popular in the wrestling community for their "Pretty Jumpin' Vlogs" where wrestlers show off their behind the scenes experiences of Scottish wrestling.

Other well-known Scottish wrestling stars like current DAPW Champion Tommy Cross and staple of Scottish Wrestling Spike Tierney also take part.

Speaking on his next steps in wrestling since leaving university, Ruaridh said:

"I'm looking to become a consistent performer and step up to the next level. I also have ambitions of travelling with wrestling too and performing internationally."

Additionally, Ruaridh told The Jute Journal how he handled splitting his time between his studies and honing his craft.

"It was a difficult task being a full-time student, part-time worker and training to become a professional wrestler. The Uni provided me enough opportunity to pursue this dream while studying.

"With training once or twice a week, and a show once a month, I had to figure out how to fit it all into my schedule. On the flip side, DAPW gave me the mental break I needed from my studies to be successful in both."

Fair City Wrestling and DAPW owner and promoter Kevin Purdie said:

"Ruaridh is an exemplary person, always willing to put in the work and willing to do what he is asked to in service of entertaining a crowd. He is very well respected and liked by his peers and very important to me as the owner and promoter of our wrestling family."

William McLeod will appear again in action at the Queens Hotel, located near campus, on October 24.

"Ruaridh is an exemplary person, always willing to put in the work and willing to do what he is asked to in service of entertaining a crowd".

Student satisfaction rates rise

BY JACK BEAL

Student satisfaction rates at Dundee University have improved on last year's results despite the ongoing financial crisis.

The National Student Survey (NSS) was released over the summer, which asks students from universities across the UK their opinions on their courses and student experience.

The University has, in the last two years, been under immense strain from job losses. In the last two years University staff levels have dropped by nearly 1000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) roles either through staff leaving through Voluntary Redundancy schemes or just by leaving and not being replaced.

Despite the immense number of staff that have left the University, student satisfaction levels have increased.

Dundee University scored an 86.1% student satisfaction rate, up 1.3% from the year before, and placing Dundee as Scotland's fourth best institution in this category.

In an email that went out to students, Professor Linda Martindale, the Vice-Principal for Education and Student Experience, was "delighted" to inform students of the news.

As said in the email, the University of Dundee was first in the UK in: Architecture, Biosciences, Computer Science, Dentistry, Education and Mathematics.

The university also claimed the top spot in Scotland within Biomedical Science, Children's Nursing, Civil Engineering, Geography, Pharmacology, and Planning (urban, rural and regional).

The email from Prof Martindale went on to say this was "a considerable achievement and testament to the dedication and determination of colleagues, particularly considering [the university's] current situation.

"NSS outcomes play a critical role in domestic league tables and bolstering student recruitment and our reputation."



Dundee's rankings displayed on campus

PHOTO: NIRMI PAREKH

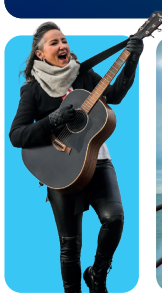
The university performed below benchmark in receiving feedback for assessments on time, "how well the students' union represent students' academic interests," and "how well communicated was information about your university/college's mental wellbeing support services."

But what do you think? Tell us via Instagram: @the.jutejournal.





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FRESHERS WORD SEARCH

Can you find the words hidden in the puzzle?

C Y T I S R E V I N U C
C A M P U S T E N M T S
U P A C A G I E N I R F
N B O N A R L D T D R F
I M L M G A S N T I R C
O S T I D N A U T E A E
N T Y G A M E D S S R S
E T A K D R F H X O T R
R M P R E U E N T N E I
D O E X E R S I S W I T
S S A L C F H A O A E N
S T R I K E S T T T L E

DUNDEE **BONAR** **UNIVERSITY** **STRIKES**

FRESHER **DUSA** **UNION** **CLASS**

TOWER **LIAR** **MAGDALEN** **CAMPUS**

ONE PIC WONDER

Draper, Utah: *Barrel Racer rounds the turn at an American rodeo as spectators look on with the sun setting over the Oquirrh Mountains.*

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SENT IN BY MILES WILLIAMS, TJJ HEAD OF PHOTOGRAPHY

What's on in DUNDEE *in* SEPTEMBER

GIGS + MUSIC

Connor Liam Burne & The Bad Kissers*
@ CANVAS, SEP 24TH

Assai Records Presents: Gurriers
@ CANVAS, SEP 26TH

Bongo's Bingo
@ LIVEHOUSE, SEP 26TH

Dundee Jazz Festival Launch Party
@ CANVAS, SEP 27TH

Odds & Ends Comedy Club
@ CANVAS, SEP 30TH

Ewan McVicar
@ LIVEHOUSE, OCT 3RD

The Snuts*
@ LIVEHOUSE, NOV 19TH

PUBS + CLUBBING

O'Marley's Pub Quiz*
@O'MARLEY'S, EVERY MONDAY

Funky Gunners Open Vinyl Night
@ GUNNERS BAR, EVERY TUESDAY

Open Mic Night*
@ ART BAR, EVERY TUESDAY

Firewater Thursdays
@ FIREWATER, EVERY THURSDAY

Live Scottish Trad Folk Night*
@ SPEEDWELL BAR, EVERY WEDNESDAY

Dundee Uni Bands Society Open Mic Night
@ CANVAS, SEP 21ST

Jute, Jam & Junglism
@RIDDOCH'S BASEMENT, OCT 16TH

EXHIBITIONS + GALLERIES

*JJ RECOMMENDS

Everything for Everybody
@ GENERATOR PROJECTS, TILL SEP 24TH

The Craft and Flea Makers Market
@ THE BONAR HALL, SEP 26TH

Curtain Call: Costumes from Stage and Screen*
@ THE MCMANUS GALLERIES, ONGOING

Francis-Lise McGurn: The Charm Offensive
@ THE DCA, TILL NOV 16TH

COMING SOON:

David Bowie: On Tour
@ THE V&A DUNDEE, OPENS NOV 4TH