
Our Dream Department

How might HE better organise
postgraduate and researcher
support?

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Workshop overview



- Context: a new department within the School of Social Sciences
- Remit: transform leadership and support for postgraduate, early career and established researchers
- Aim: build hope and resilience locally in a sector facing financial, political, ethical challenges
- Workshop format: questions/prompts to think through challenges and dream together
- Workshop outcomes (opt in): record of ideas shared with all participants; networking and support; ongoing collective approach?



Discussion 1: Names matter



Department of Methodology and Research Development

- MuRDer
- MeRDe

Department or Institute?

- HWU focus/legacy - research for practice
- Research Methods for Practice?
- Ethics in all this?

Question: What should we call it?

Discussion 2: Getting the news out



Launch timing and approach

- School of Social Sciences
- Heriot-Watt University
- Externally

Questions: Who needs to know? When? Any pitfalls to avoid?

Discussion 3: Leadership



What does good leadership feel and look like?

- PGRs
- DBAs
- GTAs
- ECRs
- Researchers within and outwith departments

Question: Have you ever worked with a good leader? What made it good?



Universities
UK

Trump Cancels Federal Research Grants. What Are the Consequences?

While more than \$1.5 billion in federal grant money has been terminated by the Trump administration, the consequences at state universities and community colleges are particularly dire.

MEDIA RELEASES

Universities grip financial crisis – but at what cost to the nation?

MOST RECENT UPDATES

(in the past fortnight, approximately; last updated 27 June 2025)

- Bangor is cutting 78 jobs
- Birmingham City University is facing up to 340 redundancies
- Arts University Bournemouth is looking at 75 compulsory redundancies
- Bristol has 45 at risk of redundancy
- de Montfort is cutting 80 posts and attempting fire & rehire
- Derby is merging four colleges into two
- Exeter is in its last 'generous' voluntary severance scheme
- Goldsmiths has opened yet another voluntary severance scheme
- Greenwich is planning to cut 300 posts
- Hertfordshire is making colleagues compulsory redundant
- Lancaster is looking to lose 400FTE, having already lost 50 colleagues to VS
- Leicester is trying to shut down the departments of languages, chemistry, and education



The Decline (and Fall?) of College

Universities could go the way of the Roman Empire. But they don't have to.

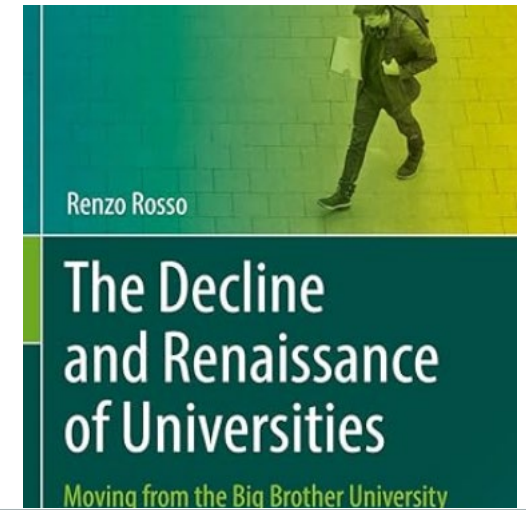
Jun 30, 2023 | Richard K. Vedder



Scottish finances drop 92 per cent with nine institutions in red

Increased staff and other operating costs blamed for 'significant deterioration', with spending on restructuring ballooning

May 21, 2025



Discussion 4: The wider context



Higher Education, the UK - urgent need for research and new knowledge but...

- Funding
- Exclusionary origins, history, legacies
- Precarity
- Bullying, discrimination
- Career paths
- Technological change

Question: How would an ethical department support researchers in this context?

Next steps

Toolkit and support – opt in

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