

The holiday season is almost here, but many UK university staff are feeling a distinct lack of festive cheer. Recent announcements about potential job cuts at Bangor and Cardiff universities raise the spectre of the financial challenges looming over other universities in 2019. Huge hikes in staff pension payments await, as do spiralling visa costs for enrolling non-UK European Union staff post-Brexit. Institutions will also wonder if EU enrolments will fall off a cliff if students lose access to student loans after Brexit. It's little wonder that UK universities have been tightening their belts, but the scale of the redundancies and severance payments paid to staff, as revealed by Times Higher Education, may surprise many readers, with almost £50 million spent on this last year by Russell Group institutions alone. But is this efficiency drive something more? Many will suspect that some of the costs may be linked to a cull of 'underperforming' staff ahead of the 2021 research excellence framework deadline. And some will worry that the REF 'game-playing' has just begun. (Fonte: THE 20-12-18)