

# Facilities Management Leaders Reveal How to Tackle the UK University Funding Crisis

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According to UUK (Universities UK), many universities are responding to planned government funding cuts by pausing capital expenditure and infrastructure improvements to protect day-to-day operational spending. This means maintenance, repairs, and upgrades to buildings and facilities are likely to be delayed or cancelled. It has been reported that 60% of institutions have scaled back on repairs and maintenance to existing facilities, with 89% planning to do so over the next 3 years\*.

With universities exposing themselves to non-compliant building maintenance measures and risking further spiralling costs, Simona Sopagaite, Implementation Consultant from [SFG20](#), the industry standard for building maintenance, has shared her insights on how these institutions can save time, effort, and money without compromising their estate's compliance.

## Step 1: Establish risk appetite and tolerance

To make your budget stretch further amongst the university funding cuts, your first activity should be establishing the level of risk tolerance your organisation has in terms of exposure to risk.

Using a risk register, you can identify risks, see if it is within the established risk appetite, and see the associated costs or time implications. Fundamentally, a risk register can help you to assess and rank maintenance needs and ensure that the most urgent issues are addressed first, i.e. those that directly affect staff and student safety and/or will become costly later down the line.

## Step 2: Fix your asset register

The best way to maintain your property is to know what you have inside your building. Asset registers ensure that all building assets are accounted for and, therefore, able to be scheduled for maintenance works and repairs appropriately, reducing the risk of unexpected failures and compliance risks.

The biggest problem with asset registers is that most of their data is incomplete or even missing in some cases. Whether it's lost during the handover process at the end of construction or passed across ineffectively between different parties during the life of the assets, this can make working with asset registers frustrating at best and impossible at worst. In fact, the SFG20 State Of Facilities Management 2026 Report revealed that only 15% of organisations have an asset register that is 100% accurate, with 1 in 10 not having any asset register at all.\*\*

Ultimately, organisations that update their asset registers monthly or quarterly are likely to be better positioned to be more cost-effective in their approach, being able to implement planned preventative maintenance, resource and financial forecasting, as well as evidence compliance with legislation and the golden thread of information.

### Step 3: Understand your statutory obligations

Delays in maintenance works, especially those that are critical, can lead to compromised student and staff safety, disruption to learning, and further costs further down the line.

Making sure those responsible for maintenance of your estate are fully aware of their statutory obligations and the most critical tasks for optimal functioning is essential to reducing disruption and ensuring student and staff safety.

Non-statutory building maintenance tasks differ from statutory building maintenance tasks in that they don't have any traceable references to primary or secondary legislation. However, this doesn't always mean that they are any less vital to an organisation's operation, as non-statutory building maintenance tasks are often used to prevent premature failure of an asset, minimising disruption and costs to businesses. For example, faulty lightbulbs would cause considerable disruption in a room used for university exams.

### Step 4: Cost forecasting

Once you know what you've got to maintain, and your asset register is accurate and complete, you can now apply the compliant maintenance to each asset. From this, you can then forecast the budget to do all the tasks required to achieve compliance with the law. You must communicate this to your stakeholders - this is how you demonstrate exactly what budget you need.

The first step will be 'First Principles Estimating', looking at labour time, material costs, and ancillary costs, such as specialist tools. This can be followed by a review of historical data, to track the actual time taken for tasks, analyse material and sub-contractor costs, and identify task trends over time.

Simona Sopagaite said: "For universities, cutting back on maintenance tasks, especially those required by law, will put organisations at risk. Delayed upkeep not only risks student and staff safety, but can also result in increased fines, legal exposure, and unexpected breakdowns.

Without following the steps discussed above, you can't expect to have a clear picture of your university's

compliance, risks and cost forecasting. All of this has a key part to play in helping to support a high-quality learning environment in universities in line with student expectation.

The bottom line is, if you cannot clearly justify budget requirements to executives, they cannot make an informed investment decision about future funding.”

To learn more about the risks universities face from cutting down on maintenance budgets, and to best mitigate any issues, download SFG20’s e-book [here](#).

\*<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/creating-voice-our-members/media-releases/universities-grip-financial-crisis-what>

\*\*<https://www.sfg20.co.uk/e-guide/state-of-fm-2026>