

I hear rumour that at least one university may go bankrupt...

Published: January 17, 2026, 3:47 am

This time of the year is very stressful for 18-year-olds waiting for A level results, with the hope of getting the place of their choice at a university. I know. I am the father of an 18-year-old waiting for results next week.

But they may not be the only people suffering stress. Rumour has reached me of at least one university that may not make it to the autumn unless 'clearing' - the process where those who have not got their place of choice scramble for a place elsewhere - goes especially well for it, such is their debt pile.

Our university education system is failing us all if young people's life choices, careers and hopes can be imperiled in this way, but I very strongly suspect that the risk is not facing just one university.

That's what comes from creating an 'education market': failure is built-in. It is not, however, the right-wing ideologues who will pay the price for this. Our young people will.

So I have one simple suggestion. That is that every university should, when offering a university place, attach to it an audited undertaking that they are a going concern for as long as the course lasts. That should concentrate minds.