

Physics professors criticise cuts in budget

By Robert Winnett
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UNIVERSITY physics departments and researchers are facing the worst funding crisis in a generation because of Government cuts, according to leading scientists.

Professors from Cambridge, Oxford and more than 20 other universities issued an unprecedented statement crit-

icising ministerial plans to cut scientific research grants by 25 per cent over the next three years.

The scientific community is bracing itself for details of cut-backs to be unveiled today that are expected to end British involvement in a number of international projects in astronomy, space exploration, particle and nuclear physics.

The £80 million shortfall in

the Science and Technology Facilities Council budget will also reduce the number of new PhD students and post-doctoral researchers. Many hard-pressed university physics departments, heavily dependent on grants from the council, are also facing closure.

Brian Cox of the University of Manchester said: "Scientific research is not a luxury: it is a

necessity. The Government has done an enormous amount over the past 10 years to restore the UK's reputation as a scientific leader. It is short-sighted and damaging to throw this away through an ill-considered attack on fundamental science."

An estimated one million jobs are dependent on physics-based technologies or expertise.