

Dear Senior Management,

We are extremely concerned with the “emergency measures” that senior management have implemented in response to the coronavirus. As University staff who will be highly affected by these measures, we have several questions and demands that are outlined below.

The “emergency measures” that we are aware of will severely damage the public, intellectual and financial reputation of the University, and should not under any circumstances become institutionalised as normal University procedures in the long-term. Measures implemented so far are highly targeted and include:

- Hiring freeze;
- Ceasing University PhD studentships for those beginning in 2020/2021;
- Promotion freezes;
- Not extending the contracts of staff on fixed term contracts
- Scrapping Hallsworth and Simon Fellowships for a 2020/2021 start, including cancelling the forthcoming interviews; and
- Freezing University staff’s research expenses.

Please note: these are the measures we are currently aware of, having been drip fed information from different sources. We are certain there are many more that have not yet come to light.

The “emergency measures” have been rolled out especially quickly and appear very reactionary with little to no justification or explanation as to their cumulative effect. They diminish our core business, education and knowledge production, and the longer-term sustainability of our institution. We seek clarification on why these core business areas are targeted? What are the long-term financial and reputation damage that these decisions might have? Why has The University of Manchester cut funding to top tier PhD students who have developed trusting relationships with staff and invested labour, time and effort into applying to study with us? This will clearly hit our reputation as a world leader in research and affect our long-term sustainability to attract the best talent.

Furthermore, to not extend fixed term contracts of staff contributing to core business activities (delivering our top UG and PGT programmes) will leave them without employment at precisely the time when employers should be doing their utmost to support their employees. The UK government has been very clear about the duty employers have to retain their staff during coronavirus. These staff cuts will also increase already untenable staff workloads, and harm our institution.

Worryingly, we are aware that these “emergency measures” are being applied unevenly across and within faculties. This is a clear breach of normal procedure but also reveals problematic questions on how the uneven roll out of measures means that judgements are being made about which disciplines, research topics and knowledges are more valuable than others. While it could be understandable that some measures had to be taken quickly, the way it has been done and the areas in which the cuts are levelled are damaging the public and intellectual reputation of the University, as well as staff loyalty, and will exacerbate already existing inequalities across the University.

As University employees who will be adversely affected by these measures, we have several questions and demands of our senior management:

1. **Clarification** before 15 April 2020 of all the “emergency measures” that have been taken within and across Faculties. We suggest that senior management creates an internal webpage where “emergency measures” are outlined for transparent and clear communication to University staff.
2. **Consistent** application of so-called necessary “emergency measures” within and across Faculties.

3. **Transparency** of decision-making processes around all “emergency measures,” including individuals involved, committees at which decisions are made, and the formal and informal processes surrounding decision-making. We ask for the release of committee minutes e.g. of Manchester Doctoral College, Faculty Leadership Team and School Leadership Team where decisions are discussed and confirmed.
4. **Publication** of all data used to inform the “emergency measures”, including a clear explanation and **Justification** of how this evidence supports senior management’s decisions. This includes the information provided to decision-makers at all levels.
5. **Confirmation** that the “emergency measures” be subject to weekly review and agreement. This process should involve Heads of Schools, Heads of Departments and trade union representatives.
6. **Re-assurance** that the “emergency measures” will not be institutionalised as normal University procedure or as a means of developing new normal University procedures, and that they will be repealed as soon as possible.
7. **Full disclosure** of senior managements’ short and long-term plans to respond to the economic uncertainties due to the covid19 pandemic.

We recognise that the response to the health and economic uncertainty that the covid19 pandemic is bringing creates a fast moving picture, but as University staff we should be kept abreast of any decisions and plans that may affect our employment, wellbeing and institution.

Yours Sincerely,