

Dear Member,

We are in the midst the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a volatile, rapidly changing situation which is causing great concern throughout society. Our immediate concern is the health of students and staff at the University of Manchester. We are also mindful of our responsibilities to the wider society. We note that a number of UK Universities have announced the immediate cessation of face to face teaching for the duration of the health emergency. We note the concerns which have been raised by over 200 academic scientists regarding the Government's strategy for dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. We note that expecting staff and students to attend university exposes them to a number of risks including possible exposure to the virus whilst travelling to and from work, as well as in work. We note that some of the most elementary precautions regarding Covid-19, such as maintaining a distance of 1 metre from other people, are very difficult, if not impossible, to observe in the context of face to face teaching. We believe that the number of international students and staff at the University of Manchester confers additional responsibilities on us to do everything which we can do to minimise the transmission of Covid-19.

In the current situation we believe that the wisest course is to follow the precautionary principle. As a result, we are making the following recommendations:

- 1) All face-to-face teaching and activities where social distancing is not possible should end now. We note that the School of Arts, Languages & Cultures has already announced its intention to move all of its teaching online with immediate effect. We applaud the leadership shown by Professor Schiesaro in this matter and call on other Schools to follow his lead. If you have concerns about continuing face to face teaching, we advise you to raise your concerns with your line manager. If you are not satisfied or reassured by their response, we advise you to contact us immediately. We remind you that existing health and safety legislation (see in particular Section 7 of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/section/7> which places a duty on every employee to take reasonable care both for their own health and safety and that of other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 empowers any employee to remove themselves from circumstances of danger <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/18/section/44> We will support any member in the exercise of this legal right.
- 2) Teaching activities should be moved online with the dual aims of (i) minimising, as far as is possible, the disruption of student learning, and (ii) mitigating the effects of increased social isolation. All activities should be designed with both aims in mind.
- 3) The design and delivery of good online teaching requires extensive training and experience. It is not reasonable to expect tutors to develop these skills, nor develop extensive new teaching materials, in a matter of hours. Do not put undue pressure on yourself to deliver perfect online courses. Students will understand if things don't work either immediately or perfectly. We will ask the Senior Leadership of the University to ensure that students are made aware of the constraints within which tutors are operating during this period.

UCU will resist pressures for undue expectations of staff in this emergency. We will ask for a clear statement that the Senior Leadership understands that the priority of moving to online teaching will necessarily affect other areas of work, particularly research. We will work to protect the rights of all staff, and will work to secure the support required from the university for this temporary shift to online activities. We note that the University of Sheffield has announced that all casual workers will receive full pay for Covid-19 related

absence/closure. We call on the Senior Leadership at Manchester to ensure that there is no loss of pay to any member of staff as a result of virus-related closure or isolation, regardless of contract type or visa status. We also ask that additional hours incurred by hourly paid staff for training and transferring resources to online facilities, as well as providing additional online support for students, are fully remunerated the University. Although our priority is the current health crisis we will also work to protect our terms and conditions during and after this crisis.

Finally, please do remember to look after your own health as far as you are able.

UMUCU Executive Committee