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17<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
The University of Manchester

Dear Nancy

Thank you for meeting with us last week (13<sup>th</sup> March, 2020). We support the latest position that all face to face teaching activity is suspended from 17.00 today and most staff will be required to work from home until further notice. We completely agree that the priority must be ensuring both staff and student safety and supporting their health and well-being. We understand that for a range of reasons it is not feasible to completely close the University and campus operations at this time and that the situation is developing rapidly. We feel that UCU along with all the campus unions are in a unique position not only to understand the concerns and problems staff face, but also to identify possible solutions. **Accordingly, we expect the University Senior Leadership Team to fully consult with campus trade unions in planning its COVID-19 response and provide copies of COVID-19 related risk assessments and meeting minutes as a matter of urgency.** We support the position set out by the UCU General Secretary in her letter to heads of institutions in the further and higher education sectors on [16<sup>th</sup> March 2020](#). We note the [UCU advice](#) to members working in these sectors.

We are pleased to see the important steps the University is taking to move from face-to-face to online learning. **We do however expect that the University recognises that an immediate transition to online teaching can only be accomplished at a very limited level, and that progress towards more meaningful online teaching should not be rushed and should be undertaken in full consultation with the unions.**

Our members are understandably concerned about a variety of issues: the health and safety risks they face and how to minimise these in different situations across the University; pay and loss of income; the IT technologies and resources they should use to move to online lectures, seminars and teaching; meetings and professional services; and the balance between high quality online learning and moving resources online at speed. We also note our members' concerns about the emotional and mental health consequences of voluntary or imposed self-isolation and working remotely, for staff and students alike. Our members have expressed anxieties about coming into campus and asking students to do the same (public transport is a likely vector of transmission). We note GTA and other staff on hourly paid as well as insecure contracts (eg language tutors) face additional issues. We welcome and support the University commitment to ensure that all staff, including agency staff, will not be disadvantaged in terms of pay.

In the spirit of seeking the most effective response to the current crisis, we have the following suggestions which we hope you will consider:

1. That you publish the evidence underpinning the University strategy. We believe this will help to explain different responses within the University and across the sector.
2. The latest update notwithstanding, that all staff required to come into the University are given clear advice and support to: minimise travel to and from the University and to maximise social distancing; assess the risks of each type of face to face contact they need to engage with, as well as clear signposting of available support from University and UCU branch health and safety representatives and relevant health and safety legislation. That the University recognises all staff's right to remove themselves from risk. This includes all teaching, research and professional support activities. No worker with caring responsibilities which restrict home working are caused detriment in their role, and they continue to be paid in full. Provision of a clear and effective mental health strategy to support staff working remotely, whether self-isolating or otherwise.
3. Clarify the steps the University is taking to ensure adequate provision of personal protection equipment and hygiene facilities to staff who remain on campus or travel on university business, consistent with their assessed risk of exposure to COVID-19.
4. While we welcome your commitment that no member of staff will be disadvantaged in terms of pay, could we ask for further details of how this will be honoured? We note that some of the FAQs include phrases such as 'most staff' – what does this mean and who is and is not covered by this? We ask that no member of staff is disadvantaged as a result of virus-related closures or isolation, regardless of contract type or visa status. We also ask for confirmation that additional hours incurred by GTAs and other types of fractional and hourly paid staff for training and transferring resources to online facilities as well as providing additional online support for students are fully remunerated by the University. Working from home will impose additional costs (such as daytime heating, additional broadband or phone costs) on some staff, we would welcome clarity on how the University will meet those costs. Similarly, there are health and safety issues involved in working from home and we would ask for clarification on how staff will be supported in assessing these risks and given the necessary resources to adjust for them.
5. Researchers on externally funded research contracts, studentships or fellowships are not disadvantaged by unavoidable delays to the research programmes (due to COVID-19) and that the University works with funding bodies to ensure that fully funded extensions are provided.
6. All staff are reimbursed for cancelled travel arrangements, however booked and paid for and that all staff currently on field trips and/or based abroad will be fully supported and treated equally with staff in the UK.
7. There is clarity and clear guidance about access to training in and resources for remote/online teaching. Clear guidance and support to staff about the balance between high quality distance/online learning and what is acceptable, given the need for transfer at speed. The IT resources and online platforms recommended and provided by the University are functional, fit for purpose and minimise potential privacy/GDPR problems. The licenses for discipline specific software only available on university owned computers and/or on-campus computers are extended and made available to all staff and students off campus working off-campus. That the constraints staff are working to in achieving the transfer of face to face learning to online resources are made clear to students.
8. The transfer to largely online learning and a high level of remote/home working to deal with this current emergency must be reviewed with Senate. Any extension of the emergency online learning provision is negotiated with the campus unions to ensure adequate protection of the intellectual and performance rights of staff and that such moves will not be

at the expense of staff roles and posts. It is crucial staff have the resources and time to develop and provide the high quality online/blended learning this University will need in the future.

We would like to reiterate our support for moving all activity online for the duration of this COVID-19 emergency. Given the considerable additional work, stress and hardship that our members are now facing, it would be a helpful goodwill gesture if the university were to rescind any pay deductions from the recent strike action.

Kind regards

David Swanson (UMUCU President)

Caroline Martin (UMUCU co Vice President)

Linda Davies (UMUCU co Vice President)

Adam Ozanne (UMUCU Secretary)

On behalf of the UMUCU Executive Committee

C.c. Edward Astle, Chair of the board of Governors  
Patrick Hackett, Registrar & Secretary  
Karen Heaton, Director of HR