

Motion on return to in-person teaching, 14 October

UMUCU notes that members passed a motion on 9 September stating that all non-lab and practice-based teaching should be done online. This is the position at which the SLT arrived almost a month later, after over 1000 cases of student infection. UMUCU notes that listening to members would have saved many students, staff and Manchester residents from illness, and would have given teaching staff sufficient time to prepare online small-group teaching materials.

UMUCU notes that moving back and forth between in-person and online teaching at short notice causes undue stress on staff. This contravenes stated University commitment 'to providing a supportive working environment that maintains and promotes the health and wellbeing of all its employees' and stated policy that 'the University has a duty to manage work-related stress in the same way that it manages more tangible risks'. The increasing levels of stress felt by staff over the last few months may also exacerbate other existing mental health conditions for colleagues such as long-term anxiety and depression.

UMUCU notes that the move to online seminars is only in place until 30 October. The short-term nature of this enormous shift means that instructors and PS staff, after scrambling to adjust to a new method of instruction, may have to scramble to change it again in three weeks' time. UCU also notes the likelihood of further outbreaks in the city of Manchester if in-person teaching resumes, which will likely force a return to online teaching in the same semester.

UMUCU notes that because lectures remain online for the semester while the mode of seminar teaching is uncertain, GTAs and fixed-term staff members, who do less lecturing and more seminar teaching, disproportionately suffer from undue work-related stress every time the risk level changes, as their obligation to return to work on campus resides on this.

UMUCU resolves

- If the SLT attempts to force members who are teaching online to return to in-person teaching during the Autumn 2020 semester, we will declare a dispute and move toward industrial action.