

UEG/UCU joint statement

Following discussions on plans for the Spring Semester, between the University Executive Group (hereafter 'UEG') and Sussex UCU (hereafter 'UCU') we are pleased to make the following joint statement. Where the term 'University' is used this refers to a wider decision-making group than UEG.

1. The UEG, University and UCU recognise that much excellent teaching has happened online since March, and that all teaching staff are committed professionals who will wish to return to teaching in person (face to face) once they are confident that it is safe to do so.

2. UEG reaffirms the commitment [made on 12 August](#) that:

The health, safety and wellbeing, both physical and mental, of our staff and students is our key priority and will remain at the centre of our planning and decision-making.

3. UEG reiterates the VC's [statement of 15th May](#), as valid for the remainder of this academic year:

It goes without saying that nobody should be expected to work in an environment in which they feel unsafe and an important part of any return will be to give colleagues the agency to make decisions for themselves. This is especially important for those who have, or live with someone who has, an underlying health condition, although there are also other considerations. For our part, we will do everything we can to make that choice as easy to make as possible.

4. The University commits to maintaining the arrangements outlined in the [Return to campus guidance](#) and [Managers tool kit](#) (published on 12 August) essentially unchanged for Semester 2. Any significant updates will be made

only after meaningful consultation with the three campus trade unions, and will be checked with the Equalities Officers of all three unions and the EDI Unit to ensure that they cannot be seen to lead to any direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, age or any other protected characteristic.

5. The University confirms that staff, regardless of contract type, who do not feel able to teach in-person will not be required or in any way pressured to undergo an Occupational Health assessment. Additionally those staff who care for or live with someone who is clinically vulnerable will not need to show evidence of this in order to gain consent for teaching partly or entirely online in Semester 2. Nevertheless, the University will ask managers to offer staff who feel they have a health vulnerability (physical or mental) a referral to the Occupational Health service, on a voluntary basis, so that an objective clinical assessment is available to help inform discussions about returning to in person teaching and about their own health and well-being. These discussions will be informed by guidance agreed by the Directors of Teaching and Learning.

6. The University, while aiming to facilitate a greater proportion of in-person teaching in the spring semester, will actively ensure that no coercive measures are used to achieve this.

7. UEG will enter into meaningful consultation with representatives of UCU and the other two campus trade unions on plans for teaching and campus-based working in the summer and for future teaching periods while the pandemic lasts. Considerations of workload and of staff experiences of in-person and online teaching will be factored into the design of principles for teaching.

8. The University commits to a policy under which staff will be informed if they have been at a teaching or lab event with a student who tests positive in the following days, regardless of the degree of contact between staff member and student.

9. In case of evidence of transmission of Covid-19 through an in-person teaching session, the University will immediately review the situation in consultation with the campus trade unions, the Health and Safety team, and public health experts and, based on all available expert advice will move

teaching in that School online if this is considered necessary to prevent any risk of wider infection.

10. UEG and UCU will continue discussions to have a clear understanding about how the University will respond to local levels of Covid incidence and transmission rates.

11. While recognising that the University has reasons for wishing to increase the proportion of in-person teaching consistently to 33% (subject to government guidance) next semester, UCU continues to believe that, in principle and with necessary exceptions, all teaching should be moved online for the duration of the pandemic. However in light of the above commitments from UEG, UCU will discontinue moves to issue a Notice of Failure to Agree initiated by the [motion passed at its General Meeting of 28 September](#).

12. UEG and UCU accept that appropriate and timely consultation and negotiation with each other must be an integral part of working with the University community in a pragmatic, reasonable and sensitive way during these exceptionally difficult times.