

# NEWSLETTER

**UCU**  
University and College Union

AN INFORMATION BULLETIN FOR EASTERN & HOME COUNTIES MEMBERS

APRIL 2020

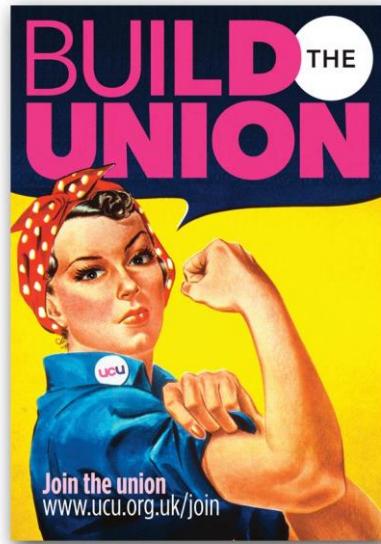
## Coronavirus Advice

Your Eastern and Home Counties UCU regional office team has put together this newsletter to offer key relevant advice at this difficult time.

Updates are available on our website: [www.ucu.org.uk](http://www.ucu.org.uk)

If you need help please contact your local UCU reps.

To find their contact details please use the search here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/contacts>



## New ways of working

**Delivering teaching and working remotely** is new ground for many members. In response to the sudden shift which could last for some time and the huge steps it involves, UCU has produced a concise guide:

[https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10830/UCU-guidance-on-working-from-home-and-teaching-online/pdf/ucu\\_workfromhome\\_guide\\_mar20.pdf](https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10830/UCU-guidance-on-working-from-home-and-teaching-online/pdf/ucu_workfromhome_guide_mar20.pdf)

The guide takes in advice on home-based working (including health and safety), intellectual property and an overview of online teaching. Members are picking their way through this maze at high speed and as well as using the guidance, members should stay in touch with their branch to ensure that any concerns from technical issues to workload to general support for working remotely from your colleagues are addressed by your employer.

Although most education workplaces have now been shut down, for staff **still working from their normal place of work**, there are a number of obvious health and safety concerns.

- Employers have a legal duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and need to take reasonably practicable steps to identify and control any risks to injury or health.
- This means assessing all risks that might cause harm in the workplace, being clear about all risks identified, controlling those risks through protection measures and ensure that you are trained and instructed to deal with the risks.
- Employers also have to consult employees (normally via UCU and other unions) on health and safety issues.

If you have doubts about any aspects of your institution's planning for COVID-19 with specific regard to your health or you are vulnerable in any way, you should raise your concern directly with your manager and make sure your local UCU branch representative is copied in. UCU advice is posted on [www.ucu.org.uk](http://www.ucu.org.uk) and is updated regularly.

## Leave in the time of Corona: a guide to exceptional leave

We are pleased to report that most of our employers have acted quickly to support staff during the coronavirus outbreak. Our guide here lays out your basic rights, but your employer may be offering additional protections too.

**If you are too ill to work**, whether coronavirus or not, you should be on sick leave. The normal reporting process may have changed so check with your manager e.g. it may be difficult to get a doctor's certificate just now. If you agree to use a different procedure, get it in writing.

**If you are working**, including when self-isolating, you should not be on leave. Working is working wherever it is, and you should be paid as normal.

**If you can't be in your normal workplace, and you cannot work from home**, a lot depends on the circumstances (check your staff policies and with your local UCU branch):

- If you are self-isolating\* with coronavirus symptoms, because of a household member with coronavirus, under advice from a doctor or NHS111 – you may be eligible for contractual sick-pay and / or statutory sick pay (SSP) if you meet the other eligibility requirements. See <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus/self-isolation-and-sick-pay> .  
\*Remember if you are working whilst self-isolating, you get normal pay not sick pay.
- If you can't work because you are looking after dependents, you may qualify for time off to deal with a dependant's emergency, or parental leave to look after children. Some employers offer this as paid leave, but it's not a legal requirement that it's paid.
- If you are unable to work for other reasons, there may be contingency leave available.

Life is complicated so if your circumstances aren't covered, if you aren't being paid, or if you feel you are being treated unfairly, do contact your local UCU branch. They are negotiating hard for the best policies for all staff, and can support individual members who need different solutions. You can also read the ACAS guidance here: <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>.

## MIND guidance on home-working

<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/toolkit/coronavirus-and-isolation-supporting-yourself-and-your-colleagues/>

## Education Support

Education Support provides independent, confidential 24/7 support, including counselling on personal and workplace issues. Whether it is stress, bullying, depression or financial matters please contact Education Support. There are plenty of resources available on their website.

For more details:

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/>

Or call the helpline on: 08000 562 561

## Membership benefits

- Your reps raise issues collectively and provide individual help
- UCU's legal scheme covers **employment rights, personal injury** (claims are free and cover workplace stress) and **immigration employment advice**.
- Subscription rates are banded depending on your earnings. Most members can reduce their subs by claiming tax relief

To join: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/join>

For more benefits:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/ucuplus>