

UCU Covid-19 guidance for academic-related/ professional services (ARPS) members in HE

UCU is aware that some ARPS staff in areas such as IT and facilities will need to attend on-site as part of skeleton staffing teams, to ensure that their institution can continue to function and to provide and maintain essential services eg, IT support for online teaching and learning.

Working on a campus or in buildings with few or no other staff can present its own set of risks. Members have raised concerns with us about staff on site not being able to access clean toilets and other facilities; rubbish bins not being emptied; hand sanitizing gel not being available and left-behind food leading to infestations of rodents and insects. These are all potential risks, and employers are required to address them.

Your employer should have already produced a **preventative** coronavirus specific risk assessment for the workplace in consultation with employees and health & safety reps which should be shared with the staff affected. A safe system of work should accompany this as appropriate, and this should include ensuring the cleanliness of the working environment and the ability to socially distance yourself from other staff who are working on site. The risk assessment should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure appropriate control measures are in place to prevent exposure to coronavirus and to reduce likelihood of transmission.

Employers must give you information about the risks in your workplace and how you are protected. They must also instruct and train you on how to deal with the risks.

The risk assessment should address all the issues that could arise including circumstances where the controls identified cannot be implemented, such as lack of the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). If controls cannot be implemented, then the workplace hazards remain and the risk to health and safety is not prevented or reduced. If the risk severity and likelihood are considered to be high, then work should not continue on site until suitable controls are in place.

When requiring staff to physically attend work, your employer should consider how staff can travel to and from work safely to minimise exposure to coronavirus. If you would usually travel by public transport, your employer could ensure workplace parking if you have access to a car or pay for taxis to facilitate safe travel. If someone is unable to travel to work without significant risk, then the employer should not force staff to travel, instead finding alternative work which can be carried out remotely.

If you have any concerns about your health and safety, you should raise it directly with your manager and make sure your local UCU branch representative is copied in.

See also **Thompsons solicitors briefing on employer and employees' responsibilities** in the wake of coronavirus.