



UCU London Region NEWSLETTER

ISSUE **4**
20 May 2020

Welcome to our latest newsletter

WE HOPE that you are keeping safe and well.

As always, we try to signpost recent developments and useful information, and your feedback is enormously welcome. We want to hear from you about any issues or challenges you might have in your workplace as the Covid-19 crisis continues to develop. As always, all of UCU's advice and guidance on this situation is available at: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/covid19>

At the moment, principals and leaders of further education colleges, adult education and prison education providers are reviewing government guidance released last week setting out how some students may return to face-to-face teaching in colleges from 1 June. The concern is that some employers may apply pressure to UCU members to

return to their workplaces. UCU's position on this is clear: no return until it is safe to do so, and not until full consultation and negotiation with UCU has taken place. More about that below.

In higher education, news of the extension of the government's coronavirus job retention scheme to the end of October, along with greater clarity from ministers about universities' eligibility to access the scheme, has been welcomed. It is still proving difficult to persuade some employers to use the scheme for its intended purpose; to shield employees from being pushed into a jobs market that doesn't exist. Again, more on this below.

Please keep in touch with us at londonregion@ucu.org.uk
Barry Jones and Adam Lincoln, Regional Officials



Carry over of annual leave

the worker was entitled under this regulation as a result of the effects of coronavirus'.

The new regulations refer only to statutory holiday entitlement (28 days including bank holidays), not any further contractual leave entitlement, and the additional carry-over applies only if it has not been practicable for a worker/employee to take their leave in the current leave year due to Covid-19. This does not give staff the automatic right to carry over four weeks leave but we are aware that

many members will be unable to take their full leave entitlement due to sickness, caring responsibilities and/or workload at the current time.

This legislation allows your UCU branch to negotiate with your employer to adopt a flexible approach and it cannot use the legal situation to deny you the opportunity to carry over some of your leave. Please contact your branch in the first instance if you think this may affect you.

For full guidance on this issue see: <https://tinyurl.com/y8nc6nuq>

THE GOVERNMENT has brought in new legislation which allows employees and workers to carry over up to four weeks' paid holiday into their next two holiday leave years where 'it was not reasonably practicable for a worker to take some or all of the leave to which

London higher education update

HE EMPLOYERS are coming forward with their plans for dealing with the impact of Covid-19 on student numbers and university funding. A UCU report by London Economics contained some sobering conclusions about likely outcomes, and it is important that UCU branches are ready to engage with employers about their responses.

A further document has now been published on protecting jobs in higher education from the impact of Covid-19:

<https://tinyurl.com/yb5zwcms>



We are seeing employers focus primarily on the wage bill, as has become their custom on far too many occasions. For staff on fixed-term contracts, there are immediate threats. The aim of the *Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme* is to help employers protect the jobs of staff who otherwise might be thrust into the non-existent jobs market, and we are finding that too many employers are reluctant to use it for that purpose. UCU is challenging employers to extend fixed-term contracts to avoid redundancies so that the furlough scheme can then be used, if necessary, and employment maintained.

For information about what is happening in your institution, please contact your branch. We want to hear about any problems and, as you would expect, we are fully committed to supporting branches in safeguarding members' jobs.

Barry Jones, UCU Regional Official

No return to the workplace until it is safe to do so



All the further education sector unions have said that social distancing plans must cover travelling to and from work in addition to time spent in the classroom

IT IS crucial that there is no return to further/adult/prison education until it is safe to do so and that we stand together to protect lives. Further education sector unions (UCU, GMB, Unison, Unite and NEU) demand stringent hygiene measures, protection for vulnerable people and isolation for all suspected cases to avoid colleges becoming Covid-19 hotspots.

The unions said that social distancing plans had to extend beyond the classroom to cover things like travelling to and from college and socialising.

UCU General Secretary Jo Grady said: 'Staff and student health is the number one priority and nobody should be going back to college until it is safe to do so. The government needs to work with us to address the national challenges, while individual colleges should work with their local

union reps to address the unique challenges they will face.'

UCU has been working closely with further education sector unions to respond to the government guidance (<https://bit.ly/2WTufw5>) released last week setting out how some students may return to face-to-face teaching in colleges from 1 June.

UCU has issued guidance to inform discussions with employers about any future return to the workplace:

<https://tinyurl.com/yc3ehoxq>

The FE trade unions have issued five tests government and colleges must meet before staff and students can return. This forms the basis for all discussions with the employers at local and national level in relation to any return to work.

<https://tinyurl.com/ycnvr6tx>

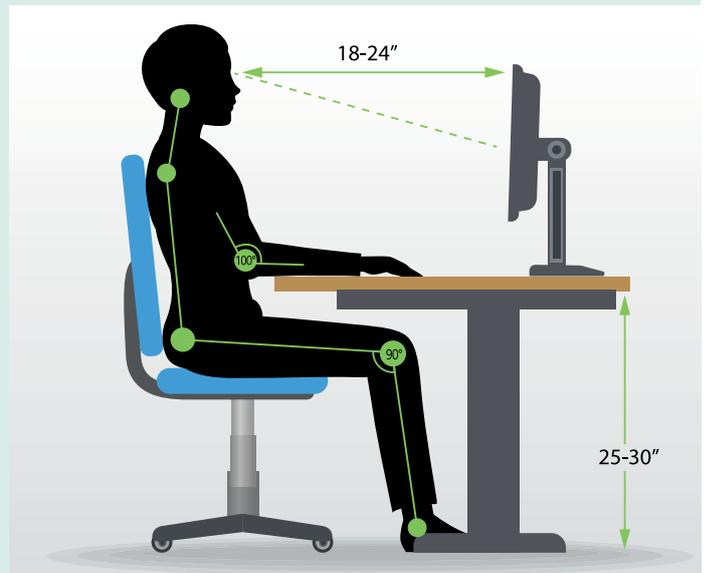
Adam Lincoln, UCU Regional Official

Display screen equipment and health and safety

YOU MAY find that your usage of display screen equipment (DSE) such as desktop computers and laptops has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. While there is no evidence that use of DSE can cause permanent damage to the eyes, many people using DSE for prolonged periods can experience eye strain, visual fatigue, headaches and stress. Other health complaints relating to improper or overuse of DSE include a range of upper limb disorders and backache.

The DSE Regulations 1992 do not apply to temporary working arrangements but employers do still have a general duty to protect your health and safety at work. As such many employers have provided their temporary home workers with DSE self-assessment checklists and information and guidance relating to the safe set up of workstations.

Some preventative measures you can take include scheduling different work activities to break up your screen time and taking a break of 5-10 minutes for every 50-60 minutes of continuous screen time. You can set up simple reminders and alerts using your mobile phone or online calendars or download one of the many apps



available online that can enforce break times or gently remind you to take a breaks at customisable intervals. In general, frequent short breaks are much more effective than fewer longer breaks and should be taken before the onset of fatigue and before any decline in productivity. For additional info: HSE DSE Leaflet and DSE Regulations Guidance L26: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse>

Furlough leave



THE GOVERNMENT has introduced the coronavirus job retention scheme (CJRS) to support employers to keep staff on the payroll during the Covid-19 crisis. Where an employer is unable to offer work to a member of staff, the

scheme allows an employer to put a member of staff on 'furlough leave' and recover 80% of staff salary from the scheme, subject to a maximum of £2500 per month. Individual employees must be paid through the PAYE payroll (where the employer deducts tax and national insurance) to be eligible for the scheme.

On 12 May the duration of the scheme was extended to the end of October 2020, with some new measures of flexibility (details of which are yet to be published) to be introduced from 1 August 2020.

You cannot be put on furlough leave without agreement but if you do agree your contract of employment continues and all other terms and conditions remain in place. The

minimum period you can be furloughed is three weeks and during the furlough period you must not do any work for, or for the benefit of, your employer.

The scheme can be applied to staff on full-time, part-time, hourly-paid, variable hours (including zero-hours) contracts, and agency staff.

There are some limits to employers who receive public funding in accessing the scheme but we are aware of employers in both FE and HE offering furlough leave to some groups of staff.

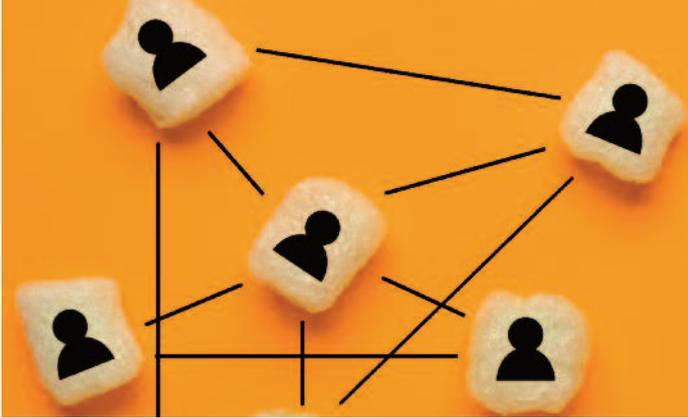
We would expect any FE, ACE, Prison or HE employer to top up staff pay to 100% if they are offered furlough leave.

For full guidance on the scheme and how it may affect you see:

<https://tinyurl.com/ydyfx9ec>

Recruit a colleague

Stand together, stand stronger



THIS IS a critical time for all of us, and a crucial time to recruit via our networks so that we are in the strongest position we can be in every institution, and so we are able to represent the greatest number of workers in our sectors.

Please forward this newsletter to colleagues who you think would benefit from membership – it's never been more important to stand together.

Join UCU here: <http://join.ucu.org.uk>

ADVICE ON COVID-19 AND YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK



UCU **ADVICE** on the coronavirus crisis can be found at:
<https://www.ucu.org.uk/coronavirus>

Information on the coronavirus job retention scheme is here: <https://tinyurl.com/ydyfx9ec>

And the government's latest guidance on financial support for education, early years and children's social care: <https://tinyurl.com/yd5k4vwk>

MY UCU



IT'S NEVER been more important that UCU can contact you when we need to. Please go to My UCU today at <https://tinyurl.com/ycodyhuz> and check that all your membership contact details are correct, including: ● branch and preferred email ● home postal address ● mobile phone number. **THANK YOU**

Together we are UNITED



Together we are STRONG



JOIN THE UNION

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