

18 May 2022

Our Ref: AOS/rlc

Prof Ian Campbell
Vice Chancellor
University of Wolverhampton
Wulfruna Street
Wolverhampton
WV1 1LY

Sent by email only

Dear Professor Campbell

Course suspensions

I am writing to you on behalf of UCU members who are alarmed by the University's announcement that it has suspended recruitment of students to 146 courses across the University, including all first-year undergraduate and Masters-level postgraduate courses in the School of Performing Arts.

As a recognised union whose members are directly affected, UCU would like to understand the rationale for this decision and, to that end, we request that you provide us with the following information as a matter of urgency:

- A copy of the business case for these changes, including the financial data on which the decision was based
- An explanation of the approval process for such decisions
- Confirmation of which body(ies) within the University approved this decision and the dates on which approval was given
- A copy of the re-instatement plan for all the affected courses for the academic year 2023/24 (once the year-long suspension of student recruitment is lifted)
- A copy of any assessment of the Workforce and Culture Committee in relation to the Faculty of Arts, Business and Social Sciences that relates to the courses that are being suspended in that Faculty and, in particular, any assessment of the committee relating to the workforce of the School of Performing Arts that contributed to the decision to suspend all first-year undergraduate and Masters-level postgraduate courses in that School
- A copy of any assessment of the Workforce and Culture Committee in relation to the workforces of the Faculty of Science and Engineering and the Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing that contributed to the decision to suspend courses in those Faculties

- A copy of any other information that was taken into consideration by the University in coming to its decision to suspend recruitment to all the courses specified by the University.

The draconian nature of these course suspensions strongly implies that 'the requirements of the [University's] business for employees to carry out work of a particular kind ... have ceased or diminished or are expected to cease or diminish.' As I am sure you know, such a situation meets the statutory definition of redundancy for the purposes of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. In view of the numbers of courses affected it is highly probable that more than 20 academic staff will be at risk of losing their jobs through redundancy as a result of the University's actions. If so then, in accordance with the above Act, the University is under a statutory duty to consult with the recognised unions on the redundancy proposals and the methods of carrying them out.

We are therefore very concerned that – seemingly in direct contravention of the requirements of that Act – no formal consultation has yet taken place with UCU, despite the legislation providing that consultation with the recognised unions must take place 'in good time'. Case law has established that this means at a formative stage with sufficient information and adequate time for trade unions to respond. Consultation discussions must cover ways of

- avoiding or reducing the numbers of redundancies and
- mitigating the consequences of any redundancies

and there must be time for the University to give 'conscientious consideration' to the union's response.

In order to facilitate the process of consultation the Act requires that the following information be supplied to us:

- the reasons for the proposals
- the numbers and descriptions of employees at risk
- the total number of employees of any such description employed by the University
- the proposed method of selection for redundancy
- the proposed method of carrying out the redundancy dismissals, with due regard to any agreed procedure, including the period over which they are to take effect
and
- the proposed method of calculating the amount of any non-statutory redundancy payments.


In view of the fact that a public announcement has already been made by the University about its plans please supply this information to me by return.

In light of our serious concerns about the University's handling of the situation UCU reserves our right to apply to the Employment Tribunal for a declaration that the University has failed to comply with its statutory duty to consult and for a protective award to be made in consequence of that failure.

Once all of the requested information has been received it will be necessary to hold a series of consultation meetings so I would appreciate suggestions of convenient meeting dates and times in the next 2 – 6 weeks.

I look forward to hearing from you by return.

Yours sincerely



Anne O'Sullivan
UCU Regional Official West Midlands

cc: Ailsa Nicholls, Head of HR
Catherine Lamond, UCU Branch Officer
Paul Barrow, UCU Branch Officer
Greg Barnett UCU Head of Bargaining, Organising, Representation and Operations