

## **Motion by UCU Branch Committee On Brunel's Return to Work Plan**

### **This branch notes:**

1. UCU branch officials have been in talks with Brunel University's Senior Management in the Delivery of Education group, in the Health and Safety Group and in the Staff Consultative Committee. These talks have been productive in some regards but there are major areas of concern outstanding.
2. That from the outset of these Covid-19 discussions the UCU branch strategy was that Brunel should provide on-campus testing for staff and students and an effective on-campus track and trace system, in order to mitigate the national government's failure to provide an effective system of testing, track and trace. Brunel could have been a 'market leader' in this regard. Exeter University for example is offering staff and students on-campus testing for C-19. While Brunel has indicated that they are in discussion with Hillingdon Borough and other local universities to offer on-campus testing, we have had no clear statement as to where these plans are and when or if they will be effectively implemented.
3. That branch officials have repeatedly insisted that online teaching should be the default mode of delivery (as per the official UCU view), citing both the latest Independent Sage and "official" Sage reports.
4. That in the first wave of Covid-19 Brunel University's Dr Jie Chen died of Covid-19 on Sunday March 29<sup>th</sup>, aged 55.
5. That the University has opted for a partial normal 'campus' experience for students which includes some on-campus face to face teaching.
6. That there are wide variations in the demands being made on staff in different departments to deliver on-campus face to face teaching, that these are inconsistent and therefore unfair and present a public health risk to staff and students.
7. That branch officials have repeatedly insisted that mask wearing should be mandatory on campus in indoor environments, including corridors and in seminar situations. By contrast the university has chosen to hide behind shifting government guidelines on this issue and resists making mask wearing mandatory or even strongly recommending it as a civic obligation.
8. This motion recognises that there have been some positives to come out of the discussions, including the university making 2 meters the standard for Social Distancing and the University's explicit recognition of the 1996 Employment Act Section 44 which allows employees to raise health and safety concerns without detriment to their job, salary or role, etc.

**This branch believes:**

1. That in an overall assessment of progress made, the return to work model delivered by the university does not command the confidence of this branch and constitutes an unacceptable public health risk to staff and students.
2. That with Covid-19 rates escalating nationally, pressure for a return to online delivery and further lockdown restrictions (on campus and/or nationally) are likely to become irresistible in the next few weeks.

**This branch resolves:**

1. To demand that Brunel University make on-line delivery of teaching in accordance with expert scientific opinion (e.g. Independent SAGE) the default position.
2. To demand that where it is impossible to deliver parts of the educational provision on-line, the university must arrange regular testing and tracing for students and staff and that wearing a mask in seminars and any indoor teaching scenarios is made compulsory.
3. To demand that no-one will be required to undertake on-campus face-to-face teaching if they express the wish not to do so.