

BRANCH COMMITTEE MOTION: HEALTH AND SAFETY AND THE RETURN TO CAMPUS

Newcastle UCU wants its campuses to stay open, safe and optimally functional for those members of the University who need it.

This branch notes:

1. That UCU Health and Safety representatives have worked hard over the summer to ensure the campus can remain safe.
2. That recent expert opinion (Independent Sage and BMJ editors) is warning—based on modelling and the outbreaks at US universities—that the new academic year could seed a second wave of infections.
3. That the new SAGE report into the impact of on campus teaching articulated ‘high confidence’ that by Christmas and the New Year period HE would pose a ‘significant risk to both extended families and local communities’.
4. That the University’s own modelling predicted 0.9 staff death using its current mitigation procedures against risk, a figure that is unacceptably high.
5. That existing NHS test and trace structures are inadequate to guarantee the safety of staff, students and the wider community.
6. That University Covid infection reporting currently by-passes union Health and Safety reps.
7. That a general return to campus and halls of residence imperils necessary lab-based research and practical teaching that is not possible remotely.
8. That the long-term health impact of Covid infection is unknown, and consequent staff absence poses a risk to academic programmes.

This branch resolves:

1. Where PS or academic work is possible remotely during the pandemic, return to campus should be voluntary.
2. No in-person teaching should take place in Semester 1, unless it is pedagogically necessary.
3. To support any member who declines to return to campus or do in-person teaching.
4. To require that the University provides risk assessments for every building, and activities taking place therein; and to include all recognised unions and staff and students in infection reporting protocols.
5. To insist that any requirement to do in-person work be in the form of a specific written request coming directly from an employee or worker’s line manager or equivalent
6. To relax the above resolutions once UCU’s ‘five tests’ are met.

End of motion

Mover: Matt Perry

Secunder: David Stewart