

From: Iain Owens <IOwens@UCU.ORG.UK>
Sent: 18 October 2021 13:48
To: Adrienne McFarland <Adrienne.McFarland@newcastle.ac.uk>
Cc: Graham Kirkwood <Graham.Kirkwood@newcastle.ac.uk>; UCU Office <UCU.Office@newcastle.ac.uk>
Subject: Health and safety concerns

Dear Adrienne

I hope you are well.

I have been contacted by the local branch officers who have indicated to me that there are a number of important health and safety issues related to Covid which urgently need resolution.

These are as follows:

1 The lack of usage of face coverings by students (and in some cases staff). From speaking to Graham Kirkwood, I believe he has reported in that there appears to be a deliberate systematic approach to non-face covering in the Business school. But that is a very specific case. We need, and I hope you would agree, that we need to get to a position where University members respect the health and safety of others by wearing a face covering, We are asking that the university makes face covering mandatory in all indoor spaces including teaching spaces excepting cases where due to, for example, medical reasons, it is not possible.

2 Agreed maximum occupancy for teaching rooms

3 Means of ensuring that safe distancing exists throughout the university

4 Issues relating to ventilation, including the use of monitors, windows being open in rooms without mechanical ventilation; desk, ceiling and pedestal fans being shut down in multi-occupancy workspaces.

5 Means of ensuring ongoing consultation on these issues on a regular basis to ensure that issues can be identified and sorted at source.

6 The provision of specific building risk assessment checklists.

7 The provision of more detailed activity-based risk assessments which acknowledge that different teaching activities carry different types and levels of risk.

These are issues which are causing our members understandable concern as they transition back from working, almost, exclusively at home to working on the campus. As I said at the start of this letter these issues need urgent resolution. I would hope that if we could meet we could come to agreement and that we could do this without recourse to formal dispute resolution procedures. But the branch is very much of the view that without such an agreement that will be the path we will need to follow.

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