



Dear Prof. Koen Lamberts

We, the University of Sheffield's joint Staffside Campus Trade Unions are writing to state our position with regards to face-to-face working for the new academic year. We are deeply concerned about the level of institutional preparedness for face to face work on campus with students. We request an urgent meeting with you to discuss the very serious situation that is unfolding nationally (the Covid-19 alert level was revised to level 4 yesterday).

In these challenging times, staff have shown incredible unity, solidarity and community in supporting our fellow staff members and students. As the new academic year begins, however, we do not feel that our institution has shown staff the same level of support. The University has not put in place and ensured the delivery of sufficient H&S practices, and certainly not ready for the start of semester. We are thus writing to express our concerns about the risk that face to face work across the university will have for staff, students and the wider community.

We call for an immediate suspension face-to-face work until such a time as compliance with our 5 principles below is possible. Note the Independent SAGE advises online only teaching for all courses for at least the first two weeks to limit the spread of infections brought from outside the city. We strongly believe that a delay to face-to-face work is in keeping with the blended learning approach and may be the only way to protect staff, students and the wider community from infection.

We have consulted with our membership and brought together the diverse voices and positions of our members. They are summarised in the following key principles. We hope that you will be able to take these on board in order to ensure all our collective health, safety and wellbeing.

Our principles

1. No work without risk assessments being actioned

We are deeply concerned that institutional risk assessments are not being followed and departmental risk assessments are not as comprehensive and effective as they should be. We are concerned that structures are not in place to ensure the measures proposed in risk assessments have been actioned, putting workers at risk. No staff member should put themselves in a dangerous working situation. We Sheffield TU staffside believe that there

should be no work without workplace safety. We call upon the institution to ensure that risk assessments are being adhered to fully.

2. No penalty for not participating in face to face working

The campus trade unions believe that staff should be able to opt out of face to face work without detriment. Staff who feel they cannot or are unable to carry out face to face work should not be penalised.

3. Testing is required to properly assess risk

The government's Test and Trace system is currently not fit for purpose. The joint Campus Trade Unions believe that until adequate testing is available, risk to staff, students and the wider community is not being properly assessed and thus managed. We call on the University of Sheffield to suspend face to face work until Test and Trace is fully available.

4. Monitor Covid risk, health and wellbeing on campus

We call upon the University of Sheffield to provide an anonymised daily dashboard of Covid-19 cases (suspected cases, confirmed cases, hospital admissions, and deaths among staff or students) on campus to ensure transparency and enable staff and students to make the appropriate decisions to ensure their safety. We call upon the University to make additional efforts to monitor staff workloads, stress and wellbeing in these challenging times.

5. Support students to attend as they need to

The University of Sheffield has a diverse student population. We call on our institution to support both students who are able to physically come to university and students who choose to stay at home. It must be recognised some students' home environment means they benefit from working on campus, while other students may not be able to attend campus (e.g. due to health or travel restrictions) and neither group should be disadvantaged. We call on the University to provide adequate support to its student community.

The Campus Trade Unions deem the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students to be a priority concern and call upon the university to do the same. We look forward to meeting with you at your earliest convenience as this is clearly a matter of urgency.

Sincerely

The Joint Campus Trade Unions