

# UPDATE

for UCU members in the

## North West Region

# UCU

University and College Union

Issue 4

June 2020

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## Fury as Blackburn College announces plans to sack staff but boost bosses' pensions

**Blackburn College has announced controversial plans to axe 11 posts, whilst giving senior managers a salary boost to help them avoid paying tax on million-pound pension pots.**

Under the proposals, 29 staff are at risk of losing their jobs, with 11 expected to be made redundant by September. The plans, which include the closure of the Trade Union/Health and Safety Education Centre, were immediately condemned by UCU, Blackburn MP Kate Hollern, and Lancashire's trades councils.

UCU said the latest losses were another blow to a college where staff numbers have plummeted in recent years. According to the college's data, total staff numbers fell by 140 between 2016 and 2019. These latest plans are the fifth proposals for redundancies since May 2016.

UCU said the proposal to allow staff with pension savings of £1million to be given a salary boost to avoid tax was incredible. The change would see the college pay staff extra in salary instead of contributing to their pension. This would save those staff who had reached the £1million savings a considerable tax bill.

Six people at the college were paid an annual salary of over £80,000 in 2019, all of who were in the senior management team. The highest earner was the principal who was paid between £175,000 and £180,000.

UCU regional official Martyn Moss said: 'We are in unprecedented and difficult times as we all try to deal with the current crisis. We find it incredible that the college is threatening staff with job losses while making plans to further feather the nests of senior managers. challenge employers.'

**Support the UCU campaign against redundancies: sign the petition [here](#).**

## Defend all jobs campaign launched by UCU Branch at University of Liverpool

**UCU, Unite and Unison branches at the University of Liverpool have launched a "defend all jobs" campaign. The campaign comes as over 300 members of fixed term and hourly paid staff are due to see their contracts expire at the end of July.**

The University of Liverpool has been accused of using the coronavirus epidemic as an excuse to toss hundreds of casual employees "on the scrapheap". The claim has been made by the local UCU branch who have said that the University of Liverpool, the city's second largest employer, has not made a concerted effort to renew contracts which are due to expire between now and the end of July for all temporary employees.

Around 40% of academic jobs at the university are undertaken by staff on fixed term and hourly paid contracts. With workloads already dangerously high, UCU said that not renewing the contracts would cause unnecessary hardship during the pandemic for both the staff and the region's economy.

Whilst recognizing that the university faces a loss of income due to the pandemic, UCU and the two other large campus unions Unison and Unite argue that the university could save money and continue to be sustainable without losing jobs. The unions are calling on the employer implement the following three measures:

- Develop a realistic and sustainable model of student intake that is not based on never-ending growth.
- Scrap capital development projects. Any resumption of such projects would need the agreement of the campus trade unions.
- End gross pay inequality. Introduce a 1:6 pay ratio where the highest earner can earn no more than six times the lowest paid full time member of staff. This would mean a £100,000 maximum wage at the University of Liverpool.

Follow and support the branch's campaign [here](#).

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## Risk assessments

As discussions continue at a national and local level over UCU's [five tests](#), the importance of risk assessments in making our workplaces Covid-19 secure are at the forefront of negotiations between UCU and employers. But what is a risk assessment?

A risk assessment is a systematic examination that your employer must conduct of the task, job or process that you carry out at work.

This is for the purpose of identifying the significant **hazards**, the risk of someone being harmed and deciding what further **control measures** must be taken to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. Employers have a duty to risk assess under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Employers have a legal duty to consult with Safety Reps on anything affecting their members' safety. This would include the outcomes of any risk assessment.

A **risk assessment** is a systematic method of looking at work activities, considering what could go wrong (this includes thinking about who can be harmed and how, and how badly they could be affected), and deciding on suitable control measures.

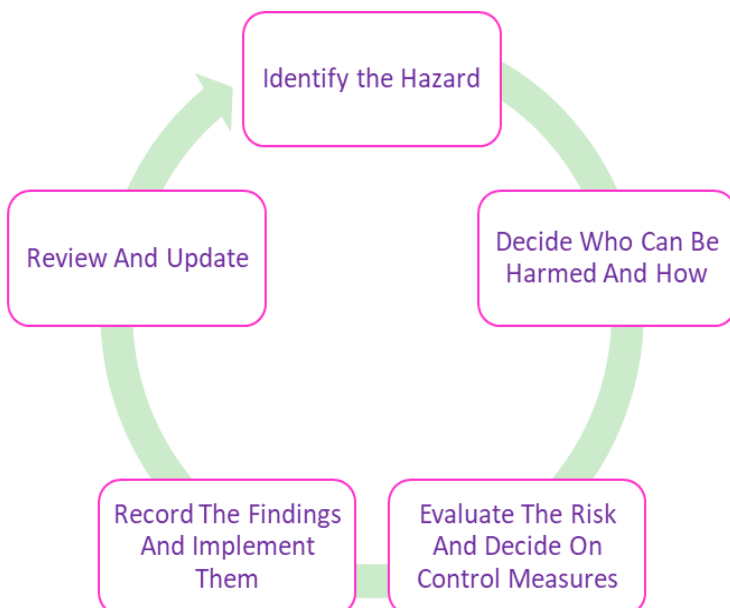
These **control measures or controls** are designed to eliminate, reduce or minimize the risks of loss, damage or injury in the workplace

A **hazard** is something that can cause harm. In the case of making sure our work places are Covid-19 secure, the hazard is not Covid-19 but activities such as face to face teaching, working from home, access and egress.

A **risk** is the chance, high or low, that any hazard will actually cause somebody harm.

**Implementation and Review:** risk assessments are **live documents**, they should be reviewed regularly and updated when there has been any change in circumstances or risk factors.

The key principles of a risk assessment are outlined in the diagram below.



## Advice for members

Across the North West, local UCU branches have written to their employers to demand that there is no return to work until collective consultations and risk assessments with UCU have taken place.

Your [local UCU branch](#) will update you on the progress of negotiations and you should contact your local UCU reps if you have any questions or concerns.

In the meanwhile, if you are contacted by a manager to ask about returning to work, we advise that you reply with the following statement:

*"I am very concerned about the suggestion that I return to on-site work activities without knowing all suitable and sufficient risk management controls are in place making it safe to return. My union, UCU, will be advising me of the outcome of collective consultations over any proposed risk management strategy the college may have. I therefore request that this consultation takes place with UCU prior to any consultation with me individually."*

Please ensure that you copy your [local branch secretary](#) in to your reply.

## Metro mayor backs UCU

Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor issues support for UCU's safety first approach in Further Education.

UCU's campaign to ensure that staff and students only return to on-site learning in Further Education when it is safe was boosted by support from the Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram. The metro mayor stated:

"I've been clear throughout that government should take a safety-first approach before further easing lockdown measures and this must apply to the further education sector.

"Before expecting staff or students to return, government and colleges should look at the five tests set out by the trade union movement and ensure that all necessary measures have been taken to keep everyone safe."

