

UPDATE

for UCU members in the

North West Region



University and College Union

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Macclesfield College under fire for forcing staff to come in for VIRTUAL open day

Macclesfield College has been branded 'irresponsible' for 'unnecessary' attempts to force staff onsite for a virtual open day on 11 June.

UCU said the college had failed to follow [government guidance over risk assessments](#), ignored [government guidance on limited reopening of colleges](#) and failed to meet its [legal duty to consult with the union](#) on health and safety matters.

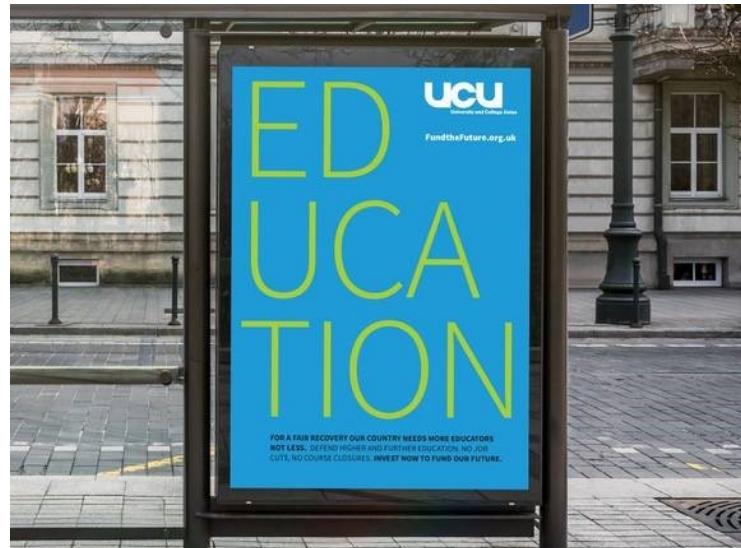
The union said it was unaware of any other college in the country taking such risks, especially in the North West, which at the time had the [highest rate of transmission of Covid-19 in the country](#). The increase in the infection rate prompted [schools across the region to axe plans for reopening](#). UCU said colleges needed to follow the science, and schools' lead, and not reopen until it is safe to do so. The union said the health of staff, students and their families had to be the number one concern for any college.

UCU said it was stunned that Macclesfield College had asked staff to come in to answer questions online for a virtual open day when the tasks could be safely done at home.

The college only presented UCU with an executive summary of its risk assessment the afternoon before the open day, which the union said was completely inadequate.

UCU regional official Martyn Moss said: 'The health of staff, students and their families has to be the number one priority for every college. 'We don't know of any other college that is behaving in such an irresponsible way and we are stunned Macclesfield College is trying to force staff to come in for a virtual event to undertake tasks they could safely do at home.'

'We want to work with all colleges to ensure safety is top of the agenda. We would urge Macclesfield College to follow the science, halt these plans and urgently undertake the proper risk assessments.'



Fund the future: build the campaign in your branch

Last week UCU launched Fund The Future: a UK-wide campaign to protect jobs, secure government funding for tertiary education, and make sure that we emerge from this crisis with a better system than the one we entered it with.

UCU general secretary, Jo Grady has [written to the prime minister](#) and his counterparts in Scotland and Wales, warning that the sectors our members work in are projected to suffer more from the economic effects of coronavirus than any other. UCU has been warning about this for months, with the evidence steadily mounting up in support of our claims. Tertiary education can no longer wait for the financial help it so desperately needs.

Support the campaign

The website for Fund The Future, is now live – [click here to visit it](#). Our website provides guidance for all UCU members to support the campaign:

- [see how the Covid-19 crisis could affect your area and write to your MP here](#)
- [watch and share our launch video](#)
- [contact your local UCU branch to help](#)
- [use our starter pack to kick-start your local campaign](#).

In the coming weeks we will be following up with other steps to increase the pressure on politicians all over the UK – and gain support from the wider public. [Education is forecast to be hit harder than any other part of the economy](#). Now is the time to affirm the immense, irreplaceable value of the staff who make post-16 education what it is.



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Risk assessments update

UCU reps in FE are at the forefront of negotiations to keep staff and students safe as pressure mounts for a return to more onsite teaching.

In the past weeks a number of UCU FE branches across the North West wrote to employers whose risk assessments were 'not suitable or sufficient.' UCU also wrote to members to update them of the union's response to institutional risk assessments which were 'not suitable or sufficient' providing advice for individuals who wished to remain working remotely due to concerns over a return to on-site working at present. This advice to members currently remains the same.

Developing a suitable and sufficient risk assessment

Most FE employers have responded to UCU by requesting emergency meetings and JNCs to discuss the problems the union had identified with existing risk assessments. Your local UCU FE branch reps are being supported by regional officials in these negotiations and branch updates will keep you up to date with local developments.

Contact your branch

If you have been asked by a manager to return to onsite working but have concerns regarding your safety and wish to remain working remotely, then contact your local UCU branch immediately.

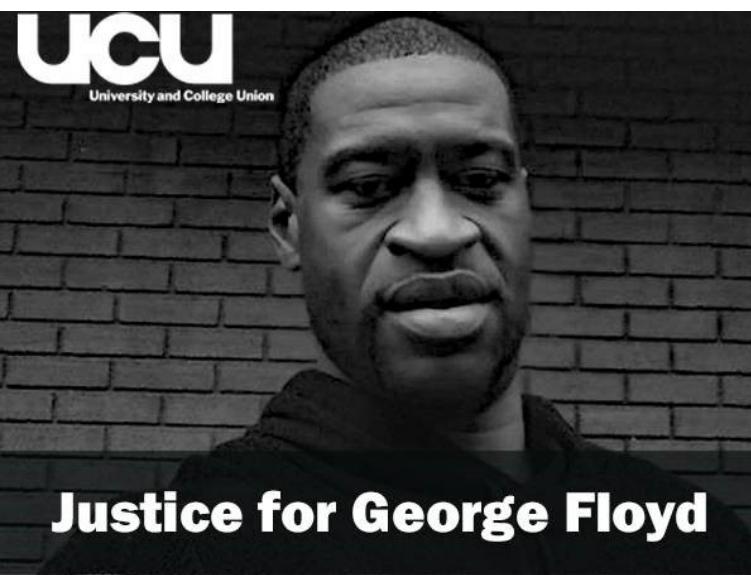
Writing to HE Vice Chancellors

This week UCU HE reps in the north west participated in an online webinar training event on risk assessments. In the coming week, UCU NW will be writing to all vice-chancellors across the region to assert the legal requirement for full consultation with UCU over risk assessments. HE branches will be supported by the Regional Office in upcoming negotiations over risk assessments. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact your local UCU branch.

Are your details correct?

Use [My UCU](#) to update your membership details

Have you changed your place of work or email address? Then make sure you update your UCU membership details. You can do this easily online via the [My UCU](#) webpage. At this time more than ever it's vital that your branch can keep in touch with you.



Justice for George Floyd

Stop the cuts at Blackburn College

Support the campaign against redundancies.

As reported in our last edition, UCU is campaigning against redundancies at Blackburn College and as well as contacting local MPs and local councillors and [set up a very successful petition](#), we would now like to invite you in joining us and writing directly to [the principal and chief executive of Blackburn College, Dr Fazal Dad](#) to ask that he halts plans for job cuts.

UCU – standing proudly against racism

UCU calls for justice for George Floyd and stands for [#blacklivesmatter](#) and in solidarity with protestors across the world seeking to address generations of injustice.

Yet another black person has been killed at the hands of the police in the USA. The events taking place there are the latest bloody chapter of centuries of racism and oppression of black people. The magnitude of his death can be felt across the world by black people who experience the violence of state and other racism every day.

Here in the UK, as in the USA, black communities face structural inequalities resulting in disproportionately high numbers dying as a result of Coronavirus, unprecedented levels of unemployment and ongoing race discrimination in the workplace.

- UCU stands in solidarity with George Floyd and we send our sincerest condolences to his family and loved ones.
- UCU stands in solidarity with protestors across the world seeking to address generations of injustice.
- UCU stands against racism.
- UCU stands on the side of justice.
- UCU stands for [#blacklivesmatter](#).

From the Coronavirus pandemic to the economic crisis we are facing, it is evident that inequality and systemic racism is on the rise. You can find a range of tools to challenge all forms of discrimination on the [UCU's equality webpage](#).

How you can help:

Sign: add your name to the [Justice for George Floyd](#) petition

Donate: in the US, a [fundraiser](#) has been set up in George Floyd's memory by his brother Philonise Floyd to cover funeral costs and counselling as well as expenses during court proceedings, and the [Minnesota Freedom Fund](#) helps to support those in custody who can't afford bail. In the UK, UCU is affiliated to the [United Family and Friends Campaign](#), supporting the families of those who have died in custody, which also welcomes donations.

Inform: UCU is encouraging black members to [complete this TUC survey](#) on the treatment of BME workers during the Covid crisis.

Organise: information on UK based solidarity events can be found [here](#).



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