

Hello, everyone. I want to just touch base before we head off for a few days on our Easter break.

April is a great month this year, with the flowers coming out, the buds of the tree, our extended evenings. And this April is a time where our Muslim colleagues are observing Ramadan. Our Christian colleagues are celebrating Easter, and our Jewish colleagues are celebrating the Passover.

And in the recent edition of The Bones, we put a highlight on Easter and Ramadan. And in the next edition, we will put a spotlight on Passover. And it's really interesting to read and understand the traditions of the many faiths we have across the University. And I appreciate the Interfaith Staff Network, our most recent staff network, which was established in order to bring people together to develop mutual understanding of each other's faith.

So many faiths and traditions we have across the university and it's highly inclusive, is there for people of all faiths and none. So do join if you wish to understand more and develop mutual respect for different faiths and traditions. All the details are on the staff intranet.

Now, some dates for you. Our hybrid working trial begins on the 2nd of May. You have received, (Professional Services staff), you would all have received the principals, frequently asked questions, the guidelines. If you please familiarise yourself with those and if you have any questions or comments, speak to your line manager in the first instance. It is a trial, it will go on to the end of this year, so we're unlikely to get everything right for everybody first time.

But if you keep your feedback coming, we'll know what works well or doesn't work so well to be able to adjust and develop our policy for the future in early 2022. I know many of you who have been back on campus for some time now providing services to our students teaching, doing whatever, so thank you for that.

I also want to recognise with gratitude, the staff who've been on campus throughout our last two years of the pandemic, because their jobs mean that they cannot work from home. So special thank you to all that you have done for us as a community.

Just to flag, I will be sending out an email. I'm going to set up some catchup sessions where I would love to meet people from across the university. There are so many people have been employed since our initial lockdown that I haven't met. But it's open to everybody for small group discussions and I'll send more information out by email. I just love to hear the things you're doing here, ideas for the University for the future, anything that's bothering you. I'm really happy to talk. In fact, I'm really looking forward to meeting people.

And another message for you is our Easter break, it has been extended by a day this year.

So instead of just having Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, we are having Tuesday. The university will be closed on Tuesday as well. And that's because we were rewarding that extra bank holiday from the government to celebrate in the queen's platinum jubilee. Typically, this would be added to the May Bank holiday weekend. But that's not a weekend we recognise as a bank holiday.

And so we've added the day now to give you an extended break, extra time to relax and recharge.

Big flag, fifth of May. We have our Above and Beyond Awards. And for the first time, we are going hybrid. So there's a point of opportunity for people to engage in the celebration of the many, many people you've nominated and to find out who's won our ten awards

And finally, just I wanted to say what amazing job you've done for the last well, whatever, seven, eight months of this academic year. And in preparing for it, the challenges of the pandemic continue.

We've been adjusting and will be doing that for some time. And we know that the COVID regulations are going to change again in the next week, on April the 18th, when we won't be doing advising regular testing anymore. So we've kept adjusting to various changes.

And it's not been easy for people who are at home all the time or so. But because of your work, your drive, your commitment. We are, the university is, on track to overachieve on its financial targets for the year. And because of that, the ULT agreed to award a one-off recognition payment to all staff as thanks and appreciation, in recognition that every day many staff have gone above and beyond to deliver for our students who've been having a tough time during the pandemic to continue with the research they're doing, that is changing lives.

And we read about that every day. Every day. You can see evidence of our colleagues' research and to support businesses and the, you know, the small organisations that have really struggled through the pandemic. So, in recognition of that we're awarding the payment of £750. It will be awarded in your pay packets on the 28th of April. If you work part time or 0 hours or guaranteed hours, it will be pro-rated for you.

It's a token of our appreciation and recognition. So, thank you. Thank you for all you've done, and I hope you have a lovely relaxed, safe, relaxing, long weekend over Easter. Stay safe and stay connected.