

ULT live Workplace Q&A

Regarding the challenges we are facing, Andrea talked about beginning to furlough some groups of colleagues. Can you talk a bit more about that please? Perhaps how that will be approached, how extensive it might be?

The rules around the Job Retention Scheme have been rather complicated and have changed almost daily so we have been working hard to establish who might be eligible. The first test for us is that a role must be funded from external income other than the grant that we receive from Scottish Government. The second test is that the person is unable to carry out their normal work. Our catering team would be a good example of a group that would be eligible and indeed we did furlough this team yesterday. The money that goes towards paying their wages comes from sales from our catering outlets so it passes the first test and they are not able to do their work from home so they pass the second test. We see furloughing as a way to protect staff and support us with our income losses. Staff that have been furloughed have had their salary and pension topped up to 100% and we will do this for as long as we can financially. We spoke to some staff yesterday on a call and then followed up with letters and frequently asked question documents to hopefully address any questions or concerns they had. This is a new process for us all so we will no doubt have some learnings from this and will take feedback from the team on board. I think people may wrongly assume that furlough is the first step to redundancy and I want to clarify that this is not the case. Just because you are furloughed does not mean that you would be first in line should redundancies need to take place. The idea of the scheme is to retain jobs that you will need when the restrictions lift and normal business resumes. I hope that helps to provide you with a bit more information and context. (Kerry Dewar)

I wonder whether you could comment on the staff FAQs about people with caring responsibilities. It said a decision would be announced on 14 April about pay? I haven't seen any further announcements. The guidance says you should try and source alternative childcare or get someone else in your family to help? I would suggest the first option is impossible in the current situation and the second would either put grandparents at risk or assumes you have a partner that can help. My partner is a key worker and we both work FT so would welcome guidance.

It is certainly a challenge trying to juggle childcare and work and we are keen to support people as much as possible. We recognise that every situation is different so standard guidance and hard rules did not feel right in the situation. We have asked managers to work closely with their team members to get a sense of what might work for them. It might be a change in working pattern, different duties, taking some annual leave etc. We know people are doing what they can and we really appreciate that. If people can't do any work at all from home due to childcare then we have suggested that they take some annual leave to cover part of it but have put in a maximum limit of 10 days. We don't want people using all of their leave just now for childcare and hope they can take a break when the restrictions lift a bit. We are trying to get as much of a balance as possible. (Kerry Dewar)

What measures can we put in place to financially support our research postgraduate student community across the University? Self-funded and international students in particular will face challenges paying fees and supporting themselves in the weeks and months ahead when they may have lost support from a sponsor and/or lost part-time jobs. We risk losing students who have invested so much in their studies with us. Loss of fees would appear to be the major contributor to the predicted deficit, but is it at all feasible to think in terms of fees-freeze or extended payment plans etc?

To support our Postgraduate Research students, we have committed to continue to pay stipends for up to 12 weeks for those students who cannot continue their research during the current lockdown. We have also committed to provide appropriate extensions to their registrations to account for any period where their studies could not continue due to the lockdown so that there is not any time impact on their registration. In addition, as Andrea mentioned in her presentation we have received additional Student Hardship funding from donors and government and postgraduate research students can make applications for grants from the hardship funds. (Michael Greenhalgh)

Regarding the recruitment freeze on non-essential positions, I see that Napier are advertising a grade 4 full time permanent Marketing Executive, could you please explain how this position is considered essential?

Many roles were already in flight when we went in to lockdown so we are working through those appointments and will only appoint roles that we believe are essential. Marketing will be critical to ensure we still attract as many students as possible to boost our income. Roles like this are key in building media plans and growing applications in what will be a very competitive market place. (Kerry Dewar)

I see that most other Scottish HEIs are offering extra paid rest days, shorter working days and in one case a 4 day working week. Could you explain why Napier fall short in comparison? It's my understanding that we were actually in a better financial situation than many other HEIS going into the pandemic.

Hopefully you will have picked up from the Principal's View session that ENU is likely to be in deficit this year so we are not in a position to offer a reduction in the working week. Many of our teams are incredibly busy just now trying to get material online, plan assessments etc and we have some staff furloughed as well as others who cannot do their work from home. When I think of this context and listen to feedback from staff, I am not sure that rest days just now would be the right answer for us. I think it's important we take into account our own context and recognise staff that in that manner. I have discussed this at length with the TU and I am open to suggestions on the right way to recognise all of the hard work that staff are contributing right now which reflect our context. (Kerry Dewar)

What is Napier doing to support staff morale and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic?

We are trying to support our staff as much as we can with regular communication, hints and tips on wellbeing, fun challenges etc. If you have thoughts on other things that you would like to see then all ideas and suggestion are most welcome! (Kerry Dewar)

If it is decided to move teaching on line for tri 1, what support will the university give in relation to skills development, workload adjustments, etc?

We are continuing to develop plans to support colleagues via the excellent work that has already been taking place within DLTE and the learning technology team in IS. We have a very strong network of colleagues who have completed the BoE programme, for example. More information will follow. (Alyson Tobin)

How is Napier fulfilling commitment to health and safety provisions for staff working from home? Many working from inappropriate work spaces - kitchen tables, sofas etc - increasing the risk of work-related musculoskeletal disorders.

We have been working with both EIS and Unison on a special COVID Homeworking Policy which we hope to launch soon and this provides hints and tips on the issues you have raised. We have sent out guidance and an online learning module to help support staff to work as safely as possible. There is also guidance in the FAQs. We have also set out how people can order equipment that they may need in the FAQs. If you have an ergonomic chair on campus because of health reasons we can make arrangements for you to visit campus to collect it. We have to be mindful that the lifts are not working so if you are on a higher floor in the office then it may be difficult to collect. We also have to be mindful that we want to keep our security staff who are on campus as safe as possible so please on make these arrangements if you really need to. Permission to access campus needs to be obtained from Andy McGoff. (Kerry Dewar)

Any idea on when a decision will be made as to whether tri 1 teaching will go ahead, particularly with regards to students coming to us on exchange or from another country generally, as they will need to start booking flights etc?

We are planning the contingency of delivering teaching online for trim 1 and currently keeping an oversight of travel and opportunities for exchange students. There is a lot of uncertainty, as you know, about whether/when students will be able to travel. (Alyson Tobin)

Some staff are saying they haven't got a laptop although they applied through the formal route and got this signed off by their managers first. What do they do next? These are staff who need equipment to work from home, i.e. essential requests.

Since lockdown we have issued 50 new laptops. We have a further 110 ether arrived or arriving and this will help support current outstanding requests for 57 staff. We expect to release these laptops within the next week. To request a new laptop, click [here](#). This of course needs a justification and manager approval. (Andy McGoff)

How is the current situation likely to affect those on Guaranteed Hour Contracts?

We have confirmed that we will pay the hours that we have committed to for Guaranteed Hours staff even if they will be unable to carry out the work. (Kerry Dewar)

I just wondered if the rapid module change process that was enacted recently will be rolled out again in Trimester 3 (to make changes to upcoming Tri 1 modules). Even with a return to face-to-face teaching, module changes would likely be needed to change assessment strategies.

We're looking at this. The emergency approvals process was approved at Academic Board and will continue to apply until we lift the 'emergency' status. We are already working on a fast track process to approve changes. The process has enabled us to respond quickly and also to maintain or assurance processes as guided by QAA. (Alyson Tobin)