**UNISON Covid-19. Letter Template to MPs**

**You can check who your MP is here:** [**https://www.theyworkforyou.com/**](https://www.theyworkforyou.com/)

**If your MP is Labour, you can include the request that they forward your letter to the Shadow Minister for Universities, which is Emma Hardy MP.**

**Make sure you include your own postal address on email correspondence, to evidence that you are a constituent.**

**The letter should be adapted to include the name of your university or college.**

**[Your Name]**

**[Your Full Postal Address]**

**[Date Sent]**

**Dear [Your MP’s Full Name] MP**

**I am writing to you as one of your constituents to raise my serious concerns about the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the Higher Education sector.**

**As a professional services staff member at [insert your institution’s name], I am worried about the response so far from institutions who are threatening high numbers of job cuts.**

**Research conducted on behalf of the University and College Union suggests that over 230,000 fewer students will enter higher education in 2020 as a result of the crisis, over half of which are international students.**

**That fall in student numbers would translate into a drop in income of around £1.51bn from non-EU students, £350 million from EU students and £612 million from UK students opting to stay away.**

**Higher education is an important element in the UK economy and locally for our community.**

**Without significant financial support from the government, the UCU research estimates that over 60,000 jobs will be lost, both in universities themselves and in the local economies that surround them. Many of those jobs would be in places where the local university is amongst the biggest employers.**

**The total cost to our economy of doing nothing is estimated at greater than £6bn. On top of this universities face further virus-related losses in areas such as research income and activities like accommodation and conferencing.**

**The analysis assumes that universities will actually be able to deliver teaching to all students from September – something which at this point is far from certain.

The £6bn figure also undervalues the key role that our universities will play in the UK’s post virus recovery. At just the moment when we need to be expending educational opportunities, a damaged university sector would make these hard to deliver.**

**Staff in higher education have suffered years of real terms pay cuts, with terms and conditions eroded as contracts become increasingly precarious. The gender and race pay gaps in the sector remain unchecked, as vice chancellor pay has become unjustifiably high.**

**Universities have profited from international students paying increasingly high tuition and accommodation costs and UK students saddled with a lifetime of personal debt. Students should not be asked to pay any more and access to higher education should be increased as a solution to reskill people as a response to the crisis.**

**I am asking you to support a call for:**

* **the protection of jobs for higher education sector staff through additional Government funding;**
* **decent pay, pensions, terms and conditions for staff and an end to the reliance on casual and temporary staff across the sector;**
* **an end to the market in Higher education;**
* **the ruling out of merger or closures of universities and colleges;**
* **fully funded access to education for new students and those seeking retraining.**

**It has been argued that government should wait and see before making any commitment to our sector but hundreds of thousands of students, staff and their local communities need confidence now, not months down the line.**

**This crisis demands a re-examination of what we should prioritise in our society. The decent treatment of frontline key workers, and those providing public services must be our focus. This means investment in the staff on our campuses.**

**The government must take this seriously so I am asking that you raise these issues with the current Minister for Universities and any relevant colleagues. I look forward to your response to these important issues.**

**Yours**

**[your name etc]**

**My trade union, Unison, has made this case and written to the Minister:**

[**https://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2020/04/government-must-not-allow-universities-fail-coronavirus-outbreak-warn-unions/**](https://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2020/04/government-must-not-allow-universities-fail-coronavirus-outbreak-warn-unions/)

**Link to 10 April UUK demand for rescue package:**

[**https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/news/Pages/Package-of-measures-proposed-to-enable-universities-to-play-a-critical-role-in-rebuilding-the-nation-.aspx**](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/news/Pages/Package-of-measures-proposed-to-enable-universities-to-play-a-critical-role-in-rebuilding-the-nation-.aspx)

**The loss of pay for the HE workforce is explored in more detail in the Joint Unions HE pay claim for 2020-21** [**https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2020/03/HE-Pay-Claim-2020-21.pdf**](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2020/03/HE-Pay-Claim-2020-21.pdf)

**Further information regarding the gender and ethnicity pay gaps can be found in the below sources**

[**https://www.ucu.org.uk/genderpay**](https://www.ucu.org.uk/genderpay)

[**https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/oct/15/uk-universities-bme-staff-less-likely-to-hold-top-jobs**](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/oct/15/uk-universities-bme-staff-less-likely-to-hold-top-jobs)

**Vice chancellor pay has continued to rise unchecked across the sector**

[**https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/senior-staff-pay/**](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/senior-staff-pay/)