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28 January 2025

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BY E-MAIL

Dear Anne,

Thank you for your letter dated 23 January, requesting an extension to the consultation period, due to concerns UCU raise as outlined in the letter.

I have considered the request carefully and have decided to not agree to the request to extend the consultation as there has been significant information on the University's financial position shared with UCU colleagues since October 2024 and many opportunities through consultation meetings and meetings with University senior officers to discuss and ask questions about the financial information provided. The detail of these opportunities is provided below, together with information on the Equality Impact Assessment.

- 17 October 2024: I announced to the University community our challenging financial position on 14 October 2024. Following that announcement, UCU, collectively with Unite and Unison, made their first request for financial information which was responded to on 14 November 2024 and put as an agenda item for discussion at the FSP TU meeting on 22 November 2024 so that the University could respond to any questions.
- 4 November 2024, UCU sent to the FSP group a number of questions which had been raised by their members. These were responded to directly to UCU representatives and published on 25 November 2024 on the 'Improving our Financial position' webpage.
- After a FSP TU meeting in November, on 29 November 2024, UCU sent more detailed questions regarding financial and financial-related information which had been shared with them on 14 November. This request was responded to on 16 December 2024, outlining further discussions could take place at the scheduled FSP TU meeting on 19 December and at the scheduled weekly meeting on 8 January 2025, with the Chief

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Finance Officer. Financial Information was shared with all three union bodies given the request came collectively and further requests were through those FSP meetings. It should be noted that some aspects of the financial information was not available until December, as it was subject to University Council approval. The University's Council meeting was held on 28 November 2024.

- Therefore, even ahead of the HUMSS consultation launch, UCU had engaged in requesting financial information to enable representatives to provide feedback and alternative proposals to help support and improve the University financial position as well as to enable them to engage in meaningful consultation when the HUMSS proposals were released.
- 4 December: Consultation was launched initially with UCU representatives, followed by presentation to staff on 9 December 2024. Consultation closed on 24 January 2025. The consultation period was for 47 calendar days. (37 calendar days, without the Christmas period), which is legally compliant and reasonable. The consultation document included student numbers, student income and contribution information for the Faculty.
- Following the launch of the HUMSS consultation, weekly meetings were held with UCU representatives in which feedback and questions were presented. A total of 5 meetings with UCU have been held (12 and 19 December 2024, 9, 16 and 23 January 2025). Meaningful discussions took place within the weekly meetings, and UCU were informed that FAQs would be developed for UCU representatives and staff. At the weekly meetings, UCU representatives were reminded that the answers to questions presented were available to them within their dedicated SharePoint folder and given an opportunity to raise anything further in relation to the information presented at those meetings. FAQs were sent to UCU representatives and published to staff at 3 intervals throughout the consultation period (19 December, 14 January and 21 January). These FAQs provided clarity on questions being raised collectively and individually, as well as outlining aspects of the feedback that would be considered as part of the consultation process. All alternative proposals in relation to selection pools/criteria and process, have been collated, in order that these can be considered collectively at the end of the consultation period. It was explained to UCU that this process would be followed as it would enable the 'decision making' panel members to give thorough consideration to all the feedback, after being able to assess any impact on other aspects of the proposals; as, for example, one suggestion might impact on another element of the proposal. All feedback/counter proposals are noted within the FAQs documentation, which UCU representatives have access to, to show that the feedback will be given thorough consideration.

- Within the consultation period, a further FSP TU meeting was held on 19 December. Financial information that had been requested through the FSP route and which had been provided to UCU was discussed within this meeting. No additional financial information was requested at this meeting. Following this, a meeting was scheduled on 8 January 2025, for UCU representatives to meet with the Chief Finance Officer. This meeting enabled UCU to gain clarity on the financial data/information, to assist them in being able to put forward alternative proposals. It should be noted that within the meeting, UCU shared on the screen a graph showing some student income and staff cost information from 2014 to 2024 and when asked if they would be sharing this for further consideration, stated it would be in the alternative proposal they intended to submit on 24 January 2025. No further financial information was requested by UCU at this meeting. No requests to meet with the Chief Financial Officer again to discuss financial information further have been received.
- Within the weekly collective consultation meeting on 16 January, UCU representatives stated that they considered consultation was not meaningful as they had not been given all the financial information. Therefore, UCU were asked to provide information on what they considered was outstanding in order that the information could be provided. UCU responded on 17 January with a list of additional financial information – not previously requested. Information was provided in a reasonable timeframe (5 working days), on 24 January 2025.

The University, therefore, considers that there has been ample opportunity provided for UCU colleagues to ask questions, provide feedback, and obtain clarity on the University's financial position. The University has been open with UCU colleagues and provided financial information to them prior to any proposal for change being in place. The University has ensured that meetings have been focused on the HUMSS proposal as well as providing opportunities to discuss the overall University financial position with senior staff throughout the process. These additional meetings, FSP TU meetings, and meeting with the Chief Finance Officer have enabled UCU representatives to obtain the wider aspects of the University's financial position. The University considers that reasonable time and meetings have been provided throughout the process to enable UCU representatives to obtain clarity and the relevant information needed to put forward counter proposals, given that all 3 requests for additional financial information were responded to within the consultation period. UCU colleagues have stated throughout the meetings, they would provide the counter proposal to redundancies by the closure of the consultation (24 January) as they were working to place costings on the proposal, following the financial information they had obtained.

It is noted in the letter that UCU wish to discuss the 'Estate costs' as it is considered that this has an impact on the financial situation. Written representation which incorporates feedback and counter proposals on how redundancies can be reduced by 'Estate costs' can be provided

as part of the consultation process, if they consider it relevant to the HUMSS proposal. Given the nature of this discussion focuses on the University position, it is not considered that this topic will hinder UCU in being able to put forward counter proposals on the HUMSS proposal, as this proposal focuses on improved financial contribution levels within the schools as noted in the consultation paper.

Overall, it is considered that consultation has taken place over a reasonable period of time and has been meaningful as there has been thorough engagement throughout from UCU representatives and staff, with key stakeholders involved in the proposals and those of the senior team with the financial knowledge.

I note that within your letter you outline additional concerns related to the EDI impact assessment, the process and criteria for determining the selection pools, he proposed criteria to be applied for redundancy selection. Responses are noted as follows:

The draft Equality Impact Assessment was shared with UCU on 16 December 2024 and discussed within the consultation meeting. It was explained that the EDI impact assessment is a draft analysis of the data, and the personal circumstances form, and reasonable adjustments that have been built into the proposal are to address any direct or indirect discrimination. That the EIA will be reviewed at various intervals of the process which was explained to UCU. The EIA has not been raised by UCU at future meetings.

Also, within the consultation meetings, UCU have raised concerns about the proposed selection pools and criteria and stated they would detail alternatives within their written submission on 24 January. It was explained in the meetings, that their alternative suggestions to the pooling and criteria will be noted, and then considered as part of the consultation process. These are noted on the FAQ document, to ensure UCU and staff are aware that all feedback and alternative selection pools and criteria will be considered.

Within the consultation meetings, UCU and staff members have asked questions about the reference in the consultation paper to how **'a minimum headcount by discipline will be established with reference to sector benchmark SSRs'**. A detailed response was provided to UCU and staff via the FAQs which were published on 14 January 2025. UCU were informed responses to questions had been published and had an opportunity to raise additional points of clarification or questions on this matter at the meetings held on 16 or 23 January.

UCU representatives did ask whether the academic pay cost figure would alter once the University has the up-to-date student numbers in February. There was no request to delay the decision making until the cycle's applications are known, but it was explained that it is unlikely that the figures would alter, as the projections had already built growth in. Given that the University's final proposal will not be reviewed at Council until early March, this will enable the University to review final student numbers and give consideration as to whether there are any

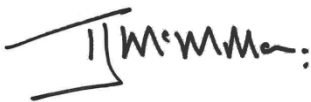
adjustments to the levels of financial contribution/financial savings outlined in the consultation paper.

The wellbeing of staff is important, and dependent on the outcome of the proposals around reduction in academic staff numbers and a merger of schools, it would be at that stage to review workloads, and appropriate discussions would take place between staff, HoS and Faculty Dean, as necessary.

Any impact on students has been considered and will be as regularly reviewed throughout the process. There is ongoing communication with the Students' Union to ensure students are communicated to appropriately and are supported.

To recap, based on the above, it is considered that reasonable and meaningful consultation has taken place, and no further extension is required to the consultation period. I am aware that UCU submitted their written alternative proposals on 24 January. However, the University is keen to maintain a positive relationship with UCU colleagues despite the challenging position we find ourselves in. I have therefore asked that local UCU colleagues be provided with some additional time to consider whether they wish to refine their alternative proposals, given the information provided to them in response to their request for additional information submitted on 17 January 2025. We look forward to receiving any refinements to the alternative proposals by 12 noon on 30 January 2025.

Yours sincerely,



PROFESSOR TREVOR MCMILLAN OBE
VICE-CHANCELLOR