



Professor Debra Humphris
Vice Chancellor
University of Brighton

28th September 2020

Dear Vice Chancellor

We are writing about the restructure of IT Services which is currently taking place.

Although the University is undertaking a consultation with the trade unions over potential redundancies and changes to job roles, we are concerned that a wider discussion across the university community has not taken place over these changes. The withdrawal of school-based IT technicians in particular is causing alarm among academics as they begin to discover that they will have to do without specialist support informed by a close familiarity of their subject areas and working practices that they increasingly depend on.

From an organisational point of view, it seems perverse to shrink and centralise this service at precisely the time that reliance on it from both academics and professional staff working from home are higher than ever. Logic dictates that in these circumstances, far from cutting posts, the University would be employing more technicians to ensure that systems function, and more Learning Technology Advisers to facilitate the transition to online learning. It is obvious to everyone that the cuts and centralisation currently being driven through cannot fail to impair the very thing that senior management claims to care most about - the student experience.

From a human perspective, the restructure is also indefensible. As we have argued before, making staff redundant, to be resisted in normal times, is inexcusable during an economic crisis caused by a pandemic. Universities, as socially responsible public institutions, should not be abandoning their staff to mounting dole queues and Universal Credit. Nor should they be piling additional responsibilities on the already overworked staff that remain.

Both Unison and UCU have members who are at risk of redundancy as a result of this ill-conceived restructure. All the staff affected are undergoing extreme stress as they worry about whether their job will continue to exist and what it will look like if it does.

We are writing, therefore, to seek a guarantee from the University that there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the IT restructure. We think this is the least the University can do ease the pressure on this group of loyal and hardworking staff, and we look forward to your prompt reply.

Yours sincerely,

Ivan Bonsell, Unison branch secretary
Mark Abel, chair UCU coordinating committee