

## **EDI in extra-ordinary times: a short guidance note**

In extra-ordinary times normal rules can be suspended as we are urged to take quick and decisive actions, often precipitated by concerned emails from students, their parents, colleagues and our teaching and research partners. Thinking about EDI principles can be one of those areas that is suspended, unless we remain alert to it. It is important to stay alert because we know that crises can exacerbate inequalities and further marginalise those at the periphery of decision making. Also, once this crisis passes (as it likely will), we will still be left with relationships and obligations to our colleagues, only with (potentially) added grievance and upset.

This briefing contains a few tips and points of advice that can prompt considerations for EDI in your current processes. They are not instructions. Apply them as you deem useful.

### **Working from 'home'**

[We Are Plan C](#), an activist network, has written, "We need to recognise that 'staying at home' doesn't mean the same thing to everyone. For some, homes are a sanctuary. For others, the home is another place of work, where cooking, cleaning and childcare take up the majority of their time and energy. There are many for whom the home is a place of danger, with time outside, if possible, being a respite from abuse. For people with mental or physical illness, for the elderly and disabled, the isolation they may face through being confined to the home can be deeply unhealthy, at times terrifying. Some people don't have homes at all; being shunted from one sofa to another, sleeping in night shelters or out on the streets are dangerous "options" during this pandemic for those that have few already."

If you are encouraging staff to work from home or remotely, then do consider this may not be a good option for everyone, taking into account not just COVID-19, but people's full life circumstances. So, what can you do in our current climate?

- If you do not have individual offices, are you able to offer an isolated room in your building that colleagues can book and work from as a respite from home, if needed?
- Can you host video calls to catch up with colleagues, especially those you think may be otherwise isolated?
- Can you encourage your colleagues to tell you if working from home is just too difficult, and reassure them that you will try to make accommodations or alternative arrangements for them?

### **PGTAs/Teaching Fellows/PS Support staff**

As UCL teaching moves online at a rapid pace, the task of learning and supporting new technology and working through its pedagogical implications can fall on colleagues on fractional contracts. Let's assume everyone wants to help right now, and that no one wants to raise questions about fair payment lest it should appear crass. So, we should talk about fair payment. What can you do?

- Are you able to offer time off in lieu or extra payment to PGTAs, GTAs and TFs (or anyone on a fractional contract), in recognition of the additional time they are being asked to give to otherwise routine tasks?
  - Has this extra time been factored into emergency/current budgets?
  - Has time off been factored into annual leave monitoring or timetables (if you run such things)?
  - Have you communicated clearly to colleagues on fractional contracts that you'll 'make it up to them'?

## **Productivity**

As we all reckon with the full implications of this crisis on all aspects of our life (how we may help our elderly relatives, entertain and educate our children who may be sick themselves, buy groceries and other essentials, travel and move around, and deal with our own coughs/sneezes/ailments), completing work-related tasks may not be at the forefront of our minds. As many of us have eased assessment deadlines for our students, can we also ease deadlines for our colleagues and adjust expectations on their levels of productivity? What can you do?

- Can you identify urgent (business critical) and non-urgent tasks and issue guidance to colleagues on non-urgent tasks?
- Is it within your power to push back deadlines?
- Can you communicate your attitude to productivity decline at this time?
- Can you give any reassurances on the implications of any productivity decline on the renewal of people's contracts or in their performance reviews?

This is clearly not an exhaustive list of things to think about from an EDI perspective and there is plenty of online guidance from colleagues in Arena especially on inclusive online teaching, for example. Rather, this short note identifies three topics that have appeared in a lot of communication from line managers this past week or so, and suggests actions we can all take to lessen the impact of this moment on our most vulnerable colleagues.

Kamna Patel

Vice Dean EDI

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