

Dear members

Some updates and comments on various matters.

SHUTDOWN PERIOD

- The conditions of service for all staff define the Shutdown Period as “from the end of the last working day prior to 25 December to the start of the first working day following 1 January of the following year”.
- The conditions of service also states “In addition to annual leave, the last working day in December (usually 24 December) will be a half day”.
- The sessional dates, available from the Registrar’s webpage shows the University closes on 24 December at 12:00 and re-opens on Monday 4 January 2021.

It is noted that an additional column has been added more recently, **A: PROPOSED TIMETABLE FOR ALL-ONLINE ONLY MODULES-WITH CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT**, which refers to the period of shutdown as Catch-Up

The shutdown period **does NOT include** essential services staff.

UKSU acknowledges the extremely stressful year that academic staff, in particular, have experienced in 2020, due to the numerous changes to teaching formats, preparation of templates, only to be told these are no longer needed in X format but must be done in Y format, then online teaching, to name a few issues.

EXCLUDING essential services staff who are required to work as instructed during the shutdown period, it is an employee’s right not to undertake University work during the shutdown period from 12:00 on 24 December until 4 January 2021.

NOTICE RE CAMPUS CLOSURES

It should be noted that the University is not shutting down before 24 December. Staff are expected to work from home until the shutdown. The University Notice provides this clarity, as it refers to the following:

- for all on-campus activities
- in March, we closed the University some days in advance of the government’s directive because this allowed us to do so in a way that maximised the protection of staff and students and also allowed us to take the necessary measures in a considered and orderly fashion. We are acting now in precisely the same manner - and for the same reasons.
- In due course, we will advise on how we will proceed with returning to on-campus activities in the New Year.

Essential services staff must report for duty on the campuses, as required at all times, even between 24 December and 4 January.

PERFORMANCE AWARDS

Unfortunately, management is refusing to budge from its position that it is unable to pay the PM bonuses for the 2019 cycle that should have been paid in August 2020 after moderation was completed. The money for this is budgeted for in the year of payment (2020 for the 2019 cycle) and the 2020 budget had to be adjusted to include the additional COVID related costs.

Moderation has just concluded across the colleges and UKSU, together with NEHAWU & NTEU will raise this issue again in early 2020, as we have remaining questions about the revised budget presented to us.

PERFORMANCE PAY PROGRESSION

The ED: HR reported on 17 December that this issue was taken to EMC, where costing for the 2018 and 2019 periods was requested. The cost is estimated at R13m for all eligible staff. EMC responded that, in the light of the current financial situation, it does not have funds to implement this. Management said they will inform staff shortly. Unions responded that this was very sad and disappointing, given that staff worked so hard and now would not be rewarded.

The impact of this decision, is very concerning because it will prejudice staff for their remaining tenure and impact the value of each individual's annual increase – both issues compounding going forward.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CONTRACTING and WORKLOADS

It seems that HR management find it imperative to have data in the system for 2020, irrespective of whether this has any real meaning or not, just as long as data is in the system! Management insists that staff must complete the contract, whatever the content is. Two alternative proposals were provided to make provision for those who may require the score for promotion or progression. However, management turned both down. The one was that if required the relevant line manager provides a report on the employee's performance and the other was an averaging of previous years. The same applies to workload data, evidenced by the many messages forwarded about what should be entered.

The concerning issue is that this '*data for the sake of data*' will be used for promotion, discipline, etc., when management has acknowledged the problems.

2021 SALARY NEGOTIATIONS

The collective unions NEHAWU, NTEU & UKSU have written again to management to request a meeting for salary negotiations. The latest response (late last week) from the ED: HR is that he will discuss with the CFO and revert.

Regards
UKSU Executive