Furlough Q&A

1. **What does furlough mean?**
   Furlough refers to employees being placed on a temporary leave of absence from work due to special needs of a company or employer, which may be due to economic conditions at the specific employer or in the economy as a whole. This term has been adopted by the Chancellor in his recent announcement in relation to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. The scheme applies to employees/workers who were being paid through the University’s payroll through Pay as You Earn (PAYE) as at 28th February 2020.

2. **Why am I being furloughed?**
   If you are designated as a furloughed worker it means that work has ceased or significantly reduced in your area such that, on a temporary basis, the University no longer requires you to work.

3. **What is my status during the time I am furloughed?**
   You will be kept on the payroll, remain employed and designated as a furloughed employee/worker.

4. **Can I refuse?**
   You can refuse to be furloughed although all that is being asked is that you agree not to do any work for the University or an associated employer during the furlough period. Our ability to place employees on Furlough and utilise the Government’s job retention scheme is really important. The Vice-Chancellor has previously advised of the very challenging financial circumstances we now find ourselves in. The decisions and actions we are taking are first and foremost to ensure that we can protect jobs and be in the best position to enact our “bounce back” strategy following this period of uncertainty.

5. **What criteria are being used to decide those who are furloughed?**
   The following criteria will be considered:
   - Whether the area of work has closed temporarily or the need for work has significantly reduced in that area
   - Whether the role is temporarily not needed due to reorganisation of priorities to support the COVID 19 business continuity plan

6. **How long will I be furloughed for?**
   The minimum period is three weeks. Initially we are expecting that designated staff will be furloughed for up to three months from the date when work ceased (which can be backdated from 1st March 2020) until 31st May 2020. The government has now extended the scheme to 30 June 2020 and we will inform those that may be affected by this extension; however, it is still under review.

   The government Job Retention Scheme, which supports employers in paying salaries of those furloughed is effective for three months from 1st March 2020.

7. **Does this mean I am going to be made redundant?**
   No. Furlough is an arrangement that seeks to avoid the need to make redundancies. No redundancies are currently proposed and if that changed this would be subject to a separate process of consultation.

8. **Will I be paid while I am furloughed?**
You will continue to receive payment on the same pay day as normal. The amount you receive is detailed below:

Part time/full time member of staff

As a part time or full time member of staff you will receive full pay, this will be subject to the normal tax, NI and pension deductions.

On -demand contract holders

Those individuals who are on an On-demand contract (those who work as and when) will receive pay for work already completed and/ or offered and accepted for March which will be paid in April 2020. Beyond this, for workers that have been engaged for 12 months or more, pay during the furlough period will be based on the highest of either the:

- same month’s earning from the previous year
- average monthly earnings for the 2019-2020 tax year

If the period of engagement is less than 12 months, pay will be based on average monthly earnings since starting work. This will be paid monthly and subject to the normal tax and NI deductions if applicable.

9. I have not been furloughed but think I should be. What should I do?
   There is no right to be furloughed but if your work has ceased or significantly reduced you should discuss this with your manager.

10. Will I continue to accrue annual leave?
    Yes. Those returning from furlough leave will be asked to ensure their annual leave is taken in proportion to the rate it is accrued. E.g. If annual leave is 28 days a year, it is expected that 14 days will be taken by 30th September 2020.

    On-demand workers’ furlough payments will include an element of holiday pay.

11. What will happen to the bank holidays that occur while I am furloughed?
    These will be treated as days of furlough leave rather than annual leave. You will be paid in full for these days. They will not, however, be added back to your annual leave entitlement as they are holidays that fall on specific dates when the University is closed.

12. What will happen to my pension while I am furloughed?
    There will be no change to pension contributions.

13. I have annual leave booked during the period I am being furloughed what will happen to my leave?
    We have recently had clarification that annual leave can be taken concurrently whilst on furlough leave so any pre-booked leave will remain as it is and should not be cancelled or re-assigned.

14. I have an on-demand (casual) contract with both the University and UECS, will I be receiving payments for both contracts during the period of furlough leave?
All on-demand agreements for an individual will be viewed collectively for the purposes of furlough and pay calculations.

15. I have multiple positions at the University, one permanent and one on-demand will I receive a furlough payment for each position, even if I have a permanent role that I am continuing to undertake?
   If you have a permanent position that is continuing then you will not be furloughed. If your permanent position is furloughed then this is the role for which you will continue to receive a salary during the furlough period.

16. Can I do any work whilst I am furloughed?
   No. The reason you have been furloughed is because your work has temporarily ceased. You must not do any work in any role (whether permanent, fixed-term or on-demand) for the University, UECS Ltd or Wivenhoe House during furlough leave but you may undertake unpaid voluntary work or temporary paid work outside of the University during the furlough period.

17. Can I be brought back to work before the end of the furlough period?
   Yes, the minimum period of furlough leave is three weeks but we reserve the right to recall you to work and end the furlough period if the need arises.

18. I am on a fixed-term contract that will end part-way through the furlough period.
   Unless you have been advised otherwise, your contract will end on the planned end date and your salary will be maintained up to this point.

19. I am on a tier 2 visa. How will being furloughed affect my visa status?
   Your visa status will not be affected if you are furloughed.

20. I am off sick but my work has ceased or significantly reduced, does that mean I will be furloughed?
   Whilst off sick you cannot be furloughed. For those who have longer-term health issues, a full medical assessment will need to be made to ensure you are fit to return to work. On returning to work a decision will be made whether to furlough.

21. I am due to go on maternity/adoption/paternity leave part way through the furlough period, what will happen to my maternity/adoption/paternity leave and pay?
   Furlough leave will end automatically at the point you have told us you will be starting your period of leave. Normal leave and pay arrangements will apply according to the type of leave you are taking.

   If you are returning from maternity/adoption/paternity leave and work has temporarily ceased you will start furlough leave by agreement upon your return to work.

Our campus trade unions are also providing support for members of staff during this period and can be contacted as follows:

Unison - uoe.unison@gmail.com
UCU - ucu@essex.ac.uk
Unite - unitetheunion@essex.ac.uk