



Date: 12 November 2024

University of Bradford  
BD7 1DP

University of Bradford  
UCU Local Association

[ucusupport@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:ucusupport@bradford.ac.uk)

Dear Dawn

Thank you for your letter of 18 October 2024 following the UCU General Meeting of the 16 October 2024, bringing to my attention the views expressed by members and a call to University Management for action and commitment in respect of:

- 1. Protecting Jobs and Terms and Conditions**
- 2. Workload**
- 3. Stress Risk Assessment.**

Please see below my response to each of these three matters.

### **Protecting Jobs and Terms & Conditions**

The University has two separate challenges to address in terms of its financial sustainability. Revenue Expenditure and Capital Expenditure affect these challenges differently:

1. We need to have sufficient cash in the bank (liquidity) to evidence that we can pay our bills / expenses as they fall due. At present, the University does have sufficient cash, but this will deplete rapidly if we do not address point two effectively and as a matter of urgency. It is this cash resource that enables us to fund one-off Capital Expenditure, with our commitments in this regard described further below.
2. We need to ensure that our revenue expenditure (Staff Costs and other Operating expenditure, but NOT Capital Expenditure) does not exceed our level of Income. If it does, then the University will be in Deficit. In that instance, our cash balances will further deplete, thereby ultimately causing the University to have





Date: 12 November 2024

liquidity issues i.e. we will eventually not have sufficient cash in the bank. It is this second challenge that is most critical at this time and why we must reduce our ongoing Staff and Operating Expenditure. It is essential that we drive the University to an ongoing sustainable position where income exceeds costs in each year of our plan.

With regard to forecast Capital Expenditure of £18m in 2024/25, this is comprised of three elements:

- £4.8m of expenditure on schemes that were approved, and due to be completed in 2023/24, which were so far advanced that it was considered best to complete those schemes, rather than leave them incomplete. i.e. they were schemes already in train and therefore sensible to complete.
- £5.4m of expenditure that is funded externally, for example through SALIX, and therefore completing the schemes allows us to enhance the University using external funding.
- £8.5m of schemes to complete in 2024/25. Many of these schemes were also underway, or were at advanced planning stages, and / or are required, to ensure facilities are maintained to a minimum standard for both students and staff. Careful consideration was given to which schemes should continue and an overall reduction of £6.5m Capital Expenditure was made from the £15m originally budgeted, in order to appropriately preserve cash levels.

Future years Capital Expenditure projections have also been reduced by £5m per annum from that planned i.e. to a minimum level to further preserve cash levels. We still need to go through a prioritisation exercise to limit this expenditure in future years, with that requirement clearly understood by senior leaders.

As discussed at the recent all staff Open Sessions and associated written communications, we are designing our Target Operating Model, as well as reducing budgeted costs by at least £10 million per year (with at least £7.5 million cost reduction delivered in 2024/25) through our Cost Reduction Strategy.





Date: 12 November 2024

University of Bradford  
BD7 1DP

The focus of the strategy is on removing / reducing expenditure that can be actioned in 2024/25 while minimising disruption to core business activities, protecting and improving quality, and preserving the value we deliver to our students. All aspects of the University are being considered through this strategy, and will, unavoidably, include some targeted organisational change, which in turn will impact our staffing profiles and establishment.

As per your motion, it is not possible to commit unequivocally to a policy of no compulsory redundancy due to the scale of the financial challenge we face, however, wherever possible we will seek to avoid compulsory redundancies. As shared with all staff on 15 October, and as discussed with the campus trade unions at the Organisational Change Forum, we will be running a Voluntary Redundancy Scheme to reduce our overall staffing costs and this is based on robust and transparent factors, as set out within the scheme guidance. I can confirm that your feedback has been included in the scheme guidance, including increasing the VR payment being increased to a maximum of six months' salary.

It is possible that this will not result in achieving the required savings, however, I agree that where there are programmes of organisational change, these will be based on coherent and thoughtfully constructed approaches to change based on our new change framework.

### **Workload**

Work commenced earlier in the year to begin reviewing our academic workload model, and a number of colleagues, including trade union representatives, attended a workshop to discuss a range of issues and potential changes/improvements. This review will now be led by William Martin, Dean of Faculty of Health Studies.

The Academic Workload Model (AWLM) Oversight Group will recommence meetings in November 2024, and making changes to the AWLM handbook as needed is a core role of the oversight group, and staff representation on the oversight group has an important part to play in this work.

+44 (0)1274 233007

m.kenyon2@bradford.ac.uk

bradford.ac.uk





Date: 12 November 2024

University of Bradford  
BD7 1DP

There were no changes made for the 2024/25 AWLM handbook from the previous (23/24) version, beyond changing the date. The last actual changes to the AWLM handbook (version 4) were made for the 22/23 academic year, and were approved by the AWLM Oversight group, at which there was staff representation. In response to your motion to “call upon the employer to withdraw any workload models that have been undertaken using the non-negotiated workload handbook”, Dr Martin has confirmed that he would be happy to provide the previous version of the handbook (from 22/23) if you would like to compare with the current published handbook.

### **Stress Risk Assessment**

The health and wellbeing of our staff is of the utmost importance to the University. We have a wealth of resources available not only to support individuals, but to equip people managers with the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to maintain and promote positive health and wellbeing in the workplace. Our Stress Management and Resilience Policy, which includes stress risk assessments, is just one of the ways in which we support colleagues.

Regarding departmental/team stress risk assessments, whilst these are encouraged as good practice to proactively identifying potential workplace stressors and put in place measures to remove/minimize these, they are not mandated. There is therefore no central database. It is up to the individual departments/team to co-create, implement and monitor these.

As we continue our journey of transformational change, we are building a comprehensive set of resources to support all staff. Team/departmental stress risk assessments are being highlighted and encouraged alongside the many other ways we can support our workforce.

In respect of individual stress risk assessments, the need to undertake one can originate from many sources, for example, as a result of a team risk assessment, a conversation with a line manager, or (in the majority of cases) as a reaction to stress being identified as an issue where a staff member may or may not be absent due to workplace stress. Depending on the individual circumstances, a referral to





**Date: 12 November 2024**

**University of Bradford  
BD7 1DP**

---

Occupational Health may or may not be made, as agreed between the staff member and people manager.

A member of staff does not have to complete a stress risk assessment; however, they are encouraged to as they provide a useful framework for discussion to identify the cause/s of stress, and importantly the actions that can mitigate or remove these.

It is concerning to hear that some union members have felt that stress risk assessments are being used inappropriately, or that discussions with people managers are not supportive. It is, however, difficult to respond to specific examples without knowing the details of these. I would be grateful if you could provide these specific examples to Dave Harris, Director of People, Culture and Wellbeing and Rachael Simpson, Associate Director of OD, Culture and Wellbeing, so that they can work with you to address these.

I hope the above information sufficiently responds to the points that you have raised, however, it is important that we continue to communicate during his difficult period therefore, if you have any further queries or concerns in relation to the above or any associated matters, please do get in touch as well as raising them at the regular meeting we have agreed to establish.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shirley Congdon".

Professor Shirley Congdon  
Vice-Chancellor