

Anulika Ajufo
Chair, Board of Governors
University of East London

18th November 2020

By email

Dear Ms Ajufo,

We are writing with deep concern about recent developments at the University of East London (UEL), following a restructuring process that has been undertaken by the University Executive Board since the summer and led by the current Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Amanda Broderick.

We are particularly alarmed to hear there have been significant staff cuts, and that many trade union members of the University and College Union branch at UEL have been subject to compulsory redundancies, including its chair and vice-chair. We also understand that a number of these trade union members include professors and eminent scholars who have been subject to compulsory redundancy without notice.

The deliberate targeting of union members at UEL is an extremely serious development if true, and constitutes the victimisation of staff who have the legal right, and protection, to be members of a trade union.

We also understand that of the seven academics at risk of compulsory redundancy: five are women over 50-years of age, two are of Asian heritage or descent and three are Jewish. We have serious concerns about the equality implications of the university's redundancy process, particularly for those staff members who by definition of the Equalities Act 2010 have legally ascribed protected characteristics.

We note that University Executive Board commenced with a restructuring process in the summer because of a forecast fall in revenue of some £30 million for the 2020-21 financial year, compounded by the impact of Covid-19, and the need to make significant savings so that UEL can remain solvent. We understand that despite attempts by staff to engage positively with the Executive Board on an alternative business plan during this period, this was ignored.

Overall, we are concerned about this evolving situation over the past few months at UEL, not least because of the expectations we demand from UEL as a local partner to meaningfully demonstrate its stated commitment to the Council's Community Wealth Building agenda; and most recently our 'Towards a Better Newham Recovery and Reorientation' strategy launched in July.

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It is therefore disappointing to hear about the troubling developments caused by the actions of the University Executive Board, which are contrary to your stated commitment to the aspirations we have for our Borough. Moreover, we noted that Professor Loderick has stated publically that *'We do not take any potential impact on jobs lightly, particularly in the current economic circumstances, and are committed to undertaking this process in a supportive, fair, consistent and sympathetic manner as is possible'*.

What we have heard about the treatment of staff does not appear *'supportive, fair, consistent and sympathetic'* at all.

Please provide urgent clarification on these matters, and we trust that you will positively respond.

Yours sincerely,

Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz OBE

Cllr Sarah Ruiz, *Cabinet Member for Education*

Cllr Dr Rohit K Dasgupta, *Commissioner for Social Integration and Equalities*

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