**Open University branch of UCU Regional Centre FAQs**

Negotiations with management are continuing and so we will continue to update these FAQs as we discover more information. Please note this is not definitive legal advice and every situation is different, so for specific information and guidance on your personal situation then do contact your UCU rep. If you have a question that we have not answered then please send it to [ucu@open.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@open.ac.uk).

Contents

[FAQs up to 15 December 1](#_Toc444009741)

[FAQs from 16 December 2015 to 21 February 2016 5](#_Toc444009742)

[Process and Schedule 5](#_Toc444009743)

[Voluntary Severance and Early Retirement 7](#_Toc444009744)

[Relocation 8](#_Toc444009745)

[Homeworking 8](#_Toc444009746)

[FAQs from 16 December 2015 to 23 February 2016 11](#_Toc444009747)

[Consultations, Options and Preferences 11](#_Toc444009748)

[Redeployment 12](#_Toc444009749)

[Relocation 12](#_Toc444009750)

[Trial Periods 13](#_Toc444009751)

[Home Working 13](#_Toc444009752)

[R05 and R08 Office Facilities 13](#_Toc444009753)

[Extended Hours and Shift Work 14](#_Toc444009754)

[Role Descriptions 14](#_Toc444009755)

# FAQs up to 15 December

1. **Why are we continuing with the industrial action when the decision to close the regional centres has already been made?**

Whilst the decision has been taken by Council we still believe that there are strong arguments to be had with management. Our dispute is not simply about the closure of the centres, but is also about the loss of jobs and the impact on working practices. At the moment we are negotiating with management to improve the position for affected staff and the industrial action is needed if we are going to get the best package possible for our members. (16/12/2015)

1. **If we are in dispute then why are we also negotiating with management? Shouldn’t we be refusing to talk to them until the dispute is resolved?**

Firstly even in dispute we would still maintain a dialogue with management to try to resolve the issues. In addition, we are in a redundancy situation. By law, management must consult with trade unions. We believe this should have happened before Council made its decision, but management are only now starting them. If we refused to attend the consultation meetings then decisions would be taken without us having any input, which would not benefit our members or allow us to get the best possible terms for them. (16/12/2015)

1. **My letter of appointment states that I work at a specific region. Isn’t a change to my place of work including homeworking a change to my contract?**

The law states that the employer must tell the employee where their place of work is, or if the employee is required to work at various locations, an indication of that. Although you were appointed to work at a specific region, there are sometime clauses in contracts that allow employers to change your place of work and it is not yet clear that you could not be required to work at another location. This is a matter upon which UCU is currently taking legal advice. (16/12/2015)

1. **If it is a contractual term then how can management force me to change it? I thought changes had to be agreed.**

If management does not have an express contractual right to change your place of work, to do so would require your agreement. But, were you not to agree, you could be dismissed, and depending on your individual circumstances, it is possible that such a dismissal may be fair. We expect management to offer staff choices. The choices that you are offered as an alternative are part of the consultation discussions that are happening between UCU and management. UCU believes that you should be given maximum choice between homeworking, relocation or redundancy. (16/12/2015)

1. **If I am forced to change then isn’t this constructive dismissal?**

The term ‘constructive dismissal’ means that you have resigned your employment because of management’s unreasonableness. We hope no-one will be placed into that situation. We do not advise members to resign without taking full advice from us. (16/12/2015)

1. **Our Faculty have told us that voluntary severance or early retirement is not going to be an option and that our only choices are relocation or homeworking. That doesn’t seem fair.**

Indeed it does not seem fair which is why our negotiating position is that the third option must be put back on the table. This is one of our major areas of disagreement with management and we are going to have to win this argument not just with negotiating skill but with the backup of our members taking action and demonstrating our industrial strength. (16/12/2015)

***Update 22/02/2016: We have agreed with management that there will be a process for individuals who do not feel that the University’s ‘preferred’ options for their staff ‘category’ are suitable for them, through which they can apply for a different option. This request must be taken seriously by the University and the outcome will be decided by a ‘panel’; this will overcome the possibility of unequal treatment of members in different CAUs, for example, or unfair decisions by individual managers. If common themes emerge from the Panels, these will be considered collectively with the unions.***

1. **The policy on flexible working and homeworking is not very helpful and does not seem to give me any security about my future. Why has this been agreed?**

It has not been agreed with either UCU or Unison. The trades unions were given the policy for the first time just before the Council meeting on 24 November. Until our meeting with management on 8 December we have not had the opportunity to discuss it with management. We think there are major flaws in the policy and will be negotiating improvements that benefit our members. Until the policy is agreed it is not a valid agreement and does not represent the final position on those issues.

(16/12/2015)

1. **If the policy hasn’t been agreed then why have we been given it as part of our formal consultation? That has just made things even more confusing.**

We agree totally. It was ridiculous to start having consultation meetings when the policies that staff had to consider were not agreed or even discussed with the Unions. UCU believes that it has caused unnecessary stress to staff in an already stressful situation. (16/12/2015)

1. **If the implementation plan hasn’t been finalised and the policies have not been agreed then why should I attend a consultation meeting and use up one of only three meetings that I have been offered? Wouldn’t it be better to wait until the information is correct?**

UCU has raised this with management and made it clear that we do not believe that three consultation meetings is enough. We have asked for further meetings to be added, and this has now been agreed by management. (Updated 22/01/2016)

UCU would advise you to go to the meetings however and use them as an opportunity to state your concerns about the process as well as to ask questions about what their implementation plans are. The more information that members can gather from management the more our position is strengthened. Please go to your meetings and feed back to your reps any issues that are raised.

(Updated 22/01/2016)

***Update 22/02/2016: see FAQs from 22nd Feb below for updated advice on the Consultations, Options and Preferences.***

1. **I can’t get a rep to support me in my meeting as they are too busy. Should I just go anyway?**

No. UCU believes that you are better off taking someone in to a meeting with you so that you have a witness to what is said. It is very hard to remember everything that is said in these meetings particularly when you are worried about what is going to happen to your job. Management have confirmed that meetings will be rescheduled where necessary so simply ask that your meeting is set for a time and date where you can have representation. UCU is working hard to support all of its members so please be patient with us whilst we try to find you a representative. (16/12/2015)

***Update 22/02/2016: see FAQs from 22nd Feb below for updated advice on the Consultations, Options and Preferences.***

1. **I think I know what I want to choose so should I let management know my preferred option at my first meeting?**

No. At the moment we do not have clear policies agreed on flexible working, nor do we have agreement on whether or not staff will be able to access a voluntary severance deal. Until you have all of the correct information UCU would not advise you to make any decisions. (16/12/2015)

***Update 22/02/2016: see FAQs from 22nd Feb below for updated advice on the Consultations, Options and Preferences.***

1. **What is going to happen next?**

UCU will continue to negotiate with management to seek improvements to the policies and implementation plans. We will update you regularly on our negotiations. In the meantime please continue to support the industrial action including the Action Short of a Strike (ASOS).

(16/12/2015)

1. **I am worried that my pay will be docked for working to contract. What should I do?**

UCU does not believe that working to contract justifies any deduction from pay. In any event, management have informed us that they will not be docking pay for staff taking ASOS at this point. It is possible that they may change their minds and if this happens then management will inform you that they do not accept ‘partial performance’ of your contract. If that occurs, UCU will issue further guidance. (16/12/2015)

1. **I am not quite sure what I should be doing in terms of working to contract. Where can I find further guidance on this?**

UCU has issued guidance on this and you can find it here <http://bit.ly/1Q3bSxl>. If you have any questions about this then talk to your local rep or email the UCU office on [ucu@open.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@open.ac.uk) (16/12/2015)

1. **My one to one interview was conducted by my line manager. Is there a conflict of interest having my line manager holding my consultation meeting when they will also be affected?**

No. Line managers are being placed in a difficult position particularly when they are also affected by the change, but UCU accept that they are the most appropriate people to be running the consultation meetings. If any UCU members are line managers and have concerns about the position they are in then they should contact UCU to seek advice. (16/12/2015)

1. **I have been told that I have to make a decision on which option I would prefer by March and yet the information I have been given is incomplete and doesn’t allow me to make an informed choice. Is this fair?**

No. UCU does not believe that the individual consultation is meaningful at this point given that policies have not been agreed or finalised. We have put this view to management and are seeking negotiations on both the policies and the timing of the individual consultation period. We will update you when we have further news. (16/12/2015)

***Update 22/02/2016: see FAQs from 22nd Feb below for updated advice on Consultations, Options and Preferences.***

1. **The OU have said that the money that I would be given to make purchases to enable me to work from home will be taxed. This means that I wouldn’t actually receive the £1,000 promised but considerably less. Is this right?**

That is the current position of the OU however UCU does not believe that the package is generous enough and will be seeking to ensure that staff working from home have enough money to make it practicable. UCU does not believe that staff should have to meet their own costs for working from home and effectively find themselves in a situation where they are subsidising the employer. (16/12/2015)

1. **At my one to one meeting the document that was being used on homeworking and flexible working did not state that it was a draft. Has it now been agreed with the Union?**

No. It is not agreed and as far as we are concerned is not something that we would agree in its current form. UCU will notify members when any policies are agreed with management but for the time being you should operate on the basis that all of these new policies are subject to change.

(Updated 22/01/2016)

1. **At earlier location analysis meetings Keith Zimmerman stated that regional staff would have 12 months’ notice of a confirmed office closure date. Given that the proposed staggered closure of regions is not a confirmed plan, can we still expect this 12 months’ notice?**

Our understanding is that this should be the case however we have not had that confirmed by the employer. We are aware that the plans are already being looked at in terms of the timings and comments made by members of Council. We will seek to get assurances on this matter as soon as possible and this will form part of the discussions that we have with management in relation to the closure plans. (16/12/2015)

***Update 22/02/2016: a revised plan for closures has been issued by management, and it has also been confirmed that permanent non-CAU staff will have guaranteed employment ending 4th Feb 2017.***

1. **The PowerPoint briefing to CAU staff specifically identified that it addressed “academic” staff, it did not mention “academic-related” staff. Will the university confirm that both of these types of staff are to be offered the CAU package?**

It is our understanding that the package should be open to academic related staff, however we also believe that it should be open to all of our members in affected regions. None of this has been agreed with the Union and we will be seeking to negotiate the position that gives our members the most amount of choice as possible. (16/12/2015)

# FAQs from 16 December 2015 to 21 February 2016

## Process and Schedule

1. **When the announcement was made to affected staff, apparently those staff whose announcements took place in actual meeting rooms received 'an envelope'.  Members who were not in the room did not receive one. How can we get a copy?**

Contact your HR Partner for a copy of this pack. You should also receive a pack of information in your 1-1 consultation. (22/01/2016)

1. **Surely we should not have to choose an option by 1 March 2016?**No, you should not have to make your decision until all the options are clear, and we have argued this with management. We are negotiating over the timetable. We will update you when there is further news, but for now you do not have to state your preference by 1 March, and we would advise you not to do so.  
     
   In the meantime, think about what you *want* to happen rather than the options that management may want to offer you. Be clear on what *you* want to negotiate for, whilst understanding that you may need to compromise to reach agreement. (22/01/2016)

***Update 22/02/2016: see FAQs from 22nd Feb below for updated advice on Consultations, Options and Preferences.***

1. **When will the decision as to my location be made, by whom, and using what criteria?**

We understand that this is a very unsettling time for all affected staff, and that the individual consultations have been particularly frustrating with unclear and contradictory information about the future. The industrial action has been crucial in bringing management to the negotiating table. The timetable and the options which will be open to you will be confirmed at the end of the collective consultation. You should be treated fairly according to the policies agreed at that stage, and UCU will represent you in negotiations with your manager if you have individual circumstances which mean that the general policies are not appropriate for you. (22/01/2016)

1. **Will academic and academic-related staff in all Faculties be treated equally? Will the same criteria apply to all academic and academic related staff affected by Locations Analysis regional closures, or will it depend upon Faculty, or be decided at individual level?**

We believe that all staff deserve equal treatment, regardless of unit. However, as you know management have offered different options to CAU staff than to other staff, and the 1-1 consultations have exposed differences between the different CAUs. We will be seeking equal and consistent treatment of staff in our negotiations with management. (22/01/2016)

***Update 22/02/2016: see FAQs from 22nd Feb below for updated advice on Consultations, Options and Preferences.***

1. **Some members of staff have joint roles, one within a CAU and one within a non-CAU unit, and this has caused anxiety in 1-1s. What options should they be offered?**

Once the collective negotiations are complete and the options available to staff are clear, there will still be staff where further individual negotiation is needed because of their unique circumstances. UCU will be ready to represent members who find themselves in this situation. When you are thinking about your options, start from the position of what you most want to happen rather than trying to fit it in to what you think the options are. If you would rather focus on one role rather than the other then it is possible that we could negotiate a solution for you. If you want to do both then we are going to need to be clear about how this could work and then see if we can negotiate this for you. Do not rule anything out but be clear that we might not be able to get exactly what you want. (22/01/2016)

1. **Will my work location remain as currently until it closes or will it happen earlier?**

As yet the timetable has not been discussed and agreed during the collective negotiations, and so we don’t know the answer to this yet. When we have more information we will update you. (22/01/2016)

1. **In my opinion, management are making these posts redundant and “offering” what they consider suitable alternative employment, mainly home-based working, which may not be suitable alternative employment for many staff because of personal circumstances might be considered reasonable. Why are HR saying that this isn’t redundancy?**

We quite agree, and we are fighting for voluntary severance to be available for all staff who are unable to relocate or to work from home. This is part of the collective negotiations. (22/01/2016)

1. **Will there be a trial period and a consequential right to a redundancy payment should the employee decide that it's not, after all, a suitable alternative for them during the trial period?**

We will be negotiating for a trial period for staff who opt for home working or relocation. We will update you when we have progress to report. (22/01/2016)

1. **With so many staff facing redundancy, shouldn’t we only be advertising internally for posts? We know of a post being advertised externally and not internally first at our national office, and we know of further posts that will be advertised early this year.**

Academic Services and Marketing staff who are able to relocate have been guaranteed a position at their current grade in a surviving location of their choice. We are fighting for CAU staff to be given the same option. Whilst any staff remain at risk there should be a ban on external advertising of jobs which have not previously been advertised internally only, or for which demonstrably no internal candidates are likely to be qualified. We are pursuing this. (22/01/2016)

## Voluntary Severance and Early Retirement

1. **Why isn’t the London weighting allowance (LWA) included in the VS calculation?**

This has not been agreed with UCU, and we are arguing that it should be included in the collective negotiations. We will update you when we have further news. (22/01/2016)

1. **Early retirement is being offered as an option, but it is not enhanced.     Could this be negotiated via UCU? And will the University be paying the early retirement funding charge?**

Again early retirement conditions have not yet been agreed, but we will be including this in our collective negotiations. We will update you when we have further news. (22/01/2016)

1. **Can we take VS and then retire?**The rules on retirement age vary according to an individual’s circumstances. It may be possible for some members who meet the age qualifications to retire early in these circumstances, but your pension may be reduced. Please contact USS for more information. (22/01/2016)
2. **Is it true that if we opt for voluntary severance, it is not automatically agreed and we have to make a case for it?**

It is standard practice for management to say that a case must be made, and normally it would be HR or management who would make the case. It is for UCU in the negotiations to clarify the procedure and to make sure that requests aren’t unreasonable refused.  (22/01/2016)

1. **Will the OU offer further incentives (over and above VS) for those who would be prepared to commit to staying (and covering business needs) to the end?**

We are arguing for flexible end dates for staff with VS as part of our collective negotiations. We will explore the options for those staff who are prepared to stay to the end in the negotiations. (22/01/2016)

1. **Is the voluntary severance package likely to be changed by the time we get to the closure date?  When will our severance amount be guaranteed?**

The details of the voluntary severance package will be confirmed as part of the collective negotiations. Once that is agreed, the details will be guaranteed and can be applied to individual situations. (22/01/2016)

## Relocation

1. **Can I opt to relocate to any of the remaining locations (WH, English regions or Celtic nations)?**

If you are a member of Academic Services or Marketing staff at a closing regional centre, yes you can choose to relocate to any of the remaining regional offices or Celtic nation offices.  You will be guaranteed a job at your current substantive grade, although the exact role will be dependent on which roles are available at that location and may not be the same as your existing role. (22/01/2016)

1. **Will all the other terms and conditions of my contract be unaffected by a change of location in particular flexible hours of work? (A FBL document suggests that Academic staff who relocate to Walton Hall will be expected to be at this location at least 3 days a week and Academic-related staff 5 days a week)**The change of location should not automatically change other aspects of your terms and conditions, however we understand that management are also considering changes to working hours for some teams, e.g. to provide longer opening hours. Management have not yet provided us with details of their proposals, but they will be subject to collective negotiation. We will update you when we have more information. (22/01/2016)
2. **I have been told that I won’t be eligible for the London weighting allowance and I live in the London Borough of Croydon with a ‘C’ postcode. Please could you challenge this decision?**

Home based workers have been told that if they live outside the favoured postcodes (those beginning N, S, E or W) they will only receive the London weighting allowance for 2 years, as protected salary, and then they will no longer be eligible for the London weighting allowance at all. We think that this proposal for a postcode lottery is ridiculous, and we are fighting against it in the collective negotiations. (22/01/2016)

## Homeworking

1. **Can the management withdraw the home working option for staff who live within 25 miles of a surviving OU location? A FBL document suggests that this is the case.**

The home working policy has not been agreed, and we will be arguing for the maximum possible choice for our members. When there is progress to report, we will update you. (22/01/2016)

1. **The Flexible Work location Policy states that homeworking arrangements may be revoked by the Head of Unit by giving 3 months’ notice. What would be the criteria under which homeworking arrangements would be revoked? Would revoking the formal designation of ‘homeworker’ as my job location (if granted) mean I would be deemed redundant?**

This imposition of the long-term insecurity of a 3-month revocation clause is clearly unacceptable. The Flexible Work Location Policy is yet another policy which has been introduced as a ‘draft’ before negotiation with UCU. We will be demanding improvements before the policy is agreed. (22/01/2016)

***Update 22/02/2016: management have agreed to the removal of the 3-month revocation clause. However, other aspects of the policy remain under negotiation.***

1. **If I opt for homeworking, will I still be paid expenses if I have to travel to any remaining regional centres or Walton Hall?**

It is our understanding that the University intends to pay travel expenses from a home worker’s front door to anywhere they travel for work purposes. This will need to be confirmed as part of the negotiations and be written in to the policy. (22/01/2016)

1. **If I opt for homeworking, will all my other terms and conditions stay the same and will I still be able to apply for promotions and other job roles?**

There should be no other terms and conditions changes as a result of opting for home working but this will be covered in collective negotiations. You would still be eligible to apply for other roles, but these may be based in a particular location and if so you may be required to move if you are successful. (22/01/2016)

1. **If I become a home worker, would there be any restriction on me moving house? Would moving house affect my travel expenses?**

These are important considerations which should have been considered in any home or flexible working location policy. As you know, the policy hasn’t been discussed or agreed but we will make sure that they are covered in the collective negotiations. (22/01/2016)

1. **Has there been any change in the position on printers for homeworkers recently? Are they going to be provided by the OU or will they need to come out of the £1k grant to homeworkers?**

We have heard that some members have been told in their 1-1s that printers may be provided by the OU, whilst others have been told that they will not. The details will be included in the collective consultations, and when a final position has been negotiated we will let you know. (22/01/2016)

1. **One monitor is not adequate when working on screen all day – it is difficult to work on multiple documents without two screens. So please can we be provided with a second screen**.

The details of the homeworking policy have not yet been negotiated. We will note your suggestion and update you when there is progress to report. (22/01/2016)

1. **Will homeworkers be able to claim for the cost of consumables (ink, postage, paper, other stationery)?**

Homeworkers should be able to claim for consumables but the details need to be confirmed in the collective consultations. (22/01/2016)

1. **There are lots of facilities we use in regional centres, e.g. storage for outreach kits and books, offices for unplanned difficult conversations, meeting rooms and common rooms; and services which are provided by our colleagues in the regional centres, e.g. producing handouts for events, IT support. How will this be handled it there is no regional centre?**

Again, the University has not considered the full practicalities of homeworking without a regional presence and this is why we wanted the collective negotiations to happen before the individual consultations. We will be raising these issues in the collective negotiations and will update you on progress. (22/01/2016)

1. **If I accept a home working contract, am I committed to continue working for the OU for a specified length of time?**

The requirements for giving notice will not be affected by your change of location. However, until the University’s proposed homeworking policy has been discussed and approved we won’t know whether the university will try to impose any limitations on the homeworking grant. This will be covered during the collective negotiations. (22/01/2016)

# FAQs from 16 December 2015 to 23 February 2016

## Consultations, Options and Preferences

1. **I have been told that I can have a second 1-2-1 meeting. I still haven’t had answers to the questions I asked at the first meeting, why should I go to a second one?**We understand that for many staff the first meeting was very frustrating, as policies hadn’t been finalised and the options weren’t clear. We are now much further down the road with the collective negotiations so more information is available, and we are advising members to attend the second meeting but to arrange to have it as late as possible so that key negotiations will have been finalised. Remember that you can have more consultation meetings if you need to, so you will not be missing out on a later opportunity by having a meeting now.

We advise you to approach this meeting as an opportunity to say what you want to happen. We expect HR to use these meetings to measure demand for alternative options, so it is important that you are as clear as possible about what you need. This will help to provide the evidence we need for the negotiations. If what you want is not presented as one of the options available to you, do not let that stop you from talking about your requirements, and what you would need to make your choice feasible for you, e.g. an agile working arrangement, a hot desk at a serviced office. Please pass this advice on to other colleagues.

Do not expect an immediate answer, but nothing should be ruled out at this stage. Collective negotiations between UCU and management have agreed a process for at-risk staff to request a ‘non-preferred-by-management’ option, and for this to be considered and decided by a panel. If your manager is unable to agree your choice, you should be given access to this route. (23/02/2016)

1. **When should I submit my preference form? I’m still not clear what the final policies or the new job roles will be, and this may affect my choice.**

Following consultation with UCU, management have agreed to put back the submission date for preference forms to 4th April 2016. This will not be a final choice, but is simply an expression of preference. You will still be able to change your mind.

The preference forms have been designed to encourage you to choose one of management’s preferred options. However we advise you not to be constrained by the choices laid out if they do not suit you, but to use the form as an opportunity to say what you would like to happen, and what you need management to do to make this feasible for you. I.e.

* You could accept the preferred option if it works for you.
* You could express a preference, but say that this is dependent on a particular arrangement e.g. you may be able to relocate to office X but only if an agile working arrangement is in place to allow you to work from home for 2 days per week, and you have a trial period of 12 weeks to assess this.
* You could express a preference for option (a) if specific arrangements are put in place for you, but if the arrangements are not agreed your preference will be option (b). E.g. a preference for home working if a hot desk is available in a serviced office within 50 miles of your home, but if this is not possible then relocate to Regional Centre Y with allocated desk space but working from home for 2 days per week, and if this is not possible either then you may opt for voluntary severance.

We expect the University to use the preference forms as another method of measuring demand for alternative options, and again it is important that your needs are fully and clearly expressed in order to provide evidence for the negotiations. Please pass on this advice to colleagues who may not be in UCU.

If you opt for something that is not management’s preferred option for you, and your manager cannot agree it, your request will be considered by a panel in order to reach a decision. (23/02/2016)

1. **I and a number of my [non-CAU] colleagues would like to have the option of homeworking, not just re-location, Voluntary Severance or Enhanced Early Retirement. I know I might appear to have a number of relocation options but they would all involve a lot of disruption and, though in an ideal world I’d prefer not to work  from home, homeworking would undoubtedly be the easiest, and possibly only realistic, option for me.**

We would advise you to express your preference on the preference from regardless of whether this is one of management’s preferred options for you (see Q50). You might consider expressing a preference for homeworking, or (if this is acceptable to you) a combination of home working and relocation for 2 days per week to a different regional or national centre, or a reduction to part time hours to allow a shortened working day to make relocation a possibility. (23/02/2016)

## Redeployment

1. **What about staff who may wish to relocate / redeploy on a higher grade? This doesn’t seem to be covered under the relocation / redeployment options.**

Relocation and redeployment would normally be at the same grade, or at a lower grade with salary protection for 4 years. In some cases, though, there may significant overlap between an existing role and a new role at a higher grade, and in that case at-risk staff in the existing role may be able to transfer across to the new role.

However, if there is a different role available at a higher grade – and it is not filled by the relocation / redeployment of another at-risk member of staff at that higher grade – then staff at other grades would be able to apply for that role. This would be considered as applying for a new role rather than redeployment or relocation. (23/02/2016)

1. **If a member of at-risk staff was willing to consider redeployment but did not consider any of the available jobs suitable, would they still have the option of Voluntary Severance?**

If there were no ‘suitable’ alternative jobs then the option of Voluntary Severance would remain. However staff cannot ‘unreasonably’ refuse ‘suitable’ alternative roles without losing their right to severance / redundancy payments. The UCU Rep would work with members to make sure that they didn’t unknowingly find themselves in this situation, but the judgement is made both on the basis of both objective job-related factors (e.g. the new role requires similar skills and offers similar terms & conditions), and the member of staff’s personal considerations. (23/02/2016)

## Relocation

1. **If I agreed to trial relocation but it didn’t work for me, would I be able to return to my previous location and then take voluntary severance when it closed? I am concerned that I may be forced to accept voluntary severance at the end of the trial period, and may lose the chance of continued employment until the closure date. This would be penalising me for being willing to try relocation.**The timing and arrangements for trial periods (and where necessary voluntary severance if the trial is not successful) is subject to collective negotiation but has not yet been agreed, and we will update you as soon as we are able. However, we would not expect staff to be penalised for being willing to trial relocation, and the University has guaranteed employment for all at-risk staff until at least the end of January 2017. (23/02/2016)
2. **There’s been talk of the fact that should we relocate our contracts would change. Would this just be in relation to hours or would it also affect pay, leave etc.?**

We would not expect contracts or terms and conditions to change as a result of relocation. However, please see the Extended Hours and Shift Work section for more information on working hours. (23/02/2016)

## Trial Periods

1. **When East Grinstead closed, I believe the trial period for redeployments was extended to 5 months. Will this also be the case for anyone undertaking a redeployment because of the regional closures?**

The collective negotiations on trial periods are not yet concluded, but the standard trial period for a redeployment is up to 12 weeks, with the exact length of the trial period agreed as part of the individual negotiations. The trial period agreed with each individual will take into account circumstances such as the similarity between the existing and new role, and any personal needs a member of staff may have to make a decision by a particular point in time. (23/02/2016)

1. **Would it be possible to have more than one trial period?**

Again this will be discussed as part of the collective negotiations, and we will let you know as soon as we have an update. (23/02/2016)

1. **We’ve been told that we would be able to get Voluntary Severance if our trial 3 month period was unsuccessful (if we decided not to relocate after all, within 3 months). However, the Relocation Policy states that we’d have to repay the monetary help if we left that location within 2 years-repayment of 100% of the monies if we left within a year, and repayment of 50% if we left within 2 years.**

We would not expect staff to have to make permanent arrangements for relocation, nor to incur the costs of permanent relocation, in order to take part in a trial. We are therefore be discussing reimbursement for the costs of disturbance / temporary relocation during the trial period, as part of the collective negotiations. (23/02/2016)

## Home Working

1. **I am worried about stating a preference for home or Centre-based work when the Home Working policy has not yet been agreed. If I do so, and the policy is reworded, what does this commit us to?**

We agree that it is unreasonable to expect you to make firm choices based on partial information. However, the Preference Forms you have been asked to fill in are just that - preferences only. They do not commit you to a final option and are to be used by the University for high-level planning purposes only. We recommend that you use the preference forms to state both what your preferences are (on the basis of the information available at the moment), and the arrangements you would need the University to make in order for this to work for you. (23/02/2016)

## R05 and R08 Office Facilities

1. **If there are a lot of relocating or new staff required for the SRSC, will that impact on the amount of allocated work space and hot desks available in existing centres for CAU staff?**We have been assured that there will be allocated work space and hot desks for CAU staff, although the details have not yet been finalised. If you have particular concerns about facilities which may suffer or improvements which will be needed, please let us know so that we can feed these in to discussions. (23/02/2016)
2. **How will existing ‘reasonable adjustments’ be accommodated in the new allocated and hot desk arrangements?**

This is an important point which will need to be included in the redesign of offices. HR have assured us that existing reasonable adjustment arrangements for staff with disabilities will be supported, but it may also be the case that new reasonable adjustments arise because of the new working conditions. This may include staff who move to homeworking, staff relocating to a new office, or staff working in a changed office environment. If you have any existing arrangements, and / or think that you may have changed requirements as a result of a new working environment, mention these to your line manager or in a 1-2-1 consultation so that the University knows what support you need. (23/02/2016)

1. **What realistic options are there for confidentiality to be maintained to standards expected by external regulatory bodies, such as Nursing and Social Work? This includes data storage and telephone calls.**

We have been assured that there will be ‘pods’ available for confidential work, consultations and meetings, but the final layouts are not yet available. We have also been told that CAUs have been involved in defining the requirements for these spaces. Please ensure that you have expressed your concern about these factors through your CAUs, and again let us know about the concerns so that we can feed them into the plans. (23/02/2016)

## Extended Hours and Shift Work

1. **Will the Target Operating Model apply to the National Centres as well as to MK, Nottingham and Manchester and will it apply to the Careers Service? The details of the model may well influence my decisions about my future.**

We understand that the national centres will be included in the TOM, but the details of how it will be implemented in the national centres have not yet been discussed. (23/02/2016)

1. **I thought that extended hours and shift work was not going to be imposed on existing staff, but I have seen a Student Recruitment and Support Centre Programme FAQ which says that the University had hoped to avoid imposing the new hours, but operationally cannot do so. Will I be forced to work the new hours?**

We know that this issue has caused a great deal of concern as it has the potential to severely impact upon the lives of future SRSC staff, and has serious implications for equality. The University confirms that it will try to respond flexibly to requests and seek to avoid imposing the new hours on staff with ‘exceptional’ circumstances. We remain convinced that the extended hours can and should be implemented in a way that allows staff to choose a working pattern to suit their lives, meets the duty to promote equality, and meets the support needs of the University’s enquirers and students. We are forcibly pursuing this as negotiations continue, and will update you when we can. (23/02/2016)

## Role Descriptions

1. **I have seen the new job descriptions on the SRSC Programme website, and I am not happy with the description for my role. Have these been agreed with UCU?**

No the new roles have not been agreed with UCU although they will be part of the collective consultation. We will be challenging management on all aspects of the roles which have an implication for equality, including extended and shift work, restricted leave periods, and arrangements for agile working.

We also need to highlight any issues to do with job design. These may only be apparent to skilled and experienced staff in the area, so we need your help with this. If you have concerns, please let us know which job description(s) you are unhappy with, including the specific areas which are problematic and the reasons why, and we will feed these in to the negotiations. (23/02/2016)