



Professor Max Lu and Michael Queen
University of Surrey
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28 February 2022

Dear Max and Michael,

Open Letter from the Campus Trade Unions regarding outsourcing

Three departments central to the efficient operation of the University will be outsourced to Cervus Plus Consulting LLP on 1 March 2022, and yet there remain many unanswered questions. Our hope, in writing this open letter to you both, is to receive satisfactory responses to these questions so that staff and students can be assured of their continued safety both on campus and also whilst travelling on University business. We also hope to allay the concerns of the staff affected and those more broadly impacted by this outsourcing.

For anyone reading this letter 'cold', the central Health & Safety function, University insurance function and the internal audit and risk assurance function will all be operated from Cervus Plus Consulting LLP as of 1 March 2022. The University Information Governance function (including the Data Protection Officer and the team with responsibility for managing GDPR compliance, responding to Freedom of Information requests, etc) will also move to Cervus Plus Consulting LLP on 1 May 2022. For anyone wanting further information on what the 'LLP' stands for in the name of the new company, there are a number of [useful sites on the internet](#).

From those start dates, University staff within those functions will cease to be University employees and they will lose their eligibility for membership of the University Superannuation Scheme (USS pension) along with many other benefits of working for the University including, for instance, access to the Centre for Wellbeing. Cervus Plus Consulting LLP staff will have contracts of employment that specify that they are Home Workers, meaning that they will also lose the many benefits of working on campus, including face-to-face contact with colleagues and an ergonomic, fit for purpose desk/workstation.

The consultation for those staff transferring was short (33 days) and was negatively impacted by being held over the Christmas and New Year holidays. This has resulted in many questions remaining unanswered and has necessitated this letter to you both. Whilst we do not expect that you should be responsible for providing responses to the many detailed operational queries (*and we have purposefully left those out from this letter, for the moment*), your respective positions of President and Vice Chancellor and Chair of the University Council, do make you the right persons to answer the following:

1. During the limited consultation we were told that there was “*Significant support from EB [Executive Board] and Council. EB approved the approach and Council discussed and support the way forward at their away day*”. To aid transparency and instil confidence that the transfer process was and is being completed with proper University governance, please can you:
 - a. as Chair of the EB (Max), provide details of what you agreed at your meeting in September 2021 (or on any other occasion during which the proposal was discussed)?
 - b. as Chair of the University Council (Michael), provide details of what you agreed at your meeting in November 2021 (or on any other occasion during which the proposal was discussed).

We understand that some of the commercially sensitive detail may need to be redacted but expect the overall proposal, direction of travel and the current and future scope of the transfer arrangements to be shared.

2. What future plans exist for other members of University staff (i.e. those not in scope for 1 March 2022 and 1 May 2022) to be transferred into Cervus Plus Consulting LLP or another new separate company?
 - a. Will this include staff working in professional services i.e.: HR, Finance, Estates and Facilities, as well as Student Services?
3. A new company called Operate Surrey Ltd was incorporated by Companies House on 1 February 2022. Is this the company into which some or all members of staff in HR, Finance, Estates and Facilities and Student Services may be transferred? If so, when will they be informed?
4. It would appear reasonable to conclude that hundreds of members of University staff could potentially be outsourced to either Cervus Plus Consulting LLP, Operate Surrey Ltd, Innovate Surrey Ltd or another new entity. Please can you provide your personal assurance that the consultation period for all future staff is of adequate length and will not coincide with peak holiday times?
5. How will you ensure that there is both good governance and a safe environment when, from 1 March 2022, the current University Director of Health & Safety will be employed by a third-party company - the same third-party company that has been awarded an exclusive contract to provide advice on health & safety? Who will ensure, from the University’s perspective, that the advice and service received from the third party is adequate, when the University will no longer employ a Director of Health & Safety?
6. The University of Sussex outsourced their health & safety function, only to bring it back in house. Please can you share with us details of all the actions taken by the University to ensure that:
 - a. Our staff and students are not going to be endangered.
 - b. The health & safety service provided by Cervus Plus Consulting LLP is fit for purpose when both the existing Director of Health and Safety and the existing University internal audit and risk assurance function will both be provided by Cervus Plus Consulting LLP (i.e., the supplier).

7. We understand the imperative of running the University effectively within a budget and of maximising both the student and staff experience whilst also capitalising on our fantastic research and innovative partnerships with many external bodies. However, it would appear to be counterintuitive to good housekeeping to purposefully incur multiple sets of overheads in the running of multiple separate companies to provide the same, and potentially worse service. Please can you explain the financial logic?

Given the timings of the proposed transfer, and the very great impact that these changes will have on the University, potentially hundreds of members of staff and to our current and future students, we would hope to receive a fulsome and detailed response at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards

Surrey UNISON, UCU, Unite