



**It's a great time to join the TEU.**  
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***Sent on behalf of Michael Gilchrist TEU National President to all VCs and CEs***

Tēnā koe

Sent by Email

As the COVID-19 lock down continues, we want to raise a number of matters with you.

First, we want to acknowledge that the senior leaders of the tertiary education sector have been working hard to ensure learning is disrupted as little as possible and have found many ways to support staff in these extraordinary times. But as we all know there is much more work to do.

There is much to be done in the area of strategic planning to deal with COVID-19, with health and safety considerations as we move out of Alert Level-4, and work on staff wellbeing. We will deal with each in turn.

### **Strategic planning around COVID-19**

The move to Level-4 three weeks ago happened rapidly and often the response in our sector was rapidly decided. In many cases there was communication with union representatives but there were few opportunities for consultation with union members or staff.

The move out of Level-4 lockdown and through other alert levels during the rest of 2020 should be planned and enacted with the full involvement of staff.

As we have said previously, we accept that temporary changes are having to be made to academic and administrative processes in order to deal appropriately with the pandemic response. However, any such changes will be more effective if staff are involved in the early discussions and we create the way forward together. Of course, the right of staff to be consulted on changes that affect their work remains undiminished by any Alert levels in force or the Government's epidemic management notice.

We therefore request, that you meet with union branch representatives (Branch Presidents, co-presidents, branch committee members and TEU organisers) to discuss ways in which union members and staff at your institution can have more substantial input into the decisions that will shape their working lives in the months to come.

We are currently gathering information from members on the key issues and pressure points they see emerging in the coming months, together with some basic expectations they have of

how the return from Alert level 4 to levels 3 and 2 should be managed in institutions. This concerns issues around teaching, learning and research as well as health and safety requirements for both ākonga and staff. We will be sharing this material – including examples of best practice - with you in a further letter in the next few days.

### Health and safety considerations

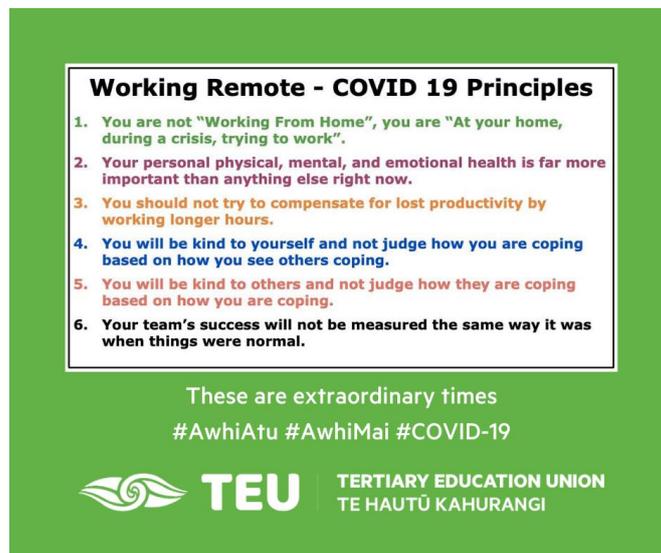
As the country moves from Level-4 lockdown to Level-3 it is likely that staff and ākonga will begin returning to campuses. Like all New Zealanders, we want to ensure that health and safety is the number one consideration. In the first instance, the resumption of on-campus activity will be conditional on institutions being able to show that the safety of all involved can be ensured, in accordance with the principles of Alert level 3.

Currently the Ministry of Health, WorkSafe, and unions are working to develop some foundational guidelines around health and safety. We would like all tertiary education institutions to work together to ensure there is a common set of health and safety procedures that ensure staff and student well-being. We would like to know if you are interested in participating in this process.

### The well-being of staff

The wellbeing of staff in the tertiary education sector is currently a matter of considerable concern. Many staff are feeling immense pressure to perform under very testing conditions. Those working in Polytechnics have the additional uncertainty of a radical transformation of their sector, beginning on 1 April, to contend with. Last week we sent members some principles for working under the current conditions and the response was overwhelming.

The principles are as follows:



**Working Remote - COVID 19 Principles**

1. You are not "Working From Home", you are "At your home, during a crisis, trying to work".
2. Your personal physical, mental, and emotional health is far more important than anything else right now.
3. You should not try to compensate for lost productivity by working longer hours.
4. You will be kind to yourself and not judge how you are coping based on how you see others coping.
5. You will be kind to others and not judge how they are coping based on how you are coping.
6. Your team's success will not be measured the same way it was when things were normal.

These are extraordinary times  
#AwhiAtu #AwhiMai #COVID-19

 **TEU** TERTIARY EDUCATION UNION  
TE HAUTŪ KAHURANGI

Here are just three examples of how staff in the sector have been responding to this simple message:

*"Thanks so much for the heads up about the graphic, which I'd somehow missed. I so appreciate that message (to the point of tearing up, if I'm honest) and I don't think we've been getting it from our senior leadership. It's not even that anything concrete needs to happen - even just a change of tone would made a huge difference."*

*"Thank you and also for the links to both articles. I can finally accept that my feelings of 'not being there enough for my students' are unnecessary."*

*"Thank you for these pieces of sanity, good sense, and support in this crazy new world. This (and the links) is the most useful email I've received in my inbox for a long time. Thank you for still being there supporting us in real and important ways :-)"*

In some cases we fear that in the drive to ensure minimal disruption to learning the well-being of staff is being forgotten.

We ask that all leaders of the sector ensure managers are well-informed about the psychological distress that pandemics induce and that all communications to staff include a message which reassures them that their institutional leaders understand that these really are extraordinary times and work is not continuing as normal.

As the Prime Minister has said throughout this crisis we need to be 'kind'. That kindness must extend to workers as well as to our whanau and friends.

Ngā mihi

Michael Gilchrist

National President, TEU