



# **Stamp Out Casual Contracts**

**Building effective local campaigns  
against casualisation**

**A Branch rep's guide**

**About this guide:**

This brief guide is designed to help branch officers and Anti-Casualisation reps to build effective, united and sustainable local campaigns that can support our strategic objectives in fighting casualisation at local level.

It also draws on current good practice in our branches and includes, in the Appendix, more detailed case studies.

**UCU's strategy: Local action as part of a national strategy**

UCU's national strategy for fighting casualisation is to build political pressure on politicians and on our sector to take action that eradicates the worst exploitation and builds support for action to require institutions to create better jobs.

In the meantime, nationally, the union coordinates and resource local organising, campaigning and bargaining around national objectives such as the focus on zero hours contracts and researchers, for example. We're focusing our energies on where our opponent is weakest.

This is partly because we can't wait for political change. Members on casualised contracts need us to take action now. But it's also partly because taking action to win better jobs locally builds national pressure that says there is an alternative.

**Interlocking organising, campaigning and negotiating:**

Trade union strength is best exercised collectively through collective bargaining and campaigning action that secures real gains for our members.

This is the core part of our job and unless we're doing that effectively, we'll struggle to mobilise our members.

Making progress in this core role depends on how well we can establish interlocking and mutually reinforcing organisation, campaigning and negotiation.

## **A few key steps to building effective local campaigning and negotiation around casualisation:**

### **1. Find out what the issues are**

Holding meetings of or consulting with casualised staff is always the first step. One really good way of engaging with casualised staff is to use surveys. Surveys help us to build an evidence base to take to management and support our arguments. They also get us in contact with casualised staff and show them that their union is working for them and can help us to organise and recruit action groups or reps.

In the last couple of years alone, UCU branches at **Edinburgh, Manchester, Sheffield Hallam, Liverpool, Lancaster, Bristol** and many others besides have used surveys as an integral part of building a bargaining agenda and organising among hourly paid, zero hours contracts and fixed-term contract workers.

**Resources:** You can find template surveys for contacting hourly paid, casual and fixed-term contract staff here: [http://www.ucu.org.uk/socc\\_materials](http://www.ucu.org.uk/socc_materials)

### **2. Organise groups or networks among the casualised**

It's vital to build and sustain groups of active members among the casualised staff.

Sometimes they take leading roles in campaigning and negotiations, sometimes they are more in the background, acting as a link with casualised staff and ensuring that the branch's negotiations are always reflecting and based on the needs of casualised members.

But casualised members have to be integral to the campaign and the process of negotiating to ensure that both reflect their concerns and needs and to maintain the unity of the casualised and the permanent membership.

Meetings of GTA's were held at **Manchester** throughout negotiations over hourly paid staff being assimilated to the national pay spine.

**Edinburgh UCU** used networks of postgraduates and recruited hourly paid reps to ensure that the casualised were an organic part of their campaign.

Anti-casualisation reps are playing a leading role in building the campaign in **Liverpool**.

### **3. Maintain branch unity**

It's vital to build and maintain unity between casualised and permanent staff. That can be hard work but it's got to happen because it would be easy for managements to exploit divisions. When managements are able to drive exploit gaps between casualised and permanent staff, everyone loses.

- Permanent staff need to understand that unless casualisation is tackled it will have a greater and greater effect on them over time.
- Casualised staff very often have to operate within branches where most members are on permanent contracts but are themselves under great pressure on a whole range of issues.

Neither group can simply demand the support of the other. Branch officers and activists have to work at building unity.

That's what makes united UCU branches so important. They are places where solidarity can be built around an agenda that unites different sections of the membership in recognition that their issues have are expressions of deeper problems with a common root and a common solution.

### **4. Build wider alliances and mobilise political pressure**

It's vital to be able to mobilise external pressure on institutions from influential agencies.

Students are a key ally. Just as we argue that providing quality education needs staff to be fairly paid and well treated, so we argue that staff employed on casual contracts are being prevented from providing the best education possible.

Similarly, universities and colleges dislike pressure from local politicians and the press. Zero hours contracts and the growth of casualised and poor quality jobs are a hot political issue and this gives us the opportunity to highlight the levels of exploitation in our universities. We're doing this nationally, but our branches are also doing it locally, with our support.

UCU used the **mass lobbying** during our recent most successful ever day of action to build links with more MPs over the issue of ZHCs in education.

At **Gower College**, local reps, supported by the Wales office have exploited the political environment to put direct political pressure on the management.

**Liverpool UCU** are building links between different unions across the city, using the trades council to build a city-wide campaign against zero hours contracts.

**Sheffield Hallam UCU** have lobbied their local MPs and PPCs directly.

**Edinburgh UCU and UCU Scotland** have done the same with the Scottish administration.

**Resources:** You can get more help with contacting your MP and dealing with the press here: [http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/h/g/ucu\\_lobbyingtoolkit.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/h/g/ucu_lobbyingtoolkit.pdf)  
Or, contact your Regional Official.

## 5. Recognise that it's a long-term process

Campaigning and negotiation can be a slow and frustrating business. Because at some point it has to involve tactical compromises based on a balance of power, it rarely leads to complete victory. But nevertheless it can produce real tangible wins for casualised staff that win greater security and better jobs.

Providing that we see these wins as part of an ongoing process of organising, campaigning, negotiating and back again, it can be part of a process of building our power and increasing our ability to get better deals.

Here are some pointers for achieving this in your branch:

- establish winning greater continuity of employment and campaigning for better jobs as a clear strategic objective which must be kept in sight and constantly reviewed;
- Identify a series of smaller campaigning and negotiating objectives as the immediate ways of pursuing the bigger strategic objective.

**Manchester University UCU** have kept casualisation on their bargaining agenda for years, targeting fixed-term contracts, then GTA employment and then greater security of employment in succession.

Similarly, **Goldsmiths UCU** fought for years, combining campaigning, organising and bargaining pressure to win a good agreement on the appropriate use and fair payment of hourly paid staff and then went on to fight for a new agreement that won them greater job security.

## **6. Bank your success, recruit - and move on to the next stage...**

Winning greater continuity of employment and more, better jobs for the casualised should be a constant objective and the end of any set of negotiations should be an opportunity to celebrate, organise, recruit and identify the next objective in support of our strategy.

Active recruitment is vital. People join unions if they think they are effective. This union has a lot to be proud of in fighting casualisation. If we fail to show the work we're doing, we can't really blame them for not joining.

Make sure that you include any successes, however small, in your newsletters

Don't be afraid to repeat these messages – don't assume that everyone reads things the first time round

Ask members to pass on your newsletters to their colleagues, to non-members and particularly to casualised staff

**Resources:** You can find lots of leaflets and other resources for recruiting casualised staff here: [http://www.ucu.org.uk/socc\\_materials](http://www.ucu.org.uk/socc_materials)  
To order materials for your branch email [campaigns@ucu.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@ucu.org.uk)

**Questions:**

Think about your branch – if you did a health check on your own campaigning against casualisation – how are you doing?

- Do you know what your strategic priority objectives are?
- What kind of agreement are you after at this point?
- What level of organisation of casualised members is in place to support you?
- How could you further build UCU support and profile among casualised staff?
- How are you ensuring that support for campaigning on casualisation is supported by 'permanent' staff?
- What are you doing to recruit casualised staff?
- Who are your potential external allies?
- What help do you need from the national union?

***Where to get more help:***

*You can get lots more help on campaigning and organising around casualisation on the Stamp Out Casual Contracts campaign web pages:*

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/stampout>

*For more advice on organising in your branch, see:*

<http://btu.web.ucu.org.uk/>

*And remember to contact your Regional Office.*

# Appendix 1: Case studies

## Targeting zero-hours contracts - case studies

Targeting the use of zero-hours contracts is a major priority for our union and, like others in the labour movement, UCU is operating a twin track strategy for addressing this.

The problem of employers using super-casualised employment forms like zero-hours contracts will only ultimately be solved by measures to make them impossible to operate and grant workers better rights. That's why UCU continues to push the political parties to harden their policy positions on zero-hours contracts. The focus on 'exclusivity clauses' or attempts to distinguish 'exploitative' zero-hours contracts are woefully inadequate responses, which is why we have supported [Labour MP Ian Mearns's private members bill](#). This bill would make it very difficult for employers to operate zero-hours contracts and while it stands little chance of becoming law, building support for it is an important contribution to the debate, at least within the Labour Party.

In the immediate term, it's also vital to use our campaigning and collective bargaining strength to push employers to stop using them now. Nationally, in higher education, as a result of the national agreement reached this year with the employers representatives at UCEA, a joint union and employer working group has been set up to look at casualisation. While this is likely to produce some joint 'guidance' on 'best practice' there will not be a national level agreement on zero-hours contracts. Nonetheless, the national level engagement is an important lever with which to increase pressure.

The union is also using the national FOI results to identify strategically important mass users of zero-hours contracts, target them and to coordinate support for UCU branches at those institutions. If we can win good agreements that move members onto more regular, secure contracts, we can raise the pressure on other employers and start to change the direction of travel in our sectors

Nationally, we've produced a  [new guidance document for branches 'Ending zero-hours contracts in further and higher education' \(.pdf\) \[344kb\]](#). This document aims to help branches to recognise zero-hours contracts, set out guidance on negotiating to move staff onto more secure fractional part-time contracts and offers advice on building effective campaigns to support negotiations. Like all guidance documents, it captures the best of what's already happening and generalises it for other branches to adapt to their own uses.

Nationally, we're also coordinating support for branches in target institutions and we're seeing the building of some impressive campaigns. Since the progress made by [Edinburgh University UCU, whose campaign is covered elsewhere](#), we've seen effective campaigns built at Sheffield Hallam University and two

universities in Liverpool, for example. The key features of these campaigns are the combination of attempts to negotiate with the building of 'top to bottom' campaigns that combine gathering evidence on and mobilising zero-hours staff with leveraging in local political support.

On the back of the FOI, Sheffield Hallam UCU conducted a survey of hourly-paid staff which aimed to get beneath the glib management line about staff valuing flexibility. [Their report](#), launched on UCU's national day of action, was sent to management, local politicians and the press, increasing pressure on the university management.

Similarly, UCU at Liverpool University and Liverpool John Moores conducted local FOIs to gather more detailed information about zero-hours contracts, launched a survey of zero-hours contracts staff on the national day of action and wrote to their local MPs briefing them on the use of zero-hours contracts at their institution. In addition, they have formed a joint branch organising group to recruit and organise among casualised staff. At Edinburgh, Sheffield Hallam and Liverpool, strategically focused campaigning and bargaining that combines local, regional and national resources is building pressure for change.

## **Zero-hours contracts: progress at Gower College**

How a Freedom of Information request led to new protocol for using hourly paid contracts at Gower College.

Zero-hours contracts have continued to feature in the news, exposing some tensions within the UK coalition government. In May, Tory employment minister Esther McVey [outlined plans to enable JobCentre staff to 'mandate' unemployed people to accept zero-hours contracts](#) with the sanction of removal of benefits. On the other hand, in June Liberal Democrat Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills Vince Cable attempted to deflect some of the public attention on this issue by [announcing that the government would legislate to make exclusivity clauses unenforceable](#) as part of the Small Business Enterprise and Employment Bill.

As the authors of a new [Institute of Employment Rights pamphlet](#) have pointed out the proposed legislation will have almost no impact, partly because exclusivity clauses are probably already unenforceable and partly because this misses the essential feature - and unfairness - of the zero-hours contract: the fact that the employer is under no obligation to provide work.

The ongoing political furore over the use of zero-hours contracts is an opportunity for unions to press for a proper solution by building political support for legislation that provides a right to continuity of employment. However, we also have a duty to work now to use our collective bargaining strength to win tangible improvements for staff on these contracts. That's why UCU is working to target major employers using zero-hours contracts, making use of their high profile and controversial status.

The advantage of this kind of targeted approach is very visible in the case of the campaign at Gower College in Wales. UCU's FOI revealed that Gower College was the biggest user of zero-hours contracts in the Welsh further education sector, employing almost 80 staff on such contracts. The UCU Wales office and branch agreed to target this employer for a sustained campaign against casualization, beginning by proposing a protocol for fractionalising staff on zero-hours contracts.

The college, in common with many FE colleges, pleaded funding constraints and an early agreement seemed unlikely, so the branch and region moved into organising and campaigning mode. Part-time teachers formed a focus-group and from this a part-timers rep came forward for the branch. The college seems to have smelled trouble as it offered some members of the group fractional contracts, but no agreement. UCU continued to press for a comprehensive agreement and began to target Welsh politicians, making good use of the high profile issue, raising it in political circles and maximising bad publicity for the college. A high-profile lobby of the Welsh assembly followed, including part-time staff and the UCU Wales official, after which several politicians wrote to the college asking them to explain why they used zero-hours contracts and employed so many staff as hourly paid.

In September last year, under growing pressure, the college agreed to set up a working party to look at an agreement. In May 2014, following hard negotiations, an agreement was finally signed. Under the terms of the new protocol for using hourly paid contracts, the college recognises the need to 'ensure that all staff feel secure and are appropriately supported throughout their employment' and are 'committed to appointing staff on contracts of employment that are 'fair and equitable', within funding constraints. Concretely, the college have agreed that those staff with four years' service at above 418 annual teaching hours (including remission) can apply for conversion to a fractional post. The college has maintained that conversion should be subject to any 'legitimate factors' that might place provision at risk, but has also agreed to review the policy with a commitment to looking at reducing the threshold of eligibility where possible.

UCU Wales are not sanguine about this deal. It's not ideal, but it's a major improvement, a big step forward and a launch pad for further campaigning and bargaining. And it was achieved for vulnerable precarious staff by combining organising, campaigning and negotiation while maximising the opportunity provided by the current political context.

## **UCU Edinburgh - winning on zero-hours contracts**

UCU Edinburgh has worked locally in three areas simultaneously to try to change its management's approach to the use of zero-hours contracts (ZHCs) alongside the national campaign led by UCU's Anti-Casualisation Committee.

The points below are a summary of the steps we have taken.

### **Data collection**

- Qualitative survey of members and non-members on their experiences of hourly contracts (Dec 2012-Jan 2013). Quotes from this survey later used in the petition.
- Initial proportions of staff on zero-hours contract emerged (Nov 2012).
- Total numbers of staff on different contracts (open-ended, open-ended with a review date, fixed-term, hourly) broken down by grade, gender, college/support group, job function from Edinburgh University, by an TULR(C)A request (Jan 2013).
- Total numbers of staff on different contracts (open-ended, open-ended with a review date, fixed term, hourly, and any other) from all Scottish universities, under FOI request (May 2013)
- UCU HQ requesting numbers and details about number of academic and related staff zero hours contracts from all UK HEIs and FEIs, under FOI (June 2013).

### **Campaigning and organising**

- Setting up a postgrad and postdoc network (the majority of ZHCs at Edinburgh are held by postgrads and postdocs) with presentations at postgrad induction days, regular meetings (with officers from student union present) and a Facebook group.
- Postgrad/postdoc rep on the committee
- Postgrad/postdoc rep liaising with student union on campaigning etc (regular meetings with officers and the student union postgrad rep).
- Attending annual national meeting of members on casualised contracts.
- Events: anti-casualisation workshop on 6 March (UCU day of action) with UCU Scotland.
- Petition: [a petition launched on 6 April](#), addressed to the principal, requesting better conditions and pay for tutors, demonstrators and other hourly paid staff - with stall and signing outside student union, as well as circulating petition online (eg UCU mailing lists). The petition was supported in a motion by the student union
- Postgrad/postdoc regular meetings and postgrad/postdoc rep attending open 'question time' meeting with principal to raise the issue
- Media: survey results and Edinburgh University numbers published on our website, eventually shared with MSPs via regional officials, as well as shared with credible newspapers (eg Herald).

### **Negotiating**

- Human Resource Policy Development Group (consisting of HR and union reps) developed project to review how ZHCs are used (January to July 2013) with UCU Scotland input.
- University senior management decided to give staff [guaranteed hours and to move to pro-rata contracts](#) (August 2013)
- Understand your university politics: what are its weak points?
- Keep going: persistence pays off.

## **Manchester University UCU - bargaining and campaigning for casualised staff over the long term**

Manchester University is one of the biggest research intensive universities in the UK, employing more than 1,700 research staff. With such a large body of researchers, the use of casualised fixed-term contracts has long been a big issue at the university, which is one reason why the local UCU branch has made it a long-term strategic objective to win greater security and continuity of employment and fairer treatment for these staff.

What's notable and interesting about Manchester UCU's approach is how long they have persevered, combined organising, campaigning and long-term negotiations to win comprehensive local agreements that cover their casualised staff. As we'll see, problems remain, which make it necessary to organise, campaign and negotiate constantly to police how these agreements are implemented. But the lessons are there, nonetheless.

### **Greater security for fixed-term staff**

When the fixed-term regulations came into force in 2006, like lots of other branches, Manchester's used it as an opportunity to press their HR department to transfer large numbers of fixed-term staff. As it became apparent that this wasn't happening, they sought to press management for a local policy and started to campaign and organise among fixed-term staff to create pressure from below. Under joint union pressure, a university working group was convened in 2006 and by May 2007 it was discussing an initial draft policy.

It wasn't till December 2010 that the branch was finally able to win agreement on a progressive policy covering fixed-term contract staff. This included the crucial policy commitment to 'seek to employ people on permanent contracts where possible'. The agreement also included a tight and narrow definition of the circumstances under which it was appropriate to use a fixed-term contract.

Perhaps most importantly, the university made a commitment to end the use of 'hybrid' open-ended contracts with a stipulated end date. Instead, Manchester agreed to recognise only two kinds of contract: fixed-term and permanent. This meant that research staff whose employment depended on external funding won important new protections. They were contractually no different from other permanent employees and won equal rights to other permanent staff when the term to their funding placed them at risk of redundancy, including being properly consulted with a view to avoiding redundancy, being placed on the redeployment register and getting redundancy pay. In addition, individuals made redundant via this route would continue to be paid employees, on the redeployment register for three months after their funding ceased. Finally, the termination of fixed-term contracts, the threat of redundancy among externally funded research staff and the general policing of the policy were to be monitored by a fixed-term contracts committee. The agreement would, the university said, give the 'opportunity to enhance the quality of employment', while 'working toward a balance between flexibility and efficient and fair working practices'.

The branch continue to use the new machinery established under the agreement to ensure that the policy is implemented properly, which needs constant vigilance. There continue to be plenty of examples where the policy is not followed, so it needs constant monitoring through the bargaining machinery established through the agreement. But the agreement is a major improvement for research staff at Manchester and the branch continue to organise around it to ensure that researchers know their rights and they included it in their recent recruitment work.

### **More rights for graduate teaching assistants and no zero-hours contracts**

In 2010, as the research contracts policy was being signed off, the branch also began to organise and campaign around the need for a similar policy to cover its graduate teaching assistant (GTA) population, mainly, but not solely comprised of PhD students. Meetings of GTAs were organised to find out the extent of the problems and build support for an agreement during June and November 2010.

In April 2011, the university agreed to set up a teaching assistant review group and the branch sought to ensure that GTAs were able to feed into these group meetings. Consultation meetings on early draft policies were organised with GTAs and other hourly paid staff. Then, late in 2012, the branch signed off a final GTA agreement.

Under the final policy, the university agreed to ensure that GTAs all received one of a family of formalised job descriptions referenced against the nationally agreed academic role profiles and all received a formal contract of employment. Under the agreement, all GTAs were assimilated to the National Pay spine and those who had worked up four years' service had incremental progression.

A key win under the policy was the general policy commitment to ensure that teaching assistants 'should not be treated as casual'. This commitment is delivered on via a range for mechanisms including the transfer of staff after four years of fixed-term contracts and can include the use of pro-rata contracts.

Another critical achievement was the commitment to eradicate zero-hours contracts. Zero-hours contracts had been widely used in some faculties but the branch scored a major success in winning management to the idea that there was benefit in moving all these staff on a 'defined hours' contract with a few retained on 'minimal hours contract' to allow for specific flexibilities. The branch were able to convince management that such defined hours contracts 'would give greater stability and reliability in the use of teaching assistants.'

Again, of course, there remain problems with implementing the agreement, yet despite this its mere existence gives local reps the opportunity to hold management to account.

What's most impressive about Manchester UCU's achievement is the fact that as far back as 2004, the branch identified casualised staff as a strategic priority. Having done so, they made a long-term commitment to the issue and to combining campaigning, organising and collective bargaining over the long-haul. It's not perfect and like any policy, it needs to be constantly policed which

requires the branch to keep organising and talking to management. But there's no doubt that these agreements have paid off in the form of real improvements for many vulnerable staff.

## **Winning better jobs - two case studies from further education in the south west**

UCU has been saying for years that casualised contracts affect the quality of education. Professional, committed staff who are put onto casualised contracts are often not given the resources or the time that they need. Employers with highly casualised workforces often struggle to ensure that there are guaranteed staff for who areas of provision and that employers struggle to recruit and retain staff, leading to high turnover.

For students and learners, this means their lessons may not have enough staff, they may not know from term to term who is teaching them, and that it is impossible to build up proper educational relationships with a fast-changing workforce. For staff on casual contracts, it means the endless anxiety of worrying whether you'll be employed again and the frustration of working for an employer who shows no commitment to you but expects you to deliver 'excellence' day in day out. That's why UCU argues constantly for transferring casualised staff onto secure contracts. It's in everyone's interests.

It seems that at least some Ofsted inspectors may be starting to agree with us. UCU, like other teaching unions, is highly critical of Ofsted, but it does seem that inspection teams in the South-West may have combined, if unintentionally, with UCU campaigning to persuade two colleges to reduce the casualisation of their workforces. **City of Bristol College** and **Wiltshire College** both received critical Ofsted reports over the course of 2013 and 2014 and in both cases, the quality of teaching was under the spotlight.

City of Bristol College is a significant employer of staff on zero hours contracts, while Wiltshire College employed some staff on zero hours contracts and over 30% of its teaching was delivered by workers employed by a college agency. In the case of Wiltshire College, Ofsted, which shies away from contractual matters, seemed to come close to addressing casualisation directly. In its [report from March 2014](#), Ofsted notes that 'over recent years, the lack of stability in a number of teaching teams due to staff turnover and some inadequate cover arrangements has contributed to students' below average achievement'. Similarly, in its [October 2013 report into City of Bristol College](#), Ofsted noted that there was 'significant variation in the quality of teaching within and between faculties and subject areas', together with insufficient attention to planning to meet the needs of individual learners, while assessment and feedback to students was poor.

Both colleges responded by putting in place plans to overhaul their teaching. Wiltshire College proposed to make job cuts whereupon UCU stepped in to argue that the college should take all teaching back in house, including transferring agency staff to direct employment. The college eventually agreed to redeploy

agency staff onto fractional and variable hours contracts (not zero hours contracts) wherever possible, increasing direct employment at the college.

City of Bristol college also looked to overhaul their teaching and, under UCU pressure, agreed to move all variable hours lecturers and all zero hours contracts staff who had been doing regular work for the previous two years onto improved permanent fractional contract posts. The Principal has said that in future, casual contracts should only be used for one-off visiting lectures or guest lecturers.

These are difficult times for FE colleges and UCU's job is to fight for every job in the face of cuts. But we also need to fight for better jobs, partly because it's fair and right and partly because we think it's better for the colleges. It seems that other agencies may, belatedly also be recognising this point. That's why this is the time for UCU and its branches to turn up the heat on our employers.

## **Hourly-paid teaching at Goldsmiths - there is a better way**

It's been a long road for the Goldsmiths branch, but at the end of it they've come out with a series of agreements that show there is another way to treat teaching staff in our universities.

Negotiations around the implementation of the Framework agreement for hourly-paid staff began in 2008 and did not conclude until 2013. In that time, it was vitally important to support this long and arduous work with active campaigning. 'We relied on both pressure from local activists (including our anti-casualisation rep) as well as the national days of action in relation to anti-casualisation' says branch Secretary Des Freedman.

The pressure paid off. The agreement that finally emerged established hourly-paid teachers in a clear set of roles that provided equality of treatment across the various departments and also placed many hourly-paid teachers on fractional contracts. All hourly rates of pay for hourly-paid lecturers have been tied to the pay rates of salaried academic staff, thus ensuring parity of pay across departments and between hourly-paid and salaried academic staff.

For example, associate lecturers with less than 150 hours teaching in a year and less than four years' service are employed as temporary hourly-paid lecturers but on reaching four years' service they are offered either a permanent fractional or associate lecturer post.

Postgraduate students without prior teaching experience would be employed as 'Graduate Trainee Tutors'. While these are graded at 6, below the established academic scale, they are provided with a training programme and after one year, they proceed automatically to grade 7. Importantly, therefore, there are clear and transparent routes whereby hourly-paid teachers can progress and, with sufficient service and hours, expect to move to a fractional contract.

But crucially, the branch didn't see this agreement as the end. As Freedman puts it, the 'Assimilation Agreement' was, above all, about ensuring equality more than tackling precariousness. So we realised that we would still need to do far more to deal with the insecurity and exploitation faced by what are now called 'Associate Lecturers'.

So in 2013 and 2014 discussions began to secure greater continuity of employment. Once again, the agreement that emerged contained a critical progressive commitment: 'In order to maximise stability for staff and students, where appropriate, Associate Lecturers can reasonably expect employment by the College for three years (subject to performance, recruitment and other employment issues)'.

In addition, if an Associate Lecturer is contracted for 350 hours or more in any one year, this would automatically trigger a contract review which would normally lead to the creation of a fractional post. Departments are committed to monitoring the hours of their staff and the branch have won agreement that staff will be notified no later than June of any year about their employment in the coming academic year.

There's no doubt that looking round the sector, these are good agreements, negotiated with the support of the UCU regional office throughout. But as Freedman says, active campaigning helped to keep the issues of its associates near the top of the branch's agenda: 'Our ALs were more active than ever during the 2013-4 pay campaign and I think that this focused the attention of the branch on extending the struggle on pay to the other issues that affect hourly-paid staff.'

Why did Goldsmiths' management feel able to go further than so many other university employers? For Freedman it was a combination of a management that recognised the contribution made by its Associates with the campaigning pressure.

It's also worth noting the solidarity between casualised and permanent members. At Goldsmiths, solidarity between different staff groups was expressed in a unified branch collective bargaining agenda. Casualised and permanent staff supported each other's struggles.

