

A report on hourly paid contracts at Sheffield Hallam University.



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**'Being an AL¹ isn't a
choice, it doesn't fit a
lifestyle, this is a myth,
we need to work and this is the best we are offered sometimes'**

1. 'AL' or 'Associate Lecturer' is the term Sheffield Hallam University uses to refer to teaching focused staff on fixed-term contracts.

Executive Summary

In 2013 the University and College Union (UCU) made a Freedom of Information (FoI) request that revealed Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) to be employing relatively high numbers of staff on 'casual' contracts.

Following on from this Sheffield Hallam UCU Branch decided to conduct a survey of staff on such contracts and obtained 46 responses. Our survey sample is predominantly engaged in teaching-focused activity. The sample articulated a clear sense of job-insecurity with 88% (n=38) revealing that would prefer to be on a permanent contract with guaranteed hours of work.

The sample also raised a variety of further issues and highlighted apparent variation in management practices across the University. Key concerns related to the amount of preparation, marking and administration that is represented by the 'comprehensive hourly rate'; participation within departments (and whether attendance at meetings was paid); problems with contracts being issued on time; and a lack of clarity regarding recruitment, retention and conversion processes.

This report presents qualitative and quantitative findings from the survey in some detail, and concludes with suggested next steps in the UCU branch's campaign against the use of casual contracts at SHU.

Introduction

The University and College Union has registered concern at the proliferation of ‘casualised contracts’ in higher education over recent years, and this has led to the development of national campaign aimed at combating this growth (‘Stamp Out Casual Contracts’). Previous research by UCU (2013) indicated that the growth of so-called ‘zero-hour’ contracts in the education sector generally have increased ten-fold since 2004. The main problem the union has with ‘casual’ or ‘atypical’ contracts (these include ‘zero-hour’, ‘variable-hour’ and ‘fixed-term contracts’) is the insecurity they create for employees, who are unable to engage in medium and longer term financial planning. The union’s preference is that if there is a clear expectation of work continuing into the future then casualised staff should be converted onto part-time ‘fractional’ contracts.

In data provided to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) reported that as of 2011/2012 they employed 181,385 academic staff, alongside 82,045 staff on ‘atypical’ contracts, defined by HESA as ‘those with working arrangements that are not permanent, involve complex employment relationships and/or involve work away from the supervision of the normal work provider’ (UCU, 2013). On the basis of these concerning trends, the UCU issued an FoI to every UK HEI asking questions in relation to the use of zero-hour contracts. As there is no agreed definition of ‘zero-hour contracts’ the union decided to ask for data on the use of contracts under which the employers has no obligation to offer work and guarantees no minimum hours of work. 145 of 162 HEIs (including Sheffield Hallam University) responded to the request. In total, 75 (52.8%) of those institutions responding stated that they did use zero hours contracts for teaching, research and/or academic related staff - 67 (47.2%) stated they did not.

The Situation at Sheffield Hallam

According to the FoI return made by Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) to the UCU, this institution employed 684 staff on a zero-hours contract (many 'Associate Lecturers' on teaching only duties) for year 2012-2013, and they worked alongside 1910 other academics (teaching and research, or teaching only). Whilst this placed SHU as the 12th highest ranking HEI in terms of the number of staff on zero-hour contracts (ZHCs), it is important to recognise that definitional problems may explain why over 47% of HEIs reported that they did not use this kind of contract. Indeed, the use of ZHCs is clearly endemic to the entire sector. In liaising with Human Resources at SHU, the local UCU branch has been able to ascertain more recent figures, current as of October 2014. This showed that there are 753 'Associate Lecturers' (teaching-focused fixed-term staff) currently registered with the university, but that only 461 of these were 'active' (they had made a claim for work subsequent to 1st September 2013). Obviously this figure will not include casualised researchers, or other casuals employed directly or indirectly by the university, but it is the figure we shall focus upon for the purposes of this report.

The proliferation of these types of contracts at SHU has something that the branch has been aware of for some time, and previous campaigning on this issue led to the creation of a negotiated 'conversion policy' in 2006. This policy allows for the conversion of Associate Lecturers to a full or fractional contract if they satisfy the following criteria:

- evidence of significant and consistent working over a three year period (minimum of 100 hours per year)
- sustainability of role/post projected forward
- adequate skills and ability (assessed at interview)
- individual aspiration to convert to a SHU Academic Contract
- willingness to be work planned according to the needs of the subject area of faculty as appropriate

While undoubtedly the creation of an agreed upon conversion policy with Human Resources at SHU has been a positive step forward for staff on these contracts, anecdotally the Branch has received numerous reports that either a) ALs were being maintained at below the 100 hour threshold, so debarring them from applying for conversion; or that b) they felt the grounds upon which their conversion application was rejected to be spurious. An example of the latter is the case of an AL in Development and Society whose conversion application was rejected (repeatedly, over a number of years) on the basis of their being a lack of 'business case', but who had been given a similar workload allocation in previous years.

The most frequently occurring criticism that the branch hears from members and non-members on AL contracts is that their hourly rate does not take full account of the actual workload commitment implied, as it relates to the design and preparation of learning materials, actual contact time with students, marking and feedback, and electronic communications with students, staff and administrators. The consolidated hourly rate is based on a formula of 1.5 hours of preparation and marking time in addition to direct teaching time, but often the real time to prepare the work is greater. Other common comments relate to a lack of access to facilities and not being included in meetings

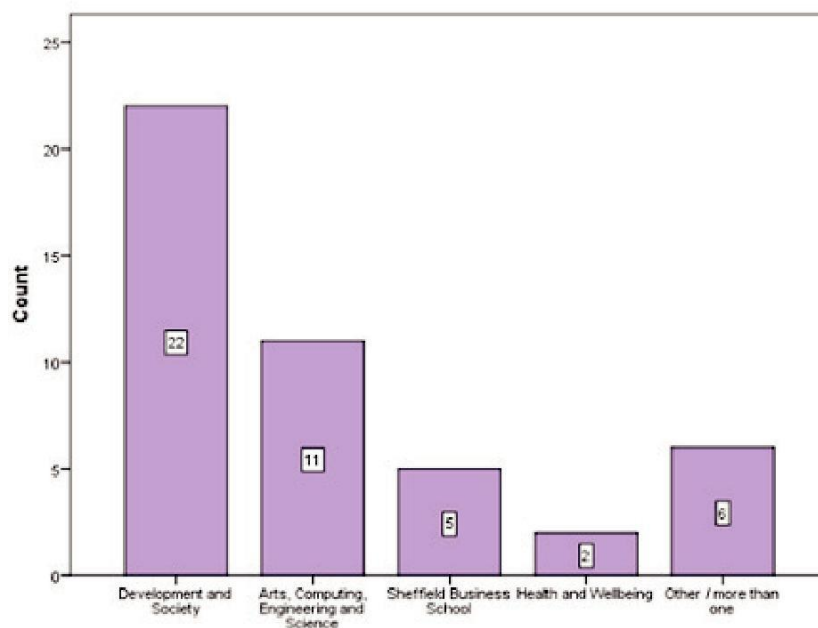
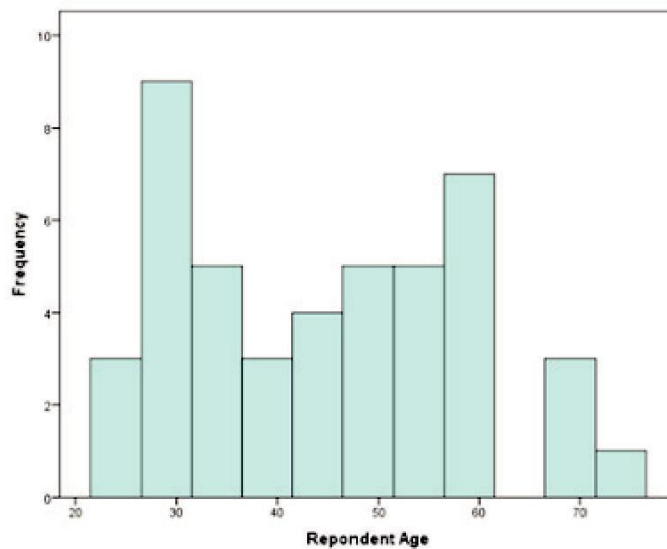
or other aspects of university life. Nonetheless, the Branch is also aware of contrary arguments, that zero-hour contracts (ZHCs) provide flexibility, and that this is desired by those who undertake such work, allowing them to balance their work life alongside family commitments or further study.

In light of these debates, and in the context of the campaigning being undertaken nationally by the UCU, it was decided that SHU Branch would attempt to survey all of those academic workers at SHU employed on ZHCs. The survey was designed by a Branch Officer in consultation with the UCU Regional Office and the rest of the Branch Committee and was launched on national Anti-Casualisation Day of Action on the 7th May 2014. 250 colour copies of the questionnaire were printed and distributed to Branch Officers and representatives who were instructed to seek out staff on ZHCs in their area. A digital copy of the survey was uploaded on the UCU Sheffield Hallam branch website and emails were sent out requesting members forward the link to the survey to non-members in their subject areas.

Due to an initially very poor response it was decided to continue to accept surveys through to October 2014 and this led to 46 submissions, or a response rate of 10 per cent. Clearly this is disappointing, but reflective of the fact that staff on ZHCs constitute a decentralised, dispersed and often isolated workforce who may not have access to staff facilities. Moreover, there is an increasing acknowledgement at both a national and local level that the UCU needs to be doing more to reach out to workers in these situations. We hope that the results of this survey will be an important first step in this wider undertaking.

The sample

The sample consisted of 46 individuals aged between the ages of 24 and 72 (with a mean average age of 44). The majority of the sample were female (67%, 31 out of 46) and stated their ethnicity as white (80% or 37/46). In terms of the academic faculties respondents were located in, almost half of the respondents were in Development and Society, with another quarter in Arts, Computing, Engineering and Sciences, and the remainder being drawn from Health and Wellbeing, Sheffield Business School, or other areas. It is worth noting that this may be a reflection of the areas where UCU is most active, rather than an indication of where SHU employs the most casualised staff. It could also indicate a subject variable, in that some subjects need staff with professional qualifications, e.g. in health professions, who are less likely to be available for HPL work. Of these casualised staff the average (mean) length of service is 5.7 years (the median is 4), indicating a propensity for staff on these kinds of contracts not to remain with university on a long-term basis (though there are some notable exceptions to this).



The Work That They Do

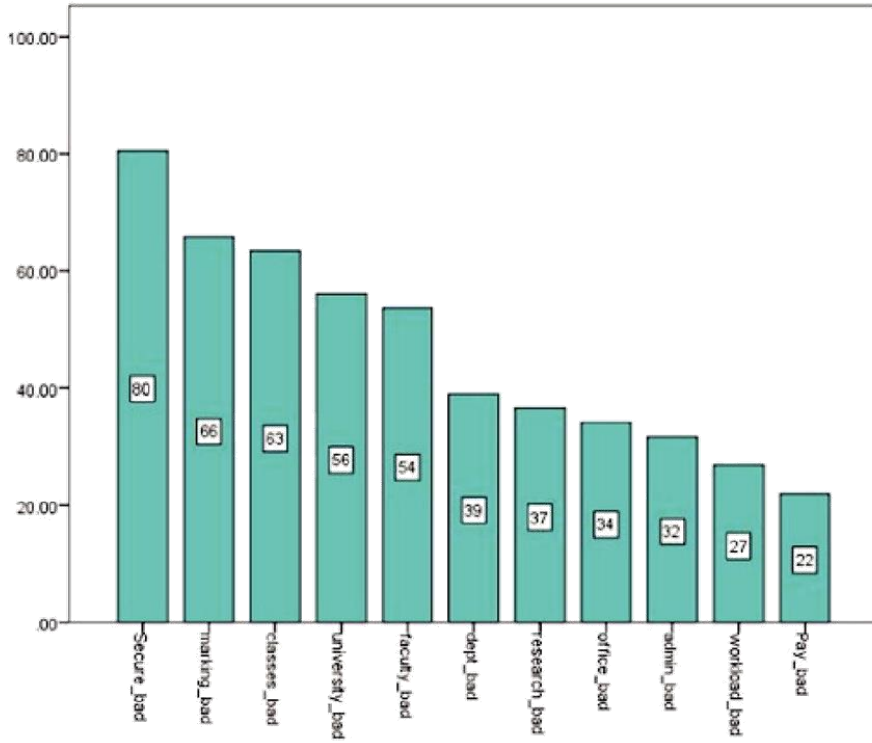
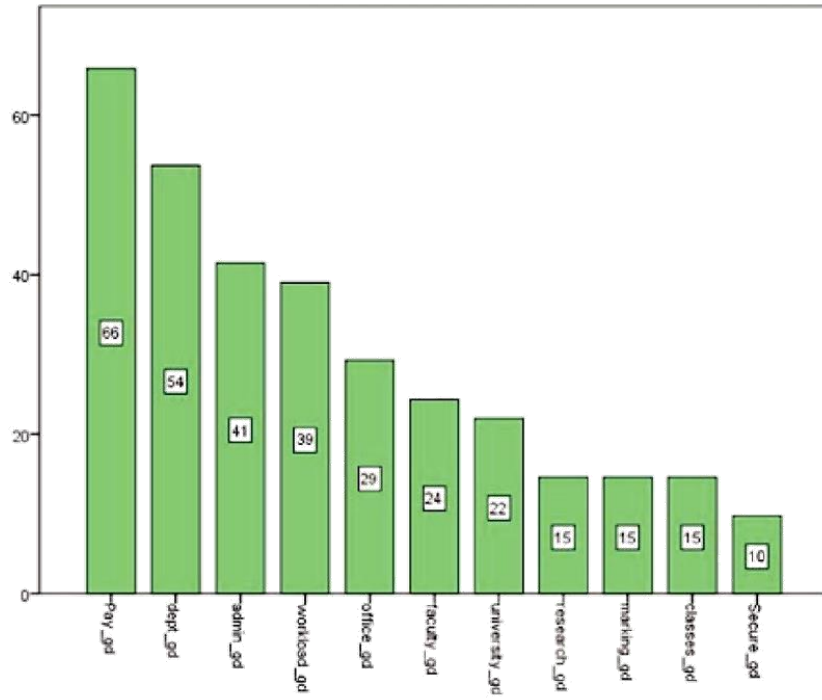
Most respondents (n=35, 80%) reported that they are engaged by SHU for a teaching focused role, with 9 (20%) reporting to be involved with either research or both research and teaching. Similarly, a majority of respondents (n=23, 54%) reported not to take lectures, 8 (19%) reported to take between 1 and 10 lecture 'engagements' and 12 (28%) reported to be involved with more than 10. Indeed it is evident that this sample of casualised staff are primarily engaged in the teaching of seminars, with 66% (n=27) reporting that they undertake this activity. 15 (37%) stated that they undertake between 1 and 100 seminar engagements and a further 12 (29%) reported over 100 engagements. The highest number of seminar engagements in a year reported was 380.

Most respondents also indicated that they only teach undergraduate level (n=28, 72%). 26% (n=10) report to teach at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels and one case reports to just teach at postgraduate level. Half of respondents (n=20, 50%) reported no marking 'engagements', 11 (28%) reported to take between 1 and 40 marking 'engagements' and 9 (23%) reported to be involved with more than 40, with one respondent reported 100 marking engagements. A majority of the sample reported that they do not take tutorials (n=26, 62%), but 26% (n=11) reported between 1-100 tutorial engagements and 15% (n=5) reported more than 100, with one respondent reporting 210 engagements. Finally, it is also clear that hourly staff at SHU are not generally engaged for the purposes of research. Most respondents (n=39, 89%) reported no research 'engagements', with only 5 individuals (11%) reporting any research engagement.

How They Rate Their Experience

The two graphs in this section illustrate how the sample feels about their employment situation at SHU. In one section of our survey we asked people to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how they felt about 12 aspects of their employment, such as the hourly rate of pay, administrative support, office facilities, workload and their involvement with the different tiers of the university (department, faculty and university-wide). The first graph shows the overall percentages of those who responded either 'very good' or 'good' to these questions and the second graph presents the 'very bad' or 'bad' responses (the numbers refer to the combined percentages of 'good' and 'bad' responses).

In the first instance what is striking is that there are only two dimensions on which our sample noted a majority of positive responses, and these were 'pay' and 'involvement with the department'. While the second of these factors may be indicative of a collegial environment at SHU, it is clear from the qualitative comments of respondents that the rate of pay does not reflect a wide range of 'unseen activities' that are part and parcel of an Associate Lecturer's duties. Turning to the more negative responses, 80% rated their job-security as 'bad or very bad', around two thirds rated time for marking and class preparation as 'bad or very bad', and a majority have negative responses to their involvement with their faculty or the university more broadly.



Key Themes

The following sections combine both quantitative and qualitative data from the Hourly Paid Contracts Survey, to explore a number of key themes in relation to the experience of casualised staff.

Other employment

A majority of respondents (n=24, 52%) undertake other forms of employment in addition to their casual contracts at SHU. While a majority of these reported other teaching in both further and higher education, it is clear that a small number were employed in industries related to their particular academic skills and expertise. One individual (R9) reported that they work in a shop (also on a casual contract) for £6.39 per hour.

Study

By contrast, only a minority (n=18, 39%) are undertaking 'study concomitant to employment'. 7 respondents (15%) were undertaking some form of doctoral study and this may indicate that, at least for some, being a casualised academic is a transition stage onto a hoped-for academic career. Nonetheless, a number of respondents reported that they had PhDs, but were undertaking casual work because of the lack of availability of permanent full-time academic posts. At least two respondents to the survey were on funded PhD 'Demonstratorships' that required that they teach as part of the conditions of their research funding with SHU (see National Union of Students, 2013 for a detailed analysis of the issues faced by these kind of hybrid student/workers).

Motivations

Some of the points are illustrated in the responses to the question 'why do you undertake hourly paid work at Sheffield Hallam University?' The great majority stated that they found the teaching (and/or research) rewarding and are passionately committed to their discipline. Beyond this, while for some casual work was seen as a stepping stone into a full-time academic post ('gaining experience'), others referred to financial necessity and a lack of alternative options. A minority of individuals spoke of 'flexibility' in terms of working around other commitments:

I enjoy doing it and feel I can make a useful contribution based on my personal work experience. (R3)

I love teaching, and have an interest in supporting students to develop personally, academically and professionally. I wanted to gain experience in teaching at HE level in order to begin my own career in this area. There is no other way of breaking into teaching in HE unless you are rich or lucky enough to have found funding for a PhD. For those of us that have to earn money, this is a very long, unsupported process. (R13)

To gain experience in support of application for full contract. (R15)

I am seeking my first permanent post and need to develop experience (and pay bills) in the meantime. (R22)

Because it gives me flexibility; I am a main carer for disabled parent. (R26)

For the money! (R28)

I was offered it and enjoy doing it. I find it complements my other work. Happy. (R39)

Contracts

43% (n=19) have a single contract with SHU, 32% (n=14) have 2 and the rest (n=11, 25%) have more than 2. One case respondent reported having 8 separate contracts. Clearly the issuing of contracts for work seems to be problematic, 23 respondents (50% of the sample) reported that they usually only receive a contract after they start working at SHU, while one individual reported having never received a contract. At least one response to the survey was from a student with a PhD 'Demonstratorship' (a bursary in return for teaching), referred to confusion in relation to their terms and conditions:

Regarding the PhD funding, I don't recall this being mentioned as unpaid work at interview or mentioned on the form I signed. I have asked for a copy of the document I signed, to check, and am waiting for this from the departmental administrator. (R16)

Another issue is that 40% (n=20) of the sample who responded to the question reported not to have received a P46 at end of the tax year.

Rates of Pay

The question on rate of pay was unevenly responded to, with 18 missing responses, and this suggests some confusion over payment rates (i.e. some respondents wrote comments such as 'Associate Lecturer Rate', 'mostly grade 3', or 'grade 3 - £40 per hour' with the grades being referred to by the respondents not corresponding to the rates published by SHU on the staff intranet - perhaps referring to obsolete institutional terminology). Nevertheless, of the 28 who did respond, there was a cluster of 11 responses (39%) at £40 per hour, 3 (11%) below this rate (minimum of £18) and 14 (50%) at a higher rate (to a maximum of £46.25).

Although we reported above that 66% of the sample rated their pay as 'good' or 'very good', a number of comments made by respondents in relation to the question 'what is your rate of pay' clearly suggests confusion as to what the 'comprehensive' hourly rate of pay they receive is meant to include:

£40.71, at 1-3 hours per student per module. I noted above that this is 'fairly good'

- but only if it actually represented an hour, or even two hours[.] [H]owever, the 1-3 hours per student actually includes a one-hour tutorial, reading and commenting on drafts, and marking, plus regular communication, monitoring activities and writing comments on [Shuspace] for some modules, admin, etc. In other words, actual rate of pay is closer to minimum wage. (R12)

Roughly £40 p/hour for face-to-face teaching (which includes prep. time). I'm unsure for marking (for some modules, I get paid for marking, for others I don't - I'm not sure why). (R23)

I get £40 per contracted hour but there is an assumption that for every hour I work, there will be another hour and a half of 'background work' (prep, marking, etc.)[,] so it is actually £40 for every 2 and a half hours. Also prep and marking tends in fact to take longer than this... (R44)

Marking and Preparation

The confusion over the hourly rate of pay was also reflected in the responses to the question 'how much time are you given for marking and preparation?':

None specifically, but as I understand a level of time is built into the rate paid. However, as I am creating new material it takes me longer to prepare. (R3)

No idea - these are built into the hourly rate, which is opaque to say the least. Paid only for contact time (12 hours per seminar group), no additional allowance for marking has been offered since 2012. (R5)

I am not totally sure how it is calculated, this was very unclear. I think I was given about 15 hours for marking and 7 for prep...but, as I say, it was very unclear. It was never anywhere near enough for the marking and preparation I did do. (R13)

For preparation, I think the assumption is that this is rolled into the £40 p/hour rate of pay so I'm not given any time for this. Marking varies - on some modules I teach, I've been told that this is also included in the £40 p/hour rate, whereas I've been paid on an hourly basis for other modules. I don't know how the number of hours was calculated (although the total seemed fair). (R23)

25% extra on top of allocated hours. (R28)

10% of work includes designated pay for this. Must be requested. (R32)

Some of the marking is unpaid. I do find this unsatisfactory. (R39)

One and half hours for every hour of face-to-face teaching. (R44)

Worryingly, there is also a suggestion of wide variation in practice, with some casualised staff indicating that they receive extra hours for marking, but that for others it is integrated into their hourly rate.

Administrative Duties

Administrative duties are another part of a casualised employee's work that remains hidden. 60% (n=24) reported that they undertake administrative duties. Examining the comments made in the survey, it is clear that much of this is routine in nature, including dealing with marking and assessments, moderation and the inputting marks into gradecentre². Nonetheless, 8 respondents (17%) reported that they undertake module leadership, and this suggests that ALs are being used as part of the core delivery of teaching:

I'm a module leader, so - alongside the usual administrative duties associate with teaching - I sit on the exam board; attend student academic conduct panels; liaise with the exams office and faculty admin team to set assessments; answer student queries about the module; liaise with the learning technologists to troubleshoot the delivery of online teaching resources and assessments; and I co-ordinate the module teaching team (R23).

A number of respondents also drew attention to the demand to maintain email communication with large numbers of students and others:

Entering data on systems, hundreds of emails, communications with faculties, research for teaching, prep for sessions (R26).

Meetings

Part of the routine administrative duties of casualised academic staff at SHU relate to attending meetings, of which there are a wide variety, from exam boards to subject group and departmental meetings, student conduct panels, meetings with the student employability service, as well as faculty wide information meetings. On a positive note 64% (n=28) of our respondents report to be invited to all relevant meetings. Many were clearly happy with their level of involvement in the department, but some acknowledged that a barrier to greater involvement was the fact they had other commitments elsewhere. There were also a few who felt actively excluded from their departments. The following comments are indicative of the spread of opinion (answering the questions 'are you invited to relevant meetings?'):

Yes, I can have meetings if necessary, and receive info about general meetings for the faculty. (R1)

Yes, sometimes, but I often can't make them because I have other commitments.

(R7) I attend all project meetings. (R27)

Sometimes - I'm not always available and not always invited. (R14)

2. 'Gradecentre' is an electronic record of students grades, hosted on the Virtual Learning Environment plat-form Blackboard.

No. I am interested to attend and they cover relevant information to me, but I am not invited and I assume I would not be paid for my time. (R2)

No, not sure if I am just not on the mailing list or if AL's don't attend. (R36)

14 individuals did not give an answer to the question of whether they were paid for meetings and presumably the majority of those will be the people who are not invited to meetings in the first place. Nonetheless, of those that did respond 56% (n=18) report to not be paid for attending meetings. There are important implications to this. On the one hand if casualised staff attend meetings, many of which will be relevant to ensuring the delivery of a quality service at SHU, then they are effectively adding to the duties represented by the 'comprehensive hourly rate' (i.e. reducing their hourly rate of pay). On the other hand if they do not attend meetings they often end up feeling isolated from and marginal to the full-time workforce. Given that many casualised staff are involved in the core delivery of seminars on large modules, the potential for demoralisation to impact upon delivery is clear. Previous research has highlighted that many casuals are dissatisfied with the support and development provision they have available to them (Leigh, 2014). Although UCU Sheffield Hallam Branch has a collective agreement with the university on the payment of casuals to attend meetings and training events, it is evident from this survey that there is wide variation in practice. This being the case, it would be helpful for SHU to clearly state the kinds of meetings casualised staff should be attending and the hourly rate they can be expected to be paid for attendance.

The fact that casualised staff are not fully included in the department is also reflected in the fact that 60% (n=27) report to have not received an induction when they started at SHU. For those that did report having some form of induction, this varied markedly from a '*fairly informal talk with my line manager*' (R21) to a '*tour of buildings and facilities [and an] explanation of course and requirements*' (R6) to much more substantial training courses delivered over a number of days. Similarly 87% (n=39) of the sample report to have not have an annual appraisal with their line manager. For those that did have an appraisal this seemed to vary significantly in the degree of formality. There was also concern that a manager conducting an appraisal had not always had direct dealings with the casualised member of staff, and therefore not really in a position to assess their performance:

I had one in the three years I was an AL. Meeting with the Head of Department – formal discussion about objectives. During this meeting, the appraiser was unaware of all the work I had done and expressed surprise at my involvement/contribution. (R13)

Casualised Employment Status

One of the clearest findings from the survey was that casualised staff would overwhelmingly prefer to be on a permanent contract with guaranteed hours of work, indeed 88% (n=38) stated this to be the case. In explaining their answer to this question respondents were expressive of the insecurity that life on a casual contract represented, which acts as a barrier to longer term financial planning, but also leads to very high

levels of stress. While these were clearly the dominant themes, some members did talk of wanting to feel more included within their departments, or to have access to better facilities:

No job security is incredibly stressful. I would prefer being paid less but having a permanent contract to a zero hours contract. (R1)

I would like to feel more secure in my position - although I have been at SHU for 4 years, I never know if I have any work at all or not after the end of each term, usually with only one or two weeks' notice before the next term begins, and am 'unemployed' (unpaid) for 5 months of the year. [...] Financial security for myself and my family would make a huge difference to my quality of life and stress levels also. (R2)

After 15 years of working here, why wouldn't I want better conditions and higher status? (R5)

As an AL I feel like a 'second class citizen' and not worthy of being included in many faculty or university events or meetings [...] There is an air of competition between the ALs to ensure employment in the next contract, and while this can be healthy at times, the constant pressure can detract from what would be an atmosphere more conducive to cooperation and creativity with people working as a team to develop the teaching in the department. (R6)

Of course! Life on £400 per month is not easy stuff. It was a miserable, hard, at times unbearable slog. [...] A number of times I did not receive my claimed pay on time (and had to wait another month, sometimes more!) because the claiming process is so overcomplicated and ridiculous that if one detail is wrong, or your line manager doesn't sign the form in enough time, you don't get paid. [...] (R13)

I would like more stability from one semester to the next, and to have such activities as marking, tutorials etc., incorporated into a formal work-plan. (R21)

It would mean feeling more secure in my job and feeling like a proper, valued member of staff (rather than feeling like I'm waiting for my career to start). [...] I think 'valuing' part-time staff means appointing them as salaried Teaching Fellows working on either a full-time or fractional contract. (R23)

Having to go through the summer without getting any money. Insecurity, e.g. will there be any work next semester? Getting modules no-one else wants (e.g. the one with high marking loads). (R24)

For security of employment and better conditions of employment, including sickness benefit and pension rights. (R30)

I want to know the work is secure from year to year. I want to be more involved and have the same rights as other employees - e.g. sick pay. (R31)

No guarantee of desired number of hours being available (though normally not a problem) and so insecurity. Reliant on claiming Jobseeker's Allowance during

periods when work is unavailable (i.e. during the university vacations - Christmas, Easter, Summer). (R33)

I would be paid for the hours I work (not just seminar time). (R35)

I feel like I am capable of being full time - and the hours are there because I am doing them. Although I appreciate the experience is necessary, however I don't feel like I would be willing to continue for more than 2 years on a zero hour contract. (R36)

I would like to work most weeks of the year, with a predictable number of hours per week (preferably about half-time). I want more income! (R37)

Though I don't want full time work, a guaranteed number of hours would help me afford the fees and budget accordingly. I am asked by members of the [masters] cohort for advice / tutorials and I refuse or tell them to ask the course leader to 'hire' me. [...] (R38)

Yes, of course I would like a permanent contract. Being an AL isn't a choice, it doesn't fit a lifestyle, this is a myth, we need to work and this is the best we are offered sometimes. [...] (R41)

This would give me more employment certainty. Currently I don't know if I will be required for the next academic year until the summer as it depends on student numbers and availability of full time staff. (R46)

While overwhelmingly respondents would prefer a permanent contract, a small number (5) said they would not, and gave the following reasons:

I enjoy the flexibility that is offered by the contract that I have and I do not wish for the overhead that is associated with a permanent contract. (R3)

No, the flexibility suits me. (R43)

Finally, a further facet of the insecurity of casualised contracts is that a substantial number of workers (16, or 43%) did not understand what a 'casual contract' meant in terms of their employment rights.

Conversion

Given such feeling amongst our sample of casualised staff, it may seem surprising that a greater number did not report having applied for 'conversion' to a full time or part-time fractional contract, with 86% (n=32) stating this to be the case (there were also 9 missing responses to this question). Although it is clear that many casualised staff have not been with SHU for the 3 years necessary to qualify for conversion, it may also be the case that casualised staff are either unaware of the policy or that they are not meeting the requirements for conversion in terms of the requisite number of contact hours (100 per annum):

I'm never given enough hours to qualify for conversion. (R20)

I don't think I've ever worked enough hours over the required uninterrupted period to be able to apply. (R22)

For those who had applied for conversion (5, or 13% of those who responded), they did not have a positive impression of the process:

6 times - each time I am given different reasons for being turned down. The main reason was 'business case', now I m not appropriately 'qualified' or have enough experience (R14)

The fact that casualised staff have had their application for conversion turned down, but then been given similar work in subsequent years, suggests that the explanation of a 'lack of business case' may be something of vague 'catch-all' lacking in a transparent definition.

Unequal Treatment

39% (n=16) reported to have experienced some form of unequal treatment at least once during their employment with SHU and 32% (n=11) reported having experienced it on more than one occasion. 61% reported that they have not experienced unequal treatment.

As an AL being treated as a second class member of staff is intrinsic to the experience. Excluded from promotion opportunities; subject to arbitrary attacks on our conditions and pay (in my department the withdrawal of additional hours for assessment, amounting to a 20% wage cut, is the latest assault which includes withdrawal of holiday pay several years ago). (R5)

I have never received a formal induction or training, for example, in how to use the online learning facility. Any training I have received I have sought out for myself. I feel I have been excluded at times from certain information [...] I find that emails are sent and deadlines are moved at short notice and have usually passed by the time I become aware of them (i.e. notifications sent the same day or with less than 24 hours' notice). This has caused me extreme stress at times, as I like to do my job well and not let colleagues or students down. (R8)

[...] being on a zero-hours-contract means you cannot make any mistakes or annoy people because your behaviour and perceived performance has an effect on next year's contract, and relationship with the person signing your pay off every month. This level of pressure was unbelievable. I felt I had to do everything perfectly, first

time and fast. (R13)

Although many members of staff are supportive and encouraging and good to work with, it is clear that many others do not take you seriously. (R14)

Can't quantify it - but the allocation of work is not done fairly - there is no system but someone gets offered until someone is found to cover. It's not fair. An email can be sent out to a number of people offering a class and it goes on the first to reply saying yes. (R20)

As an AL you have very little say in anything. (R29)

I do not get told about what support is available to help me do my job. (R31)

Severe delays in pay for 2 years, can be up to 6 months after work. (R32)

This is usually in terms of communication - emails ignored by admin, not informed of events, issues, accommodation inadequate. (R35)

It is almost impossible to check pay slips as there is no record of the dates that the pay relates to, nor the hourly rate for different roles. Claiming sick pay is very complicated because if I have a day off sick, I do not get paid for the hours I was contracted to work on that day, but for the average hours worked over the previous 8 weeks. [...] But it takes no account of exam weeks, and there is no reference to sick pay on pay slips so I don't know what I have received. [...] (R37)

It is worth noting that there were a couple of positive comments in this section:

The staff members I am working with are wonderful, and we work collaboratively really well. (R27)

I have never felt that I have been unfairly treated or differently to other members of staff. (R36)

Bullying

One positive finding was that very few instances of bullying were reported by the sample, with 83% (n=35) reported to have never experienced bullying or harassment whilst working for SHU. Only five respondents reported one instance of bullying, and a further two reported more than one instance. Nonetheless, any incidents of bullying remain of concern to UCU Sheffield Hallam Branch. The following are indicative of the behaviours that were reported:

Prior to my first conversion meeting, my then line manager informed me of an 'unofficial complaint' made by 'unnamed students' relating to alleged improper conduct. This was raised again, a year later, during my second conversion meeting with the department head. (R5)

I tried to question an action by a module leader who I was working with and I was dismissed by email to all tutors and accused of not running my classes properly. (R14)

I had the head of department shouting at me once for no reason. I didn't feel I could complain to anyone. [...] (R41)

Any further comments

At the end of the survey, respondents asked if they had any other comments that they wanted to make. 27 respondents (58%) chose to do so. One or two of these comments were broadly positive:

Overall I am happy with my contractual arrangements as it gives me flexibility and I do not want a permanent contract at this time. However, I do think that a more structured approach could be taken towards the induction and involvement of associate lecturers. (R3)

Our sample used this opportunity to reiterate their complaints regarding casualised work as SHU, primarily in terms of job insecurity, but also in relation to workload, working conditions and stress. A number of respondents reported feeling demoralised and exploited:

I have worked steadfastly at this university for 15 years and, in that time, have helped hundreds of students through their undergraduate degrees. I have done this for a fraction of the salary received by my full time colleagues. In my view, the conversion process is a fraud and had the effect of making conversion more difficult rather than less. In the years since the conversion process has been in place, my department have converted only a single AL. Meanwhile, in this period, the department has increased its reliance on AL staff. (R5)

I am pleased you are undertaking this survey - hourly paid contracts are clearly morally and ethically wrong. [...] I don't blame my line managers, the problem is much higher up and it's probably the same for permanent staff (hours never cover what you actually do). Still, having a permanent contract might lessen the feeling and fact of exploitation. It would also mean I could pay something into a pension. [...] I have to keep reminding myself that when I am spending hours creating a decent lecture or seminar that a) I am being paid about £40 (before tax) for the lecture and b) I earn about £2,500-£3,000. (R9)

I was encouraged to be an AL as a step in the process of becoming full lecturer. It seems that the conversion process simply does not work (for me anyway) and each time I show CPD and commitment I am knocked back and given more hoops to jump through. Why do I need more qualifications than a large number of my colleagues? Why is my experience inadequate? Is there favouritism and discrimination operating here? (R14)

I am concerned that other PhD researchers are unwilling to join a union or fearful

of challenging unpaid work. A number have mentioned that this could count against them when applying for paid work as AL or more permanent employment. Some ALs have mentioned that certain people within the faculty are 'anti-union' and that it will count against me if I raise the issue of not being paid for hours worked. [...] (R16)

I do think [...] that zero hours work needs to be properly paid. At the current rate, an associate lecturer, who has invariably undergone years of specialist training and is highly qualified, receives something close to the minimum wage once time for marking, preparation and student emails/tutorials are accounted for. This is unacceptable. (R22)

[I]t seems to me that far from zero-hours contracts being used as a way of 'plugging the gaps' in teaching, they are actually an integral part of the university's strategy for teaching provision. Insofar as it depresses pay and imposes 'flexibility' on some segments of the workforce, this seems entirely suited to the exigencies of Sheffield Hallam's financial model. However, as it is utterly detrimental to the provision of an 'excellent student experience', because it means students have no continuity in the lecturers that teach them and therefore unable to develop meaningful pedagogical relationships with their teachers. [...] staff have little to no incentive to come to grips with the overall structure of the course curriculum on which they teach [and] they have no incentive to become acquainted with the pastoral and academic support available to students [...] This, coupled with the current state of the Higher Education labour market, makes for a hugely demoralising experience for early career academics [...] (R23)

I feel very lucky and privileged to have been awarded a funded PhD/demonstratorship at SHU [...] Though I have witnessed the opposite for other PhD students in different subject areas, who have been burdened with many hours teaching/marking. Firstly, this can mean they end up doing the same work as their seniors, but for probably less than minimum wage, because of the amount of extra hours they have had to put in to prep and marking, and on top of their PhD research hours. Secondly, it is appalling that students who are paying £9000 per year are being taught by people who have no experience in teaching (or teaching in HE) and often, little or no experience in the subject they are teaching or demonstrating. (R25)

A slight improvement from 0-hours work would lead to more dedication to teaching, lecturing and marking. It's simple, but overlooked. (R32)

When I began doing AL work on a zero hour contract I didn't really think much about it, however as the year progresses and I spend X amount of time preparing and putting effort into my sessions, it does begin to feel like you are dispensable as you contribute towards a student's grade on a major educational qualification and it leaves you behind. (R36)

I love my job as Lecturer and I have been very committed in my field of expertise and to higher education for the past 20 years. [...] This AL contract of 0 hours is really scandalous and as far as I'm concerned doesn't fit a "lifestyle" as it claims to, it is a cheap form of labour recruitment, it puts the workers in a vulnerable position with poor future prospects, permanent insecurity and it is undermining. I have been

living on border line poverty and haven't always been able to make ends meet, I am a single parent and so the sole earner. [...] My experience of being an AL after being in FT employment with another university [...] is that it is an incredibly stressful position for one to be in, no job security, poor prospects, if any. Being told at the very last minute if you will get work, not feeling part of a team. In fact in my 3rd year of employment at SHU I was told very late in the summer that I was being offered 'so many hours' and to come and sign my contract on the Friday before the start of teaching on the following Monday. I was rang that Friday morning to say not to come as I wasn't offered work anymore due to fall in student numbers and was advised to find some work elsewhere, of course it was far too late to find work at another university at such a late stage. (R41)

Payment of invoices can take up to 4 months. The lack of printed payslips makes this very hard to monitor, particularly as my email access is cancelled at the end of every academic year and takes some time to re-establish. (R46)

One of the themes highlighted here, that recruitment and workload allocation processes relating to casuals are often opaque, seem to be a particular source of insecurity for workers. This supports the findings of previous research in this area (Bryson, 2013). While the vast majority of our respondents spoke of a commitment to the students, to the discipline or professional body, the comments here clearly identify a wide range of features of their employment situation that are likely to lead to demotivation.

Conclusions and Next Steps

This survey has revealed a variety of concerns regarding the experience of workers on casualised contracts at SHU. As has been highlighted, key issues relate to job insecurity, workload (particularly the 'hidden' workload of preparation, assessment, meetings and routine administration) and discrimination as compared to permanent members of staff (not being included in the structures and processes of the university, lack of status, and being dependent upon the good will of a single line-manager for work). These central issues were compounded by a seemingly 'unplanned' approach to the recruitment and retention of casualised staff, with contracts being issued after work has got underway, or the promise of work has been cancelled at very short notice.

What individuals in our sample also noted, was the potential for this insecurity to negatively impact upon their own mental health (in terms of stress), but also in relation to their commitment to the institution, and the job that they have been hired to do. This suggests that such work is not of the kind that employees would consider undertaking on a long terms basis (which is also confirmed by the average service length of respondents in our sample) and this has clear implications in terms of the consistency of delivery. Moreover, it is arguable that the conversion process to move casualised workers on to full time contracts is 'not working', both in the sense that those members of the sample who had been through conversion generally had a negative perception of the process, but also in that many did not meet the eligibility criteria in the first place, either by chance or design.

There are weaknesses to this survey, as with any research methodology, and it is important that these are clearly articulated. On the one hand this was a non-random (or 'opportunity') sample, and this means that it is impossible to statistically generalise our findings to the wider population of casualised staff; and on the other, it was a relatively small sample (10%) of the total pool of the casualised staff at SHU. Nonetheless, the evidence accumulated in this report has highlighted some clear themes in relation to the casual experience, and these resonate with the anecdotal information often given by members and non-members alike. There are a number of arguments that are perpetuated to justify the existence of large casual workforce (see Hopkins and Fairfoul, 2014), but it seems evident from our sample that workers are doing more than just 'plugging gaps' and that many are involved in regular core teaching activity (mostly, but not exclusively, seminars). It is therefore clearly incumbent upon the branch to take up these issues and to campaign for a policy whereby greater numbers of casualised staff are converted to permanent fractional or full-time contracts.

Equally, the proliferation of casualised contracts is not an issue confined to Sheffield Hallam University, nor the education sector more widely, but are now used in a wide range of industries to employ somewhere in the region of 1.5 million people in the UK (TUC, 2014). While this might seem to suggest that such contracts are an increasingly acceptable feature of the economy, it also suggests that both nationally and locally, the UCU can build alliances with other groups of workers, in order to highlight the issues faced by casualised staff. More than this, certain politicians have begun to make public

statements against the use of casual contracts (see Blomfield, 2014), and there is the potential to persuade many more to join a campaign against the use of such contracts.

On a much more local level, the branch clearly has a lot of to do in terms of organising casualised workers at SHU. It is a fact that such workers are much less likely to be a member of the union, and this is something which must be urgently addressed. Casual workers are dispersed across many corners of the university, and the branch will have to develop a communication strategy that takes account of the difficulty is contacting casualised workers and the problems such workers may encounter in being able to attend meetings. Given the factors, this Branch has the following proposals for campaigning on the behalf of staff on casualised contracts:

- request that the reasons for the refusal of conversion be made as explicit as the criteria for eligibility (including an agreed definition of terms such as ‘business case’)
- request the clear guidance is issued on the kinds of meetings casualised staff are required to attend, along with hourly rates of pay attached to such meetings
- campaign for a ‘conversion policy’ that sees greater numbers of casuals being converted to full-time or part-time fractional permanent contracts
- hold open meetings for casualised staff across the university to feedback the results of this survey
- consult with any casualised staff who wish to get involved in the local ‘Stamp Out Casual Contracts’ campaign
- explore the opportunity of doing research with students to ascertain their attitudes towards the use casualised staff in the delivery of their teaching
- contact local political representatives to ascertain their position on casualised contracts
- representatives to Sheffield Trades Union Council will work with other trade Unions in the city of Sheffield for joint campaigning against casualised contracts
- continue to collect testimonies of causal workers experiences at SHU, and will undertake further research on two categories of casualised workers we know to exist (but on whom this survey provides too little or no data), PhD Demonstrators, Disability Student Support Workers.

Finally, we would love other UCU members at Sheffield Hallam University to be involved in this campaign. You can find out more about the work of the branch at <http://ucuhallam.wordpress.com/> (you can also email us at UCU@shu.ac.uk or speak to a local rep in your area).

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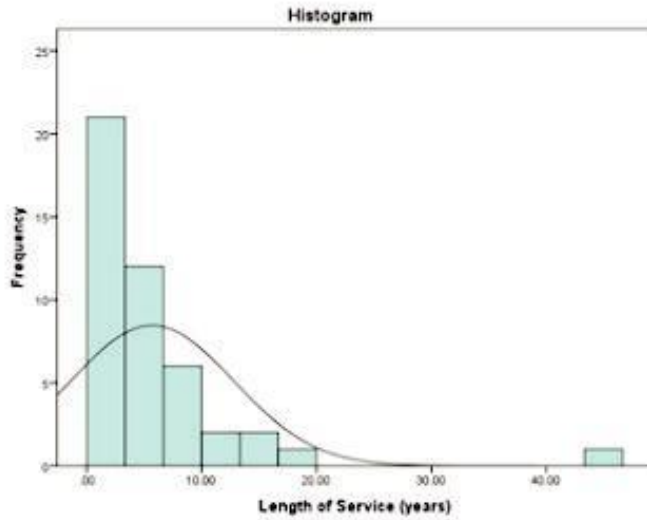
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Appendix

Length of service

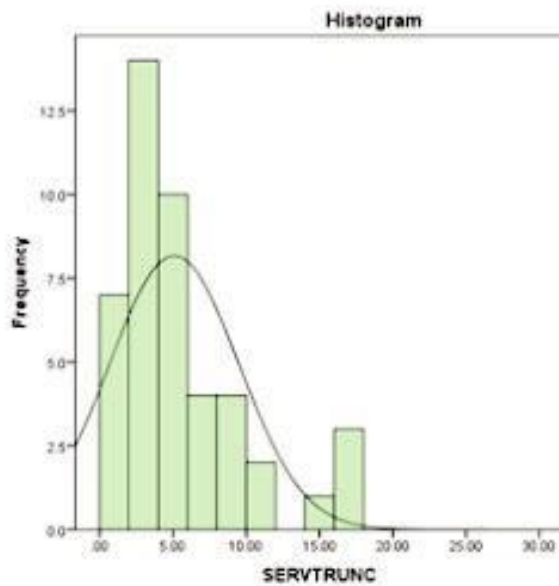
Mean (sd) = 5.7 (7.1); Median=4.0. High outlier value (44 years, case id 18)

Including case 18 with '44 years of service'



n=46
Mean (sd) = 5.7 (7.08)
Median = 4.0

Truncated - case 18 capped at 17 years



n=45
Mean (sd) = 5.1 (4.39)
Median = 4.0

HPCS - Responses to Rating Items												
	PayoffRate	SecurityJobFuture	FacilitiesOffice	SupportAdmin	TimePreparation	TimeMarking	ResearchDoing	InvolvementDepartmental	InvolvementFaculty	InvolvementUniversity	AllocationWorkload	VolumeWorkload
V Good	11	0	3	4	2	0	3	6	3	2	3	2
Good	19	4	10	14	5	6	3	19	8	8	16	19
No Opinion	5	4	15	12	9	8	20	3	9	10	14	14
Bad	9	16	11	6	15	9	4	15	14	14	8	8
V Bad	2	22	7	9	13	19	12	3	11	11	5	3
n=	46	46	46	45	44	42	42	46	45	45	46	46
missing	0	0	0	1	2	4	4	0	1	1	0	0
Mean	2.4	4.2	3.2	3.0	3.7	4.0	3.5	2.8	3.5	3.5	2.9	2.8
sd	1.18	0.94	1.15	1.28	1.15	1.12	1.19	1.23	1.24	1.18	1.11	1.00
Median	2	4	3	3	4	4	3	2	4	4	3	3
V Good / good	65%	9%	28%	40%	16%	14%	14%	54%	24%	22%	41%	46%
No Opinion	11%	9%	33%	27%	20%	19%	48%	7%	20%	22%	30%	30%
Bad / V Bad	24%	83%	39%	33%	64%	67%	38%	39%	56%	56%	28%	24%