

Winning the arguments

Winning staff support for a campaign against job cuts should be relatively easy. However, it is important that we resist attempts by the employer to pit members' interests against each other – for example by claiming that ending fixed-term contracts or not offering work to hourly paid staff will protect permanent staff.

As well as the political and moral argument for members to defend all jobs, there is a very obvious link between job cuts and the workloads of those left behind.

Even before the Covid-19 crisis our members were reporting that their workloads were excessive and having a detrimental impact on their health. Job cuts will increase workloads even more.

Wherever and whenever possible this link needs to be made and members whose jobs are not at risk should be encouraged to be very clear that they do not have the capacity to pick up additional work as a result of job cuts.

At departmental / subject level it will be helpful for more securely employed staff to be vocal about what will not get done if any proposed job cuts go ahead.

Winning the employer over is usually not as easy. There are lots of moral arguments against job cuts but those rarely hold any sway with the employer. Instead we need to make employers understand that pushing ahead with job cuts (including those of staff on casualised contracts) will affect the student experience, be detrimental to staff health, will risk bad publicity, will risk staff going into dispute and even industrial action.

At a time when employers are desperate to retain their home students and lure international students back, none of the above is good for business.

But as well as highlighting the negative impact of staff cuts it is important for branches to be highlighting the positive ways in which a full staffing complement can help to re-build the institution, making it an attractive place that students will want to study with.

It is also important to highlight the ways in which staff will be needed to provide additional student support to help returning and new students 'catch up' with the lost months of learning.

How current staff, including those on casualised contracts, can help to rebuild the institution and improve the student experience

- New and returning students will need extra support to help them with missed teaching as a result of Covid-19. Those with caring responsibilities and less access to equipment and (safe) spaces to learn at home are most likely to be in need of this additional support.
- Need more staff as teaching cohorts are decreased in size to meet social distancing requirements.
- Need for more staff to prepare materials to be delivered on line.
- Need for more staff to ensure the technology is appropriate.
- Need for staff to help market and deliver to international students.
- Need more staff to help deliver teaching on line (online support, break-out sessions etc).
- Need more staff to help 'green' the curriculum.
- Need more staff to address decolonising the curriculum.
- Need more staff to ensure compliance with the new website accessibility regulations.

The arguments against staff cuts

- Problems are short term and cuts will cause long term damage – inability to quickly recruit once student numbers recover.
- Workloads of remaining staff will be unmanageable leading to increased levels of stress, increased sickness levels, retention problems and a poorer student experience.
- Risk of being in dispute with staff unions at a time when all parties need to be working together to build a sustainable future.
- Student ratings are heavily influenced by the level of support that students feel they have outside of the classroom – this type of support is often unquantified and often carried out by staff on casualised contracts. Less staff means less of this type of support and a threat to student satisfaction and retention rates.
- Fewer staff leading to less student support will have a detrimental impact on the university / college's equality and widening participation agendas.
- Impact on local community.
- Impact on equalities - especially if the proposed cuts are disproportionately affecting women, black staff or disabled staff (all of whom are over-represented amongst staff on casualised contracts).
- Impact on widening participation agenda.
- Impact on being able to recruit post-graduate students (who often rely on the ability to undertake teaching work to support them in their studies).
- Impact on career progression for PGRs as they are unable to gain teaching experience.

Gathering the evidence to support your case

- Try and quantify, at a local level, the volume of teaching being provided by staff whose jobs are under threat and publicise – targeting students and potential students. Members, activists, reps and students can all be asked to help with this work.
- Try and quantify, at a local level, the amount of student contact and support being provided by staff whose jobs are under threat and publicise – targeting students and potential students.
- Try and quantify, at a local level, the volume of research being carried out by staff whose jobs are under threat and publicise.
- Try and quantify, at a local level, the amount of support being carried out by staff whose jobs are under threat and publicise.
- Gather case studies from staff and students about the types of work being carried out by staff whose jobs are under threat and how that work has benefitted staff, students and the institution. Publicise to staff, students and potential students the impact that the proposed cuts would have on these types of experiences.