

University and College Union

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To Attendees of the annual meeting 2021

Action for information

Summary Unconfirmed minutes of the 2021 Staff on Casual Contracts annual meeting, 13 March 2021

Contact Jane Thompson (jthompson@ucu.org.uk) Bargaining & Negotiations Official

Attendance:

Elaine White (Chair), Vicky Blake (President), Janet Farrar (President Elect), Jo Grady (General Secretary), Jane Thompson (National Official), Ronnie Kershaw (National Organiser), Sue Bajwa (Conference Officer), David Bussell (minutes).

Alex Baker	University of Warwick
Joseph Baker	University of Birmingham
David Bell	Loughborough University
Richard Bell	University of Oxford
Kevin Biderman	Royal College of Art
Vicky Blake	University of Leeds
Steffan Blayney	University of Sheffield
Cecily Blyther	Petroc
Peta Bulmer	University of Liverpool
Dominique Carlini-Versini	Durham University
Mona Casey	Birmingham City University
Neill Clark	Glasgow Caledonian University
Chiara Colombo	Doncaster College
Viviana Coston	University of Sussex
Alexander Coupe	University of Liverpool
Daniel Cutts	University of Aberdeen
Sonja Dobroski	University of St Andrews
Susan Dobson	University of Liverpool
Pinar E. Donmez	De Montfort University
Jo Edge	The University of Manchester
Mark Edmondson	University of Lancaster
Matilda Fitzmaurice	Durham University
Tim Flitcroft	Morley College
Kit Fotheringham	University of Bristol
Heen Franks	University of Salford
Bea Gardner	University of Southampton
Eloise Grey	University of Aberdeen
Deevia Healeas	University of Westminster
Will Hornett	University of Sheffield
Jessica Jacobs	Queen Mary, University of London

Erik Jellyman	University of Lancaster
Kyran Jouglin	University of the Arts London
Amy Jowett	Hackney Adult Education
Joe Kerarsey	University of Nottingham
Charlotte Kestner	Imperial College London
Rhian Keyse	Birbeck College, University of London
Sam Kidel	Central Group HE - South
Alexander Kirby-Reynolds	University of Sheffield
Sezen Kizilgul Kartal	Capital City College Group -CANDI
Ruth Lawlor	University of Cambridge
Aimee Lee	University of Exeter
Ian Lund	University of Essex
Lewis Mackenzie	Durham University
Fides Matzdorf	Sheffield Hallam University
Justine Mercer	University of Warwick
Sam Morecroft	University of Sheffield International College
Javier Moreno Z	University of Warwick
Ellie Munro	University of Birmingham
Joanna Nadin	Bath Spa University
Steve Orchard	University of Sussex
Ozge Ozduzen	Brunel University
Manya Pagiavla	University of Oxford
Christina Paine	London Metropolitan University
Fiona Pashazadeh	The University of Manchester
Jeffrey Pocock	University of Bristol
Ben Pope	The University of Manchester
Ben Purvis	University of Sheffield
Stefan Ramsden	University of Hull
Galadriel Ravelli	University of Bath
Kester Richardson-Dawes	Queen Mary, University of London
Patricia Roche	Blackpool & the Flyde College
Nick Rush-Cooper	Newcastle University
Ayse Sargin	Uni of Essex
Kate Seymour	University of Essex
Eleana Simon	University of Sheffield
Andrea Stein	University of Salford
Audrey Verma	Newcastle University
Bella Vivat	University College London
Elaine White	Bradford College
Tom White	University of Oxford
Xanthe Whittaker	University of Leeds
Millie Wild	New City College (Hackney)
Peter Wood	The Open University
Shell Young	University of Sunderland
Vijay Tymms	Imperial College London

1 Introduction and welcome

- 1.1 The Chair, Elaine White, welcomed delegates and introduced herself.
- 1.2 There were apologies noted.
- 1.3 The Chair informed delegates that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of the minutes only and would be deleted thereafter, and explained the protocols for online meetings.
- 1.4 The Chair thanked members of the ACC for all their hard work this year, and offered special thanks to Christina Paine, who has recently stepped down from the committee.
- 1.5 The Chair asked for a minute silence to respect Sarah Everard, noting that as a union we have always campaigned against gender violence and will continue to do so.

2 Minutes of the annual meeting held on 29 February 2020

- 2.1 Bella Vivat raised a point of order, pointing out that a year had elapsed since the last AGM, and that most of the people attending this year weren't present for it. In that sense, asking this year's delegates to approve the minutes for an event they weren't present for makes no sense. Bella proposed that the minutes are circulated sooner next time.

ACTION: It was **AGREED** that the minutes for this meeting will be circulated asap after the event takes place. This will be as a reminder for attendees but will also allow any alleged errors to be flagged up at an earlier stage. The minutes will still be required to be ratified at the annual meeting the following year however, under standing orders.

- 2.2 Bella Vivat noted that during the last AGM there wasn't time remaining to debate the 3 motions from UCL, so they were remitted. This wasn't mentioned in the minutes.

ACTION: Bella will make a short addition to the minutes and submit to the committee.

- 2.3 Bella noted that the remitted Motion 7 was still under discussion.
- 2.4 The Chair reported on the work of the ACC this year. She added that research was ongoing to find out how many people lost their jobs over the last year.
- 2.5 The minutes of the annual meeting held on 29 February 2020 were **APPROVED**.

3 Chair's report on the work of the Anti-casualisation Committee.

- 3.1 The Chair took Conference through her written report which detailed the work of the Committee in the past year.

4 Elections to the Anti-Casualisation Committee

- 4.1 The Chair explained how the election process worked, and that this year they would take place online the following week.

5 Strategy Statement from Jo Grady

- 5.1 The Chair welcome the General Secretary.
- 5.2 Jo Grady reported that UCU was building local collective claims into bargaining successes, and that casualisation was at the heart of our response. We are dedicated to fighting precarious contracts with job security as a focus.
- 5.3 On a national level we are seeing that not everyone experiences the effects of casualisation the same way. Social class, Race, gender, whether or not you are disabled, migrant status, and many other factors play a part.
- 5.4 Jo stressed the need for members on casualised contracts to help inform UCU strategy and urged members to stay and in touch and engage in future events.
- 5.5 The NEC will continue to work with the ACC to progress work an implement motions.
- 5.6 A discussion around Jo's speech followed, with delegates sharing stories of how casualisation had affected them and their branches.

6 Panel discussion hosted by UCU President Vicky Blake

- 6.1 The President thanked delegates for showing up on a weekend, and introduced the meeting's three speakers, who talked about organising casualised staff during the pandemic.
- 6.2 Bob Jeffery (Sheffield TUC) talked about the Sheffield Needs a Pay Rise campaign, a movement of low wage workers coming together to demand fair pay. He reported how the campaign had focussed on forging partnerships with other unions, such as hospitality and food unions
- 6.3 Aimee Le (CoronaContract) talked about the challenges of mounting national action. Aimee talked about the importance of recruitment, and the importance of national campaigning. She encouraged co-ordination between unions and sharing knowledge.
- 6.4 Amy Jowett (Hackney ACE) talked about wins in the Adult Education sector. She noted the problems casualised contracts pose for ACE workers. She stressed that ACE workers were, by and large, keen to return to work.
- 6.5 The meetings was then invited to ask the panel questions.

The meeting then broke for lunch

7 Debate on Motions.

- 7.1 The Chair noted that we would not be taking amendments in this session.
- 7.2 **Motion 1: Defend the Four Fights**, was moved by Will Hornett from the University of Sheffield and seconded by Sam Morecroft from the University of

Sheffield International College.

This meeting notes

- *The Four Fights have been a successful campaign in linking hyper casualisation, poverty pay, racialised, gendered and ableist inequalities and unmanageable workloads in one pay claim*
- *All these issues have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has led to increased precarity, widespread redundancies, and the acceleration of a sector-wide race to the bottom on pay.*
- *Sector-wide binding frameworks would represent a huge step forward for us as casualised members of staff*
- *The dispute around pay and conditions is protracted as the employers refuse to offer meaningful and reasonable concessions*
- *The current pay claim has been improved through campaigns such as CoronaContract and PandemicPGRs, now including demands for a two-year extension of fixed-term contracts, and for all teaching to be contracted, as a direct result of grassroots organising.*

This meeting resolves

- *To call on Congress, our colleagues and the wider labour movement to defend casualised members of staff in Higher and Further Education*
- *To campaign for the union to carry the Four Fights campaign through to industrial action to eliminate casualisation pay inequalities, and for a decent wage-rise.*

Motion 1 was **CARRIED**.

7.3 **Motion 2: Teaching Fellows and casual contracts**, was moved by Vijay Tymms from Imperial College London and seconded formally.

This meeting notes:

1. *that for many HE institutes teaching fellows have become an integral part of their models for undergraduate teaching and administration on degree programmes,*
2. *that many, if not most, teaching fellows are employed on precarious contracts,*
3. *that the pandemic has led to a proliferation of teaching fellows brought in on short term contracts as cheap labour to assist with increased workload.*

This meeting resolves to:

1. *call on UCU to campaign for teaching fellows to have open ended contracts whenever possible, with the exception of limited number of*

cases where there is clear objective justification as outlined in law (for example related to maternity leave cover),

2. *call on UCU to produce bargaining advice for branches, specifically directed to assisting issues regarding teaching fellows in precarious contracts,*
3. *ask that the UCU anti casualisation committee considers teaching fellows as a specific example highlighting the problem with short-term contracts in HE.*

Motion 2 was **CARRIED**.

7.4 **Motion 3: Sustainability is a Casualisation Issue**, was moved by Pete Wood from The Open University and seconded formally.

Meeting believes:

- 1) *Climate change, biodiversity-loss and un-sustainable development are a serious and growing threat to human wellbeing.*
- 2) *The present political situation means that the costs and losses of mitigation or adaptation tend to disproportionately to fall on the less powerful, more marginalised members of society. Within tertiary education, this includes workers on casualised contracts.*

Meeting reaffirms:

- a) *Casualised members support UCU taking action on point 1.*
- b) *Action on point 1 must be part of, rather than in tension with, supporting casualised members.*

Meeting Resolves:

- 1) *UCU should campaign for a 'Green Recovery' from Covid-19 that prioritises measures which reduce casualisation.*
- 2) *Guidance to branches on sustainability should incorporate anti-casualisation, including that:*
 - i) *Measures supporting 'sustainable behaviour' are made accessible to casualised employees.*
 - ii) *Employers must reduce institutions' environmental impacts and absorb any associated costs, rather than transfer or outsource their impacts or costs to employees, particularly casualised employees.*

Motion 3 was **CARRIED**.

7.5 **Motion 4: Understanding Casualisation by Learning**, was moved by Pete Wood from The Open University and seconded formally.

Meeting notes:

- *The rapid growth of learning technology in tertiary education as described in 'The Automatic University: review of datafication and automation in Higher Education', a report by UCU Scotland.*
- *The rise of non-education jobs in the gig economy based upon casualised, highly surveilled employment relationships often mediated by an app.*
- *The incursion of international learning technology organisations into UK universities bringing exploitative employment models from Big Tech*
- *Increased use of teaching and learning based on pre-recorded or pre-written materials, rather than interactive activity.*

Meeting requests that UCU commission research into learning technology and 'tech platforms' to investigate:

- *Key threats of increased casualization*
- *Surveillance elements as they affect employees' autonomy and wellbeing*
- *Successful steps taken by trade unions experienced in performing right (eg BECTU/Prospect and the NUJ) to defend members' rights.*
- *Recommendations from the findings for fighting casualisation and deterioration of working conditions arising from new learning technology.*

Motion 4 was **CARRIED**.

7.6 **Motion 5: Fighting 'subject to funding' contracts**, was moved by Pete Wood from on behalf of the Anti-Casualisation Committee and seconded formally.

Meeting notes:

- HESA data on HEIs 'open-ended/indefinite' contracts are misleading because many have the clause 'subject to funding'.
- This legal status is distinct from a Fixed Term Contract, so requires additional, specific data-gathering.
- That submission of ad hoc branch requests for information from individual employers could create grounds for employers to opt-out of a subsequent national survey.

Meeting requests that UCU develop:

- As a matter of priority, a standardised national survey for submission to employers.
- A follow-up template letter for individual branches to submit under TULCRA or FOI, for use where employers refuse the survey.

- Guidance to branches and negotiators, including on legal status

The above are developed following information-gathering with workers, to establish trends and case-studies in:

- 1) how open-ended/indefinite but subject-to-funding contracts are created, terminated and extended.
- 2) The extent to which this problem extends beyond research-focused HE contracts.
- 3) Successful redeployment mechanisms or models

Motion 5 was **CARRIED**.

7.7 **Motion 6: Fighting Casualisation in Private Education Providers** was moved by Sam Morecroft from the University of Sheffield International College and seconded formally.

This meeting notes:

1. *The increasing use of private education providers, such as Study Group, Kaplan and ONCAMPUS, by UK universities and colleges*
2. *That although UCU has members working for many of these companies, the union has not yet won recognition in the vast majority of these providers.*
3. *That these providers represent some of the worst examples of casualisation in post 16-education in the UK today, where zero hours employment is the norm and the working day can last up to 12 hours*
4. *That this is outsourcing and it is used to circumvent collective bargaining and drive down employment standards in post-16 education*

This meeting resolves:

1. *To offer active practical support to improve working conditions to all casualised staff in Private Education Providers*
2. *To mandate the Anti-Casualisation committee to campaign to highlight casualisation in Private Education Providers both within our union and publicly, to provide all possible support to casualised members in these providers to establish UCU branches, and to win union recognition and concrete improvements to their working conditions*

Motion 6 was **CARRIED**.

8 Workshops

8.1 Attendees were invited to select and attend one of 5 workshops:

Workshop 1 – PGRs as employees – campaign ideas

Workshop 2 – Developing a Research concordat

Workshop 3 – Hourly paid staff and holiday pay

Workshop 4 – Keeping safe at work, sharing experiences with the NEU

Workshop 5 - Fighting Casualisation and Winning Union Recognition in Private Education Providers

8.2 Following the workshops, feedback was given to the Conference from each of the workshops

9 Vote of thanks and close

9.1 The Chair closed the Conference with a vote of thanks to all those involved. The president thanked the Chair for her work.

The meeting closed at 16:00.