

Precarious work in higher education – update February 2025 (HESA staff data 2022/23)

This short report provides an update to some of the key data contained in our 'Precarious Work in Higher Education' report (see https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10899/Precarious-work-in-higher-education-Oct-21/pdf/UCU_precarity-in-HE_Oct21.pdf).

The updated data is taken from the HESA staff data 2022/23, the most recent data we have access to at the time of writing. Comparative data for the years 2019/20 - 2021/22 can be found at: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/14007/Precarious-work-in-higher-education--Aug-23/pdf/UCU_precarity-in-HE_Aug23.pdf

All the table numbers refer to the tables in the original report.

All numbers are rounded to the nearest 5, all percentages are shown as whole numbers. All calculations are carried out before numbers are rounded.

Summary

For teaching and research staff and research only staff the use of fixed-term contracts has hardly changed.

There has been a decrease in the percentage of fixed-term contracts used for teaching only staff from 45% (HESA staff data 2021/22) to 37%. This has driven the slight decrease in the overall percentage of academic staff on a fixed-term contract from 33% (2021/22) to 30%.

There has also been a slight fall in the use of zero hours contracts to employ teaching only staff.

However, that is the extent of the good news:

- there is little change in the use of hourly paid contracts
- there is no significant change in the numbers of atypical staff employed
- women are still more likely to be on fixed-term contracts, zero hours contracts and hourly paid contracts than men
- Black, Asian, and 'Other' (including 'Mixed' ethnicity) staff are still more likely to be employed on a fixed-term contract than White staff

- Black staff remain the most likely to be on zero hours and hourly paid contracts.

In tables 1,2,3,4,7,8 'All' includes those who are neither teaching nor research.

Table 1: Number of academic staff

	2022/23		
	Fixed-term	Open ended / permanent	Total
Teaching & Research (T&R)	7025	95910	102930
Research only (R)	32670	17315	49990
Teaching only (T)	31290	54025	85310
All	71350	168635	239985

Table 2: Percentage of academic staff on a fixed-term contract (FTC)

	2022/23
T&R	7%
R	65%
T	37%
All	30%

Tables 3&4: Numbers and % of academic staff on a zero hours contract

	2022/23	
	Number	%
T&R	35	0%
R	95	0%
T	3765	4%
All	3905	2%

Tables 7&8: Numbers and % of academic staff on an hourly paid contract

	2022/23	
	Number	%
T&R	505	0%
R	530	1%
T	31545	37%
All	32590	14%

Table 11: Number of atypical staff

2022/23 number
62645

Table 12: Percentage of ARPS staff on fixed-term contracts

Academic-related staff are those counted in the HESA staff record as employed on non-academic contracts (excluding atypical contracts) at the following levels: senior management, senior function head, function head, non-academic section manager, team leader (professional, technical, administrative), senior professional, and senior administrative professional.

2022/23
13%

Table 14: Percentage of academic men and women on a FTC

% of academic staff on a FTC	2022/23
Women	31%
Men	28%

Table: Percentage of academic men and women on a zero hours contract

% of academic staff on a zero hours contract	2022/23
Women	2%
Men	1%

Table 15: Percentage of academic men and women on hourly-paid contracts

% of academic staff on an hourly paid contract	2022/23
Women	15%
Men	13%

Table 17: Fixed-term contracts and ethnicity

% of academic staff on a FTC	
	2022/23
Black	36%
Asian	40%
Other (including mixed)	39%
White	25%

Table 18: Zero-hours contracts and ethnicity

% of academic staff on a zero hours contract	
	2022/23
Black	3%
Asian	1%
Other (including mixed)	2%
White	2%

Table 19: Hourly-paid contracts and ethnicity

% of academic staff on an hourly paid contract	
	2022/23
Black	25%
Asian	15%
Other (including mixed)	17%
White	14%

Table 24: Fixed-term contracts and disability

% of academic staff on a FTC	
	2022/23
Known disability	29%
No known disability	28%

Table 25: Zero-hours contracts and disability

% of academic staff on a zero hours contract	
	2019/20
Known disability	2%
No known disability	2%

Table: Hourly-paid contracts and disability

% of academic staff on an hourly paid contract	
	2019/20
Known disability	14%
No known disability	13%