

UCU is undertaking a campaign to recruit more young people and those at the start of their careers in further and higher education. We want to improve the way in which we relate to our 'early careers' members and also our response to the particular issues facing those new to teaching, and other younger staff working in the tertiary education sector. To give us a picture of what our early careers members want from UCU, and to establish the kind of issues that they face, we have carried out an extensive survey giving members the opportunity to inform and shape the type of support and representation we provide. This is the first time that UCU has conducted a survey of this kind and the response was overwhelming. Over nine hundred members responded – one of the biggest responses to any survey carried out by the union – and we hope you find the results interesting. We also hope that you will join with colleagues across UCU in helping us meet the challenge that they present.

EARLY CAREERS SURVEY

the key issues facing UCU members at the start of their careers

WHO OUR EARLY CAREERS MEMBERS ARE...

Of the members surveyed, the vast majority (82.9%) were in full-time employment, and most were on permanent contracts (66.9%), with 28.3% on fixed-term, and 4.8% on hourly contracts.

When asked why they had joined UCU, most (86.6%) gave 'support should a problem arise at work' as their main reason.

WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE BIGGEST PROBLEM(S) THAT YOU'VE EXPERIENCED IN YOUR CAREER IN EDUCATION SO FAR? *

- 1. Casualisation – difficulty obtaining full-time permanent contracts, job insecurity of short-term and hourly-paid contracts, 'lottery' of research funding 29.02%**

"A lack of facilities for part-time tutors (office facilities etc) and often not being given the same level of information or privileges at work as full-time staff (for example, we have no access to the department building after it is locked, no office keys etc) and we are often not informed about decisions

and activities affecting staff."

"Endless series of fixed-term contracts and the instability, uncertainty, stress related to that, as well as the fact that I don't get all the same benefits of a permanent employee even though I've been working for ages and am as committed to my job as a 'permanent' employee."

- 2. Support – no effective induction process, lack of information, left to get on with it with little experience, poor communication from management, not knowing what to expect 19.18%**

"Lack of academic support in terms of introducing how to plan a lecture, key issues in assessment, designing formative and summative assessment tasks. I have taught myself on these issues, with no real idea if I am hitting the mark."

"No real induction to the institution, so I have to chase round finding out information that, had it been made available to me through induction, would have saved me stress and extra workload in an already demanding career."

* Answers to all questions asked in the survey are given here in order of priority, reflecting the issues members said were most important to them.

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3. Workload – impact on work/life balance especially for staff often with young families, student class sizes **17.38%**

“The biggest problem I have is combining work with parenthood – the demands on time and energy of the job are difficult to reconcile with demands of a young family.”

“Trying to combine so many different roles (continuing my own research, applying for grants, developing and delivering teaching and admin) within a limited amount of time is definitely the major problem. When you’re new to a job, any one activity takes considerably more time that would be expected for an experienced academic, and I ended up working very long hours, including weekends, just to stay on top of things.”

4. Research/teaching/admin balance – lack of support with time management **8.81%**

“The pressure to seek funds for continuing my research activities interferes with adequate timing of preparing for teaching.”

“Balancing workloads ie making time for own development, publications etc while still devoting sufficient time to teaching and admin.”

5. Bullying – problems with line managers, feeling of powerlessness **7.38%**

“Bullying – this has manifested itself in terms of dumping unwanted teaching onto junior staff, and belittling their input or suggestions.”

“Problems with bullying at work in current and previous positions. Younger staff particularly are affected by this and I have seen it at three universities I have worked at.”

6. Career development and training – lack of paid training opportunities, promotion prospects dependent on research publications, books etc **7.21%**

“A lack of a clear professional development structure with associated training. I want to progress in academia, but it is very ad hoc and lacking in support and guidance.”

“Lack of clear career path, lack of guidance from superiors on how to progress.”

7. Pay/financial difficulties – often starting career with student loan debts, often no clear pay structure, hourly-paid staff not getting paid over holiday periods, starting off on the lowest level of pay **6.89%**

“Short-term contracts of nine months or less leave me income-less over the summer.”

“Being brought in at a very low level of pay and having to fight to move up.”

8. Discrimination – younger members of staff suffering adverse treatment or getting paid less. Also several respondents complaining of sexism, racism and homophobia in the workplace. **4.43%**

“Initially I was on a much lower salary than colleagues doing the same job due to my age and lack of experience and I had to look outside of my school for promotion. I think this a common problem for young staff (and for female staff).”

“The generational divide within my department. The established members of staff don’t wish to dirty their hands with tedious administrative chores (such as admissions and student recruitment). For this reason, newer staff (who are overwhelmingly female; the divide is along both gender and generational lines) are burdened with time-consuming tasks which are not regarded as important to the functioning of the department and do not count towards promotion whilst more established scholars are much freer to conduct research.”

WHAT SUPPORT, INFORMATION OR GUIDANCE DO YOU WISH HAD BEEN AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED WORKING IN EDUCATION?

1. Training and induction **29.02%**

“Training or support, in terms of dealing with stressful situations, including sexual harassment and bullying (in particular for a young academic these are much more difficult to deal with when one has no prior experience of this kind).”

“New comers in my time had no induction or peer review – and we still do not really have official reviews on how we perform.”

2. Mentoring **17.71%**

“A proper mentor with an allocated weekly timeslot

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to suit both parties, this would enable the new member to have the correct understanding and knowledge of systems and practices. Members without this either sink or swim!"

"A mentor at work. I had a very helpful and supportive union representative who was a great help to me, she kept me going in the dark days of my first year. More support from colleagues or someone to phone up and scream at would have helped, though."

3. Career planning/guidance 16.21%

"Support and guidance in relation to career development, promotion, prioritisation of work, life-planning etc, in particular – guidance about the university's expectations for promotion etc."

"Help with career planning, not just with finding jobs but also gaining more qualifications to support career progression in the future, long-term planning and pursuit of career goals."

4. Professional 'best practice' guidance 12.97%

"Some 'quick tips' on how to handle a classroom."

"Guidance on writing examination questions and on assignment and examination marking"

"Performance training for large lecture halls. How to construct lectures in an appropriate time frame."

5. Contracts and pay advice 11.97%

"Information regarding fixed-term contracts. Guidance on how to work towards a promotion."

"Dealing with short-term contracts, getting the first lectureship, your rights as a fixed term researcher."

6. UCU information/support 11.22%

"A handbook of rights, responsibilities and how to seek help included in my welcome packet from the university but produced by the union. Also detailed outline of when to call the union in, else I would not know when the union can help me in cases of manipulation and bullying regarding my position."

"Most postgraduate students aren't even aware they can join the union – some kind of info from

the union would have been helpful, even just if it informed us of our rights and what kind of issues might arise."

7. Employment rights information 8.73%

"More about employee rights; what we can reasonably expect from an employer;"

"Greater clarity on rights and responsibilities – I was well aware of what the problems would be before I took the job, but it is impossible to juggle commitments effectively when you don't know which work is compulsory, and which you can simply decline to do."

8. Early careers network 5.24%

"Maybe a forum for new teachers would be of help, and a subject specific forum area."

"I would have liked the support of an accessible network of colleagues at the same early career stage as myself – perhaps with a professional mentor outside my institution."

WHAT DO YOU THINK UCU DOES WELL?

1. Support for members/casework 26.16%

"Support members when they need help the most and make a collective voice against injustice which cannot be ignored."

"Your reps are very good. The communications seem to work. I received some help from the union after spending the day on the picket line and having my wages docked more than they should have been."

2. Communication 22.84%

"Keeping in touch with members and supporting members who have been unfairly treated."

"Stays in contact with members, regular updates and active campaigns."

3. Campaigning 17.96%

"As an ESOL teacher, I was very impressed by the Union's Save ESOL campaign. I liked the way the union worked together with many other organisations etc."

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“Major campaigns (such as the support for recent events at Keele and Nottingham Trent) – fosters a sense of wider community. Establishes its presence and communicates its ethos effectively.”

4. Pay and conditions of employment **17.74%**

“Campaigning for improved pay and conditions at local and national levels. Campaigning for equal pay and opportunities.”

“The pay and framework negotiations have modernised things significantly; without the union this would have not happened.”

5. Source of information **11.53%**

“It has comprehensive information and also keeps members updated on relevant issues.”

“Maintains website, conveys general information to individual members, holds discussion events and asks for support of membership when required for campaigning.”

6. Fixed-term contracts work **3.77%**

“It has the right channels and procedures in place to be able to protect part-time and hourly-paid staff.”

“Good publicity campaign for fixed-term contract researcher issues.”

WHAT DO YOU THINK UCU DOESN'T DO SO WELL?

1. Engaging with early careers and fixed term/hourly paid members **38.02%**

“The union isn't as visible around college as it could be – I'm not sure how many post-docs and young staff are members, or know much about it. I became involved because of an older colleague on the technical staff.”

“It can be a little intimidating. As a younger member of staff I am unsure how vocal I can be, what avenues and routes you already go down. Can be worried suggestions might get laughed down. This is more of my personal feeling and worries than how UCU actually is, but work with younger members may help this and help them to feel more integrated and have more confidence to become actively involved.”

2. Recruitment – union profile in the workplace

26.56%

“The membership does not represent young lecturers, so more recruitment needs to be done. (The anti-war/UAF demos would have been a great opportunity to have recruited younger lecturers.)”

“No attempt to recruit new members, I had to be proactive to join, no union rep has made contact and most new staff have not been asked to join the union.”

3. Political issues **19.79%**

“I feel deeply uncomfortable with the way UCU seeks to involve itself in political campaigns which should be beyond its brief.”

“The UCU should stick to issues which directly affect its members.”

4. Pay claim **13.02%**

“The threats of demanding an 8% pay increase are completely unrealistic.”

“I am concerned that UCU takes an overly combative approach to the issue of pay claims, particularly in the current economic environment. I fear this may alienate lecturers from others in both the public and private sectors.”

5. Membership fee **2.60%**

“Subscription rates too high for hourly-paid staff. There should be a lower, perhaps just nominal band for members who are not in full-time employment.”

“It would be better if the membership fees were lower.”

WHAT KINDS OF RESOURCES COULD UCU PROVIDE THAT WOULD SUPPORT AND ASSIST MEMBERS EARLY ON IN THEIR CAREERS?

1. Career planning advice **36.43%**

“Advice on promotion and career progression within one institution. Often the best way to advance in an academic career is to move around institutions. This has obvious implications for retention of young academics / researchers.”

continued overleaf

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“Career planning guidance would be a good idea – I still don’t understand how one ‘goes up the ladder’.”

2. Rights at work information 36.19%

“Certainly some guidance on rights at work would be welcome – particularly around contract renewal and retention (for example, how does the recent case in Aberdeen affect other research staff on fixed term contracts?).”

“Advice on rights, support for new young members, who are more likely to have precarious work conditions (especially in research).”

3. Mentoring/networking opportunities 11.83%

“I think the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with other young union members would be helpful. It would be particularly useful to get perspectives on working conditions in other universities.”

“Informal training and skills sessions where early career members from different institutions could meet/network/socialise (I would very much like to meet with other early career academics combining work with young children, for example).”

4. Training 7.89%

“A career development workshop covering the issues pertinent to early career members.”

“Training for younger members and a network for younger members to discuss common issues.”

5. Introduction to teaching/‘early career pack’ 7.66%

“An introductory guide to resources and supports that are available to union members, plus a general overview of the union structure and what the union does, but something that was targeted specifically to early career members which could be downloaded from the website.”

“Some straightforward literature on the issues mentioned, perhaps in the form of a particular ‘early career’ welcome pack.”

WHICH ORGANISATIONS, ISSUES, OR CAMPAIGNS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE UCU PUBLICISING AND SUPPORTING (FOR EXAMPLE, MAYBE YOU ARE INVOLVED WITH A CHARITY OR PRESSURE GROUP?)

1. Human rights 25.65%

“I am a supporter of Amnesty International and I think it is appropriate for UCU to support human rights issues – particularly access to education.”

“Human rights work, especially in relation to the ‘War on Terror.’”

2. Equality 23.04%

“Gay and lesbian rights in education (for both students and professionals).”

“The role of UCU in anti-racist activity is as important as ever.”

3. Environmental 21.99%

“Climate change – eg Campaign against Climate Change. As a broader political issue but also on a smaller scale relevant to us. I would really like to see UCU thinking about, for example, supporting members who don’t want to fly, encouraging video-conferencing, greening universities, etc.”

“Environmental issues within institutions – our halls of residence don’t even have recycling facilities!”

4. International 21.99%

“For UCU, relevant causes such as education in developing countries/support for overseas academics/education in war-zones.”

“Link to the global picture, build solidarity with other unions around the globe”

5. Privatisation 4.19%

“I’d like to see even more of a critical commentary on privatisation and marketisation of education”

“More on fight against privatisation of traditional public sector services.”

6. Poverty 3.14%

“Third World poverty and debt relief.”

“My personal charitable priorities are child poverty (particularly in the UK) and how this affects life chances, and also support for the elderly.”

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Education professionals at the start of their careers are often among the first to experience the effects of changing patterns of work and economic recession. We want to make sure that the support and representation we provide for our early careers members reflects what they need to develop the professional careers that they want. This survey is a fantastic starting point for the campaign but the best way to make your union representative of your needs and interests is to get involved and active! For the first time ever UCU will be running an Early Careers Conference, not only to shape the work that we do, but to give young members and members at the start of their careers the opportunity to engage with UCU, build the union, and develop the next generation of activists that will help us win a better deal for staff working in colleges and universities across the country.

Over the next year we also plan to:

- develop guidance materials specifically designed to support younger and 'early career' members
- Establish a nationwide early careers network, for the purposes of sharing experiences, debating and discussing areas of shared interest and networking both socially and professionally
- provide training for members who would like to develop their skills, become more active in UCU, and to assist with career planning/professional development
- run a programme of activities that are relevant and useful for this section of the union.

If you would like to get involved with this exciting new campaign then please contact Ed Bailey at ebailey@ucu.org.uk and watch our website for further details
<http://www.ucu.org.uk/>