

# anti-casualisation news



ISSUE 7 / Spring 2012

THE NEWSLETTER OF UCU'S ANTI-CASUALISATION COMMITTEE

## A time of immense challenges

**As** casual workers on hourly-paid, part-time, fixed term, temporary or agency contracts we are faced with enormous challenges to our pay, conditions and jobs. In my 40 years' involvement in post-16 education, I cannot recall a more difficult and uncertain situation. Workers on casual contracts are disproportionately affected and disadvantaged by recent changes in further, higher, adult and community, and prison education.

The Anti-Casualisation Committee has worked with other equality standing committees, the FEC, HEC and NEC to defend and promote our interests. We have had some success over the years but we still have a long way to go and need your support to enable us to achieve our outstanding priorities in 2012.

It is essential that there is a good turnout at our annual meeting on Friday 9 March at UCU headquarters in London. This is the last newsletter before the meeting and I want to emphasise the importance of this event.

I also want to urge you to consider standing for the committee; we need new ideas and new people to work strategically to implement the policies and priorities to take us forward during this period of severe austerity in education. The annual meeting will also consider motions from branches so if there's something you think the meeting should discuss, talk to your branch about submitting a motion.

Details of how to register for the event, be nominated for the committee or send a motion can be found at: [www.ucu.org.uk/cascontractsmeeting](http://www.ucu.org.uk/cascontractsmeeting)

I very much look forward to seeing you and working with you at the annual meeting.

**Jim Thakoordin, Chair  
Anti-Casualisation Committee**

## Pensions and the casualised

At the time of writing we are deeply involved in the pensions disputes. We want decent pensions for all, but there are particular concerns for many staff on casualised contracts.

Teachers on agency contracts cannot join the relevant occupational pension scheme and benefit from an employer's contribution. When I was an agency worker I found this to be one of the worst things about the agency contract. And the new agency workers regulations do not require the institution to provide comparable pensions, even after 12 weeks. This is one of the reasons we believe staff should be employed directly – not through agencies.

Some researchers are not in the same pension scheme as their lecturer colleagues which leads to difficulties in taking united action. Some hourly-paid lecturers in the older universities are not allowed to join the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) on equal terms with other staff – something we need to challenge at every level. Amid the talk of 'gold-plated' pensions, there are UCU members on very small occupational pensions indeed.

The union movement has brought about better terms and conditions for agency staff, and UCU has won battles for the equal treatment of members on casualised contracts. But the fight is far from over.

**Jean Crocker, Co-Vice Chair  
Anti-Casualisation Committee**



## GET ACTIVE!

We are interested to hear about any campaigning, recruiting or awareness-raising involving you and your branch. It really makes a difference when members get involved. Campaign materials are available from our website and include a survey template for hourly-paid staff and a flyer showing the difference in treatment between hourly-paid and permanent staff:

[www.ucu.org.uk/socc\\_materials](http://www.ucu.org.uk/socc_materials)

Please share your experiences with others – small-scale activity is just as important as a large campaign.

## We can support YOU

Your local association or branch can provide support. To find out who to contact use our branch finder: [www.ucu.org.uk/yourcontacts](http://www.ucu.org.uk/yourcontacts)

All UCU members on casual contracts can link up together across the UK by joining our networks for hourly-paid staff and researchers at: [www.ucu.org.uk/elists](http://www.ucu.org.uk/elists)

UCU members can also get support through Recourse by telephone or online 24/7. Recourse offers counselling, one-to-one coaching and help with issues such as stress and dealing with difficult people.



## Check us out online

### Anti-Casualisation Committee

Information on committee members and their priorities:

[www.ucu.org.uk/fthpcommittee](http://www.ucu.org.uk/fthpcommittee)

### Anti-Casualisation News

Our regular newsletter raises awareness and keeps you up to date on the issues. We are always keen to hear your news and stories.

[www.ucu.org.uk/anticasnews](http://www.ucu.org.uk/anticasnews)



### Survival guides for researchers and hourly-paid staff

We have had a great response to these guides which

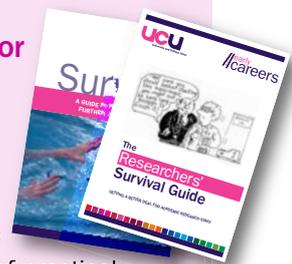
contain a wealth of practical information and advice. If you would like a copy or if your branch needs to order a supply please get in touch with Ronnie Kershaw:

[rkershaw@ucu.org.uk](mailto:rkershaw@ucu.org.uk)

You can also download copies from our website:

[www.ucu.org.uk/hpsurvivalguide](http://www.ucu.org.uk/hpsurvivalguide)

[www.ucu.org.uk/researchersurvival](http://www.ucu.org.uk/researchersurvival)



## Researchers' workshops

Look out for UCU's workshops aimed at university researchers. They are a great way of involving this group of staff in pushing for improvements, and cover employment rights and the gains UCU is making.

Southampton University recently hosted a successful workshop attended by 27 researchers. Issues covered included a document put to management by Southampton UCU as part of negotiations around fixed-term contracts and researchers' careers. Several participants joined the union, others agreed to actively support SUCU's campaign, and a network of researchers has now been set up.

If you are interested in attending a researchers' workshop contact UCU national organiser Ronnie Kershaw: [rkershaw@ucu.org.uk](mailto:rkershaw@ucu.org.uk)



# Campaigning for hourly-paid



## lecturers in further education

**The** case against casualisation is clear – casual workers are paid less, have worse conditions and face incredible instability and job insecurity. This is magnified in the current economic climate as FE colleges have their funding cut and seek to ‘streamline’ the workforce in anticipation of more cuts. With the cutting of the education maintenance allowance (EMA) the situation is even bleaker as, with learners unable to afford to attend college, staff recruitment in many colleges has dropped.

This is a rather bleak picture for hourly-paid lecturers (HPLs) in further education, but it’s not the whole picture.

In 2011 we went on strike three times at Westminster Kingsway College (WKC) to defend our pensions and were joined on 30 June and 30 November by many other unions in the area and nationally. It was against this backdrop that we started the anti-casualisation campaign in our college and the London-wide Anti-Casualisation Campaign was launched.

The unity in June and November and the strength which came from it shows the way forward for all campaigns – that unity is strength. At our college we have tried to build a broad campaign that unites those on agency, zero hours and permanent contracts. It has been vital for our campaign that it is actively supported by staff who are on permanent contracts for several reasons.

Staff who are permanent at WKC tend to be in the college more days than HPLs which means that they are able to chase up the campaign more consistently. In addition, they have successfully won rights on issues such as lesson observations, contracts and capability. Therefore, the branch has a great deal of experience and resources, and has established campaigning strategies which can be used to

challenge the issue of increasing casualisation.

It is important to remember that the issue of casualisation does not just affect those who are on casual contracts. An hourly-paid lecturer can be paid as much as £10,000 less than a permanent equivalent. If this continues it could drive down wages and conditions for all those working within the sector. In addition, HPLs aren’t always invited to department meetings, which means they miss out on important information and it then falls on permanent members to ensure that everyone knows what is going on. HPLs sometimes don’t have desks in the departmental staffroom so information is not passed on as people do not see each other on a day-to-day basis – the department could then feel fragmented. These are just a few of the issues.

Our campaign has three key strands to it: mapping the increase of casual staff and their working conditions; building a legal campaign; and building a broad and active campaign with all members involved. We are only at the beginning of the campaign but the majority of our members are now aware of the situation and angry about it. This is because we have spoken to HPLs in the staffrooms and asked them to feed us information about changes.

On the picket lines we spent time talking to HPLs who were going into work and explaining that the union branch would support them not to go in. From that strike we gained a new active HPL who is helping to build the campaign at college. He said that in these times he wouldn’t be able to survive without having the union behind him. We need to keep up our good work of meeting and speaking to members, being active and keeping up the fight. An active UCU that stands up for all its members is the key to winning more people to the union.

**Regine Pilling**  
**Anti-Casualisation Committee**

# Some good news!

We have been challenging the lack of consultation at the end of fixed-term contracts in a number of institutions and have used the threat of legal action to negotiate robust redundancy avoidance, redeployment and fixed-term contracts across the UK. This means that employers are finally starting to take notice when fixed-term staff are at threat of dismissal and are being forced to be pro-active in taking measures to avoid those dismissals.

**The Manchester College** has agreed an annualised contract for hourly-paid staff working in offender learning. This will apply to all permanent hourly-paid staff who carry out scheduled/core teaching programmes.

**Coventry Adult Education branch** is completing negotiations to end the practice of employing tutors on variable contracts. All tutors will be offered fractional contracts with guaranteed hours and conditions of service based on those of equivalent full-time lecturers. This will end the uncertainty and unfairness associated with variable hours.



**At Leeds University** a proposed fixed-term and employment security policy will see the use of fixed-term contracts being limited – and used only in exceptional circumstances beyond three years. The proposed policy also sets out how the employer will work with UCU in the event of a contract coming to an end to maximise the chances of staff being kept in employment.

There has been a college-wide UCU campaign on the use of agency staff at the newly formed **Leeds City College** with UCU pressing for substantive directly-employed posts. As a result of this the college has agreed to a reduction in the systematic use of Protocol agency over time.

## ANNUAL MEETING FOR STAFF ON CASUAL CONTRACTS

Friday 9 March  
10.30am – 4.30pm

The meeting will hear reports on UCU's work on casually-employed staff, including those on fixed-term, hourly-paid and agency contracts. There will be the opportunity to discuss motions submitted by branches/LAs.

We are seeking a speaker from a sister union to talk about how they have challenged casualisation within their industry and we are planning workshops on a number of relevant topics.

- Registrations deadline: Friday 24 February
- Nominations to Anti-Casualisation Committee deadline: Friday 24 February
- Motions deadline: Friday 17 February

All details can be found at:  
[www.ucu.org.uk/cascontractsmeeting](http://www.ucu.org.uk/cascontractsmeeting)

### QUERIES

Delegates and general conference arrangements: Sue Bajwa – [sbajwa@ucu.org.uk](mailto:sbajwa@ucu.org.uk)

Nominations and motions: Jane Thompson – [jthompson@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jthompson@ucu.org.uk)

## MORE INFO

If you would like to get in touch with the Committee or contribute to the newsletter please contact the Chair: Jim Thakoordin ([dthakoordin@sky.com](mailto:dthakoordin@sky.com))

For more information about UCU's work on anti-casualisation please visit our website at [www.ucu.org.uk](http://www.ucu.org.uk)

If you have a problem or query please contact your local branch or association in the first instance. Contact details can be found at [www.ucu.org.uk/contacts](http://www.ucu.org.uk/contacts). For more information about the Anti-Casualisation Committee go to: [www.ucu.org.uk/2973](http://www.ucu.org.uk/2973)

