

anti-casualisation news



THE NEWSLETTER OF UCU'S ANTI-CASUALISATION COMMITTEE

Standing together – we can make a difference for casualised staff

Welcome to the Autumn 2012 edition of Anti-Casualisation News. This newsletter is brought to you by UCU's Anti-Casualisation Committee who work on behalf of UCU members on casualised contracts across all sectors of the union.

In this edition we look at how a local campaign in Aberdeen has brought about real improvements for local casualised staff and discuss how to build a local campaign. We highlight the importance of standing together to fight casualisation and report on both UCU Congress and TUC where our members have been busy shining a light on the rampant casualisation within the sector.

The newsletter, and the work of the Committee highlight the need to be part of the union so that we can make a difference and fight casualisation within our branches and across the sector.

If you are already a member please talk to your colleagues about the union and encourage them to join. If you are not yet a member please join with us – together we can make a difference.

You can join online at: <https://join.ucu.org.uk>

Jane Thompson
Secretary to the Anti-Casualisation Committee

REAL CHANGES AT ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY

Colleagues may be aware of the successful UCU-backed employment tribunal in 2008, Dr A Ball vs University of Aberdeen. An outcome of this was that the university stopped using short-term funding as justification for the repeated issuing of fixed-term contracts.

Consequently, the University of Aberdeen decided it would no longer use fixed-term contracts for any period longer than nine months. Instead they opted to introduce an open-ended contract regime whereby staff who would have

been fixed-term are now afforded the same terms and conditions as permanent staff.

The major difference this has made is that staff at risk of redundancy (when, for example, research projects end) are entitled to go through a full process of consultation in an attempt to avoid or mitigate the potential redundancy. With the other campus trade unions, Aberdeen UCU and the Scottish UCU office spent a great deal of time negotiating with the university on the detail of this consultation and redeployment process. The resulting policy (<http://snipurl.com/2499r87>) attempts to provide additional protections for staff who are 'at risk' including:

- two weeks exclusive access to new employment opportunities at the university
- the right to consultation meetings
- funding for training

continued overleaf



- careers advice and support
- the maintenance of spinal (pay) points for staff redeployed to similarly graded roles
- the right to trial posts at lower grades for a month with no detriment to redundancy payments
- provisions for staff who are pregnant when they become at risk
- the right of appeal.

The policy is reviewed on an annual basis and the campus unions regularly review staff who become at risk via a joint consultative committee on redundancy avoidance (JCCRA). This has allowed us to identify areas of concern and discuss improvements to the policy. The result after two years is that around 60 per cent of staff who are placed at risk find continued or redeployed roles within the institution.

The process has been far from easy. There was, and is, considerable scepticism across the university about it, but many of the perceived concerns about the process have proved to be false. Senior management are now advising managers and principal investigators that the statistics from JCCRA illustrate that the process is expediting rather than hindering the speed of recruitment. AUCU believes that the process has been a positive step, but it does require vigilance and monitoring. The annual review provides us with an opportunity to press for further improvements as these are identified through JCCRA.

There is further ongoing work in the branch to support researchers and teaching assistants (TAs). We have a casualised staff focus group that has had some success in addressing workload issues and rates of pay in one school. The group is currently collaborating with the Students' Association on a survey of all teaching assistants (TAs) regarding their working conditions – we will then raise any areas of concern with the university. The university does have a temporary services policy (<http://snipurl.com/2499vov>) that details appropriate rates of pay for TAs and demonstrators. However, not all TAs are paid sufficiently for the hours they work – most notably for preparation and marking. We have recently had assurances from the university's Human Resources Department that they will treat these matters seriously if we bring them to their attention.

Some years ago we were able to address an issue in one academic school where a particularly active postgraduate UCU member was able to persuade her colleagues (members and non-members alike) to act

collectively and raise issues of concern about pay and workload directly with the university. This collective approach worked well and resulted in real improvements for the TAs involved. The branch understands that it can be challenging for individual staff to raise issues and always recommend a collective approach where possible.

As a result of working with postgraduates and TAs, the branch has identified that some TAs see the cost of membership as a barrier to joining UCU. In recognition of this, the branch raised a motion at this year's Congress, instructing NEC to investigate alternative charging mechanisms for low-paid staff. This motion was unanimously supported.

Aberdeen UCU regards working and recruiting postgraduate TAs as a key objective and is happy to share experiences with other branches.

Mike McConnell
Branch President, Aberdeen UCU

NOTICEBOARD

ANNUAL MEETING FOR STAFF ON CASUAL CONTRACTS
FRIDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2013
See the UCU website www.ucu.org.uk/annualmeetings for details of the event and how to register, make a nomination to the Anti-Casualisation Committee and submit motions. A calling notice will be sent to all branches in December.

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION TO RECRUIT STAFF ON CASUAL CONTRACTS
WEDNESDAY 6 MARCH 2013
The build-up starts soon. Be part of it. For information on getting involved, contact Ronnie Kershaw: rkershaw@ucu.org.uk

A future that works...

Report from TUC Congress 2012

The theme of 2012 TUC Congress was *A Future that Works*. Christina attended as the Anti-Casualisation Committee rep and Terry attended on behalf of the LGBT Members' Standing Committee.

There was a significant emphasis, throughout conference and especially in fringe meetings, on casualisation issues and the most vulnerable workers in our society. The extreme situation facing employees following major work closures was also substantially covered. There was also a good deal of coverage of casualisation from a global point of view, and a strong emphasis on the impact of work casualisation on global society.

Terry spoke in support of the major agenda item, Motion 19, Government attacks on the Equality Act and the Equality and Human Resources Committee.

Christina was accepted to speak on the Vulnerable Workers Motion (no. 7) submitted by BECTU but was

not eventually called up. Many of the concerns raised in this motion are directly relevant to casualised workers generally and especially in FE and HE.

Of particular note here though was the call through this motion for unions to recognise that casualised and young workers need to be embedded into union membership for the future. Congress was concerned at the poor statutory position that unions have in organising these workers, recognising that they often find it difficult to receive the kind of representation that workers in traditional employment receive.

It resolved that unions often have to intervene to ensure that interns receive the national minimum wage, and that casual and self-employed workers receive protection against premature termination of contracts or the holiday provisions of the working time directive.

Congress called upon the General Council to convene a campaign for

new employment rights that tackle and discourage these abuses.

Due to the emergency situation concerning UKBA and international students at London Metropolitan University Christina was also heavily involved in putting forward an emergency motion and in formally questioning Ed Balls on this issue.

Overall it is evident that TUC Congress regards the increasing casualisation of labour and the threat to workers' rights caused by the global financial crisis as primary concerns.

There was much in Congress fringe and in the formal debate of pertinence to the ACC including the exploitation of young workers, future union membership, and fair, equitable and less harmful pay and working conditions, especially in the context of the present austerity measures.

Christina Paine & Terry Duffy
UCU Anti-Casualisation Committee

UCU members and staff taking part in the TUC 'A future that Works' march and rally on 20 October in central London



PHOTOS BY SARAH PARRY



Cartoon by Winston Scotland

Following the publication of the cartoon above we have received the following communication from the management:

Y'know, this sort of thing's all very well – sure, it'll raise a laugh in some quarters, but to be frank, it's

a bit cheap and a little disappointing. Just try to see things from our perspective for once in your lives. We offer you the flexibility to work when you want, where you want. We give you the chance of putting together a portfolio of jobs to suit

your lifestyle. Okay, on occasion you might find that one or two of your modules are discontinued – insufficient numbers, etc, but why blame us? Isn't it you who should be so charismatic, so bursting with raw energy and enthusiasm that students flock to your classes? Isn't it you who should keep a sharp eye on the competition and make sure that if they go the extra mile, you're gonna go twenty?

What do we look for when selecting from a vast pool of human resources? I'll tell you: we're looking for the 'glass half full' kinda guy, the kid who sees no problems in life, only challenges and opportunities. So if you wanna join the party, shape up, put on a smile and, for goodness sake, stop whining.

*Be lucky
The Management*

With thanks to Martin Moloney

STRATEGY TO DEVELOP A LOCAL CAMPAIGN FOR PHASED FRACTIONALISATION

The battle for fractionalisation is a long-standing one at my college. I have been an hourly-paid lecturer (HPL) at the college for almost three years, having long served what I had naively deemed to be a more than sufficient probationary period. Before my arrival, I am told, a hard-fought agreement for increased fractionalisation had been won through negotiations between our branch (then Natfhe) and senior management. However, the ink was barely dry before the offer was withdrawn by the powers that be, while citing that now all-too-familiar reason: the change in the economic climate.

Of course this does not stop the college from beating its own drum, as it proudly displays its official status as Investors in People. Surely, whoever approved this elitist title recently did not interview too many of the college's

HPLs during their assessment period.

Talking to various HPLs at college has given rise to many issues, which demand further investigation:

What is the significant difference in performance of duties that warrants the real discrepancy in pay suffered by HPLs v fractionalised staff?

Can any student tell whether an HPL or a lecturer on fractional pay is standing between them and the whiteboard?

There is a pressure to attend unpaid meetings, especially for internal verification purposes in coursework-related teaching.

It is essential for HPLs to attend meetings that allow them to give their students the service they have signed up for. Some curriculum managers find themselves

ruling over teams made up almost entirely of HPLs. This indicates how casualisation impacts negatively on all staff and students.

HPLs take on a larger share of the most demanding work in teaching, namely student contact time.

There is a commonly-held view that while HPLs constitute 40 per cent of the teaching staff, they deliver around 60 per cent of the actual teaching, by far the most physically and emotionally taxing aspect to our jobs. In my attempts to obtain the figures to prove or disprove this, HR were co-operative at first, but as I began to delve deeper so this cooperation attenuated.

It must also be recognised that our own union has been heavily criticised by many of its members over its lack of support for the anti-casualisation campaign. It is up to the rest of us to raise the profile to where it matches the weeping into teacups and worrying around photocopiers. People need to see that this is not an issue that will weaken the fight: this is the fight. Perhaps by the very nature of the role, HPL reps do not seem to hold their positions for long. Cynicism has replaced hope for HPLs who have witnessed successive changes in personnel launching new campaigns from scratch with the same old message – continually re-inventing the wheel.

Many have campaigned successfully to advance their status within the union by raising the anti-casualisation argument as part of their personal manifesto. Such recognition for a plight that beleaguers lecturers on a nationwide scale is welcome. There has also been much good work left by past union administrations for us to build on. The challenge as ever is to win the hearts and minds of those who pull the strings and control the purses at a local level, by establishing irrefutable links between some of the college's main drivers: employee satisfaction, quality delivery and financial success. This means inducing the political will for the college to commit to fairness through what may be shown to make economic sense by truly investing in people.

Our local campaign needs to be multi-pronged:

- Go for a collective grievance against the college over casualisation.
- Create a new local questionnaire to survey all staff over matters of HPL status that will be hard to ignore
- Establish an HPL contact in every major staffroom in the building
- Map the building to find out how many HPLs are UCU

members and whether they are aware of the union and their eligibility for membership

- Study/compare HPL and fractionalised staff contracts
- Find examples among members of staff where both types compare equally in duties and performance, but not in pay.
- Construct relevant charts and diagrams to display the data analysed so far.
- Prepare a statement to be sent to all HPLs and to HR with a view to seeking a meeting between UCU and management at CIC.
- Continue to demand further data from HR in order to compare last year's figures with present ones and see not only where we are, but in which direction we are moving. In other words, is the inequality issue for HPLs a growing one?

Winston Scotland

UCU Anti-Casualisation Committee

SUPPORT LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY!

The Anti-Casualisation Committee wishes to express solidarity with staff and students at London Met battling the government's vindictive decision to revoke its license to sponsor overseas students, seriously disrupting the learning of many overseas students.

We welcome the High Court decision granting London Met the right to bring a judicial review, but it is regrettable that the court did not grant an injunction suspending the revocation in the interim. The temporary court orders protecting those students currently in Britain with full immigration status will be a relief to many, but do nothing to redress the anguish and uncertainty they have been put through.

The campaign to get the government to reverse its decision must continue and we are urging all branches, associations and unions to support the staff and students at London Met. Other universities could easily find themselves in the same position, as this government's approach to immigration and marketisation of education continues.

Please support colleagues at London Met by signing the petition: www.gopetition.com/petitions/full-amnesty-now-reverse-revocation-save-london-met.html

UCU 2012 Congress report

Several members of the ACC attended this year's Congress and sector conferences, two as delegates from the Committee and others as branch delegates, NEC members or observers. We met at 9am every day, to discuss the day ahead, and worked well as a group to propose our own motions and speak for motions from branches which supported our anti-casualisation aims. All in all, a good Congress, and excellent contributions from members and our supporters.

Issues around casualisation took a high profile in the debate, not only in the motions raised by our committee but also in many others from branches. The Committee also moved a number of successful amendments to motions which highlighted the issue of casualisation in the broader union agenda.

Motions from the committee to full Congress covered continuing representation of casualised members, and a campaign for non-casualised employment including a day of action to recruit staff on casualised contracts (now agreed for 6 March 2013).

Motions to the FE Conference raised the often-neglected Adult and Community Education sector, another motion called for specific actions to encourage branch-level anti-casualisation activism.

In HE, we encouraged branches to recruit and support postgraduates and our second HE motion proposed actions to support permanency for research staff.

In addition, there were several motions around casualisation at Congress and in both FE and HE conferences; for example, from the NEC in defence of jobs of all members, emphasising all categories of casualised members in the light of widespread job losses. We are, as we know too well, very vulnerable in times of cuts. As a motion from Strode College to the FE conference pointed out, these cuts impact particularly on women, who make up a majority of the part-time workforce.

Our campaigns and motions received good press coverages: the Times Higher Ed reported that 'academics face a lifetime on part-time or fixed-term contracts unless action is taken to fight the creep of casualised labour' <http://bit.ly/MLGEch>.

The Committee's fringe meeting was well-attended and lively and was a chance for Congress delegates to discuss the impact of casualisation across all sectors. The focus was on ideas for our Day of Action, recruitment of staff on casualised contracts, and on how to raise anti-casualisation activities among all members.

The other dominant issue at Congress was proposals to change the structures and size of NEC. Such a reorganisation of the representative structure could be a threat to the Anti-Casualisation Committee along with the equalities' standing committees and the other special employment committees.

The lively debate around this led to some changes to the order of business, so that our motions and

amendments to safeguard our committee and representation were heard and passed by Congress. Our 'safeguard' motions are important because changes to the NEC and representative structures are still likely, and we need to ensure that anti-casualisation activity is not jeopardised. Our argument is that any reform should maintain basic principles of representation of all members. These clear decisions of Congress are lines in the sand which define these principles, and, we believe, make a positive contribution as to the processes now in place to consider the future membership of the NEC.

Philip Inglesant

WORKSHOPS

Two workshops are now available, one aimed at **researchers** (and those on fixed-term contracts) and the other at **hourly-paid staff**.

They outline key employment rights, provide updates on national initiatives and policy on hourly-paid/fixed-term contracts, demonstrate where branches and local associations are improving employment conditions and explain how to work within UCU to tackle issues that affect you.

Workshops will be arranged as required.

If you are interested, please email national organiser: **Ronnie Kershaw**: rkershaw@ucu.org.uk

UCU OPEN MEETING FOR RESEARCHERS AT THE OPEN UNIVERSITY, MAY 2012

Goals and priorities

The meeting began with Jane Thompson, a UCU national industrial relations official explaining UCU's aims and priorities, including:

- secure employment for researchers
- supporting research careers
- building sustainable careers for research staff
- recognition for researchers as full academics

The UK-wide picture is that the percentage of fixed-term contracts used for research staff is declining. However, in 2010/11 68.9 per cent of research staff across all UK higher education institutions were on a fixed-term contract (FTC); the figure for the OU is 79.2 per cent.

Institutional variation

The figures vary massively by institution, for example Oxford University has over 87 per cent of research staff on FTCs whereas University College London has less than 3 per cent (all figures HESA staff record 2010/11).

There are reasons why some institutions get away with using more FTCs than they should, including:

- attitude of senior management, eg 'this is how it's always been'
- fixed-term nature of research funding
- Research Council procedures
- culture

UCU has always held that fixed-term funding should not be used

as a justification for keeping staff, especially researchers, on fixed-term contracts.

Real-life difficulties

Staff on fixed-term contracts face many problems, including difficulty obtaining mortgages and applying for research council funding in their own names. Improving security of employment means more than securing an open-ended/permanent contract, it means:

- staff being treated as an integral part of the university community
- ensuring that resources are managed so that redundancy situations are avoided
- breaking the employment link between individual research projects and individual researchers
- having systems in place to redeploy staff as and when necessary.

Moving forward collectively

One way to move forward collectively is to negotiate a fixed-term contract and redundancy avoidance policy with the employer. Jane highlighted the importance of staff on FTCs working together to challenge their position, rather than people tackling issues alone.

Also ensure that your institution abides by the Research Concordat, which is an attempt, by funders and employers, to agree a set of principles for researchers' careers. UCU believes all institutions should follow the Concordat, but believes

it does not go far enough in tackling job insecurity. It is a condition of obtaining research grants that employers follow the Concordat (<http://bit.ly/JT8PCo>). Additionally, the REF has a new environment section with a "people element" – which supports sustainable careers for researchers.

Monthly consultations by law

The UCU branch secretary explained that monthly consultations take place between the OU management and the UCU branch on potential redundancies due to fixed-term contracts ending. These meetings have to take place by law. If any UCU member thinks an insufficient amount is being done to redeploy them, they should contact the UCU branch early on, six months before their contract runs out.

The branch secretary spoke about the difficulties in effective redeployment when each of 30 OU units tries to operate like a separate employer. Staff in small units often have less chance of redeployment. HR need to take proper responsibility for redeployment and the different research groups within the OU to establish links with each other, and make it easier for research staff to move from one piece of work to another and one unit to another.

The meeting finished with a Q&A session.

Deb Shann and Lesley Kane
Open University UCU

STANDING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER IS THE WAY FORWARD

We have started yet another academic year with lecturers facing increased uncertainty regarding job security, pay, conditions, pensions, and support necessary for them to maintain the highest standards they have always been committed to. The attacks on casualised staff and the exploitation experienced by many have left them feeling undervalued, marginalised and uncertain about their future. UCU has fought for permanent fractional or full-time standard contracts for all casual staff and have had some success, especially when all staff and UCU have stood shoulder to shoulder.

Despite the various setbacks, progress has been made in many institutions due to the strength of the workforce organised within the union who are prepared to take action in support of their claim for fairness and justice.

I believe we should all start this academic year with a strong commitment to:

- unionise all casual, part-time, hourly-paid and agency staff
- oppose all zero-hours contracts and campaign for fractional and permanent contracts

- campaign for improved working conditions and a workplace free from harassment, bullying and stress
- attend branch/workplace meetings organised by the union
- commit to building for the day of action against casualisation on 6 March 2013

It is important for us as workers and for our students, our communities and the country to have equal, fair, and easy access to the widest possible education and skills training. Britain's success depends on investment in education and training. We are opposed to the privatisation and marketisation of education, the transfer of public assets such as colleges and universities to the private sector, the undermining of national pay bargaining, the continuing net reduction in pay and living standards due to pay rises below inflation, and attacks on our pensions.

We are committed to standing shoulder to shoulder to defend our jobs, our rights, our pensions and our union.

Jim Thakoordin
UCU Anti-Casualisation Committee
and National Executive Committee



FOLLOW US ON TWITTER: UCUNAntiCasualisation
Search for us as @UCUNAnti_Cas

FURTHER INFORMATION:

If you would like to get in touch with the Committee please contact the Chair, Vicky Blake: vickysucu@gmail.com.

To contribute to future issues of this newsletter please email articles to Jim Thakoordin: dthakoordin@sky.com

For more information about UCU's work on anti-casualisation visit 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. For more information about the Anti-Casualisation Committee go to: www.ucu.org.uk/2973



professional contracts
for professional people
end casualisation

