

# anti-casualisation news



THE NEWSLETTER OF UCU'S ANTI-CASUALISATION COMMITTEE

## ICEBERGS AHEAD!

**IT** has been a very busy year for anti-casualisation activists. We have long fought for, but seldom received, the kind of **widespread attention to atrocious pay and insecurity faced by workers on casualised contracts** as exploded over zero-hours contracts (ZHCs) in the media this summer. Activists from UCU, our sister unions and from broader social justice campaigns have been brought closer together and we continue to receive support from the wider public, trade unionists and non-trade unionists alike. **Some MPs have even taken notice**, with several doing research in their local areas and organising debates.

**ZHCs are the tip of the casualisation iceberg.** As our editorial shows, the figures obtained for ZHCs in tertiary education warrant the sounding of the loudest alarms: as activists we need to keep shouting 'iceberg ahead!' to demonstrate and to fight the myriad ways **casualisation of our labour oppresses us and undermines** not only our working conditions and the tertiary education labour market, but also the labour market as a whole.

### **WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY – BUT THERE IS A LOT MORE TO BE DONE**

We have made some very good progress in our fight against ZHCs but it would be a mistake to imagine that news coverage alone will eradicate them. Ask your colleagues if they support secure work for all staff and fair pay, and ask them to stand alongside us because **we must keep up the pressure on our employers to treat us fairly and with respect.**

The only really effective way to do this is collectively. The fight for fair pay and conditions in further and higher education is a fight is for all our members and all those who work in our sectors.

Colleagues who support our campaign to **Stamp Out Casual Contracts** understand that casualisation is both an industrial and an equality issue. Heavy workloads and erosion of pay in tertiary education are underwritten by patterns of increasing casualisation. It affects students too. Staff on part-time contracts are working disproportionate overtime, in many cases undertaking workloads more appropriate to full-time staff. **Hourly-paid staff are often required to do more work than is possible in the hours for which they are paid.** UCU is pursuing a complaint to the European Commission because changes to the law since April 2013 mean that employers no longer need to include fixed-term employees in collective redundancy consultations. **This discriminates against workers on the very basis of their fixed-term employment status.**

### **NOW IS THE TIME TO ORGANISE!**

Join the campaign and to show your support – whether or not you are currently on a casualised contract.

- 1 Get in touch with your branch to share your experiences.**
- 2 Organise meetings for staff on casualised contracts and to find out what is happening locally.**
- 3 Put up posters and submit your solidarity photos to the Collage 4 The Casualised.**
- 4 Use the Anti-casualisation email network and @UCUAnti\_Cas to share ideas and campaign strategy.**
- 5 Check out our online resources, and start planning for the 2014 Day of Action.**
- 6 Don't forget to get your branch to elect and register delegates for the 2014 Annual Meeting of Staff on Casualised Contracts on 28 February 2013.**

Vicky Blake, Chair  
Anti-Casualisation Committee

STAY IN TOUCH →

@UCUAnti\_Cas →

anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk

ZERO  
HOURS  
CONTRACTS

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# Zero-hours epidemic

**Z**ero-hours contracts (ZHCs) were at the top of the political and media agenda over the summer and UCU has been at the forefront of efforts to keep the issue in the public eye. The numbers of people on ZHCs and their prevalence across a range of sectors is one indicator of the extent of exploitation. Unfortunately however, official data sources have some catching up to do with the reality of labour market exploitation.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) have had to revise their estimates for numbers, from 200,000 to 250,000, which looks increasingly dubious with under-reporting rife and estimates from surveys carried out on behalf of the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development and Unite ranging from 1–5.5 million. Additionally, the confusing array of terms for zero-hours contracts means many do not realise they have signed up to them.

UCU's own research based on Freedom of Information (FOI) requests sent to every UK further and higher education institution revealed more

than 35,000 teachers were employed on ZHCs in the sector (10,868 in FE and 24,603 in HE). Overall 60.5% of further education and 54.1% of higher education respondent institutions make use of ZHCs. You can see the full report at:

[www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/6/s/Use\\_of\\_Zero\\_Hours\\_Contracts\\_Report\\_0913.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/6/s/Use_of_Zero_Hours_Contracts_Report_0913.pdf)

UCU maintains that ZHCs are the 'unacceptable underbelly' of further and higher education. Students miss out on continuity and often receive reduced access to staff employed on minimal hours.

Employers cannot hide behind flexibility as a defence for their continued use. The flexibility is very much a one-way street. Without a guaranteed income, workers on ZHCs are unable to make financial or employment plans on a year-to-year, or even month-to-month basis.

Through [@UCUAnti\\_Cas](https://twitter.com/UCUAnti_Cas), the Anti-Casualisation Committee has raised the profile of the issue among members in HE, FE, with think tanks, the media and politicians.

## Response from the Government

As a result of the publicity surrounding the abuse of ZHCs, the Coalition announced a review of their use over the summer. UCU took part in the review and made representations,

using the results of our FOI request. UCU remains concerned that Vince Cable's review is informal, and does not go far enough in investigating the depth and breadth of zero-hours abuse. Other organisations, for example the Work Foundation and the Resolution Foundation, have expressed similar reservations.

UCU has also been speaking to the Labour party as part of their ongoing campaign against the abuse of ZHCs. This has included invitations to Labour's summit on zero hours held in August. UCU were also invited to send a member on a ZHC to a small meeting with the Labour leader to discuss experiences of life on these contracts. This gave us the opportunity to make the following points:

- 1 difficulties of surviving financially on a very insecure income
- 2 lack of guaranteed hours
- 3 non-eligibility for tax credits
- 4 work/hours linked to meeting targets with 'poor performance' resulting in reduced hours or work not being offered the following term or year.

It was pointed out that the use of zero-hours and casual contracts in HE and FE is as much of a concern as in other sectors, despite the fact that it may not attract as much media coverage because academics and lecturers are sometimes mistakenly believed



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**WARNING: ZERO-HOURS EPIDEMIC**

to be freelancing as some sort of lifestyle choice. Specific case studies were mentioned, such as the case of a creative writing lecturer casualised for 23 years, and an FE ESOL lecturer hourly paid since 1972.

The plans put forward by Labour to tackle the abuse of ZHCs are:

- to ban employers from insisting zero-hours staff are available even when there is no guarantee of work
- to end contracts that require zero-hours workers to work exclusively for one business
- to ban the misuse of contracts where employees are working regular hours, over a sustained period, but without the same rights or benefits as full-time workers.

UCU are pleased that the Labour Party is taking the toxic issue of zero-hour contracts seriously, and would like a commitment from Ed Miliband that, if he becomes prime minister, he will legislate to outlaw this exploitation, and not simply try to implement some sort of voluntary code.

As well as ZHCs, there are other elements of casualisation that also have a debilitating effect on job security and the Anti-Casualisation Committee will continue to campaign for stronger legislation around all exploitative casualised contracts.

**Mahmoona Shah (FE)**  
**& Vicky Blake (HE)**  
**NEC Representatives of Staff**  
**on Casualised Contracts**

Follow us on twitter: @UCUAnti\_Cas

**WARNING: ZERO-HOURS EPIDEMIC**

# ZERO HOURS IS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH



*The negative effects to the health of those on zero-hours contracts can range from conditions such as repetitive strain injury to the extreme stress of coping with continual insecure employment.*

It has long been known that when people's livelihoods are at stake, they can be pressured into taking risks, and even into putting their lives at risk. Historically trade unionists have had deep feelings about this.

If you are on a ZHC, then your livelihood is continually at risk, and complaining about risks at work can lead to summary dismissal with no right of appeal. Telling your line manager that you are suffering the symptoms of repetitive strain injury could be taken as a resignation coming from a ZHC employee.

In HE and FE we are more fortunate than some insofar as there are not many fatalities in our industry, but we do have examples of staff on casualised contracts being pressured into accepting detrimental working conditions that staff on secure contracts have refused to accept.

Health and safety reps are normally supposed to be part of the workforce they represent, but when entire workforces are on zero-hours or other casualised contracts, the employer can simply stop giving work to a health and safety rep. This in itself removes an important layer of protection.

And in addition to all of the above there is the ongoing stress of having no secure employment.

If any members reading this have health and safety matters they should contact their local branch and also let us know via [anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk](mailto:anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk)

**Lesley Kane, Open University**

For more stories about zero hours contracts please see our blog at: <http://ucuanticas.wordpress.com>



# UCU Edinburgh campaign on hourly and zero-hours contracts

UCU Edinburgh has worked locally in three areas simultaneously to try to change its management's approach to the use of ZHCs alongside the national campaign led by the Anti-Casualisation Committee. The points below are a summary of the steps we have taken.

## Data collection

- **Qualitative survey** of members and non-members on their experiences of hourly contracts (Dec 2012–Jan 2013). Quotes from this survey later used in the petition.
- **Initial proportions of staff on zero-hours contract** emerged (Nov 2012).



- **Total numbers of staff on different contracts** (open-ended, open-ended with a review date, fixed-term, hourly) broken down by grade, gender, college/support group, job function from Edinburgh University, by an TULR(C)A request (Jan 2013). <https://sites.google.com/site/ucuedinburgh/news/htbn>
- **Total numbers of staff on different contracts** (open-ended, open-ended with a review date, fixed term, hourly, and any other) from all Scottish universities, under FOI request (May 2013)

- **UCU HQ requesting numbers** and details about number of academic and related staff zero hours contracts from all UK HEIs and FEIs, under FOI (June 2013).

## Campaigning and organising

- **Setting up a postgrad and postdoc network** (the majority of ZHCs at Edinburgh are held by postgrads and postdocs) with presentations at postgrad induction days, regular meetings (with officers from student union present) and a Facebook group.
- **Postgrad/postdoc rep on the committee**
- **Postgrad/postdoc rep liaising with student union** on campaigning etc (regular meetings with officers and the student union postgrad rep).
- **Attending annual national meeting** of members on casualised contracts.
- **Events:** anti-casualisation workshop on 6 March (UCU day of action) with UCU Scotland.
- **Petition:** a petition launched on 6 April, addressed to the principal, requesting better conditions and pay for tutors, demonstrators and other hourly paid staff – with stall and signing outside student union, as well as circulating petition online (eg UCU mailing lists). The petition was supported in a motion by the student union

<https://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/professor-sir-timothy-oshea-university-of-edinburgh-principal-ensure-fair-treatment-of-tutors-demonstrators-and-hourly-paid-staff>

- **Postgrad/postdoc regular meetings** and postgrad/postdoc rep attending open 'question time' meeting with principal to raise the issue
- **Media:** survey results and Edinburgh University numbers published on our website, eventually shared with MSPs via regional officials, as well as shared with credible newspapers (eg Herald).

## Negotiating

- **Human Resource Policy Development Group** (consisting of HR and union reps) developed project to review how ZHCs are used (January to July 2013) with UCU Scotland input.
- **University senior management** decided to give staff guaranteed hours and to move to pro-rata contracts (August 2013) [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-23985884](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-23985884)
- **Understand your university politics:** what are its weak points?
- **Keep going:** persistence pays off.

## UCU Edinburgh

Zero hours in the press



# Challenging zero-hours academia

**A**cademics take note: a recent strike at Hovis over zero-hours contracts drew a line between their emergency and habitual usage, Premium Foods having breached an agreement barring the latter. Relevance? HEIs do not see ZHCs as an occasional tactic for unforeseeable circumstances, but as a long-term strategy to bypass employment law. I should know. Last year my two-hourly paid teaching contracts at Sheffield Hallam ceased without notice after five years of continual renewal. I claimed unfair dismissal and, alleging specific abuses, part-timer discrimination.

## Be mindful of the law

An employment tribunal pre-hearing struck out both. It found me not dismissed at all; just 'employed for zero hours'. The discrimination claim was sunk by the same torpedo. The law demands a full-time comparator on the same type of contract, but a full-timer on a ZHC is an oxymoron. My defeats highlight why HEIs love these contracts. Their use of them may be short-sighted and unimaginative. Morally it may stink. But universities are twice as likely as other employers to use ZHCs, and not just in emergencies. What can be done?

I see three battlefronts. One is the law: backing cases with legal muscle. Although I lost my case, savvier representation and a different judge might have won the day so tribunals should not be ruled out, even in cases like mine.

The catch-22 circularity of the part-time worker regulations beggars belief. They outlaw part-timer discrimination by contract but require claimants to identify a full-time comparator on the same contract type! Sustained lobbying is needed, and a test case taken all the way.

## We need a stronger Labour movement

A second front is industrial action but let's not kid ourselves. Globalisation and the fall of the Soviet Union (which, for all its evils, indirectly reined in western capitalism's uglier instincts) have weakened organised labour. In a neoliberal race to the bottom, employers are taking full advantage. Add in implicit disregard for associate lecturers as 'less than', plus the fact associate lecturers are the least likely to join UCU, and the likelihood of action gets vanishingly small.

I see publicity as the way forward. Edinburgh University showed twice recently (ZHCs, and indirectly funding drone strikes) that HEIs fear negative press.

## We need to share information

Another is to tell students how many of their lecturers (31% at Hallam) are on ZHCs. The July FOI survey was a master-stroke but there's more to do. Imaginative ways must be found to bring home to students and the wider public both the moral and practical implications. What price associate lecturer loyalty? What price much touted notions of *quality, student experience* and *investing in people*?

At the same time we should exploit employer divisions as they do ours; HEIs are not equally implicated. Heavy users fear media focus on the nasty. Naming and shaming may concentrate minds, especially if alternative means of achieving flexibility are put forward.

Colleagues, this fight can be won.

## Philip Roddis

You can read this article in full on our blog at: <http://ucuanticas.wordpress.com>



**UCU response to Labour's zero-hour contracts plans (UCU press release):**  
[www.ucu.org.uk/6754](http://www.ucu.org.uk/6754)

**You never know if it'll be enough to survive (Guardian article):**  
[www.theguardian.com/education/2013/sep/16/zero-hours-contracts-at-universities](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/sep/16/zero-hours-contracts-at-universities)

**University of Edinburgh vows to abolish zero-hour contracts (UCU press release):**  
[www.ucu.org.uk/6753](http://www.ucu.org.uk/6753)

**Over half of universities and colleges use lecturers on zero-hour contracts (UCU press release):**  
[www.ucu.org.uk/6749](http://www.ucu.org.uk/6749)

**Research reveals huge underestimation in number of workers on zero-hours contracts (UCU press release):** [www.ucu.org.uk/6738](http://www.ucu.org.uk/6738)


**UCU response to Nick Clegg's zero-hours contracts investigation (UCU press release):**  
[www.ucu.org.uk/6737](http://www.ucu.org.uk/6737)

# Opposing casualisation in Northern Ireland and Wales

## A scoping study

In this short review I have attempted to assess the current visibility of academic staff on casualised contracts (and the challenges facing them) in both HE and FE in Northern Ireland and Wales. I have attempted in some degree to be quantitative by surveying across the sectors, but the pattern of reply has been sporadic and varied, necessitating appropriate circumspection in my conclusions. Returns from FE colleges were especially patchy both in number and content. Nevertheless I have attempted to draw together some broad conclusions, and see this as a 'work in progress' which has the definite merit of raising consciousness about the work of the Anti-Casualisation Committee in support of our members in these two important regions where UCU is a key academic trade union. Despite my detailed survey, because of gaps in the data and the inherently qualitative nature of the feedback, I have endeavoured not to over-generalise. Statistical data on the extent of zero-hours contracts was often impressionistic and frustratingly sparse. This report does, however, shed some valuable light on the current generic state of play for staff on casual contracts in Northern Ireland and Wales.

### HE in Northern Ireland



The university community in Northern Ireland has been racked by processes of merger or proposed merger, large-scale redundancy and industrial strife. Staff at the Open University (OU) emphasised changes being imposed on OU associate lecturers and that OU was in crisis over contracts. One colleague said virtually the whole university felt 'casualised' to some degree. At Queen's University, Belfast, there were complaints of an apparently 'less than voluntary' VR scheme which had forced out many part-time staff. At the University of Ulster there were variances in the replies across the four campuses of this university,

but a sense that the Andrew Biggart case won some years ago had been helpful in establishing the rights of staff on temporary and casualised contracts. After a long period of severe industrial conflict at Ulster University, members were anticipating changes in the HR regime there which could only be an improvement. At Stranmillis University College staff felt in a state of angst as a long-proposed incorporation with QUB (initially resisted by many Stranmillis staff) had been 'on and off' for years. Many casual staff were affected. At St Mary's University College lecturers hoped they had already endured the worst during the closure of sister entity, St Joseph's College, and that casualised staff were a minority primarily involved in evening classes, and seemed generally satisfied with their arrangements but would certainly like to be full-time if there were ever any vacancies.

### FE in Northern Ireland

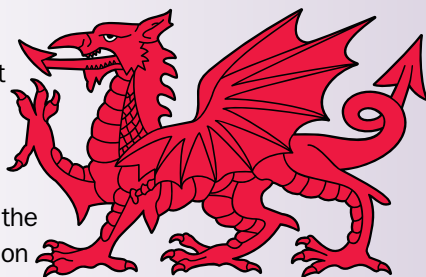
At Northern Ireland Further and Higher Education College there was a sense that an increasingly nasty management culture was disproportionately affecting tutors on casualised contracts, replacing lecturers paid off in successive waves of redundancy. The plight of workers at Belfast Metropolitan College, which has some 53,000 students at three campuses, was described as 'miserable'. A similar reply was received for the Northern Regional College (35,000 students at seven campuses) and North West Regional College (24,000 students at three campuses). At the Southern Regional College (50,000 students at six campuses) there were specific complaints of lecturers on casualised contracts being the 'unhappy stop-gap' after a cull of permanent staff. The smaller South Eastern Regional College and South West College seem to have fared little better, suggesting that size is not a factor in the increase in academic staff on casualised contracts in the college sector. On a more positive note, reports from specialist institutes such as constituent theological colleges like Union Theological



College and the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise suggest that where local management have more autonomy to set their own budgets, conditions of staff on casualised contracts seem more generous than in large multi-campus operations where they were often 'plugging the gaps' from full-time staff pay-offs. In such specialist colleges even instructors on ZHCs appeared happy with their lot. Autonomy and academic mission rather than size may be a crucial factor in institutional treatment of staff on casualised contracts.

### HE in Wales

We got a mixed set of replies from the HE community across Wales. It was hard to locate the percentage of staff on ZHCs. Staff consulted at the merged University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Swansea Metropolitan campuses said there had been a few cases where zero-hours staff had felt aggrieved by treatment in relation to contracts in the past two years, but that generally UCU members on campus needed to be made more aware of the situation of academic staff on casualised contracts, as they tended to be invisible to the union body as a whole, although there had been a few cases they had brought up with management, generally successfully.



At the University of South Wales, (formed by merger of University of Wales, Newport and Glamorgan University), which has nearly 34,000 students, there were many complaints about the treatment of academic staff on casualised contracts, and the same complaints featured in the replies from Cardiff University, which has about 30,000 students. Things seemed more confusing at Bangor and Cardiff Met where some lecturers on casualised contracts actually seemed happy with their contractual arrangements. In some specialist areas such as music and dance these contracts actually suited the relevant staff. At Glyndwr University the recent preoccupation has been with management efforts to change contracts for all lecturing staff and this has tended to unite permanent and lecturers on casualised contracts. On the other hand, a group of academic support staff on casualised contracts, some of them instructors and others who are art models on ZHC arrangements, said that the 'old regime' of their predecessor institute afforded

certain protections and that the new management had as yet to erode privileges built up for staff on casualised contracts during happier academic times. Several of these workers were represented by our sister unions, not UCU. We did not get a reply from OU in Wales but assume that the situation mentioned in Belfast would prevail there too.

### FE in Wales

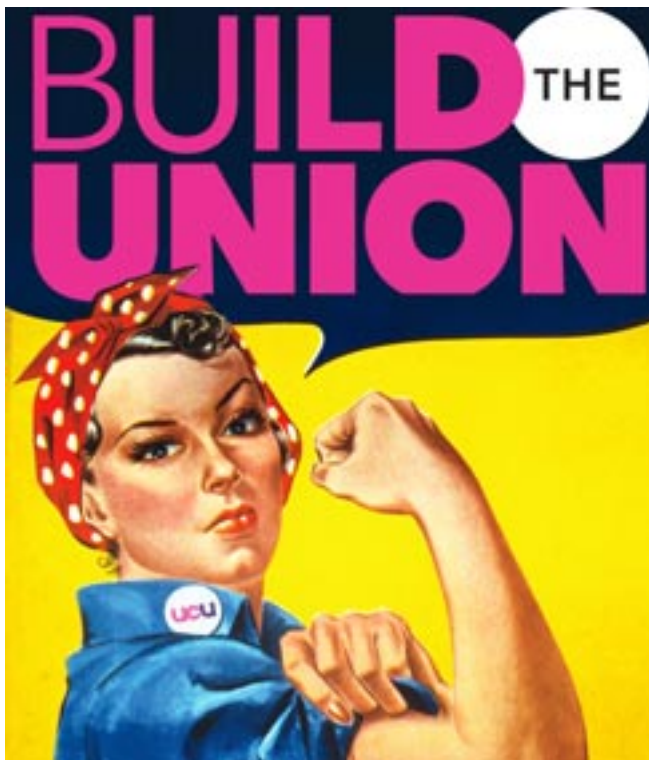
As for the situation in the FE sector, our replies were invariably less detailed. Some ZHC problems were mentioned at Bridgend, Cardiff and Vale, Coleg Cambria while, at Coleg Gwent, the largest FE college in Wales, staff talked of a marked deterioration in the situation of instructors on casualised contracts in the past two years. At the bilingual Coleg Ceredigion the pattern seemed a little better – some problems having been addressed recently by management; while we had no reply from other large FE players such as Coleg Harlech, Coleg Sir Gâr or Grwp Llandrillo Menai. Little data was obtained from them on the extent of ZHCs.

### Conclusions

As is usual from this kind of scoping research our feedback is fragmented and partial. It is apparent that staff on casualised contracts face mounting challenges across the HE and FE sectors in both Northern Ireland and Wales, but that some universities and colleges in both regions have taken a more constructive approach to the conditions of staff. In several of the smaller specialised colleges staff on casualised contracts often felt happy with their contractual arrangements even when these amounted to ZHCs – suggesting that a minority of staff have a part-time or casual contract which suits them. It seems generally that these more specialist entities either look after their staff better or the staff themselves are happier with casualised arrangements. This may be unique to particular disciplines such as theology, arts and dance. In other colleges staff spoke of the miserable insecurity of ZHCs. More generally, it was felt that staff across the HE and FE sectors on casualised contracts had suffered disproportionately from the general worsening of industrial relations felt in universities and colleges in both regions. It is also apparent from this preliminary scoping study that our Anti-Casualisation Committee has much work to do in raising consciousness about the rights of casualised and ZHC staff in Northern Ireland and Wales.

**Terry Duffy, Glyndwr University**

# Build the union and defeat casualisation



**S**taff on casualised contracts have varied experience including: cuts in staffing, changes in contracts, redundancies, harassment and bullying, uncertainty, excess workloads, long periods without work, being forced out of teaching and unable to earn enough to live on.

Of the 30 million workers in Britain today, less than seven million are in trade unions. The situation is even worse for staff on casualised contracts, including those on ZHCs. The greater the union membership at the workplace, the more recognition is demanded from the employer, and the collective bargaining strength of the union is more effective in saving jobs and defending and promoting pay and conditions.

#### **We need the strength of the UCU around us**

UCU has made massive inroads in unionising staff on casualised contracts, but this gain has been alongside the loss of many long-term members on casualised contracts. We have made massive gains, in part

through securing fractionalised contracts and opposing redundancies. Many staff on casualised contracts are not in the union, or are isolated in various outposts and have little contact with each other or the union. UCU has countered this by posting lots of information on its website. This information includes advice on combating redundancies, discrimination, bullying and harassment, joining and participating in the union structure and identifying your workplace representatives and UCU officers. A good place to start is:

[www.ucu.org.uk/3541](http://www.ucu.org.uk/3541)

Anti-Casualisation News is a useful resource for members to engage others and inform them of what is happening at their workplace. UCU has also set up a discussion network for use by members: see:

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

Despite the many problems, UCU is achieving success for our members every day, despite the efforts of the government and employers to privatise and marketise education. UCU believes that well-paid and resourced teachers, lecturers, researchers and academic-related staff are the key to success for our students, communities and the nation. The role of each member is crucial in the struggle for decent pay and conditions.

The Anti-Casualisation Committee is seriously engaged in strategic work within UCU to recognise the many problems faced by staff on casualised contracts and to critically examine and improve the support available to our members.

We need to build the union and to strengthen every workplace. We cannot do this without your help. We all have a duty to ensure that education is valued and seen as a democratic right of every individual throughout their lifetime, and that staff who provide this education are well paid, resourced and valued, by governments, employers, learners and the community.

**Jim Thakoordin**  
**Secretary, Bedfordshire ACE**  
**and member of the ACC**



## An **INDEPENDENT VOICE** for the casualised remains essential

**W**e have come a long way – but members on casualised contracts still need our independent voice in the union, and it is being reduced.

Activists on casualised contracts, with the fantastic support of fellow members on more secure contracts, have achieved the transfer of many members from zero to guaranteed hours contracts, from hourly-paid to fractional contracts, and from fixed-term to permanent contracts. This is to be celebrated, but there is still much to do, as permanent jobs are increasingly being replaced by jobs with less secure contracts.

### Have we achieved equality?

Are people in casualised posts valued equally at work, and the jobs of all members fought for with equal vigour? It is a good few years since I heard fellow members say, 'You signed the contract, didn't you?' or 'Fixed-term staff are not a priority', or (looking the hourly-paid person in the eye) 'Hourly paid! Poor quality!' But the shift in attitudes will not be complete until it becomes unthinkable for permanent staff in a redundancy situation to say that the casualised should be made redundant first.

Have we succeeded in persuading all our colleagues that the issues of casualisation should be central to the union's work? To an extent, yes, as seen in the excellent range of motions at Congress. Yet the issues for members on FTCs would at times slide back under the carpet, if not for activists speaking up.

### A degree of self-organisation

Has the union come far enough that members on casualised contracts no

longer need a degree of self-organisation? Examples are the annual meeting of members on casualised contracts, and official local meetings open to all members on casualised contracts in the branch, and which can send motions, delegates and nominations to the Anti-Casualisation Committee annual meeting.

The ACC has the right to advise the NEC and bring motions to Congress, and much excellent policy. These structures have enabled members to bring issues to national attention that would have been peripheral at best in many branches.

Excellent work is done in branches and regions, but it would be dangerous to say that we have now reached the point where no separate voice is needed for the casualised. For example, branch officers who are also supervisors of postgraduate student staff may find it hard to shift viewpoint. Researchers in danger of redundancy at contract end may find that some fellow members above them in the hierarchy accept it as inevitable. UCU reps have asked employers to stop giving work to agency workers in order to increase security for permanent staff, thus precipitating loss of jobs for vulnerable workers. Those suffering the exploitation know best what needs changing. And members of the ACC still come across members on casualised contracts who feel they haven't been able to access much help yet.

UCU recognises casualisation as an equality issue. As with the equality standing committees, there has to be a degree of self-organisation of the groups concerned, or the issues end up sidelined.



*Jean (pictured right) campaigning for job security for all*

### Stay vigilant for our independent voice

Reductions in that voice should not go unrecorded. In the cuts introduced to committees by the NEC, the ACC is to be reduced from 12 to eight, and its meetings from three to two, with a third run as a teleconference. Similarly, there are cuts to the equality structures, and the four equality conferences are being held on the same day, so that members can only choose one.

Further, a proposal is coming to NEC to change the model local rules so that local meetings of anti-casualisation and equality groups can't send motions to the annual meetings of the relevant members. This saves no money, but is a reduction in self-organisation and of an independent voice.

Nothing is won forever (even the NHS). Stay vigilant and vocal in continuing the fight for job security and equal regard, and for our independent voice in the union.

**Jean Crocker**  
Anti-Casualisation Committee



# A man's world?

**W**hen I was a PhD student struggling to make sense of an environment that rendered me at the bottom of its pile in terms of status, I thought well, if I get a job in a university then I will be someone. I will have started a career.

Prior to that I had read an academic article in the library for the first time, having previously had no concept of the genre (in 1995 a BA Hons could be done without articles) and I realised. Wow. This kind of thing matters and it can be written down. I knew immediately and exactly what I wanted and would do. I wanted to become an academic. I would do a PhD and then write, write, write (and teach). My vision forward was clear.

You know, the PhD was quite hard work. So were the subsequent two monographs in two years and the

setting up of the journal, the papers, the funding applications and so on.

### Watch out for gender issues

Oh, how naïve she is. Firstly I am a woman, so the odds on my turning a PhD into a (paid) full-time, long-term career as a public servant of thought, publication and teaching are slim. Yes, less likely than if I inhabited a male body. Weird but true. But it's just about the mind in higher education you say? No it isn't. Women are still tainted by sexism which fail to treat their mental capacities fairly. Implicit bias, open bias, covert bias and blatant networking to exclude, serve to mean that women's work and thought is sidelined, ignored, cited less, presumed incompetent and belittled. Men do better in a highly competitive domain.

Did I experience a belittling of my

work in the first three years of employment – post PhD – in higher education? (I did get a job as an academic. Hurrah!) Alas, dear reader, I did. All the schemes in the world (Concordat, Badge of Excellence, Athena Swan, the law...) did not help to stop me feel slightly bewildered. Why was he getting on so much better than me? Why is his work paid attention and taken seriously while mine is passed over as a 'novelty'? Why is his work referred and mine not? Why are they discussing his work in the meeting and never mine? Do I exist? Why does he have solid networks while I struggle to fit in? Why am I, as an employee, described as 'in and out'? Is he better than me? Why does he have a permanent job and an office, a laptop, an ipad and responsibilities and I – and all these other women – linger on precarious

short-term contracts, dependent on funding, infantilised into serving professorial staff?

Mysteries, which increasing levels of research on bias against women's thought and inclusion in higher education begins to unravel. I never stood a chance. I was a woman on a research contract. What a mistake.

But sexism aside, perhaps my status as an early career researcher on a contract might help because I am to be supported to create a flourishing career. So I can contribute this talent I have, this latent potential? So says the Concordat and Vitae for example. They are set up to help me so I'll be all right. After all, the European Union has identified that without researcher personnel to develop the knowledge economy, the future looks a little troubled. So, making sure researchers flourish, feel included, happy, find meaning and develop to do research is a big priority. Oh dear again. Such idealism.

They forget (do they?) to factor in that someone has to be the kicking horse. The early career researcher on a contract? Perfect! Let's get the early career researcher doing the donkey work in exchange for a reference or another research post. Another research post that also is a contract because once you get branded as a contract researcher and have spent

your time serving the egotistic hierarchies of a department where permanent colleagues get the career support, you have nothing to show on your CV in the way of teaching and supervision and no-one values a researcher anyway.

So forget your contribution to society dear (especially female) researcher. Because of the contract you have signed, the last nine months of it will be spent filling out random (all different format) online job application forms that will take tremendous amounts of time (that could have been spent on research) and you may or may not get another post. Of course you could have taken that redeployment to the reception desk in the social work department, but you have academic pride. You expect a viable, recognisable career pathway, you damn fool. They were right not to bother about you after all because you are clearly too stupid to work in higher education. And, by the way, we are right to patronise and ignore you whatever direction you turn because that stops you making even more complaints which are really bad form, dear. We wish you would shut up.

**Helen Lees**  
[editor@ other education.org](mailto:editor@othereducation.org)

*This is an edited version of an item that you can read in full on our blog at:*  
<http://ucuanticas.wordpress.com>

## Unionising postgraduates who teach

The recruitment of early career academic staff is hugely important to the future of our union.

Casualisation, zero-hour contracts, excessive workloads and low pay are acutely felt by postgrad students. The pressure to gain teaching experience in order to get a job at the end of a research degree makes students incredibly vulnerable to exploitation, and, in some universities, PhD students may be expected to teach as a condition of receiving funding, without receiving any kind of teaching wage. But equally our union needs postgraduate students, and research conducted by UCU and NUS suggests that the main reason that postgraduates who teach do not join UCU is simply that they are unaware that they can!

At the University of Sheffield, postgraduate membership has increased by 65%. We would not have secured such rapid recruitment were it not for a handful of PhD students with previous trade union experience who have been determined to build UCU: making contact with students in other departments, addressing new students in induction meetings, displaying UCU posters and leaflets, and actively participating in our union branch. Partially as a result of this, Sheffield UCU has recently secured contracts for postgraduates who teach, where previously we were treated as 'bank workers'.

In every institution where our union is present, we must ensure that we make contact with postgraduates and encourage them to join UCU

**Sam Morecroft**  
 Sheffield UCU Education Officer  
 and PhD Student

## UCU'S LEGAL FIGHT OVER REDUNDANCY CONSULTATION



**UCU took its fight for job security** to the European Commission on the basis that a change to employment law contravenes the requirement not to discriminate against fixed-term staff.

Read more at: [www.ucu.org.uk/6739](http://www.ucu.org.uk/6739)





## Join our Anti-Casualisation email network

This new e-group merges UCU's former hourly-paid and researchers' networks. It is a forum where members who are hourly-paid, on a fixed-term contract or other form of casualised employment can share ideas and information. The sharing of campaigning ideas will also strengthen our push for improvements. UCU's Anti-Casualisation Committee will use this network to keep in touch with you and send you relevant news. To join the network (UCU members only) go to:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/elists> and complete the request form. There is also a range of anti-casualisation materials available to members at: [www.ucu.org.uk/anticasaction](http://www.ucu.org.uk/anticasaction) on the UCU website. For more general resources, and to find out what other branches are doing, take a look at the excellent Build The Union webpage:

[www.ucu.org.uk/3541](http://www.ucu.org.uk/3541)

**Ronnie Kershaw**  
UCU National Organiser



# STOP PRESS

**The UCU anti-casualisation blogsite has now been launched:**

<http://ucuanticas.wordpress.com>

If you would like to write on any aspect of casualisation in the post-16 education sector we would love to hear from you – send proposals to [anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk](mailto:anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk) or tweet us at [@UCUAnti\\_Cas](https://twitter.com/UCUAnti_Cas)

**Annual meeting for staff on casualised contracts:** This is

being held on Friday 28 February 2014. Further information will be sent to all branches in late November/early December so if you want to attend, send a motion or be nominated to the Committee please get in touch with your branch as soon as possible.

**Day of Action 2014:** Following the successful day of action against casualisation in March 2013, Congress voted to make this an annual event to both promote our anti-casualisation campaign and to recruit staff on casualised contracts. The date has yet to be decided but please keep your eye out and talk to your branch about local events you could hold.

## Organising researchers in Europe new ETUCE statement published

The ETUCE, the European trade union federation for teachers, researchers and education workers, has published a new statement on organising researchers which identifies some of the challenges in organising researchers into trade unions and outlines a number of recommendations for education trade unions. More details and access to the full document here: [www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=6725](http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=6725)

This edition of Anti-Casualisation News has been compiled by an editing team from ACC Jim Thakoordin ([dthakoordin@sky.com](mailto:dthakoordin@sky.com)), Jean Crocker ([jeancrocker@heights222.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:jeancrocker@heights222.fsnet.co.uk)) Terry Duffy ([terenceduffy@hotmail.com](mailto:terenceduffy@hotmail.com)) and Lee Williamson ([lepw@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:lepw@st-andrews.ac.uk))



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Search for us as [@UCUAnti\\_Cas](https://twitter.com/UCUAnti_Cas)

### FURTHER INFORMATION:

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

To contribute to future issues of this newsletter please email articles to Jim Thakoordin: [dthakoordin@sky.com](mailto:dthakoordin@sky.com)

For more information about UCU's work on anti-casualisation visit [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)

