

# ...and related Spring 2014

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## Chair's welcome

Welcome to the spring edition of ...and Related that follows the academic related annual meeting. Looking back over the last 12 months, recruiting new members and raising awareness among academic-related staff continues to be challenging for our staff group. The decrease in use of the title 'Academic Related' at many institutions can cause confusion for potential new members. While we must retain it where it gives our members clear rights, I am pleased to say that the annual meeting renamed the committee in the hope of being more identifiable where our group of staff are called by a variety of different names or those who are new to HE. I am pleased to announce we are now called the Academic Related, Professional Staff Committee.

This year has been a challenging one for all members of UCU and while the pay dispute goes on, the changes within UCU are starting to bed in and I'm confident that along with a less ambiguous remit and committee members taking clear responsibility for aspects of the committees work we can improve the way the committee represents ARPS staff this year.

The divisive use of restructuring has undoubtedly resulted in members (including from the committee) being

forced to leaving sector. This use of restructuring can often result in parts of the organisation being outsourced or moved to shared services piecemeal or by stealth, over time. So far major attacks on our group have been resisted by branches supported by regional and national officers but one of our motions calls on us to be wary of the use of temps and short contracts where a permanent job exists. To date we have had little information from branches about widespread outsourcing or moving to shared services that have resulted in significant loss of jobs. We welcome any information in these areas as UCU has produced some useful resources to help branches deal with these issues.

Communication with members and development of a network of academic-related reps are things we must continue to work on. We have reps in near to half our branches now (though we have yet to put them to good use) and I thank the members of the committee (especially Roger Walters) who have been active in contacting branches directly to build numbers. One of our annual meeting workshops looked at the use of social media, and while the event was well attended and enjoyed, the committee must look to making better use of social media to communicate with

members and reach out to new members.

As ever we need input from branches so that we can support them in local negotiations to protect the terms and conditions of ARPS staff. We need branches to be vigilant about the erosion of conditions for ARPS staff. We need branches to identify and recruit our group of staff as the terminology is now too diverse to identify all. The annual meeting identified recruitment as the priority for the committee this year. We held an interesting and thought provoking talk about professional development from a former ARPS member and member of the Association of University Administrators. Our other workshop gathered views on professional development and tried to summarise current practise in this area. In the coming year, and in line with another annual meeting motion, we must make sure development and progression opportunities are available to those staff who want them and I hope we can start to build resources to support ARPS staff in maintaining their status and those who which to progress in their careers.

I'd like to express my thanks to committee and other ARPS members on HEC and other national

committees for making sure our voice is heard. I am pleased to have been re-elected chair and would like to thank the committee and my past vice chairs, Patricia Hulme and Jo Taplin-Green for stepping up when I've been unavailable in the last year and look forward to working with Helen McCarthy the new vice chair. I also thank ARPS members on all UCU committees who continue to represent our group.

Finally, I would encourage all members to support the Academic Related, Professional Staff Committee in its work by becoming a rep in your workplace, getting in touch with your issues via your rep or e-mail [academicrelated@ucu.org.uk](mailto:academicrelated@ucu.org.uk). You can also contact us and keep up to date with all the latest ARPS news on our brand new twitter feed [UCU\\_ARPS](https://twitter.com/UCU_ARPS)

## The Academic Related, Professional Staff Committee

The 2014-15 Committee members are:

Dan Arthur (chair) - LSHTM

Helen MacCarthy (vice chair) – University of Hull

Eyad Abu-Khiran – Queens University Belfast

Terry Duffy - Glyndwr University

Joe Gluza - Cambridge

Patricia Hulme - Nottingham

Marie Morley - Bath

Patrick Moule - LSHTM

Roger Walters – SOAS

The Committee Secretary is Mrs Kerith Allen, Bargaining

and Negotiations Official.

If you have any questions or queries for the Committee please e-mail [academicrelated@ucu.org.uk](mailto:academicrelated@ucu.org.uk)



## Our new committee member – Eyad Abu-Khiran

I was born in the late sixties to Palestinian parents who were forced to leave their homeland. Seeking safety and a better life they decided to move to the oil rich state of Kuwait. My mother looked after the internal affairs of the family while my father worked as a maths teacher. A high moral sense and an appreciation of education are two main things me and my siblings were brought up to value and seek. Twenty years later and after the Gulf

war, the family of 9 was forced to move to Jordan. I got a BSc in Engineering and started my first full time job in a local IT company in 1993. I was involved in the student union in Kuwait and in the Engineers Association in Jordan.

In mid-1990 I decided to pursue a PhD in Engineering from the Queens University of Belfast (QUB), Northern Ireland. Few years later I decided to leave engineering and work in IT. I

worked in few local IT companies and in PwC prior to going back to QUB where I currently work. In 2007 I got an MSc in Computer Science from the University of Ulster. I joined QUB in 2008 as a computer officer in one of the schools. Five years later I took a post in the Directorate of Information Services. This move has given me exposure to the two distinct work environments and different issues staff in each might face. I became a member of UCU in 2008 and joined the local branch committee a year later. I gradually took on more responsibilities in the branch and now I'm the health and safety representative and the assistant secretary. I believe that unions are very important and I hope that the day when unions' popularity and support diminishes will never come. I also believe that continuity should be a top priority at every branch. Younger committee members need to be recruited and taken by the hand by more senior union officers. How else can we ensure that knowledge and experience is passed on? I also think that union unity is very important and promoting left, right or centre ideas only promotes divisions and works against the essence of a union.

## Restructuring

I write this at a time when life in HE gets even harder for Academic Related, Professional Support (ARPS) staff. There is more and more to do, more challenging tasks to undertake and in many universities the purge of the 'support' and ARPS staff through draconian cuts and restructuring goes on.

Restructuring – yes there is a lot of that around. Restructuring usually means job losses for ARPS staff, so nothing new there then. What is new is the obscenity of seeing staff being made redundant and just a few weeks later a very similar job will appear often advertised through an employment agency. The job is usually just different enough to avoid legal challenge but is the same in essence. The salary will often be advertised at an hourly paid and in some cases as low as £7 per hour. Although the new Agency Worker Regulations have improved the most basic employment rights for agency staff this group of staff, and those on fixed term contracts, lose job security, full parity of employment rights and benefit to their colleagues, loss of esteem and a lack of professional development. Additionally it is galling to see that many of these jobs are offered for a year or more in some cases. This suggests these jobs are hardly temporary and it is hard not to be cynical about the 'real' reasons for restructuring and redundancies. The end result of restructuring is too often:

- ARPS staff lose their jobs
- Lose job security
- Can be reemployed on similar job by employment agency
- On a lower salary
- Lose access to USS
- Lose more than the minimum annual leave entitlement
- No redundancy payments.

A member of staff can work for the University for many years. Be made redundant, re-employed by a temping agency and continue working in a very similar role. This undermines the professionalism of ARPS staff and the contribution made by ARPS staff to institutions. The ARPS Committee will continue to highlight and campaign against the disproportionate impact of restructuring on ARPS staff.

Patricia Hulme  
Former Chair and Vice Chair of AR  
Staff Committee  
University of Nottingham LA & NEC

## Committee Priorities 2014 – 2015

Following the annual meeting the Committee has reviewed its activities and progress over the last year. The motions from the annual meeting and the issues we suspect will face ARPS members over the next year. Consequently the Committee have made the biggest change to our priorities for the last few years and they are as follows:

- Recruiting new and active members
- Protecting terms and conditions of employment for academic related, professional staff, protecting the status of academic-related staff in University statutes and in recognition agreements and resisting grade-drift.
- Campaigning to resist de-professionalisation and outsourcing and raise awareness of its damaging impact (based on case studies where implemented)
- Playing a full and equal part in action and campaigning to maximise the impact of industrial action
- Communication via newsletters and other means, and development of a network of academic-related reps
- Raise the profile of the work and structures of the ARPS committee amongst UCU members and raise the profile of ARPS members within UCU and the wider community

## Are you ready for Congress?

Congress is being held in Manchester this year on 29th and 30th May and ARPS issues will be right up there on the agenda. We are holding a Fringe meeting titled: Academic Related staff on the front line of which more details below. The Committee has also sent two motions, one to Congress and one to the HE sector conference. These motions can still be amended up to 7th May but as you can see from the current wording given below both motions touch on one of the most fundamental issues facing ARPS members; de-professionalisation.

The ARPS congress delegates are Terry Duffy and Patrick Moule. They look forward to seeing as many ARPS members as possible at congress.

The ARPS motions are as follows:

### **Fair terms and conditions for all staff Academic Related, Professional Staff Committee**

UCU is appalled by the cynical use of reviews and restructuring to make redundancies and replace these staff with temps or casualised staff within universities & colleges. UCU questions the legitimacy of this practice as many of these posts are not in any way short term and there is a substantial more permanent job available.

UCU sees this as an attack on employment rights of these staff as they are unlikely to have proper contracts or paid holiday and are unable to afford decent pensions.

UCU calls on the NEC and all branches/local associations to fight against this practice at local level, shaming managements that indulge in this shoddy employment practice.

Motions to HE Sector Conference

### **Fighting de-professionalisation and down-grading Academic Related, Professional Staff Committee**

Conference notes with sadness that staff are increasingly regarded by management as interchangeable units of production. This attack on staff members' professionalism, status and dignity represents a particular threat to academic-related staff, who are viewed as either managers or service providers, with little control over their own work. With responsibility removed, downgrading ensues. New staff are recruited into lower grades, with little prospect of advancement. Individual expertise is actively discouraged, with staff treated as a homogeneous group, able to be deployed into any role.

Conference:

- Reiterates its belief in the parity of academic-related staff with academic colleagues, and the right of all staff to be recognised as professionals working within their area of expertise.
- Calls on UCU to fight attempts to downgrade and de-professionalise staff, and to support members facing such attacks.
- Calls on HEC to campaign for the maintenance of a non-managerial career path for all.

## Fringe

The Academic Related, Professional Staff fringe meeting has been scheduled for Thursday 29th May at 1pm with the title: Academic Related staff on the front line.

Academic related and professional support staff have a unique role to play in industrial action. With contracts and responsibilities that differ from those of academics, support staff can take action which compliments, supports and increases the impact of strike and non-strike action. Academic and related staff are invited to this fringe meeting to hear experiences of support staff in disputes and discuss how we can be more effective when we work together. We look forward to seeing you there!

## The proposed changes to the Disabled Students' Allowances

Changes have been announced to The Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) to take effect for those applying for the first time from 1st September 2015. The consequences for individual disabled students are potentially devastating and have a direct impact on the ARPS staff working with such students.

DSAs are grants which can pay for needs assessment, equipment, human support and transport, according to the needs of the individual. The funding can amount to a grant of more than £30,000 per individual over the duration of their course, though most claims are well below that total.

The DSAs have been available in essentially their current form since 1990 and the National Audit Office (2007) praised the DSAs for contributing to improved recruitment & retention of disabled students and the Equality Challenge Unit (2013) statistical report shows a higher proportion of DSAs claimants attained a First/2:1 than those who did not receive DSAs.

- The DSAs will “no longer pay for standard specification computers [Detail added from the SLC document published on 07.04.2014.or software & associated peripherals] or the warranties and insurance associated with them. [They] will no longer pay for higher specification and/or higher cost computers simply because of the way in which a course is delivered.”
- Students with SpLDs are the most numerous group, they currently form approx. 50% of UG disabled students and approx 38% of PG disabled students (ECU, 2013). Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs, e.g. dyslexia & dyspraxia) are singled out: they “will continue to receive support through DSAs where their support needs are considered to be more complex”. The inference is that those students with SpLDs who have less complex needs will not be eligible for DSAs.
- The “most specialist” forms of human support will continue to be funded by the DSAs. By inference: the less specialist support workers will not be funded. The SLC document also published on 07.04.2014 adds a further detail: “DSA will continue to fund the most specialist Non-Medical Help (i.e. as outlined in the SLC NMH manual . In the last few years the sector has undertaken a process which has resulted in a standardised set of NMH role definitions and these form four bands.
- The DSAs will no longer meet the additional costs of specialist accommodation, other than in exceptional circumstances.
- Funding will no longer be provided for general consumable items (e.g. printer cartridges and paper).

The Government claims there is time for institutions for put in place sufficient arrangements and HEI's are not to pass on the costs of specialist support they provide to individual disabled students. These will put enormous pressure on ARPS staff working in student support as they try to cope with supporting students with genuine needs and HEI's putting pressure on them to stay within very tight budgets

Summary by Deb Viney, Diversity Advisor, SOAS, University of London

## A Review of the Situation and Challenges Facing Academic Related, Professional Staff in Northern Ireland and Wales

### Introduction:

Academic related, professional staff (hereafter abbreviated as ARPS) are often regarded as the Cinderella's of today's university. Predominantly located in pre-92 universities they comprise a diverse group of university administrators, librarians and computer operations and support staff, as well as some new professional categories spawned by the increasing complexity of university management. What's the current situation of these historic and newer waves of academic related staff, and what are the challenges which they face as UCU members in Northern Ireland and Wales, the two geographical areas where my own career has predominantly been based? It should also be emphasized that the term “academic related” remains something of a contested one, and that individual universities use different terminology to describe a set of staff who have traditionally been categorized by UCU (and its predecessor union, AUT) as “academic related”. There is insufficient space here to go into the

semantics of these distinctions.

Suffice also to say that the administrative growth of universities has further enhanced the debate about these distinctions, and many new challenges facing this diverse group of workers at this time.

### Current Challenges:

In this short study I have attempted to assess the current visibility of academic-related staff (and the challenges facing them) in Northern Ireland and Wales. This piece of scoping research was conducted alongside a similar survey on both casualisation and disability in higher education today, and this data has been analysed in the same way. The piece on casualisation appears in the current edition of the UCU Casualisation News. This piece of research follows the same research template. Again I have attempted in some degree to be quantitative but the pattern of reply has been sporadic and varied, necessitating appropriate circumspection in my conclusions. Returns from some of the smaller and specialist HE

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 merit of raising consciousness about the work of the ARPS Committee in support of our members in these two important regions where UCU is a key academic trade union. Because of gaps in the data and the inherently qualitative nature of the feed-back, I have endeavoured not to over-generalize. Statistical data on the specifics of academic related contracts for computing staff in particular was often impressionistic and frustratingly sparse. This report does, however, shed some valuable light on the current generic state of play for academic-related staff in Northern Ireland and Wales. It especially shows that there is a commonality in the challenges facing this diverse group of academic-related staff.

## A Picture of ARPS Staff in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland there have been whole-sale losses of academic-related posts across the university sector in the past two decades. At the same time there has been a considerable growth in new varieties of academic-related post in universities including new spheres of managerial type functions in areas such as intellectual property and compliance. The “pick up” into UCU membership by these newer categories of staff has generally been poor despite their concomitant growth in numbers suggesting that these post-holders perceive themselves as part of management cadres.

The hope of a return to the “golden age” when our ARPS numbers were high, have alas steadily diminished in recent years, in the universities and colleges of Northern Ireland, as elsewhere in the UK. Northern Ireland’s universities have been racked by processes of merger or proposed merger, large-scale redundancy and industrial strife. Staff at the Open University (which has about 3,000 students) in the province emphasized changes being imposed on OU administrators. Technical grade staff such as computing support tended to be out-sourced and lacked an affinity with the academic community. At Queen’s University, Belfast (with approximately 12,000 students) the university plan to shed many of the ARPS grades has progressed but with a good deal of resistance at Faculty level. At central administrative level the university has been more successful in penetrating what used to be a solid ARPS group, with targeted redundancies and a new “in flow” of administrative staff who do not identify with the long-standing ARPS group.

At the University of Ulster there were variances in the replies across the 4 campuses of this 25,000 student university, overall the historic ARPS group had been diminished but certainly not decimated, although many of the newer administrative appointments did not veer naturally to the ARPS group. Perhaps this could be perceived as an

overwhelming goal for the local branch- to re-establish the ARPS representation which had been represented in the past. At Strandmillis College and St Mary’s University College potential ARPS categories are too small these days to form a distinct lobby. 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 ARPS staff fare better than in large multi-campus operations where administrative staff had little status. As in QUB where Faculty-level administrators seem to have been protected by the ethos and goals of the individual Faculty, specialist autonomy and academic mission rather than size may be a crucial factor in institutional treatment of ARPS staff.

## A Picture of ARPS Staff in Wales

We got a mixed set of replies from the university community across Wales. It was often hard to locate the percentage of ARPS staff. Staff consulted at the merged University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Swansea Metropolitan campuses said there had been a few overt cases where administrators, librarians and computing support people had felt aggrieved by treatment in relation to contacts in the past two years, but that generally UCU members on campus needed to be made more aware of the situation of ARPS staff, as they tended to be invisible to the union body as a whole, although there had been this 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 administrative grades, large-scale out-sourcing of library and computer support functions and entrenchment of management against recognition of the unique roles of ARPS staff. The same complaints featured in the replies from Cardiff University which has about 30,000 students. At

Bangor, Cardiff Met and Royal Welsh College ARPS staff was barely recognizable as a group. At Glyndŵr University administrators in the predecessor institute had not perceived themselves as part of the union but were afforded certain protections for library, computing and other grades that new management had as yet to erode privileges built up 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.

## The Creeping “Casualisation” of ARPS Staff Categories

UCU consider that at least 40% of academic, research and support staff are now “casualised” and some institutions are much worse! Staff at the sharp end of casualisation are almost entirely atomized, desperately moving from contract to contract or forced to use recruitment agencies. In both Northern Ireland and Wales it is clear that increasingly, where out-sourcing agencies are involved the formerly solid groups of ARPS staff receive drastically inferior benefits, leaving the ARPS worker doubly exploited, with two sets of parasites extracting a percentage from their service. In many cases ARPS staff on casualised contracts don’t qualify for full benefits: maternity pay, sick pay, pensions and holiday entitlements etc. As a result of EU legislation, agencies have to extend rudimentary benefits but this is often a PR con-trick with the incorporation of holiday pay into the hourly rate or other benefits being offered only on paper as part of a crafty exercise in shuffling numbers. Behind the awful collective reality of the statistics on casualisation of our ARPS colleagues, are the individual stories of personal misery which threaten to blight all our lives at work and at home!

## Conclusion

As is usual from this kind of scoping research our feed-back is fragmented. It is apparent that ARPS staff face mounting challenges in

both Northern Ireland and Wales but that some universities and colleges, notably specialist institutions, in both regions have taken a more constructive approach to the conditions of ARPS staff. This may be unique to particular disciplines such as theology, computing, the sciences, arts and dance. In other colleges staff spoke of the miserable insecurity of new contracts for people

involved in areas which would normally have had a strong AR union ethos. It is also apparent from this preliminary scoping study that our ARPS Committee has much work to do in raising consciousness about the rights of ARPS staff in Northern Ireland and Wales.  
Terry Duffy (Glyndŵr University)

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