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New FE Bargaining Advice

How lesson observations should be

Following the highly successful launch of the UCU report on lesson observation by Dr Matt O'Leary, UCU has developed further resources to aid branches in their negotiations and to undertake a fundamental review of their lesson observation policy.

[Lesson Observations: How they should be conducted](#) is a practical guide to negotiating lesson observation policies in FE. Whether your college or adult education service is still wedded to graded observations or is starting to move towards an ungraded model, this guide will support you in bargaining for an agreed policy with professional development, respect and trust at its core.

The bargaining guidance includes:

- A step by step guide on how your employer might argue to keep graded observations and how you can answer those with evidence based arguments
- Recommendations that should underpin your negotiations and any agreed lesson observation policy
- A checklist to allow you to make sure your aims for a new ungraded lesson observation policy are all covered in your negotiations

- A brief overview of the current context in the sector that explains how there is a definite shift away from punitive and stressful graded observations towards a collegiate and developmental model
- A summary of the evidence gathered by UCU in the O'Leary report.

At its last meeting FEC welcomed the new bargaining guidance as a valuable tool for branches to use alongside the O'Leary report.

The UCU lesson observation web pages have links to the UCU bargaining guidance and UCU O'Leary report, further advice on learning walks, the misuse of the student voice and other information for branches to draw on in their negotiations:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/lessonobservation>.

Please contact your regional office for support and advice in your lesson observation negotiations.

Has your college moved to ungraded observations? Have you successfully negotiated a new policy with professional development at its heart? E-mail your success stories to Kerith Allen, Bargaining and Negotiations Official, e-mail kallen@ucu.org.uk

Ending the disgrace of Zero Hours Contracts in FE

While UCU continues to join other trade unions in putting political pressure on the main parties to take decisive action to legislate against zero hours contracts, we have a duty to use our campaigning and collective bargaining strength to win agreements that make a real difference now. UCU is targeting large-scale users of zero hours contracts in higher and further education and we have produced new bargaining and campaigning guidance to help all branches in ending this scandal in their own colleges.

Colleges are vulnerable on this issue as they are sensitive to the charge of exploiting vulnerable staff and have an eye on potential Ofsted criticisms of their teaching. Conversely, with budget cuts, many of them are making free use of exploitative casual contracts, increasing workloads for hourly paid staff and filling formerly permanent vacancies with casualised contracts.

UCU's new bargaining guidance reiterates the existing agreement with the AoC, which calls for the use of fractional part-time contracts as the fairest way to employ part-time staff, as well as offering guidance on negotiating variable hours contracts with guaranteed minimum hours. It also provides arguments for negotiators and campaign resources to help you put pressure on your local management. You can download the guidance here: http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/l/3/ucuzerohourscontracts_bargainingpack_nov14.pdf

If you need more information or are already campaigning or negotiating on this issue, let us know by emailing jwhite@ucu.org.uk

Is your sick pay fit for work?

This month's UCU Health and Safety News ([H&S news](#)) explains that the new Fit For Work national occupational health service should be up and running in May this year. However, UCU is concerned that this is designed to get employees to return to work sooner, thereby saving the employer and potentially the state money. This could be at the cost of the full recovery from illness or injury of our members.

Additionally, the guidance reminds employers to amend their sickness absence policies in light of this new service. UCU has been aware of employers seeking to reduce the sick pay available to our members. Employers make take advantage of this opportunity to try and push through cuts to sick pay. Cuts to sick pay entitlements are a pay cut by any other name and impact on our members at a very vulnerable point in their lives.

Branches are urged to resist such pay cuts and to use the UCU bargaining guidance on sick pay and sickness absence policies in their negotiations ([Sick of it?](#)) and to contact their regional office for support and advice immediately.

The UCU Prison Education Annual meeting

The meeting will be held at the UCU's head office in London on Friday 27 March 2015. The meeting will hear reports on the work UCU do in relation to Prison Education Staff and debate the challenges facing prison education staff. Each prison education department can send one rep to the national meeting. For more information email jlennox@ucu.org.uk