



University and College Union

‘Further, higher, better’

**Submission to the government’s
second Comprehensive Spending
Review**

Section 30

30 Casualisation

The term casualisation is used to refer to the practice of employing staff on insecure terms, particularly the use of fixed-term contracts, as well as employing staff on an hourly-paid basis. Part-time working may be a preferred option for many employees, but for others the lack of opportunity to work on a full-time basis can also be seen as another form of casualisation.

Further education

Foster Review

'Worries were also frequently expressed about the casualisation of the workforce. A significant proportion of staff (over 17%) do not have permanent full time or part time contracts. There may be legitimate reasons for employing staff on this basis, particularly where FE colleges are supplementing their expertise with professionals working in industry and contributing specialist knowledge. But it does create a fragmented workforce and makes staff development and organisational transformation more difficult to manage.'¹⁶⁵

In England in 2003-4, 7% of all further education staff were defined as casual: this may include supply staff as well consultants.¹⁶⁶ Nearly one-quarter of staff were employed on a fixed-term basis. Nearly two-thirds of staff were employed on a permanent basis. Approximately 5% of teaching staff were employed through an agency. Although the analysis by Lifelong Learning UK indicated negligible numbers of self-employed teaching staff, LLUK said: 'Many colleges do not employ hourly-paid staff so where there is a requirement for this type of teacher, they *have* to be employed via an agency'.¹⁶⁷ There was very little difference between male and female staff in their terms of employment. In brief, around one-third of further education staff were employed on a casual basis.

Terms of employment, further education staff, England, 2003-4

	Casual staff	Fixed-term staff	Permanent staff	Teaching staff employed through an agency	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Female staff	7.0%	24.8%	63.4%	4.8%	100.0%
Male staff	7.1%	22.9%	65.0%	5.0%	100.0%
Total	7.0%	24.1%	64.0%	4.9%	100.0%

Source: Lifelong Learning UK (2005), Further education workforce data for England 2003-4, p. 45.

In its submission to the 2004 spending review, NATFHE highlighted the reliance of the sector on fixed-term hourly-paid staff and agency labour. Research in 2000 indicated that between 27% and 33% of part-timers indicated that they would prefer to work full-time; this compares to a figure of 10% for the UK part-time workforce as a whole. NATFHE estimated that at least 50% of part-time lecturers were employed on hourly-paid temporary contracts and that over 20% of colleges used lecturers supplied by agencies.

Comment

The crucial issue is the negative consequences for employees and the quality of service provided by colleges if the use of part-time hourly-paid teaching staff continues. In its submission to the 2004 spending review NATFHE made reference to evidence indicating a number of weaknesses concerning the support given to fixed-term hourly-paid teachers in FE and the negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning. There is a need for an urgent review of progress made in rectifying this situation and a commitment to providing the necessary financial resources to tackle outstanding problems. Our experience continues to indicate that where colleges can find the resources, the clear preference is to move away from widespread use of fixed-term hourly-paid staff towards the use of fractional open-ended contracts.

Higher education

Of the 150,000 academics in the UK in 2003-4, 20% were employed on a teaching-only basis (ie with no requirement to undertake research), nearly one quarter were employed on a research-only basis, but the majority of academics, 55%, were engaged in both teaching and research. In 2003-4, 45% of all academics were employed on a fixed-term contract, with 66% of teaching-only academics, 91% of research-only academics and 16% of teaching-and-research academics on a fixed-term contract.

Gender

Female academics were more likely than males to be on a fixed-term contract. While female academics were split approximately 50:50 between those on permanent contracts and those on fixed-term contracts, 60% of males were on permanent contracts, and 40% were fixed-term. The proportions of male and female teaching-only academics on fixed-term contracts were almost identical. For research-only and teaching-and-research academics, males were slightly more likely than females to be on a permanent contract.

Gender and casualisation, UK higher education 2003-4 – all academics

Terms of Employment	Female	Male	Total
Open-ended/Permanent	49.2%	59.5%	55.4%
Fixed-term contract	50.8%	40.5%	44.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA; percentage calculations by UCU

Gender and casualisation, UK higher education 2003-4 – teaching-only academics

Terms of Employment	Female	Male	Total
Open-ended/Permanent	34.8%	33.1%	33.9%
Fixed-term contract	65.2%	66.9%	66.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA; percentage calculations by UCU

Gender and casualisation, UK higher education 2003-4 – research-only academics

Terms of Employment	Female	Male	Total
Open-ended/Permanent	7.2%	10.2%	8.9%
Fixed-term contract	92.8%	89.8%	91.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA; percentage calculations by UCU

Gender and casualisation, UK higher education 2003-4 – teaching-and-research academics

Terms of Employment	Female	Male	Total
Open-ended/Permanent	81.7%	85.9%	84.4%
Fixed-term contract	18.3%	14.1%	15.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA; percentage calculations by UCU

Ethnicity

Overall, white academics were more likely than their black and minority ethnic colleagues to be employed on a permanent contract. In 2003-4, 61% of whites were on a permanent contract, compared with 52% of black academics, 49% of academics of other ethnicity, and 36% of Asian academics. Among teaching-only academics, whites were more likely than BME colleagues to be on a permanent contract. While 10% of white research-only academics were on a permanent contract, only 6% of their black and other ethnicity colleagues, and 5% of Asians, were on a permanent contract. The proportions of white, black and other ethnicity academics in teaching-and-research posts on permanent contracts were very similar, at around 85%; the proportion of teaching-and-research Asian academics on permanent contracts was slightly lower, at 79%.

Ethnicity and casualisation, UK higher education 2003-4 – all academics

Terms of Employment	White	Black	Asian	Other (Including mixed)	Total
Open-ended/Permanent	60.7%	52.2%	35.7%	49.3%	55.4%
Fixed-term contract	39.3%	47.8%	64.3%	50.7%	44.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA; percentage calculations by UCU

Ethnicity and casualisation, UK higher education 2003-4 – teaching-only academics

Terms of Employment	White	Black	Asian	Other (Including mixed)	Total
Open-ended/Permanent	38.8%	32.2%	26.0%	29.4%	33.9%
Fixed-term contract	61.2%	67.8%	74.0%	70.6%	66.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA; percentage calculations by UCU

Ethnicity and casualisation, UK higher education 2003-4 – research-only academics

Terms of Employment	White	Black	Asian	Other (Including mixed)	Total
Open-ended/Permanent	10.4%	5.9%	4.6%	5.8%	8.9%
Fixed-term contract	89.6%	94.1%	95.4%	94.2%	91.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA; percentage calculations by UCU

Ethnicity and casualisation, UK higher education 2003-4 – teaching-and-research academics

Terms of Employment	White	Black	Asian	Other (Including mixed)	Total
Open-ended/Permanent	86.1%	84.4%	78.6%	84.3%	84.4%
Fixed-term contract	13.9%	15.6%	21.4%	15.7%	15.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA; percentage calculations by UCU

Non-academic professional staff

Among non-academic professional (NAP) staff in UK higher education, slightly more than two-thirds were employed on permanent contracts in 2003-4. Female NAP staff were slightly more likely than their male colleagues to be employed on a permanent contract. White NAP staff were a little more likely than their BME colleagues to be employed on a secure contract. 71% of white NAP staff were on permanent contracts, compared with 67% of black NAP staff, 64% of Asian NAP staff and 62% of NAP staff of other ethnicity.

Gender and casualisation, UK higher education 2003-4 – NAP staff

Terms of Employment	Female	Male	Total
Open-ended/Permanent	71.1%	67.7%	69.5%
Fixed-term contract	28.9%	32.3%	30.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA; percentage calculations by UCU

Ethnicity and casualisation, UK higher education 2003-4 – NAP staff

Terms of Employment	White	Black	Asian	Other (Including mixed)	Total
Open-ended/Permanent	70.8%	66.6%	63.7%	61.6%	69.5%
Fixed-term contract	29.2%	33.4%	36.3%	38.4%	30.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: HESA; percentage calculations by UCU

Comment

With nearly half of academic staff on fixed-term posts, a figure that rises to an astounding 91% for research-only staff, and 31% of non-academic professional staff employed fixed-term, the abuse of these staff remains one of UK higher education's biggest scandals. It is also a matter of concern that female academics are more likely to be on a fixed-term contract than their male colleagues, and that white academic and non-academic professional staff are more likely than BME colleagues to be on permanent contracts.

Staff on fixed-term contracts have the least job security in the sector, and often have inferior terms and conditions to their permanent colleagues. It was for these reasons that we campaigned long and hard for the Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favorable Treatment) Regulations that were introduced in 2002 and came into force in 2006.

Fixed-term contracts:

- leave many staff feeling very exposed and undervalued;
- lead to staff having difficulty getting loans, mortgages and other financial benefits;
- lead to significant recruitment and retention problems in the sector;
- are discriminatory, as their use disproportionately affects women, black and other minority groups of workers;
- are a significant drain on an institution's resources;
- destroy the possibility of career progression as individuals find themselves stuck on the lowest pay grades, on a succession of short-term, poorly funded projects which offer no room for staff development;
- have a negative impact on the research culture of universities;
- mean staff coming to the end of contracts must inevitably spend time applying for funding or other posts;
- deny the importance and value post holders have for their institution when they are repeatedly renewed.

Our aim is to achieve rewarding career paths for all staff currently on fixed-term contracts, by delivering job security. We were influential in the creation of the Regulations introduced in 2002 and in developing the Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES) guidance on fixed-term and casual employment in higher education, which together represent significant progress for staff in higher education. The Universities and Colleges

Employers' Association (UCEA) has also produced information on reviewing and reducing the use of fixed-term contracts. If used properly the regulations and associated JNCHES and UCEA guidance should bring about a genuine decline in the use of fixed-term contracts. We urge the government to encourage best practice in the sector in the transfer of staff from fixed-term to permanent contracts. We welcome the steps taken by some higher education institutions recently to reduce or eliminate the use of fixed-term contracts for academic staff, and we look to other HEIs to follow this lead in employment good practice.