

anti-casualisation news

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THE NEWSLETTER OF UCU'S ANTI-CASUALISATION COMMITTEE

Zero Hours Contracts and 'Quality'

Jean Crocker, Anti-Casualisation Committee

Recent UCU work recognises the inadequacy of official figures on casualisation, which members on precarious contracts have long pointed to, and produces decent estimates by including responses to FOI requests.

But there are two tendencies that could be dangerous. First, there are calls for a reduction in the proportion of staff on Zero Hours Contracts (ZHC), without adding 'and the staff transferred to permanent fractional contracts'. The employers could deliver this by dispensing with the staff.

The second is the argument that casualised contracts mean poor quality, if the inference is made that the staff ourselves are of poor quality and so dispensable.

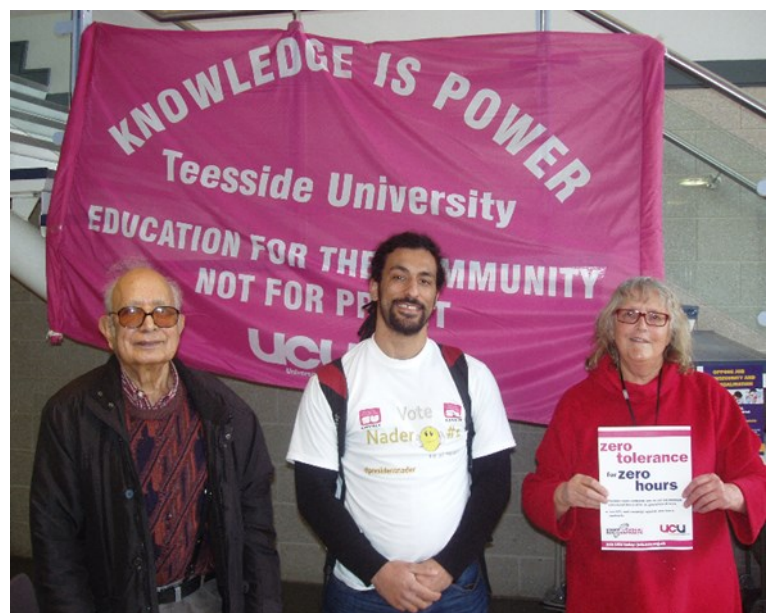
There are beliefs that the casualised are inferior. At a women's meeting in AUT days, a member said of HPLs, 'We can't work with these people', and my argument that their jobs should be fought for seemed unexpected. Given this, phrases like 'casual lecturing staff' are best avoided.

We owe much to excellent allies on permanent contracts, but some colleagues do think the precariously employed should 'go' before they do; and UCU reps have asked employers to drop agency staff and spend the money on others. Reducing numbers of ZHC would not be a victory if the people lost their jobs.

The professionalism of precariously employed staff can lead them to extend themselves far beyond paid hours, as recognised by Yvonne Hillier and Jill Jameson, who came to one of our annual meetings, in their paper 'A rich contract – the ragged trousered philanthropy of part-time staff' (2004). We want job security and proper reward for such efforts.

Because the government demands demonstration of teaching 'quality' in FE and HE, there is potential for careful use of the quality argument. The 2005 report 'Hiring Lecturers by the Hour' by Colin Bryson (Chair of a previous anti-casualisation committee), which sought the fractionalisation of HPLs, helpfully used other arguments too, such as the value of making full use of the talents of the casualised.

A 2001 Natfhe report 'In from the Cold' praised the commitment of part-timers and argued for equal access to staff development. It is crucial that UCU documents continue to state explicitly that the problem is not the professionalism of the staff but the operation of casualised workplaces – in, for example, failing to provide facilities, or haphazardly allocating teachers to classes at the last minute. This will underpin UCU's primary purpose of protecting and securing jobs.

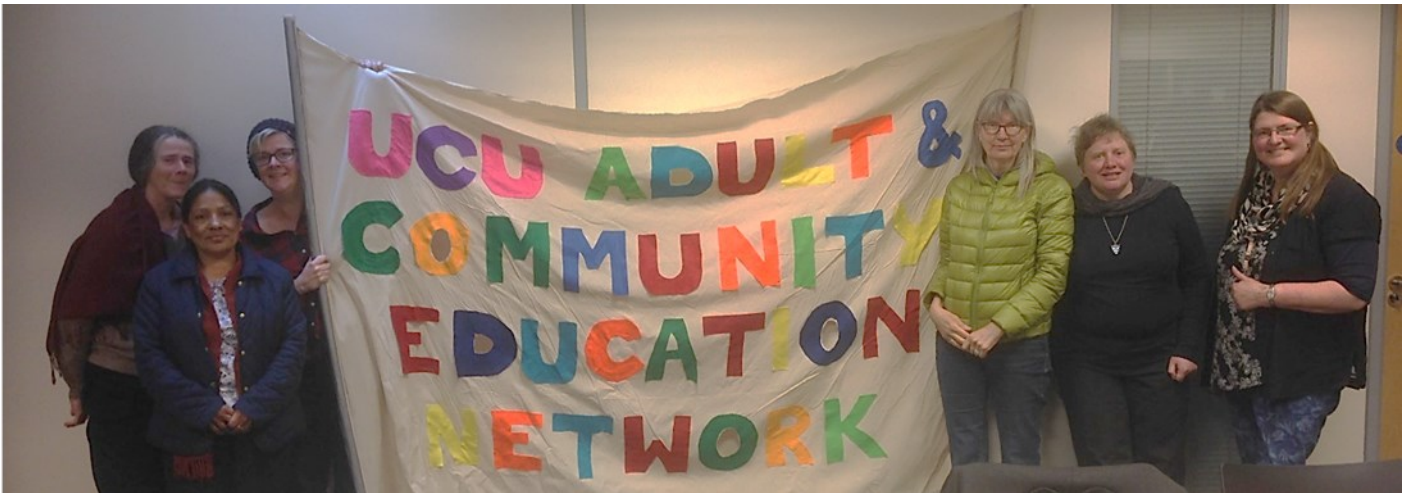


Jean Crocker at Teesside Anti-Casualisation Stall, March 2016

Anti-Casualisation Campaign Launch

UCU London ACE

Amy Jowett, NEC and Anti-Casualisation Committee



Amy Jowett is third from left; second from right is Millie Wild, who is also on the Anti-Casualisation Committee

On 16th April 2016, an important meeting was held at UCU HQ, to launch a London-wide campaign for better contracts in Adult and Community Education branches.

The meeting was instigated by members at Hackney ACE and Brent ACE. Five ACE branches were represented and those attending heard speeches from...

Geraldine Healy (who has produced a report for the TUC 'The organising challenges presented by increased casualisation of women's work' <https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/casualisationofwomenswork.pdf>),

Jonathan White (secretary of the UCU Anti-Casualisation Committee), who gave a useful background to UCU's work on anti-casualisation in the HE and FE sectors and

Amy Jowett (NEC member for workers on casualised contracts (FE) and branch secretary at Hackney ACE), who outlined the stages of the successful campaign in Hackney to gain significant pay rises and fractional contracts for teaching staff.

The aim of the event was to use success stories from campaigns against casualisation to plan action needed for ACE branches to work towards improving contracts and hourly pay rates across London.

The meeting broke into working parties and ideas from different workplaces were shared. Various action points were discussed, which will be carried on at the next meeting.

The campaign has decided to hold an evening meeting, to which more branches can send representatives. An action plan will be created for active campaigning, for branches to use at the beginning of the next academic year. If you would be interested in attending, please take part in this doodle poll: <http://doodle.com/poll/4hsspt6cze2zxnw3> (please include your workplace with your name).

If you would like more information or to get involved, please contact London.ucu.ace@gmail.com

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR CASUALISED STAFF

Whether or not you are on a casualised contract,

1 Get in touch with your branch to share your experiences.

2 Recruit staff on casualised contracts to UCU

3 Organise meetings for staff on casualised contracts and find out what is happening locally

4 Use the Anti-Casualisation email network and @UCUAnti_Cas to share ideas and campaign strategy

Vicky Blake, Chair, Anti-Casualisation Committee

Casualisation – Curse of the 21st Century Workplace



Jim Thakoordin, Anti-Casualisation Committee and NEC

The UCU advisory committee representing staff on casualised contracts is determined to use any means necessary to build the campaign to end casualisation, in favour of fractional and permanent contracts.

We all have a duty to ensure that the struggle against casualisation in all forms is a central negotiating and bargaining issue at all levels of the union. The UCU continues to achieve success in stamping out casual contracts and we have lots of practical experience and skills that could and should be shared across HE and FE.

Colleges and universities are increasingly pushed towards casualisation as marketisation, then privatisation takes root. Only a united and strong union at local and national levels can succeed in eradicating exploitative casualised contracts and replace them with secure and rewarding jobs.

We all have a duty to fight for permanent, secure and quality contracts that allow us to have a decent and regular income we can rely on, enabling us to plan our lives at work and in the wider world. Surely this should be possible in the 21st century!

We need to achieve greater continuity and security of employment and fair treatment for all staff in FE and HE. We can achieve our goals through our campaigning, bargaining, organising strategies, and seek to recruit every casualised worker into the union, to strengthen our fight for decent jobs and pay.

Unity is our strength and united we can create the change we so desperately need. We are highly skilled and dedicated people, doing a tremendous job for our students, the economy and the country and we deserve to be treated equally, fairly and with respect.

Terrified to Speak Up?

Cecily Blyther, Anti-Casualisation Committee

In an insecure job, more often than not, we don't feel able to speak out about our unfair treatment.

With so many employers too scared to recognise us for the wonderful work we do, remember our numbers are growing!

Safety in numbers

Talk about your own situation with your colleagues and document the problems you have in common. Even if you feel unable to speak to your line manager, you can speak to us. As a union, we can shine a spotlight on the employers and their mistreatment of their employees.

Identify high-profile colleagues who are on casualised contracts. Do they still work at your institution? Do/did they have similar problems? Perhaps their contribution will add weight to your local campaign.

Above all, the more ammunition you give us, the more able we are to fight for you.

Cecily was interviewed in the Observer in December, 2014: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/dec/14/why-cant-britain-create-decent-jobs>



Cecily Blyther, Petroc (North Devon), a lecturer who gives additional support, has been on a zero-hours contract for nine years. Photograph: Mark Passmore for the Observer/APEX

Why Anti-Casualisation News is Important

We did not always have a UCU newsletter produced by the casualised. A publication, which is our voice was a wonderful step forward and a recognition of the success of our struggle to be heard within the union.

We need our own voice, because our interests are not always 100% in line with those of members on permanent contracts. Of course, we could not have made the advances we have made without the support of excellent allies on permanent contracts. Their trade-unionate belief that it is all for one and one for all has enabled us to influence the union and bring casualisation up the agenda. But for some colleagues, even today, it is taken as a given that the casualised are a kind of buffer for them against redundancy, and it has happened that UCU representatives have asked for agency staff to lose their jobs in order to benefit other staff.

A central concern for us is job security, while industrial action tends to focus on pay. So members who are facing the 100% pay cut that comes with redundancy can find themselves loyally supporting industrial action while wondering why the sharp issues they are facing are not the focus of action. So we very much welcome the inclusion of anti-casualisation and equality issues in the current HE dispute.

We are part of UCU, we want UCU to be strong, and we have chosen to fight against the ill-treatment of our fellow casualised through union membership and activity.

The Anti-Casualisation Committee agreed on 29th January to restore Anti-Casualisation News. We agreed that 'Security Matters' also has a place: it includes useful and informative articles from UCU officials and academics in the field of employment, who are not necessarily precariously employed themselves, and is professionally presented. But the voice of the casualised is essential, because the person who wears the shoe knows where it pinches.

We welcome articles, which would usually be between 100 and 400 words. We aim for light-touch editing while keeping the message of the original, and this is trickier if it is necessary to bring down length a lot.

Please send in articles to any member of the editorial team:

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STAY IN TOUCH → @UCUAnti_Cas → anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For more information about the Anti-Casualisation Committee go to: www.ucu.org.uk/2973

For more information about UCU's work on anti-casualisation visit www.ucu.org.uk

To get in touch with the Committee please contact the secretary, Jonathan White: JWhite@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

See our blog for more stories about zero hours contracts: <http://ucuanticas.wordpress.com>

This edition of Anti-Casualisation News has been compiled by an editing team from ACC:
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All editions of Anti-Casualisation News are accessed at <https://www.ucu.org.uk/anticasnews>

If you would like to comment on any aspect of casualisation in the post-16 education sector we would love to hear from you:

anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk
or tweet us at @UCUAnti_Cas