

anti-casualisation news

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THE NEWSLETTER OF UCU'S ANTI-CASUALISATION COMMITTEE

Education has the second highest number of staff on casualised contracts in the UK, with the food, retail and service sectors at the top. There are over two million people on casualised contracts and they are amongst the lowest paid in the UK.

*Article by Jim Thakoordin
Branch Secretary – Luton and Bedfordshire ACE*

CHALLENGES FACING CASUALISED STAFF IN ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Staff in Adult and Community Education (ACE) are amongst the most vulnerable, exploited and abused workers, who have suffered from low pay, poor conditions, job insecurity and stress for many years, regardless of whether they are employed by Local Authorities or in Colleges.

In recent years we have seen repeated changes in contracts, reductions in pay and greater uncertainty in earnings and job security, due to cuts by central and local government. Many courses have been withdrawn and students face increasing fees, whilst staff hours have been reduced year on year.

Unlike the many victories UCU members have had across Further and Higher Education in transforming casualised contracts into fractional and permanent contracts, the situation has been getting worse in ACE, due to relatively lower levels of unionisation, isolation, and the problems associated with casualised contracts that are exploitative in every way. Many casualised staff in ACE have been made redundant in recent years or forced to become self-employed and forced into accepting reduced hours.

Important courses such as English as a Second Language (ESOL) have been severely reduced, despite the rising number of workers from the EU and other parts of the world, whose first language is not English. A large number of British workers who would benefit enormously at work and in their personal lives from additional skills gained through ACE have been denied such opportunities.



ACE is unique within the UK educational system, as it covers a wide area in terms of interests, communities, aspirations and opportunities. Community benefits and cohesion are invariably enhanced through ACE. Many mature students, having completed ACE courses, gain confidence, skills and promotion at work; become engaged in voluntary and community activities or move on to colleges and even universities.

The relative decline in ACE must be reversed. Our successive governments have failed millions of adult learners by reducing – instead of increasing – the ACE that empowers people.

The way forward:

- Greater unionisation and support for ACE workers;
- Have a dedicated UCU Official in each Region with specific duties to support ACE;
- Arrange regular UCU recruitment events and briefings for activists involved in ACE;
- Produce a regular UCU Newsletter for ACE workers;
- Lobby the government and colleges specifically for ACE;
- Organise more local county/regional networks of ACE members, to share experience and strategies to promote and defend ACE.

Achieving Change through the Anti-Casualisation Committee

The committee (ACC) gives a voice to the casualised within UCU. Here are two key ways we can use it — with examples from the time we were discovering our strengths.

Speak with a collective voice

As individuals we can be ignored when our views are inconvenient. However, ACC has the rôle of advising

A clear illustration of this occurred in 2004, when a proposed model statute came to the Executive of AUT — three years before the merger with NATFHE to form

UCU — where fixed-term staff had an inferior redundancy procedure. As chair of the Fixed-Term Staff Committee (FTSC), I had to oppose this, but was in a weak position as I had let the same paper go at an earlier meeting — I had read everything else but thought this wouldn't be relevant to the casualised. A good lesson! I asked FTSC for their support, which was readily given.

As people arrived for the Executive, the President said to me that the statute should go through. A staff member joined us. I wasn't getting anywhere till I said, "If you propose putting it through, I'm going to have to say that the Fixed-Term Staff Committee doesn't agree with it". At that point, there was a shift and, in the meeting, the paper was referred back. If I had just been speaking for myself, that would not have happened.



Jean speaking at the Middlesbrough rally

who were on a plethora of hourly rates unrelated to the pay scale and on highly insecure contracts. In the newer universities, NATFHE would not ratify (let through) local agreements unless HPLs were in, and they were trying for better contracts. FTSC argued for the same in AUT, but made no headway. We had "pre meetings" in the Lord John Russell pub and eventually,

decided on a motion to the national conference. This was the turning point. Even before the conference, we were told that institutions would be asked to promise to include HPLs.

The motion was passed, and hopefully benefitted some casualised. But it was near the end of the process and later, some universities where HPLs had not been assimilated started to put them on 'bank contracts'. We therefore put a motion at Congress, with excellent allies

on permanent contracts, for a ratification panel for HPL agreements. Lesley Kane and I were on this; it helped several branches get parts removed that were really zero hours or similar. This work continues on the National Review Panel (HP).

I hope many members will stand for ACC and bring their varied knowledge and experience.

Making UCU policy

Motions passed at Congress become UCU policy, and attract union resources for their implementation. Congress tends to support us. We have made it policy, for example, that the jobs of all members should be defended with equal vigour, and that agency workers should be offered direct employment.

Motions succeed where logical arguments fail. For example, everyone in universities was supposed to be 'assimilated' to new pay and grading structures by 2006 — porters, professors, cleaners, ... But pre-92 institutions were leaving out hourly-paid lecturers (HPLs),

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

There has been a lot of fuss in the media about the scandal of zero-hours contracts among employers such as Sports Direct, fast food and delivery firms. A zero-hours contract means that employees may get work if they are needed but have no guaranteed hours at all and get no compensation if work hours are cut. Less well-known is universities employ 48% of their teaching staff on zero-hours contracts. London Met has about two thirds of its listed staff on such insecure contracts, many with no hours at all. These hourly-paid lecturers (HPLs) are delivering core teaching and they are crucial members of the university's teaching community.

Even so, they cannot contribute to research submissions and are denied paid time for scholarly activity, attending important training activities and staff meetings, and their opportunities for career progression are damaged. It is worth remembering that **the working conditions for staff are the learning conditions for students.**

A zero-hours contract may fit the needs of some, but for most they mean a life of intolerable insecurity. If they do have hours, they still have few employment rights: they cannot get mortgages, have little sick pay or holiday pay, and are often not paid properly for all the work they do. There is no paid time for pastoral care of students, which makes it hard for lecturers to forge teaching relationships with students, critical for a rich educational experience. Yet London Met is marketed on a reputation for high-quality provision.

An HPL recently stated that "... **this is a profoundly exploitative and divisive system that simply cannot be allowed to continue** as it has been. ... the mental and physical welfare of key workers are being sacrificed in order to maintain artificially high salaries for some at the expense of many others who are treated as little better than dispensable commodities."

Another stated, "The continued anxiety of not knowing if I will have work next year or if I can pay my mortgage and feed my child has led me to experience physical and mental health problems. It has led me to consider giving up the thing I love, teaching."

At the same time, official statistics show female employees are more likely to find themselves on zero-hours contracts, and this kind of treatment feeds into the scandalous 4.8% difference between male and female pay in the Higher Education sector.

London Met UCU, with the help of the UCU campaigns team, is joining with Unison and the Students' Union to build a campaign to raise awareness of and ultimately to achieve the ending of zero-hours contracts at London Metropolitan University for both Unison and UCU staff, with publicity, model letters to be sent to the VC, a petition and a survey to be launched on the Anti-Casualisation Day of Action. The UCU has also begun a new negotiation process with management, aimed at achieving better

The London Met UCU - with Unison and the Students' Union -
Anti-casualisation Campaign

Zero tolerance for zero-hour contracts

Christina Paine, London Met UCU Chair
<https://uculondonmet.wordpress.com/>



Sally Hunt with Christina at the most recent rally

interim security, negotiating a more appropriate contract and improving terms and conditions for all categories of HPLs employed by the university.

Our demands:

- ◆ Hourly-paid staff working more than 90 hours per year are offered proper contracts with guaranteed hours rather than being a precarious army scrambling for hours from semester to semester.
- ◆ Those on less than 90 hours/year have a renegotiated HPL contract for a reasonable number of guaranteed hours, without sudden changes from year to year; full payment for all work undertaken; full employment rights; paid time for scholarly activity; the opportunity to take part in research; access to staff benefits in line with permanent staff.
- ◆ No new staff on zero-hours contracts, except in agreed circumstances and in consultation with their union, in line with existing agreements clarifying the employment rights of HPLs.
- ◆ End the mammoth cuts to HPLs' hours in the present redundancy procedure and ensure no HPL is unfairly victimised with redundancy or loss of hours for speaking out against their working conditions or taking part in recognised trade union activity.

Are you subsidizing your employer?

Lesley Kane

Anti-Casualisation Committee
& health and safety rep

A few weeks ago I circulated a few questions on UCU's anti-casualisation email list (*see below*), about use of computer equipment. The 20 or 30 responses flagged up several problems that should be looked at further by UCU.

Most part-time teaching staff who replied were not provided with computer equipment by their employers, though some had access to a hot desk with a computer at certain times. There is a wide-spread expectation that staff will use their own computers for work and pay for consumables like paper and ink/toner, with no allowance to cover computer expenses. A few said they also have to pay for other things like whiteboard markers. This is happening to hourly-paid staff, who often do not earn much.

Several responses mentioned people having disability assessments or access-to-work assessments saying they should be provided with equipment, which were then ignored by the employer. This can happen to other staff as well, but staff on insecure contracts may worry about the consequences if they complain.

Health and safety reps should look into whether this is happening in their institutions. Branches should insist their employers set up a health and safety committee, which can monitor the institution's response to disability and access-to-work assessments.

For general advice, contact

healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk

and see UCU's health and safety resources at

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/healthandsafety>

Precarity

Once upon a time
Education was free and
We pretended we all had a chance
Just meritocracy, they told us -
You'll get there if you try...
Wasn't true really
But now it's worse
Now we've started to believe
"It's a business", and
"Students are customers"
... Don't you want this shiny ensuite?
Can I get a refund on my all nighter marks?

We sell debt for dreams
Propped up by matchsticks:
Piecemeal pay, temporary teachers
Fight for dignity with a hotdesk

Vicky Blake

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 are at www.ucu.org.uk/contacts

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

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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