

Fighting Casualisation

WHAT CAN I DO?

A guide for every UCU member
fighting casualisation in the workplace

INTRODUCTION

This guide has been developed in association with our members on casualised contracts and with our Anti-Casualisation Committee.

While it is important that those on casualised contracts are involved in the shaping of our anti-casualisation activities and campaigns, the fight against casualisation is one for all UCU members – however they are employed.

Every UCU member can play a part in challenging casualisation in the workplace and we give you some ideas below – but this is not an exhaustive or static list. Please discuss and share these ideas in your workplace and if you have other suggestions, please let us know by emailing Jane Thompson jthompson@ucu.org.uk.

For more information about the ACC see

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/fthpcommittee> and follow them on Twitter [@UCUAnti_Cas](https://twitter.com/UCUAnti_Cas)



ALL

1. Ensure tackling casualisation is seen as important as other workplace issues – for example in staff meetings, when discussing a local UCU claim or when developing Congress motions.
2. Invite colleagues on casualised contracts to staff meetings (and make sure they are being paid to attend).
3. Include colleagues on casualised contracts in email circulation lists.
4. Include casually employed colleagues in staff groups – both formal and informal (eg review groups, committees, tea club, Friday lunch club, runners club etc.)
5. If there are rules, written or unwritten, that treat colleagues on casualised contracts unfairly, challenge them with your peers and with management (eg who can use the staff room, toilets, IT facilities, print room, photocopier etc.)
6. Challenge exclusion of casually employed staff to committees, staff groups, awards etc.
7. If you have colleagues whose fixed-term contracts are due to expire, bring this up at staff meetings and raise at your local branch meetings.
8. If colleagues on casualised contracts are suddenly absent from the workplace – find out why.
9. Challenge management narratives on job cuts if they do not include fixed-term contracts ending and hours removed from variable hours staff.
10. Be willing to listen to colleagues on casualised contracts about the problems arising from their precarity. Be willing to act as a signpost to official sources of help but also understand that precariously employed colleagues may be reluctant to formalise any grievances they have.
11. Recruit colleagues on casualised contracts to UCU (or point them to their appropriate recognised sister union, if it is not UCU). Talk to them about UCU and listen (and report back) any reservations they have about joining.
12. Familiarize yourself with the advice and guidance on the UCU website and refer colleagues on casualised contracts to the website when appropriate.
13. Make sure your colleagues on insecure contracts are aware of any local policies on redeployment/avoiding job losses.
14. Distribute 'Know your Rights' cards to all new starts (or send them a link: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/2966/Stamp-Out---know-your-rights-card/pdf/know_your_rights_card.pdf)
15. Distribute 'GTAs Know Your Rights Cards' to all new PGRs (or send them a link: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/11018/GTAs-know-your-rights/pdf/ucu_gta-rights_jul20.pdf)



16. When you are consulted by your branch about your priorities (at meetings, in surveys etc.) don't forget about the damaging impact of casualisation on colleagues, students and the institution.
17. Support national and local campaigns and disputes that incorporate anti-casualisation.
18. Help ensure that casually employed colleagues are supported during periods of industrial action e.g. helping them access the national strike fund or local hardship fund.
19. Where you can, donate to strike / hardship funds of branches fighting casualisation.
20. If you are able to do so without breaching your contract, do not cover for work that would have been carried out by fixed-term colleagues who have been dismissed.
21. If your teaching time is being bought out to allow you to concentrate on your research (or other activity), argue for adequate time for the whoever will be undertaking the teaching to carry out all parts of the role - including providing support to students (which they will inevitably need to do).
22. If you are involved in payments in any way, prioritise processing and payment of staff on casualised contracts.

UCU BRANCH

1. Take the pledge :
https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8626/Anti-casualisation-pledge-form/pdf/ucu_accpledge.pdf and encourage other branches in your region to do the same.

This commits the branch to:

- tabling a claim for negotiations over greater job security for precarious staff
 - holding at least one recruitment event aimed at precariously employed staff
 - recruiting at least one new rep for casualised staff
 - setting up an anti-casualisation group to support the work of the branch committee
 - sending a delegate to the annual meeting for staff on casual contracts.
2. Make having an anti-casualisation officer on the branch committee a priority.
 3. Demand that facility time be extended to anti-casualisation activists. This may be negotiating release from work duties (without loss of pay), additional payment for those undertaking trade union duties outside of their normal working hours or a contract extension. This is UCU policy and many branches have already achieved this so don't be put off by management.
 4. Add casualisation to committee / branch agendas and listen to precariously employed colleagues about their priorities and how you can help.



5. Survey your members on casualised contracts to identify their priorities and the impact of casualisation on their work and lives. Use the survey responses to inform your negotiations and to back up your arguments with management (who will often say things like 'staff like flexible contracts' to defend their practices).
6. Ensure tackling casualisation is seen as important as other workplace issues – for example in branch meetings, when discussing a local UCU claim or when developing Congress motions.
7. Think about when you hold branch meetings – ask members (and potential members) on casualised contracts what times are best for them and consider running more than one meeting to maximize attendance.
8. Make sure your communications and materials are relevant to all your members, including those on casualised contracts. Adapt them if they are not.
9. If staff on casualised contracts are under-represented in your membership, at branch meetings, in responding to surveys, on the Committee, on the picket line etc. – find out why and develop an action plan to address this under-representation.
10. In further education, when considering a Part 2 local claim, consult with casually employed staff to find out what the priorities are and include an anti-casualisation element in your claim.
11. Challenge management narratives on job cuts if they do not include fixed-term contracts ending and hours removed from variable hours staff.
12. Make sure all reps are aware of your local redeployment/avoiding job losses policy and insist that it is employed when the jobs of those on fixed-term contracts are at risk. Publicise the policy to your members.
13. Ensure that any improvements you win (pay, annual leave etc.) are fairly applied to colleagues on casualised contracts.
14. Challenge any policy that excludes casually employed staff from benefits e.g. relocation packages.
15. Contact Rob Hancock (rhancock@ucu.org.uk) to discuss running an anti-casualisation CPD webinar in your branch.
16. Help ensure that consideration of appropriate types of industrial action during a dispute take into account the position of casually employed members.
17. Ensure casually employed colleagues are financially supported during periods of industrial action eg helping them access the national strike fund and setting up a local strike fund.



MANAGERS

Many UCU members manage staff on casualised contracts, including Principle Investigators on research projects and those employing hourly paid staff to undertake teaching.

Even if casualised contracts are the norm in such situations in your institution, there are still things you can do to help:

1. Raise the use of casual (including fixed-term) contracts in staff meetings etc. and suggest that your department think about alternative ways to employ staff. Make the point that the time staff have to spend looking for alternative employment could be better spent if they were more securely employed.
2. Try to use permanent contracts as the norm – if this is not happening question why. Be pro-active in challenging the use of fixed term contracts – ensure that staff are moved to permanent contracts wherever possible.
3. If you are using hourly paid contracts, try to get them converted to fractional contracts – this gives a level of security to members of staff and signals to them that they are a part of your academic team.
4. Never accept the use of a zero hours contract – ie one that guarantees no hours.
5. Challenge the idea that hourly paid colleagues, including GTAs, are not employees.
6. Ask other departments for examples of good practice or ask your branch what is happening elsewhere.
7. Do not accept contracts of shorter duration than you reasonably expect the work to take – in general aim for 24 months as a minimum (not only does this give a better level of security than shorted contracts, it also provides staff with more employment rights).
8. Do not agree to artificially break a contract (or offer an unreasonably short contract) to deny staff employment rights. If you are being pressurized to do this, contact your branch.
9. Consider how multiple short term contracts could be consolidated in a more secure post or posts.
10. Monitor the workload of your staff and ensure no-one is working more than 1 FTE due to having multiple contracts.
11. If you are unable to change local bad practice, contact your branch for advice and support.
12. Encourage your staff to join UCU and let it be known that you encourage union membership and activity. The vulnerability of staff on casualised contracts can lead to a concern that even joining a union might be dangerous.



13. When you recruit new staff make sure they are provided with a written statement of their terms and conditions including an explanation of how their pay is calculated and how and when it will be paid. Make sure the contract recognises them as 'employees'.
14. Make sure you provide all new staff with an induction and ensure they are included in any institution-wide induction sessions that are being run (if these fall outside their normal working hours you should arrange for additional payment at their normal pay-rate for attendance at such sessions).
15. Ensure all your staff have access to your institution's facilities. This would include having an adequate workstation, access to the library, to any local intranet and to administrative support.
16. Make sure that staff have access to appraisal, staff development and training opportunities in the same way as other staff. Make sure that payment at their normal rate is provided for part-time staff attending these activities.
17. Provide paid time off to staff at risk of redundancy to seek alternative employment – either within the institution or outside of it.
18. Don't advertise for new posts if there are staff in danger of being made redundant who could do the work, with training if necessary. Check whether there are any staff under threat of redundancy first.
19. Welcome redeployed staff to your area of work and encourage colleagues to do the same.
20. If you are a PI:
 - Distribute our leaflet 'Research managers – employing fixed-term staff' to your colleagues and encourage them to talk about the issues raised
https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/5242/Advice-for-research-managers-employing-fixed-term-research-staff/pdf/ACC_res_managers_briefing_apr211.pdf
 - Distribute copies of the 'Researchers' Survival Guide'
<https://www.ucu.org.uk/researchersurvival>
 - Fully support staff if project funding comes to an end to maximise the opportunities they have for moving to another project/redeployment and encourage your colleagues to do the same.
21. If you a manager of casually employed/HP teaching staff (including GTAs):
 - Distribute our advice for managers of hourly paid staff to colleagues and encourage them to talk about the issues raised: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/5240/Advice-for-academic-managers-employing-hourly-paid-teaching-staff/pdf/ACC_Ac_managers_briefing.pdf



- Distribute copies of UCU's HP survival guide: https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/4647/UCU-hourly-paid-survival-guide/pdf/ucu_hourlypaidssurvivalguide_jan20.pdf to hourly paid staff in your department.
- If you are genuinely unable to offer a permanent contract for the same fraction of full-time contract every year, consider using a variable hours contract with a reasonable fraction guaranteed.
- If you are forced to continue to use hourly paid contracts for some groups of staff make sure the staff are being paid for all the hours they work, at a rate that is no less favourable than that paid to full-time staff doing comparable work. If a comprehensive hourly rate is paid for each teaching hour find out how it is broken down – how much is for class contact time and how much for other essential tasks? Once you know how much time is being paid for, make sure that the work you give to your staff can be completed in that time. If it cannot, you should make arrangements for additional pay. This may be necessary, for example, to attend meetings, to carry out administrative duties, to provide student support (face-to-face or by email) or to mark examination papers.
- Give staff as much notice as possible of new contracts being issued – do not leave it to the last minute to notify them of the hours available.
- Make sure your staff are paid holiday pay or have the ability to take their holiday entitlement and that the entitlement is equivalent to that of other staff on similar grades.
- Do not unilaterally reduce the hours of your hourly paid staff even where their contracts allow for such variation. Unexpected cuts in hours and therefore income cause huge anxiety for members and instability for your courses and students.
- UCU policy on agency staff is that they are transferred to direct employment by the institution. If some of your staff are agency staff, make sure your UCU branch is aware and that staff are aware of their rights to equal treatment under the Agency Workers Regulations (see: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/pdf/UCUBANAB27.pdf>).
- If staff require timesheets to be approved before they are paid, make sure you process their timesheets in a timely manner.

