

# anti-casualisation news



ISSUE 10 / Spring 2013

THE NEWSLETTER OF UCU'S ANTI-CASUALISATION COMMITTEE

CONGRESS **SPECIAL** CONGRESS **SPECIAL**

## Get the **strength** of the union around you

**S**taff on casual contracts have been going through one of the most difficult periods in all areas of post-16 education. Cuts in staffing, changes in contracts, redundancies and excess workloads have forced many staff out of teaching. Casualisation of lecturers is a growing phenomenon. The policy of the UCU is to resist cuts, redundancies, unreasonable workloads and the excesses of casualisation. We are opposed to zero-hours contracts and exploitation of our members. We will continue to fight for fractionalisation and job security for all our members.

UCU has made massive inroads in unionising staff on casual contracts, but this gain has been alongside the loss of many long-term members. UCU is therefore calling on all UCU members, regardless of contract status, to join in the campaign to increase union membership and density. The union's strength is in its membership. The greater our number, the stronger we are.

### **We need your support!**

Anti-Casualisation News is a useful resource for current and potential members. It is written by members working in the casualised sector to inform and support fellow colleagues. We know that many of our colleagues are isolated and do not have as much access to information like full-time and permanent staff. It can be difficult to connect with some colleagues on casual contracts, so the newsletter can be a useful information and organising tool.



*The Day of Action, 6 March, at the University of Essex*

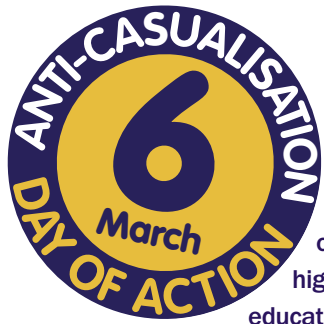
UCU members and activists want to hear what you have to say about local concerns and events, as information sharing can be empowering through ideas, support and good practice in organising at the workplace. We are also interested on your views on how UCU can take the anti-casualisation campaign forward beyond our successful Day of Action.

UCU is achieving success for our members every day, while the government is determined to privatise and marketise education. UCU believes that well paid and resourced teachers, lecturers, researchers and academic-related staff are the key to success for our students, communities and economy. UCU needs your active support too.

Please help us to build the strength of our union and to promote solidarity and improvements in education by contributing to our newsletter, recruiting new members and engaging in UCU activities.

**Jim Thakoordin, Bedfordshire ACE**  
**Co-editor of Anti-Casualisation News**

# ANTI-CASUALISATION



Many thousands of staff in both higher and further education are hourly-paid or on fixed-term or zero-hour contracts. In the UK, only the hospitality sector is more casualised than the sectors UCU represents.

On 6 March the UCU Anti-casualisation Day of Action put the spotlight on the over-use of casualised contracts in FE and HE.

UCU members on all contract types stood together to combat the blight on our working conditions and pay. The voices of casualised staff were raised: we made a fuss and we supported each other, generating a really good level of publicity and responses! News reached the United States, New Zealand and Canada and campaign connections were forged with New Zealand's Tertiary Education Union, Adjunct Nation in the US, and The Canadian Association of University Teachers.

Activities in branches and local associations varied according to context, with many activists displaying incredible creative flair in their

methods of engagement – including activists offering carrots to raise awareness of the ‘carrot and stick’ pressures exacerbated by the precarious nature of casualised employment, inviting staff to locate their position on the ‘iceberg’ of casualisation, and more.

Specific activities included:

- street stalls and demonstrations (including a very large iceberg prop!)
- meetings for staff on casualised contracts
- drop-in surgeries for casualised staff
- recruitment and awareness-raising stalls
- solidarity-building with students
- social media campaigns (local and national). Follow us: [@UCUAnti\\_Cas](https://twitter.com/UCUAnti_Cas)
- leaflet distribution: targeted mail drops and ad hoc distributions on campus
- presentation of the UCU charter for treatment of casualised staff to management
- obtaining figures for casualised staff; general sharing of information and best practice for dealing

with attacks on contracts and conditions

- focused meetings to identify improvements and representation at branch level
- collage for the casualised: people showing support for the cause
- linking campaign concerns with those of permanent, salaried staff, eg on workload
- petitions such as the one at the University of Edinburgh – sign if you haven't already!

<http://chn.ge/WhqKLi>

We also received many messages and tweets of support from within the UK, including from senior academics researching industrial relations and employment, think-tanks, journalists, and a researcher from the Home Office. We received expressions of solidarity from casualised and non-casualised staff. The think tank Resolution Foundation which has previously appeared on Newsnight wants to hear from people on zero hours contracts – and ACC has been in correspondence with their Director of Policy. The Anti-Casualisation Committee has received increasing numbers of



# NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

similar enquiries and continues to build the profile of our campaigns.

## What now?

You can help to build the campaign to stop the blight of casualisation in a number of ways. Get in touch with your branches and regions to see what work is being done locally: we can support you in organising members on the ground. Talk to staff on casual contracts about the union, and encourage those in difficulty to contact their reps and branches. Casualised staff are no less professional than their colleagues, but we are more likely to be paid unfairly and to feel undervalued in our workplaces.

Casualisation harms all of us, whatever our contract type, so there is plenty of scope to show your solidarity and spread the word even if you are on a permanent, salaried contract. Stand with us because we are stronger together: join us, get involved in our campaigns for better job security and parity of conditions for all our members.

- Follow us on Twitter: [@UCUAnti\\_Cas](https://twitter.com/UCUAnti_Cas)
- Send us your solidarity pictures for the *Collage of the Casualised!*
- Email us if you think you might be on a zero-hours contract – get it checked!  
anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk
- Take part in training opportunities for casualised staff at local and national level: eg contact your region about support for putting on hourly paid workshops

**Vicky Blake, ACC Chair and Mahmoona Shah, ACC**

## Local action

### KINGS COLLEGE LONDON



**W**e held organising meetings in the run up to the Day of Action and arranged for stalls and activities at different campuses, with a lunchtime meet-up for everyone interested in the campaign. We brought carrots dangling on sticks to show the way the elusive promise of a permanent contract is used to keep many of us running on a treadmill of poor pay and conditions.

We also brought a camera and message board so that all staff could have a picture taken showing their support, enabling us to make a collage of solidarity at the end of the day.

The student union helped publicise our campaign and as did reps who got posters up around the college.

Most importantly, in the run up to the day, and on the day itself, we met a lot of people who want to get involved.

**Rob Jackson, KCL UCU and Anti-Casualisation Committee**

### OXFORD UCU

**O**xford UCU ran stalls in two different sites across the university. These aimed to raise the profile of the union and heighten awareness of the difficulties experienced by staff on casual contracts. It was a recruitment opportunity, as well as a day of action. In the Physics department cafe, Oxford UCU committee members, branch president and the regional officer spoke to a large number of postgraduate and post-doctoral researchers, many of whom face futures on a succession of fixed-term contracts. In the foyer of the Social Sciences building, members asked university staff and students to explain – using a white board – why they felt they needed a trade union. At both sites, the most valuable part of the day was the chance to talk to members face-to-face and find out what is concerning them right now.

Although the word ‘anti-casualisation’ does not yet carry great currency at Oxford, staff are worried by the increasing use of fixed-term contracts. In future we might seek to adjust our language and slogans – but the message will remain the same. We hope to run a series of follow-up events, creating a support or discussion network for FTC staff. UCU must continue to articulate clearly what it can do for employees on these types of contracts.

**Ronnie Kershaw  
UCU National Organiser**

## BRANCH ROUND UP BRANCH ROUND UP BRANCH ROUND UP

### Southampton University UCU: pushing hard against casualisation on 6 March and beyond

**O**ur Anti-Casualisation Day of Action was filled with activity – we set up two information stands, put together a charter for the treatment of casualised staff, and got members to sign a petition to show their support for better treatment and better job security. Later in the afternoon we brought together our local UCU activists for a stimulating discussion with Dr Jenny Rohn, one of the founders of the Science is Vital campaign. She spoke with us about the dangers facing the research career path, which soon branched off into a wide-ranging dialogue about job insecurity, the predominant funding culture in academia and our prospects for the future.

The Day of Action was a big event for us, since during the past two years we have committed significant time and resources to fighting for better conditions for the university's academic staff on fixed-term contracts. We have this as a standing item on our Joint Negotiating Committee with university management; we bring forward new issues and points for discussion with our members at general meetings; and we have monthly direct discussions with our Human Resources (HR) department.

Of course we would struggle in these campaigns without support from our members, so we have put together seminars for early-career academics to support their career development and to show our commitment to their working environment. We held a researchers' workshop which helped our members to understand their employment rights. We followed this up last year with a career development workshop that included individual sessions. Participation in these events was excellent – perhaps because our seminars offered the kind of straightforward and practical advice that the university's development events don't always provide!

Interestingly, and perhaps surprisingly, the university's Professional Development Unit (PDU) has been very

*Science researchers: one of the groups often disadvantaged by employment on fixed-term contracts*



helpful and cooperative on these occasions. We have run several events for researchers in cooperation with HR and the PDU, and in the future we will continue to cooperate to help our fixed-term staff build an academic career.

Despite these encouraging signs of progress, we still face substantial roadblocks in the battle against casualisation. At a research-intensive university like Southampton, about 1000 of our staff at any given time are fixed-term contract researchers and lecturers. Many of these are employed via external funding from UK Research Councils or other sources – all of which provide time-limited research funding.

Thus, even if our branch is able to convince our institution to provide better job security, we're still fighting a predominant research culture in which time-limited funding is provided to elite 'research leaders' on permanent contracts and funding opportunities for fixed-term contract researchers is largely absent. That entrenches a culture of short-termism and exploitation of fixed-term contract academics that splits our community against itself.

For this reason, UCU's Knowledge Economy campaign may be of great benefit for casualised staff in HE. A push for more sensible science and education funding could provide great long-term benefits – particularly if we're able to push back against this funding culture that so disadvantages many of our colleagues.

The battle against casualisation will inevitably be a long and difficult one. Higher education is quite firmly entrenched in this short-termist culture, to the point where many of us have trouble imagining an alternative.

But if we can get our colleagues talking about their struggles and taking action, demonstrate to our employers the benefits of job security and stability, and push for real change in science and education funding norms, we can build a more humane and more sustainable future for our sector.

**Dr Eric Silverman, President  
and Dr Joe Viana, Fixed-Term Contract Rep  
Southampton University UCU**

## BRANCH ROUND UP BRANCH ROUND UP BRANCH ROUND UP

# LANCASTER UCU: RESEARCHERS – BE SEEN AND BE HEARD!

Lancaster UCU has been busy over the last few months establishing a professional researchers' networking group at Lancaster University. The purpose of the group is to:

- provide a forum for the discussion of matters of interest or concern to staff on research contracts (open-ended/permanent/fixed term)
- create momentum for positive improvements to be made at Lancaster
- raise the visibility of researchers at Lancaster
- enable researchers to network informally and support each other.

All researchers (whether UCU members or not) are invited to attend the networking sessions which are being held twice a term. A researchers' newsletter has been launched recently: <http://bit.ly/XT4v1k>

Over the summer, the networking group undertook an online survey of all researchers at Lancaster to find out about their professional careers, aspirations, experiences and views about what could and should be improved.

*A lot could be done and done well but it needs to be thought through – the purpose and position of researchers, what they can contribute and how they are integrated into the system rather than thrown in and out of 'jobs'.*

Nearly 40% of researchers responded to the survey. The majority (76.8%) were on fixed-term contracts and nearly 80% of respondents had had two or more fixed-term contracts over their career. Men have a 30% chance of obtaining a permanent contract after 3.2 years at the institution while women only have a 4.1% chance. Over 36% had been employed as researchers for six or more years since receiving their highest qualification and over a third did not consider themselves to be in the 'early stages of their career'.

Over 70% of researchers had never been promoted at the university, and lack of sustainable funding, recognition, access to resources and career support were cited as key issues.

*...being a researcher does not necessarily mean that a person is 'early career' or 'inexperienced'*

There were some local initiatives and examples of good practice at the university but respondents said that there was much that could and should be improved by looking at best practice elsewhere. The results of the survey are now public and have been lodged with the NW Vitae Hub and various committees at the university with a clear message that action needs to be taken to implement the Research Concordat and improve policies and practices which affect our researchers. The full report is available from:

<http://bit.ly/13ktwkn>

For further information on the researchers' networking group – please see: <http://bit.ly/14yCFut>  
**Louise Banton, Lancaster University**

## OTHER NEWS: ANNUAL MEETING FOR STAFF ON CASUAL CONTRACTS

On 15 February the Anti-Casualisation Committee held its annual meeting for staff on casual contracts. It was well attended with nearly 60 present and a good cross section of teaching and research staff from FE, HE and ACE. The focus was on building for the Day of Action and participants shared ideas for using the materials produced in local activities.

There was no external speaker although the head of higher education, Michael MacNeil, spoke about the forthcoming changes to collective redundancy consultation and the HE sector's role in lobbying for detrimental changes.

There were three afternoon workshops; on recruitment, becoming a caseworker and behavioural management.

The meeting also debated 12 motions, all which were passed and which will help to inform the ACC of their motions to Congress and sector conferences and their priorities for the forthcoming year.

# CASUALISATION – THE CREEP THAT PUTS CAREERS AT RISK

**T**here is an increasing tendency within higher and further education institutions in the UK to look to casual employees to meet teaching and other commitments in posts which were formerly filled by permanent staff. This trend is casualisation and UCU is opposed to it, in the interests of the staff directly affected, but also their full time, permanent colleagues.

There may be some sectors where casual employment is the norm because of the demands of a fast-changing business environment. Often a task may be carried out by any competent person, and a change of staff does not necessarily mean a change in the essential nature of what is being delivered. None of these factors apply in higher or further education. The real need of an education institution is for stability, with properly managed change if required. In terms of their expertise, staff bring something unique and take it with them, no matter how effective they have been. Staff turnover can mean an irreplaceable loss of capability in the institution and lasting damage to its reputation.

Some damage is already sustained during the redundancy process by staff devoting large amounts of time and energy on what to do next – chasing up renewal or extension, or applying for jobs elsewhere. Surely the institution would benefit if that time and energy were used on its behalf by employees who feel valued and can afford to be loyal.

It may appear that casual employment is preferable from a manage-

ment perspective, and there are some situations where this is true, for example introducing a new way of working which requires expertise outside the normal remit of full-time staff. There are others where finance is the main driver and not the long term interest of the institution.

Casualisation is not only a problem for those directly affected by it at present. It also sends out the wrong message to the next generation and diminishes the appeal of a career in an academic context. It creates a hierarchy among staff and undermines solidarity. Casualisation is an ongoing process and it is safe to predict that it will encroach upon areas it has not yet reached. It is in the best interests of permanent staff to show solidarity and support their casualised colleagues.

At the University of Aberdeen, casual contracts used include hourly-paid, zero-hours, fixed-term (lasting less than nine months) and open contracts with expected completion dates. There are unique problems arising from the specific contractual relationship with the employer. The most pressing concern, but not the only problem, is contract renewal. Because of their relative insecurity, staff on casual contracts may feel that their performance must be better than that of colleagues. Staff on casual contracts call upon Aberdeen UCU for caseworker support more than any other group.

In some situations, there may be a difference in the way staff on casual contracts are treated by management; there may be a lack of recognition of the contribution which is being made.

Furthermore, opportunities for career development are severely limited. This includes both lack of access to formal mechanisms for progression, and exclusion from informal networks. These limitations can make it incredibly hard for those at an early stage in their careers to develop fully-fledged professional identities. Finding oneself at risk of redundancy is often not linked to one's performance at all or seen as part of a transparent, well-communicated process either.

If you are on a casualised contract and want to make a difference in your workplace or need support please contact your local UCU branch.

**Alan Fenwick and Anja Finger**  
Aberdeen University

## TEMPLATE PRESENTATIONS

Two new **template presentations** are now available. Both cover **employment rights, an introduction to UCU and how to tackle issues collectively.**

One presentation is for **hourly-paid staff and the other for researchers on fixed-term contracts.** Also included are **guides on how they can be used.**

The presentations can be **localised to suit the situation facing staff on casualised contracts at your institution.**

Have a look at them here:  
[www.ucu.org.uk/anticasaction](http://www.ucu.org.uk/anticasaction)

# HE employers attack rights of the weakest and **most vulnerable** in society

Last year, the government ran a consultation on changes to the legal requirements on employers in collective redundancy situations – ie where 20 or more posts are threatened in a 90-day period. The following quote from the response to the consultation leaves little doubt about what employers in some HE institutions have been up to:

*Employers generally considered that legislation was necessary to exclude fixed-term appointees (FTAs) from the legislation. In particular, employers in the Higher Education sector felt that an exemption would remove the current requirement for them to engage in near constant consultation over the end of fixed-term contracts.*

In response, the government has now amended the legislation so that this legal duty to consult with the recognised trade union will not apply if the staff are on fixed-term contracts and are being made redundant at the end of their contract. This will affect the rights of many employees in HE and FE, but also in industries like tourism and construction, which employ some of the poorest and most vulnerable workers in society. In practice, the proposed legislative changes are likely to remove the few employment rights that remain to these employees, because such rights only become enforceable when the situation comes to the attention of a trade union.

If they get away with it, the proposed changes will put us well on track to seeing large numbers of people being hired and fired at will, but then that is the idea, isn't it? If anyone had any doubt about the social orientation of the Con-Dem government, the proposed changes to employment law should end any such doubts.

Following a Freedom of Information request, UCU have discovered that the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and 14 individual higher education institutions (HEIs) responded to the consultation – all but one supporting the reduction in collective redundancy rights for fixed-term contract staff. All 14 branches have been advised of their employer's response and the UCEA response was circulated in UCUHE/182.

[www.ucu.org.uk/circ/pdf/UCUHE182.pdf](http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/pdf/UCUHE182.pdf)

This was with an attack on basic employment rights being carried out in the name of management in our industry and UCEA and HE managements involved should be ashamed of themselves for the part they have played.

Universities and colleges could not function without their FTC staff and UCU thinks that it is reprehensible that our employers lobbied for a specific change in law to treat the dismissal of these staff as less important.

Another worrying aspect is that the exemption from collective consultation will make the use of fixed-term contracts more attractive to employers, and that we will see more of them, with consequent increasing social instability, and more people being unable to get mortgages. We cannot let this happen and all branches/LAs are encouraged to seek the following from their employers:

- a commitment they will consult with UCU (and other recognised unions) on all collective redundancies of FTC staff with a view to avoiding such dismissals
- a commitment that FTCs will only be used where there is an objective justification for doing so, and will not be used beyond a four-year period.

**Lesley Kane, Open University**

## GETTING RESULTS FOR HOURLY-PAID LECTURERS

The Higher Education Committee's Hourly-Paid Ratification panel have recently approved two new polices negotiated at Manchester and Birkbeck that deliver improvements for hundreds of hourly-paid lecturers (HPLs). Both agreements ensure that

pay is determined through job analysis/evaluation, that pay and other terms and conditions are linked to that of permanent salaried staff, that pay is provided for preparation, marking etc, that HPLs be provided with adequate contracts and have access to incremental pay progression. They also make clear that zero-hours contracts are not to be used. Both of

these policies took a long time to negotiate and required a lot of hard work from the branches involved. They are also not perfect – negotiated agreements rarely, if ever, are. However, the progress in these branches is testament to the fact that with a committed branch and the involvement of HPL members themselves, improvements can be gained.

## ANTI-CASUALISATION COMMITTEE

Following the elections at the annual meeting the new ACC for 2013/14 are:

Name	Institution	FE/HE
Vicky Blake	Durham University	HE
Jean Crocker	Teesside University	HE
Terry Duffy	Glyndwr University	HE
Lesley Kane	Open University	HE
Rob Jackson	King's College London	HE
Lee Williamson	St Andrews University	HE
Bill North	City College Brighton & Hove	FE
Regine Pilling	Westminster-Kingsway College	FE & NEC
Pat Roche	Blackpool & Flyde College	FE
Winston Scotland	City and Islington College	FE
Mahmoona Shah	Bradford College	FE
Jim Thakoordin	Bedfordshire ACE	FE
Joe Gluza	Cambridge University	NEC

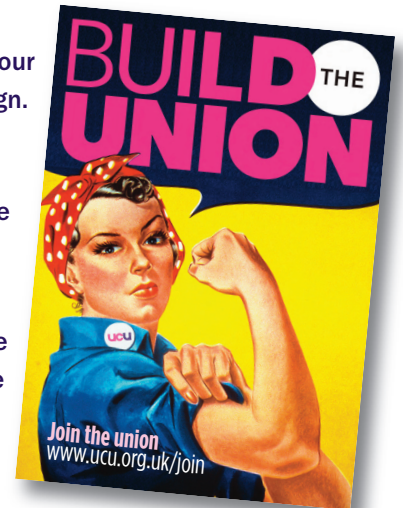
## Build the Union recruitment

Thank you to all reps who have helped in our Build the Union campaign. Since September over 100 branches have participated and we have recruited an additional 1,000 members.

Recruitment is of course vital to the health of the union and it's really important that reps make all new staff aware of UCU and encourage them to join as soon as they start their new job, along with colleagues who are not members.

Reps are asked to encourage non-members to join by forwarding their unique link included in the Friday Campaigns' email which includes the chance to be entered into a monthly hamper draw.

Our recruitment leaflets and posters are available for download: [www.ucu.org.uk/buildtheunion](http://www.ucu.org.uk/buildtheunion) or if you would like hard copies sent, please email [mwhelton@ucu.org.uk](mailto:mwhelton@ucu.org.uk)



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Search for us as @UCUAnti\_Cas

### FURTHER INFORMATION:

If you would like to get in touch with the Committee please contact the Chair, Vicky Blake: [vickysucu@gmail.com](mailto:vickysucu@gmail.com).

To contribute to future issues of this newsletter please email articles to Jim Thakoordin: [dthakoordin@sky.com](mailto:dthakoordin@sky.com)

For more information about UCU's work on anti-casualisation visit [www.ucu.org.uk](http://www.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](http://www.ucu.org.uk/contacts). For more information about the Anti-Casualisation Committee go to: [www.ucu.org.uk/2973](http://www.ucu.org.uk/2973)

