

anti-casualisation news



THE NEWSLETTER OF UCU'S ANTI-CASUALISATION COMMITTEE

Preparing for our Day of Action!



Welcome to the autumn 2014 edition of Anti-Casualisation News, packed with members' stories of the conditions they face on casualised contracts and of the fight for fair conditions and pay. We are gearing up for the next Anti-Casualisation Day of Action on Wednesday 5 November 2014, held earlier in the academic year for maximised impact.

Campaigning activity and action is set to be more widespread than ever this year as UCU fights to end the abuses faced by staff on insecure, inadequate, casual contracts to give those who work within post-16 education the stability and security they deserve and need.

Over the past couple of years, awareness of the abuses staff face on casualised contracts has grown and attracted increased media attention, particularly for zero-hours contracts – though the fight against the blight of casualisation does not end there. UCU has been integral to the exposure of poor conditions and pay faced by many in our sector and continues to support branches in developing local campaigns alongside its work at the national level. The union has scored some notable successes too, winning agreements that represent progress for casualised staff at Gower College and Bangor University. We're also targeting institutions using zero-hours contracts across the country. You can read more about the union's

successes here and on the blog:
<http://ucuanticas.wordpress.com>

The anti-casualisation campaign is a matter for all staff, whether on a casualised or permanent contract. Together we can fight the increasing culture of fear in the workplace by bringing people together to campaign and support one another. There are lots of ways to get involved – see the list overleaf. Contact your local branch or the committee if you need further help. Good luck with your campaign!

Vicky Blake, Chair
Anti-Casualisation Committee



Fight casualisation what **YOU** can do

- Check the website for activities and downloadable resources: www.ucu.org.uk/stampout
- Contact your local branch about their plans.
- Have they organised a meeting on casualisation? If not, ask them to pledge to hold one before the end of term and email the pledge to anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk
- Is there an anti-casualisation group at your branch? If not use a meeting of staff on casualised contracts to help set one up, identify issues and campaign (plenty of resources are available to help, see below).
- Distribute this newsletter!
- Be photographed with an *I support secure employment for all staff* poster available from: www.ucu.org.uk/socc_materials and send it to: anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk and/or tweet it to [@UCUAnti_Cas](https://twitter.com/UCUAnti_Cas) on [#AntiCas14](https://twitter.com/UCUAnti_Cas) – you can obscure your face with the poster if you feel more comfortable, but please do let us know your branch.
- Lobby your MP against zero-hours contracts and casualisation – more details will be coming to all members on this soon.
- Forward a recruitment email to colleagues
- Join the discussion on the Anti-Casualisation activists network to exchange stories, and campaign ideas.
- Set up an anti-casualisation group within your branch campaign with local students using the postgraduate employment charter: www.ucu.org.uk/postgrads
- Promote the UCU Learning for Life CPD programme <http://cpd.web.ucu.org.uk>

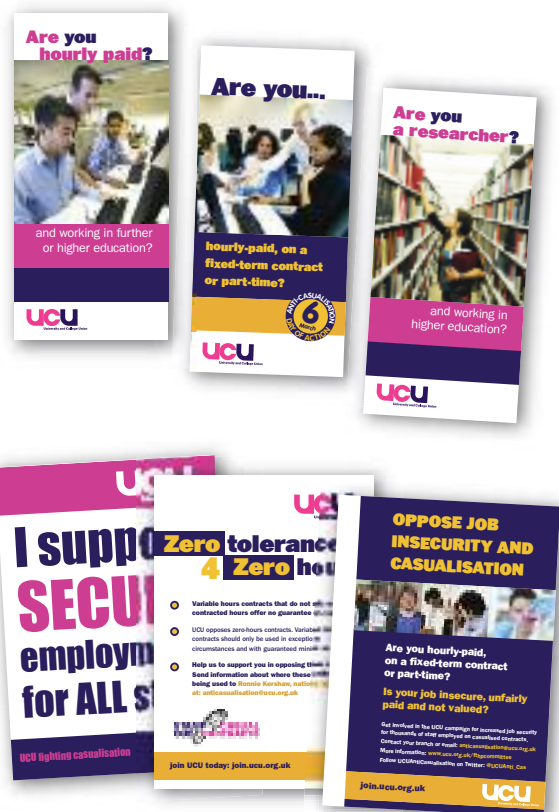


Campaign materials

Download campaign materials on fighting casualisation, including Anti-Casualisation News:

www.ucu.org.uk/socc_materials

Or order them by emailing campaigns@ucu.org.uk



STAY IN TOUCH

Join the anti-casualisation email network, via UCU activist email lists www.ucu.org.uk

There is a blogsite at <http://ucuanticas.wordpress.com>

Twitter account [@UCUAnti_Cas](https://twitter.com/UCUAnti_Cas)

You can email anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk

To get in touch with the Committee, please contact the Chair, Vicky Blake: vickysucu@gmail.com

Planning an anti-casualisation campaign



Jean Crocker at the Durham Miners' Gala

Who are the staff on casualised contracts?

Those on hourly-paid, bank and zero-hours contracts (ZHCs), contracts for services (non-employment contracts); agency and postgraduate staff; and people on fixed-term contracts – researchers, lecturers and academic-related staff.

How to contact them

- Search the website for fixed-term staff.
- Obtain lists of the hourly paid.
- Reach out via members on permanent contracts, departmental reps.
- Make sure ALL staff are in 'new staff lists' to UCU.
- Ask for ALL to receive staff induction with UCU material.
- Ask to speak at a training day.
- Ask HR, departmental heads, contact people for postgraduates etc to send info.
- Make your contact details known.



- Use social media.

Finding-hourly paid staff

The union is legally entitled to know who are its potential members, 'for the purposes of collective bargaining'. Search for *model letter requesting information on hourly-paid staff* on UCU website. Ask for names and departments – this info is readily available for other staff.

Organising

- Hold meetings to include non-members, and persevere.
- Show UCU opposes casualisation and ask the casualised what the issues are.
- Gather contact details and form an ongoing group.
- Give meetings a purpose – to plan *day of action*; agree on campaign objectives; prepare for the annual meeting of members on casualised contracts (motions, delegates, a nomination to the Anti-Casualisation Committee - check local rules).
- Have a survey – meet people, report back, discuss.
- Have departmental meetings, but not in the department if potential members feel they could suffer.
- Seek active regional involvement in sharing successes and strategies.

Do we put our heads above the parapet?

The precariat have sometimes suffered after doing so, because of lack of job security. Do we aim for direct involvement in negotiations, or to be primarily active within the union, informing the committee while branch negotiators front the issue? It is worth considering the local situation?

Working with members on open-ended contracts

- Build up support – many members only need to know the facts. Bring a motion to a general meeting where the casualised explain what their lives are really like. Encourage people to join in order to speak or vote.
- Where it's harder, say it's important to fight casualisation and welcome casualised staff into membership, for the strength of the branch, and even because management could try to get impoverished non-unionised staff to break a strike.

Wider support

- Inform the students and seek their support.
- Use publicity to build up support in the local community.

Jean Crocker
Anti-Casualisation Committee

The personal misery of academic casualisation

UCU consider that at least 40% of academic, research and support staff are now casualised and some institutions are much worse. Casualisation offers short-term flexibility for higher and further education financial planners – fiscal benefits which are almost in perverse contrast to the personal misery of affected staff. Casualisation not only leads to lower wages and benefits, but also directly increases the ratio of unpaid to paid labour, and the intensity of workloads for everyone. It is a process where a dual labour market develops, stratified and mutually isolated: a core of permanent workers with a periphery of workers on fixed-term contracts. We need also to ponder how people subjectively experience what is inevitably a miserable process. Staff at the sharp end of casualisation are atomised, desperately moving from contract to contract or forced to use recruitment agencies. This is also a barrier to the development of solidarity with other workers, and frustrates workplace organising.

In many cases casualised staff don't qualify for full benefits: maternity pay, sick pay, pensions and holiday entitlements etc. As a result of EU legislation, agencies have to extend rudimentary benefits but this is often a PR con-trick with the incorporation of holiday pay into the hourly rate or other benefits being offered only on paper as part of a crafty exercise in shuffling numbers.

Throughout the tertiary education sectors managers are shifting staff into 'McJobs', often socially subsidised and highly casualised. Often even course co-ordination is casualised. In such environs, staff are conditioned to tone down their expectations and to accept inconveniently peripatetic work. Consequently in looking at this depressing terrain, we need to be aware of the development of new subjectivities. In responding to atomisation we should certainly consider our collective identity based on the shared experience of casualised work but we must also assert our position in the entire academic workforce.

The encroachment of fixed-term contracts and the reduction of job security are threats to everyone. If a casualised academic worker finds a better job, they leave behind a position that another worker must fill. The most promising route for our anti-casualisation struggle is the development of stronger links between temporary and permanent staff.

To that extent the strategy being favoured by UCU promises to reap some benefits for academic, academic-related and non-academic staff groups across the higher and further education world. But it would be naive not to see this as an uphill struggle! And behind the awful collective reality of the statistics on casualisation, are the individual stories of personal misery.

Terry Duffy, Anti-Casualisation Committee

My experience as a variable-hours further education lecturer

In June 2013, I was made redundant from my permanent post as a lecturer of LLDD individuals. To mitigate the circumstances of my redundancy, I was given a zero-hours contract. Problems emerged in a number of areas of my work and homelife as a result of losing my stable, permanent employment. I have experienced problems with paying my bills due to having very little work during holidays. I am a few months behind on my mortgage and am afraid of losing my home.

This has all resulted in a level of depression and anxiety which I have not experienced in the past. And, I do not feel as if I am able to enjoy my life as much as before.



Casualisation can cause real financial difficulty

Senior managers in further education are using variable-hours contracts to satisfy their need for flexibility and to seek ways of reducing their total staffing budgets, but they have no idea about the impact these actions can have on the individuals involved. This is a direct result of the Coalition government's move to reduce further education funding, to increase the disparity between further education colleges and schools.

Sarah Guymer, Anti-Casualisation Committee

Pay and grading

fair treatment for part-timers

Three universities in my UCU NEC constituency (Higher Education in the South) are making changes to their promotion criteria. These move in the direction of requiring a wider range of skills, for example leadership, or professional practice, as well as teaching and research. One obvious concern is workload, which potentially affects all staff; another is fair treatment of part-time staff, which is what I want to consider here.

We must ask whether someone on a part-time contract, can carry out a range of activities such as teaching, research, leadership and professional practice all at the same time to the standard expected for promotion? And if not, how can we get fair treatment?

The law is not a perfect instrument, but there are two judgements worth noting. The first is the Matthews judgement, which found the work of a part-time retained fire fighter sufficiently similar to those of full-time fire fighters for the Part Time Workers Regulations to apply. The Part Time Workers Regulations (www.ucu.org.uk/3544) require part-time workers carrying out the same or broadly similar work to be treated no less favourably than full-time comparators, unless the employer can objectively justify the different treatment. The other judgement followed a case brought by Sue Birch, a part-time lecturer. She won, and it was found that deliberately excluding



Part-time staff who are required to concentrate mainly on teaching or another single activity should not be penalised

part-time staff from some duties may, in certain circumstances, itself be a form of less favourable treatment.

Fair treatment for part-time staff was not explicitly factored into the National Framework Agreement, on which pay and grading in most universities is based. However, now that some universities are reviewing promotions and grading, we must become more proactive in securing fair treatment for part-timers.

The contribution expected (eg number of papers published) must be proportionate to the (paid) hours of work. Where a range of activities is expected, part-timers may not be

able to do it all contemporaneously. In some cases it may be useful to argue that their contribution over a longer period should be considered, including the last few years and what they are able to contribute in the future. If the employer decides that they should concentrate mainly on one activity, eg teaching, they should not be penalised for this.

Fair treatment of all part-time staff, both fractional and hourly-paid, must form part of UCU's public platform if we are to successfully recruit and represent them.

Lesley Kane
UCU National Executive Committee

The curse of zero-hours contracts



Zero-hours contracts (ZHCs) are the curse of 21st century employment culture. According to some estimates

as many as five million workers are employed on ZHCs. Four million children living in impoverished households in Britain are related to someone on a ZHC. This cruelty against working class people is nothing less than legalised robbery and an insult to workers and their families.

I have been sending information on the horrible stories relating to ZHC, to the Labour Party to persuade Chuka Umunna MP, Shadow Business Secretary, to legislate against such blatant and cruel exploitation of workers. The Labour Party is committed to addressing a range of issues on employment law including ZHC, if they are returned to power in May 2015. The Coalition government have made a number of changes to the Employment and Labour Relations

Act, including changes to employment tribunals; the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Equality Act 2010. These Con/Dem changes have benefitted employers at the expense of the rights and benefits of working people, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

The trade union movement must continue the campaign against ZHC. It must be a high priority for the UCU as increasing numbers of full-time and part-time and fractional posts are converted in ZHC positions. This callous and uncaring practice not only creates employment and financial insecurity; stress and anxiety; reductions in income, professional status and career development; but also forces many excellent teachers and lecturers from jobs they enjoyed, valued and excelled at. ZHCs also damage professional relationships among staff, students and the institutions that operate such contracts.

Both private companies and public bodies are increasing their use of

ZHCs and this practice has taken off across Europe and North America. The private sector corporations are making record profits and are paying senior employees massive sums of money in pay and bonuses, whilst large numbers of frontline workers are paid barely the minimum wage, which is far from a living wage.

The fight against ZHCs is a just one, which the UCU and the whole trade union movement must win. UCU must unite with other education and public sector unions and use every means necessary to expose and resist ZHCs. Unity is our strength as working people. The injury to staff employed on ZHCs is substantial and unbearable. Let us put an end to the ZHC epidemic by lobbying our MPs, writing to the Secretary of State for Business Investment and Skills – Vince Cable, Chuka Umunna and Ed Milliband, Leader of the Labour Party to express our disgust and rejection of ZHCs.

Jim Thakoordin

UCU National Executive Committee



My experience as an hourly-paid lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University



I love teaching. I spent 20 years in the IT industry carrying out roles that more or less suited me as a project manager. Then I stood in front of a class of postgraduate students at Sheffield Hallam as a visiting lecturer and encouraged them to debate the topic of project risk. I was hooked.

I worked as both an associate lecturer and an IT consultant for three years. The postgraduate module in project management was run over eight weeks which meant I could fit assignments around this two-month window. I developed the classroom module and also delivered the material on a 100% online distance learning class.

The modules changed to 12 weeks and I decided to take on more higher education work. The payment system had always been flaky; however as a second income it was bearable. When my hourly-paid earnings were my only income the vagaries of a complex contract and unreliable invoicing system became problematic.

My experience of underpayment or non-payment of salary due to me for work carried out was not unique – my fellow hourly-paid lecturers at Hallam were in a similar position. When I complained about being

underpaid for a period of six months with the final underpayment being over £1,500 I was unfairly targeted by an unparticularised and anonymous complaint. I subsequently lost out on recruitment for a potentially permanent position that I had reasonably expected to get! This was the last straw and I took Sheffield Hallam to an employment tribunal for constructive dismissal. I had a very good case and would have settled out of court for a reasonable sum. The only offer I got was for £500 which was the university assessment of what I had lost. I was reliably informed by a UCU official that if I had been a permanent member of staff then I would have been offered a reasonable settlement figure.

I won my case for constructive unfair dismissal and the judge was very critical of the way Sheffield Hallam treated its hourly-paid academic staff. I now have a permanent contract. It was a tough 18 months and I got a lot of support from family and friends which I am so very grateful for. On our own we can be picked off and dismissed as ‘a minor irritant’ – together we have a fighting chance to make changes to a system that disadvantages the weakest members of the academy.

Louise Webb

A GOOD CONGRESS FOR US

At Congress in May, all the Anti-Casualisation Committee motions, which took into consideration the motions agreed by members at the annual meeting, were passed. This means that there is UCU policy for:

- casualisation issues to be in both FE and HE national pay claims, and present in publicity materials, and our different needs during industrial action to be recognised
- strike money to be available to hourly-paid members in FE – in HE the feasibility of establishing a fund when casualised suffer disproportionately is to be looked at (our HE motion was amended, we wanted an actual fund straight away!)
- an anti-casualisation officer, and representation of other vulnerably-employed groups, on branch committees
- plans to be drawn up for regional committees to have an FE and HE member on casualised contracts, to be elected by members in precarious employment
- a freedom of information request about researchers and their terms and conditions
- assessing the impact on casualised FE members when hours are taken from them and added to the workload of permanent staff for 'efficiency'; and pushing for more security.

There was also a good and lively anti-casualisation fringe, including contributions from the SOAS campaign *Fractionals for Fair Play*.

So we are moving forward.

Jean Crocker

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR RESEARCHER STABILITY

The last few decades have seen a big change in the way research is funded. There has been a huge increase in research funding, which should be a good thing. However the income model has moved from funding teaching positions to funding research projects and many university managements have not yet figured out how to optimally balance this type of uncertain income with a stable, productive environment suitable to maximising REF scores.

Research work is no longer a temporary stepping stone to teaching – around 5/6 of academic salary funding is now for purely research work, with only 1/6 for research-and-teaching work. In research-led universities it is now a 150 million pounds-a-year business. Research has become professionalised in its own right in some institutions, but

others need to create a much, much better environment to compete with them. Some universities such as Oxford, Cambridge and City University have bridging funds designed to create stable research environments. Strong, stable professional research teams can build international reputations, boost REF scores, and ultimately attract both research income and increased international student fees through this reputation. But there is no incentive for any of this under the old-fashioned system that assumes it will make everyone redundant every four years.

Creating a stable, professional research environment is clearly in research-led universities' overall business interest as it will improve research output, REF scores, and teaching income at little or no cost. Project-based staff at real-world



A more stable research environment would give universities a huge advantage over their competitors

project-based companies often describe our current churn-based practice as 'insane' for this reason. Professional university management and professional career researchers need to work together to create a more efficient and stable research environment. And the first universities to do this should expect to gain a huge advantage in research output over their competitors.

William Green

This edition of Anti-Casualisation News has been put together by an editorial team from the Anti-Casualisation Committee: Jean Crocker (JeanCrocker@heights222.fsnet.co.uk), Terry Duffy (terenceduffy@hotmail.com) and Sarah Guymer (sarahguymer67@gmail.com)

Due to space constraints, articles have had to be abridged. The original versions can be found on the blog at <http://ucuanticas.wordpress.com>

To contribute to the next issue of this newsletter please email articles to anticasualisation@ucu.org.uk



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FURTHER INFORMATION:

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

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

