



**Taking the fight against casual contracts
around the country**

Notes for branch/regional facilitators



Introduction

The fight against casualisation has been an active campaign in UCU for many years. Every year many regions, universities and colleges participate in the national anti-casualisation day of action and send delegates to the Annual meeting for Staff on Casual Contracts. At these events there are different barriers to participation and we are always conscious that there are many staff on casual contracts who may not know the work UCU is doing on this issue. During Anti-Casualisation Committee meetings last year it was decided that it would be useful to organise events around the country. This is an opportunity to empower casualised reps in branches and regions to organise an event tailored to what is most needed in their area, a chance to get new people involved and a way to move away from London centric training and meetings. The "Roadshow" is not about activists coming to your region to tell you what to do, but about taking the fight against casual contracts on the road.

Five points have been agreed as the basis for Roadshow events.

1. The "Road Show" events should use themes explored in the Anti-Casualisation Training Day, but content can be revised to suit the particular issues of the institutions involved in the event. "Road Show" events might include: training sessions, workshops, a public meeting, and social events.
2. Organisation of the event is flexible and can be based within branches, among combinations of branches, or at regional level in order to achieve the maximum and most appropriate involvement. We do encourage them to be cross sector where possible.
3. The aim of the "Road Show" events is to encourage casualised activists to become more active within their branches and to engage all branch activists in organising and negotiating around casualisation
4. While the event should be self-organised by activists and members of the Anti-Casualisation Committee, they need also involve the democratically elected reps at the relevant levels (i.e. branch or regional anti-casualisation reps and senior officers), and the relevant full-time regional officials. The Committee Secretary should be emailed about planned events.
5. On this basis, reasonable expenses can be paid on the normal basis for training events.

The most important thing is that these are local events run by you. If you would like to organise a Roadshow event in your area please get in touch and we can support you. Included in these notes are some outlines for workshop, but we encourage you to develop an events that suits you.

Contacts

Members of the Anti-casualisation committee are available to help and support you. Remember to also contact your Regional Office and other casualised/HPL reps in your region.

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<https://www.facebook.com/ucu.anticasualisation/>

Guidelines for suggested workshops

Over the next few pages there are some suggested guidelines for workshops.

Staff on casual contracts have a great deal of creativity and experience delivering workshops and training. Use the skills and knowledge of members who are involved locally and organise an event that plays to your strengths and targets the needs of your area.

Be creative!

At the last anti-casualisation training day participants took part in a Theatre of the Oppressed inspired workshop. This allowed participants to explore real scenarios they have faced as workers on casual contract.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatre_of_the_Oppressed

East London activist are planning to use a Long Table Discussion at their Roadshow event, to create a non-hierarchical space for all parties affected by casualisation to express their view – from members on secure contracts to representative from HR.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Table

These are just possible two ideas. Find out the interests and areas of expertise amongst staff of casual contracts in your area. Get in touch if you would like support in exploring alternative approaches to workshops.

Session 1: UCU's national campaign – Stamp Out Casual Contracts

The opening session can be used to emphasise the aims of the day and how the union can use its collective power to help you and how you can help build UCU's collective power.

Invite a speaker who can set out the national picture – your regional Anti-casualisation rep, regional organiser or other UCU speaker (notes below to help them).

Break meeting into small groups to discuss 2 questions and write on cards

What are the 3 most important issues faced by casualised staff?

What 3 things could UCU branch/region do to support casualised staff more?

Or, participants can create a card cluster and discuss priorities and actions.



This workshop will need a facilitator to guide the discussion but is designed to create a participatory environment. It works well with smaller groups but was used successfully in the anti-casualisation training day with a group of 30

participants. It is based on ideas and tools explore in the Reflect ESOL project.
More information can be found here <http://www.reflect-action.org/reflectesol>

Notes on national campaign:

Casualisation in numbers – it's become normal and structural:

- 54% of HE academic staff employed on some form of insecure contract
- Fixed-term contracts are the predominant form of employment for early to mid-career staff in higher education
- Around 30% of FE lecturers are on insecure contracts, mostly hourly paid

Some key trends:

- Growth of zero hours contracts
- Use of worker status for postgraduates
- Shortening fixed-term contracts for researchers and more FTCs for teachers in higher education
- Use of large numbers of hourly paid teachers for 'front line teaching'
- Growing use of subsidiary companies to move teachers 'off the books'

UCU's strategy:

- Precarious work has major public profile
- The national bargaining machinery is not delivering
- Marketisation creates risks for our employers as well as for us – reputation sensitivity
- We can drive real change in the workplace

What we're doing nationally:

- Raising the press and political profile of the issue – example of November 2016 Guardian articles (<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/8539/The-Guardian-leads-on-insecure-academic-contracts?list=7268>)
- Focusing on the pressures on quality and engaging with students – Social media campaigning around impact on students
- Naming and shaming: publishing data and ranking institutions – see the data published here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/stampout>
- Producing new guidance and training events to build capacity in our branches – like this event!

Key objective: moving people 'up the scale' toward greater security...

- Eradicate zero hours contracts and 'as and when contracts'
- End use of 'casual worker' arrangements
- Bring outsourced or insourced work back in house
- Fractionalisation of hourly paid workers
- Transfer of fixed term staff onto permanent contracts

Session 2: Who are our casualised staff and how can we support them?

ACTIVITY: Who are your casualised staff? What are their issues? How might we tackle them?

This session can be done in a plenary discussion or groups according to the size of the event.

The facilitator should ask people to list the major groups of staff on insecure contracts and identify for each group what their biggest issues are likely to be.

For example, staff on fixed-term contracts might be more concerned about their next contract and the move to open ended employment.

Staff being paid by the hour might be most concerned about their hourly rates or the insecurity of work.

Postgraduates might be more concerned about pay rates, marking rates or the difficulties of meeting students.

Ask each group to think about potential collective solutions.

When it comes to collective solutions, if the groups are struggling, help them by drawing out some examples of ways the issues can be tackled collectively. For example,

- Negotiating a new policy on access to fractional contracts
- Renegotiating an improved contract – e.g. from a zero hours to an annualised hours or variable hours contract with a guaranteed minimum
- New pay rates or policies on workload allocation that allow people remission time for preparation or scholarship
- An improved fixed-term contract policy or a review of all contracts with agreement to make permanent anyone with more than x years on FTCs
- Payment for extra contact with students
- Paid training time

You can point to the examples of successes (see Success Stories)

Success stories

We're getting successes:

- University of Glasgow – agreement to end zero hours contracts and reduce reliance on 'worker' contracts (<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/7450/Progress-on-zero-hours-and-casualisation-at-Glasgow-University?list=7268>)
- University of Sussex – agreement to end use of zero hours contracts (<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/8438/Sussex-agreement-ends-zero-hours-contracts>)
- University of Essex – improved pay for GTAs (<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/8461/A-better-deal-for-Graduate-Teaching-Assistants-at-Essex-University>)
- University of Bournemouth – moving hourly paid lecturers onto fractional contracts (<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/8676/Winning-fractional-contracts-for-hourly-paid-lecturers-in-post-92-universities>)
- South Downs College, Hackney College, Lowestoft College, West Suffolk College – moving hourly paid lecturers onto fractional contracts (<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/2137/South-Downs-College-UCU---proud-of-their-progress-on-permanent-contracts?list=7268>)
- University of Warwick UCU stopped their hourly paid teachers being 'insourced' to a subsidiary company: (https://www.ucu.org.uk/socc_effectivecampaigning?list=7268)

In each case, national and local campaigning and organising supported local negotiations that made a real difference to members.

Collective struggle supported collective change for the better. And at the heart of this were groups of people like you, supported by the union.

Session 3: Making the casualised voice heard:

Ask the group to spend no more than 10 minutes listing the barriers to organising among casualised staff. Why can it be difficult to make the voice of casualised staff heard? Answers are likely to include:

- low membership through the cost of joining and insecurity of income;
- fear of raising voices due to fear of losing work;
- lack of paid time to become reps;
- Perception that they are not supported or prioritised by 'permanent' colleagues

The emphasis of this session needs to be on positive ways to overcome these issues. So, ask them in one or several groups to think through ways of overcoming these barriers. If the group(s) are struggling, you can help them out with some examples or ideas.

ACTIVITY: Each group to discuss ways in which the identified barriers can be overcome and come up with suggestions.

Here are some things that have worked for us elsewhere to help:

- Organising small 'pressure groups' within branches who advise branch committees on negotiations and organise and recruit other casualised staff. Even small groups can make a big difference if they are plugged into wider groups and reporting up to the committee.
- Using surveys and creating email groups on the back of them. Many branches have used this successfully (e.g., Sheffield University, Nottingham University, Liverpool University, Sheffield Hallam University). If the survey asks for emails and also contains a respondents to talk about the impact on quality, it can also become a major campaigning tool.
- Using 'drop-in' events to make contact with casualised staff. Advice sessions are always really popular for people who need to know exactly what's in their contracts. They are a great way to start a conversation with people.
- Winning permanent committee members by linking the issue to the increasing precariousness of working conditions for all staff and

emphasising how allowing people to be employed precariously drags everyone down by normalising a 'cheaper' working model.

Session 4: Mobilising collective power to support collective solutions

Every union has to be able to mobilise its collective power to persuade employers to negotiate when they don't want to and to be able to influence the employer's position.

Introduce this session by talking about the particular problem we face in doing this over casualization. The basic issue is that we are negotiating for a group that is often the majority of the workforce but a minority of the membership.

We have to win 'permanent' members over to being prepared to take collective action in support of casualised staff and 'borrow' power by creating imaginative coalitions of groups who will support us.

At the same time, we have a great opportunity to use campaigning as 'leverage' because colleges and universities are more precious than ever about their public reputations and precarious work is an issue with national profile.

ACTIVITY: Ask the group to flipchart ideas. Who can help us? How do we build solidarity?

The groups will come up with their own ideas but here are some key ones to ensure are discussed and some examples to back them up with:

- Permanent staff – One idea would be to formulate claims that contain casualization elements alongside other elements that benefit a wider group of staff. For example, a growing number of FE branches are submitting claims that seek action on pay elements and casualization elements together. UCU at London Metropolitan have joined up issues around the plight of casualised staff and those on permanent staff into a single bargaining agenda.
- Students and learners – Warwick UCU were able to benefit from the fact that many of their postgrad members were also in the local Students Union to build student pressure on management. Following an occupation, the management agreed to recognise UCU to negotiate for students who teach. UCU at Bath negotiated a joint statement with their Students Union on the importance of proper contracts, while UCU nationally has targeted

students through Facebook letting them know about the casualization statistics for their chosen universities.

- Communities or regions – trades councils, local authorities and local MPs can all be valuable allies who want to be active on issues around precarious work. Glasgow UCU got valuable political support from the Scottish government and the Scottish affairs select committee to help persuade their management to negotiate with them over zero hours contracts and casual worker contracts. Sheffield UCU have made good use of local MPs to put pressure on their management to negotiate.
- Local or regional press – Getting stories in the press about the treatment of casualised staff at universities and colleges, particularly if it focuses on the impact on students and learners, creates more danger of reputation damage. Several universities have told UCU branch negotiators that a condition of talks is stopping public campaigning – a sure sign that its working!

An alternative way of running this session would be to take a case study of success and look at it in detail, drawing out the lessons.

Final session: What to take away?

ACTIVITY: Next steps

Give the group(s) time to discuss what each participant is going to take away to do from the day.

What will be the next thing they do? Here are some ideas:

- Will it be to become a rep?
- Organising a group of casualised staff to support the branch in campaigning or negotiating?
- Contact the branch to see what they are doing on casualisation?
- Organise a survey?

Participants could write these on cards and another card cluster could be created. A matrix could be produce detailing actions, who will take them and by when.