

Precarious work and the fight for job security

UCU's campaign against casualisation

Precarious labour in the University sector:

Universities have built an army of precarious labour:

- 60% of teaching only staff in higher education are on fixed-term contracts
- 75,000 staff on highly casualised 'atypical' contracts
- At least 21,636 university teaching staff with zero hours contracts.
- 67% of research staff are still on fixed-term contracts – more than 10 years since the fixed-term regulations came into force.
- A third of these are contracts of 12 months or less.

A scandalous failure...

- 42% of staff on casual contracts struggle to pay household bills
- 35% struggling with rent or mortgage payments
- 21% struggle to put food on the table

Hardship, anxiety, and fear are being inflicted on tens of thousands of people working in our universities because the sector is too lazy to take its responsibilities seriously and embrace proper workforce planning.

...And a timebomb for universities

- Because of their low pay and heavy workloads, casualised staff are under constant pressure to cut corners to reduce the amount of unpaid labour they undertake.
- A recent study noted that most academics on hourly paid teaching contracts felt they had inadequate paid time allowed to prepare or mark students' work.
- 70% of researchers surveyed recently said that short-term funding was ineffective and prevented the accumulation of knowledge
- 83% said that it geared research toward short-term results rather than longer-term impact and 1 in 3 said they believed it created a culture in which unethical research practice was likely.

UCU's strategy #1 – turning up the heat

- Marketisation, competition and budget pressures encourage more casualisation – but anxiety about quality and reputation pulls the other way. (Universities don't like being associated with SportsDirect).
- Turning up the political heat: Lobbying all politicians – UCU passed policy at the TUC calling for a national parliamentary lobby on casualisation.
- Working with the press: recent Guardian articles and more..(<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/nov/17/uni-lecturers-uk-us-casual-posts-food-stamps>)
- Our national days of action – 19 November 2015 (<http://www.ucu.org.uk/1680>) @ucu #anticas15

UCU's strategy #2 – local campaigns

Our main lever for winning change is through local collective agreements.

UCU is targeting institutions, helping branches to build campaigns and supporting negotiations

We're making progress:

- Local agreements on casualisation at University of Glasgow, University of Edinburgh and improvements won at Bristol University and Oxford Brookes
- And active campaigns and negotiations at University of Warwick, University of Bournemouth, Open University, Sheffield Hallam, Southampton and more....

Thanks to the work that UCU does every day, thousands of staff are being moved to more secure contracts.

What can we do?

- If you're not in the union, join now: <https://join.ucu.org.uk/>
- If you've been on a casual contract for a while, talk to a rep about your rights.
- Become a local rep for casualised staff
- Help recruit other staff on casual contracts
- Build a local campaign to support negotiations