

ACADEMIC WORKFORCE PROFILING/ KEY MESSAGES: Narrative



Why are we doing this?

The University recognises the valuable contribution made by hourly paid lecturers (HPLs). They provide schools with the flexibility necessary to react to changes in staffing needs, they provide a mechanism for recruiting specialists and they allow the University to provide employment opportunities for our postgraduate students. However, over the years, the number of HPLs employed by the University has been steadily increasing. By June 2018, there were over 800 active HPL contracts in place across the institution.

Although there are many good reasons why engaging an HPL may have been the right way to meet a teaching need it is clear that, like many others in the sector, we have become over-reliant on this approach.

Many HPLs have been relied on to deliver some of our core undergraduate teaching, sometimes year after year. However, none of them have the security of an ongoing academic contract with the opportunity for professional development or any of the other benefits of being full members of our academic community.

We are committed to delivering an excellent education and student experience, and believe that other staffing models would better support the delivery of this commitment, ensure better financial value and provide enhanced academic career opportunities for many colleagues.

What are the benefits?

The Academic Workforce Profiling project will help schools to review the make-up of their academic workforce and, where appropriate, to reduce reliance on HPLs by creating new salaried full academic posts.

These new posts will initially be ring-fenced to HPLs in each school and will help provide a firmer guarantee of academic continuity, better student experience and stronger, more flexible academic communities. The creation of these posts will reduce casualisation in the University's workforce which supports Kent's objective of ensuring the University is a good place to work.

Reviewing the HPL workforce will also reduce the administrative overhead associated with employing HPLs and may also help schools to rationalise their curriculum offer. The project will also seek to clarify and improve relevant policies and processes to reduce the risk of a future return to an over-reliance on HPLs for our ongoing teaching needs.

What is the UCU position?

UCU campaign nationally and locally on anti-casualisation, seeking to reduce the sector's reliance on precarious contracts and to replace them with substantive contracts. UCU and Kent share an interest in reducing this reliance, albeit with differing approaches to achieving it. In particular, UCU opposes any compulsory redundancies and urges employers to transition staff on precarious contracts directly to substantive contracts.

Timing

There are two phases to the project. During Autumn Term 2018, schools will be asked to review the make-up of their academic workforce with the support of HR. The aim is to reach a decision on whether new salaried academic positions should be created, the number of such new positions and the number of HPL posts that should be retained (for example for PGR students during their period of registration).

During Spring Term 2019, schools which identify a need to change the profile of their workforce will continue to work with HR to implement those decisions with the intention of finalising the project in time for the start of the next academic year.

How will it work?

The project will be overseen by a Steering Group led by Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, David Nightingale, the Faculty Deans, HR and representative Heads from all three faculties.

Throughout the project, the principles, policies and processes developed as part of the Recognising Excellence in Academia project and the lessons learned in their application in the HPL Pilot project earlier this year will be used to guide the work.

In addition, the Heads of School who participated in the Pilot have offered their services as mentors for the project.

What are the next steps?

Schools will be reviewing the make-up of their academic workforce and, where there is a need, developing proposals for new salaried full academic positions during Autumn Term 2018. EG will consider the school proposals in early December 2018. Approved proposals will then be the subject of formal consultation with affected members of staff and their representatives early next year, probably starting in February 2019.

Subject to the outcome of consultation, selection to the new positions is likely to take place during Spring Term 2019 and the new academic positions, created as a result of the project, will be effective from the start of the 2019/20 academic year.

How can staff find out more?

HR have set up a dedicated [webpage](#) to keep staff informed about the project. At present, the webpage includes essential initial information about the project and some Frequently Asked Questions, which will be added to as the project progresses.

Further information will be provided once schools have reviewed the make-up of their academic workforce, put together proposals for change where needed and had their proposals approved by EG.

Who are the contacts for further information?

Any questions which are not answered by the essential information and FAQs on the webpage can be referred to the HR project team by email: AWPproject@kent.ac.uk. Questions related to specific school proposals should be referred to the Head of School.