

## **Cambridge University – Time for action on casualisation**

Cambridge is a wealthy university that proclaims its global impact and international excellence. Yet it relies on an army of insecurely employed and underpaid staff to deliver teaching, research, administrative and many other roles. Cambridge UCU is campaigning to change this. Across higher education, UCU branches are pushing for action against the casualisation of university workforces. In Cambridge our branch is calling for:

### **Decent pay for casual teaching staff**

Cambridge undergraduates are taught by a host of casualised academics: college teaching fellows, postdocs and university teachers on fixed-term contracts, together with large numbers of college supervisors who are paid by the hour. The rates of pay for this teaching vary wildly and in many cases do not adequately reflect preparation time. College supervision rates have fallen behind inflation, while rates for University assessment have been frozen since 2008. It's not right that a university of such great wealth should rely on the exploitation of casual teaching staff. That's why UCU is campaigning for a fair pay rise for these staff.

### **An end to 'gig economy' contracts at Cambridge**

Shamefully, Cambridge University employs many staff on 'gig economy' contracts that deny them proper employment rights. Worker contracts issued by the Temporary Employment Service (TES) deny staff occupational sick pay, lock people out of decent pension provision and leave them vulnerable to being fired without notice. Yet these contracts are used to employ people across the university. UCU is campaigning to ensure that where people have regular and ongoing work, they are employed on proper contracts that give them employment rights, and that terms and conditions for short-term roles are improved.

### **Agreed action to tackle casualisation**

Across the university and its colleges, the use of insecure contracts for teaching and research is rife. Often these jobs are badly designed, boxing people into heavy workloads without giving them the time to develop their careers. Many are fixed-term, paid hourly, or with no contract at all. This creates real hardship for staff as well as instability and inefficiency in teaching. We're calling for the University and its Colleges to sit down with UCU and discuss reforms to ensure that staff get a fair deal from their employment, and that students get the teaching and support they deserve.

### **Action now**

This has gone on long enough. Vice-Chancellor Stephen Toope says, 'Our commitment to excellence in education, learning and research is uncompromising and lived out in practice every day in our lecture theatres and supervision rooms, our libraries and labs.'

Yet precariousness undermines the pursuit of excellence for staff and students and is also lived out in practice in lecture theatres, supervision rooms, libraries and labs. It is unnecessary. Cambridge is one of the wealthiest universities in the UK. It doesn't need to keep staff on hire and fire contracts. Our message to the Vice-Chancellor and College Heads is simple: Make good your warm words and show that commitment to excellence in practice.

## **It's time to tackle casualisation**