

Cambridge UCU anti-casualisation claim - November 2018

The treatment of staff on insecure contracts has been a priority issue for UCU at the University of Cambridge for some years now.

UCU recognises that the structure of the Collegiate University places limits on what the University can mandate. Nevertheless, the union urges the University to take substantive action where it can to promote good practice, even where it does not have direct employment responsibility.

Sub-group for the negotiation of agreed actions on casualization

Our first claim is for the University to agree to the convening of a sub-group of Partnership Working Group involving UCU and representatives of the University. The terms of reference of this sub-group will be:

- to address the points raised in UCU's claim through negotiation and agreement;
- to provide regular reports to PWG;
- to complete an initial report by the end of March 2019 and a full report with recommend actions to the University by the end of June 2019.

Underpayment of University examination and assessment work

A significant amount of examining and assessment work on behalf of the University is paid by the item, the pay rates being set in the Ordinances by the University. These rates of pay have been frozen since 2008. Inflation over that time has resulted in average price increases of between 21.4% (using CPIH) and 29.4% (using RPI). Staff have thus seen their real-terms pay cut by between a sixth and a quarter for the same tasks.

Our claim is for an uplift to these pay rates to restore their lost value and then for these rates to be pegged to the national pay scales.

Appropriate payment of hourly-paid teaching at the University

UCU believes there is a problem with underpayment of preparation time for University hourly-paid teaching such as lecturing and demonstrating.

Our claim is for the sub-group to undertake a review of the preparation time required for hourly-paid teaching, to agree an appropriate rate of pay, recognising the different kinds of preparation, and to also explicitly state the preparation time included in the rate. This will be communicated to faculties and departments as the agreed University-wide rate.

Non-contracted hourly-paid teaching at the University

Hourly-paid work can be carried out by contracted and salaried members of staff, who do it either as part of their contracted responsibilities or as a form of paid overtime. However,

this is often not the case. There are other types of workers who have either zero-hour contracts or no contracts at all, and who often lack basic employment rights such as sick pay, holiday pay, parental leave and pension contributions.

Our claim is for an agreement for all hourly-paid teaching to be covered by a contract.

Framework for the fair allocation and support of teaching work at the University

Practices in the allocation and support of teaching work to hourly-paid teachers by faculties and departments vary wildly. Many areas operate non-transparent hiring and work allocation practices and fail to provide access to basic facilities such as teaching rooms or space in which to prepare teaching. Practice in providing mentoring, access to paid teacher training, and to CPD also varies significantly.

Our claim is for the University to negotiate with UCU an overarching framework for the fair and transparent allocation of teaching work and for the provision of proper support for hourly-paid teaching staff. This will be communicated to the faculties and departments as the agreed University-wide standard.

Joint recommendations for the employment of college teachers

Practices in the payment of college teachers vary significantly across the University, with colleges for example paying supplements to their own fellows, resulting in wide disparities in payment for similar work. UCU also believes there is a major problem with the underpayment of hourly-paid college teachers for preparation time. Moreover, some of the hourly-paid teaching in colleges is done without a proper contract. While we understand the limits to the University's ability to mandate pay rates to colleges, we believe that the University has a responsibility to set out normative standards for the employment of college teachers.

Our claim is for the sub-group to negotiate an agreed recommendation over the appropriate base rate for college supervision, an agreed recommendation over preparation time for supervisions and the implementation of contracts for hourly-paid teaching performed in colleges.

New policy for the use of TES contracts

UCU welcomes the initial engagement that the University has made in consideration of the terms and conditions for TES staff, but remains deeply concerned by the scale of the use of TES contracts. There is significant evidence that these contracts are being used for work that cannot meaningfully be classed as casual, including some which occurs over extended periods of time. TES staff are denied employee status, shutting them out of access to significant service-based employment rights. They are even denied access to University cards and notice periods. TES staff are also denied the same employment rights as external agency workers; this goes against the spirit of the law (Agency Workers Regulations 2010). An employer the size of the University of Cambridge should not be making use of a legal loophole to prevent staff from having appropriate employment protections and conditions.

The use of casual worker arrangements on the scale seen at Cambridge should be a matter of embarrassment to the University.

Our claim is for the negotiations on improvements to terms and conditions for TES staff to continue; the negotiation of a new policy on the appropriate use of TES contracts; the issuing of jointly-agreed guidance to managers stating the preference for employment contracts unless the use of TES can be objectively justified; further support for managers to enable them to hire appropriately; agreement on the maximum length of time a TES contract should be used; a review of all current TES contracts with the aim of moving staff onto appropriate employment contracts wherever possible; regular monitoring of the use of TES contracts; the application of rights outlined by the 2010 Agency Workers Regulations to all TES staff in consultation with campus trade unions.

Review of insecure teaching and postdoctoral jobs at Cambridge

UCU is concerned that 'early career' teaching and postdoctoral research jobs across the University and in the colleges are being poorly constructed. Postdoctoral research jobs are often extremely short-term and do not allow for balanced academic career development, including proper support in gaining teaching experience.

While we understand there are limits to the University's ability to guide the design of college posts, such as Research Fellowships, we believe it has a duty to set out normative standards for colleges to meet.

Many short-term and low-quality contracts are dependent on external grant funding. These posts are deleterious to staff wellbeing, and to the quality of research. The University has a responsibility to ensure that posts created via grant capture meet minimum standards, and where necessary to pool and share resources to support this.

Our claim is for the University to convene a sub-group to negotiate with us an agreed recommendation on the design of early career posts to ensure that more secure and more balanced academic jobs are implemented within departments.

Agreement on provision of specific facilities time for negotiators

Conducting effective negotiations on improving employment will require a significant commitment of time from UCU reps and in particular those on insecure contracts.

Therefore our claim includes a call for agreement on a specific allocation of paid time off or, in the case of hourly-paid staff, paid time on, to allow our representatives to meaningfully participate in the processes around and within these negotiations.