

HOURLY-PAID WORKERS AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

A REPORT

RAISE THE BAR



FOR HOURLY-PAID TEACHERS,
TES WORKERS, GRAD STUDENTS,
AND EARLY CAREER STAFF



The **Raise the Bar** Pledge is a document that can be signed by departments, faculties or colleges, stating their support for

decent contracts

fair pay

rights at work

respect for graduate workers

fair allocation of teaching

It can be found at

www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/pledge-to-raise-the-bar/

This report has been compiled by the Cambridge branch of the University and College Union (CUCU). It aims to help staff better understand how hourly-paid teaching contributes to casualisation, why this is a problem, and what CUCU is doing to improve this situation.

The data used in this report is drawn from a survey carried out by CUCU of all hourly-paid staff (October 2018, 140 respondents) and a freedom of information request (FOI) to the University made by CUCU (June 2019).

HOURLY-PAID TEACHING AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

This report gives more detail about how hourly-paid teaching is used by the University of Cambridge, and how UCU is trying to improve conditions for hourly-paid work through our anti-casualisation claim and our university-wide pledge to **Raise the Bar** for all workers on casual or temporary contracts.

What is hourly-paid teaching?

Across the university, and at all career levels, staff in the University of Cambridge are paid by the hour for certain kinds of teaching. Staff with and without salaried positions carry out this kind of work, and for some a certain amount of hourly-paid teaching is a contractual obligation. The main form of hourly-paid work carried out by academics is supervisions (small-group 'tutorial'-style teaching). But other work is also hourly-paid, such as seminars and classes in colleges, as well as lectures, seminars, and laboratory demonstrations in faculties and departments. Related activities such as exam-marking and undergraduate admissions are also commonly paid by the hour or by the task.

What is the UCU anti-casualisation claim?

In December 2018, Cambridge UCU submitted a claim to the University. The main demands were:

- For the University to convene an anti-casualisation working group;
- For the rates of pay for examination and assessment to be adjusted to today's prices and pegged to the national scale;
- For preparation time to be recognised and included in the pay at an agreed University-wide rate;
- For all hourly-paid teaching to be covered by a contract;
- For University-wide frameworks for the allocation and payment of hourly-paid teaching;
- For a new policy on Temporary Employment Service contracts;
- For more secure and more balanced academic jobs within departments.

The University has agreed to convene the working group, but has not yet agreed to the other demands.

pp. 4-5

Nearly half of undergraduate supervision in Cambridge is carried out by precariously employed workers.

We want better terms of employment for hourly-paid work

pp. 6-7

When preparation time is factored in, many Cambridge supervisors are being paid the minimum wage or less.

We want fair pay that includes payment for preparation time

p. 9

There is unequal access to teaching opportunities in Cambridge

We want a system for the fair allocation of teaching work

p. 11

There is unequal access to teaching rooms and other resources

We want a framework for the support of teaching work

pp. 12-13

Excessive workloads deplete the quality of teaching and also of research

We want equality and security of access to teaching opportunities

What do staff say about hourly-paid teaching?

I spend much more time than I thought I would preparing for supervisions to be the best possible supervisor I can. Between this and my own research and other commitments, I have zero down time and constantly feel I am falling behind with no compensation. Thinking about all the work I put in to get paid for one hour just makes me angry, but I'll still put in the work because I care about the students' experience.

Once I had clawed my way into getting an offer to supervise undergrads, the division of available students amongst available supervisors was deeply biased (which impacted pay).

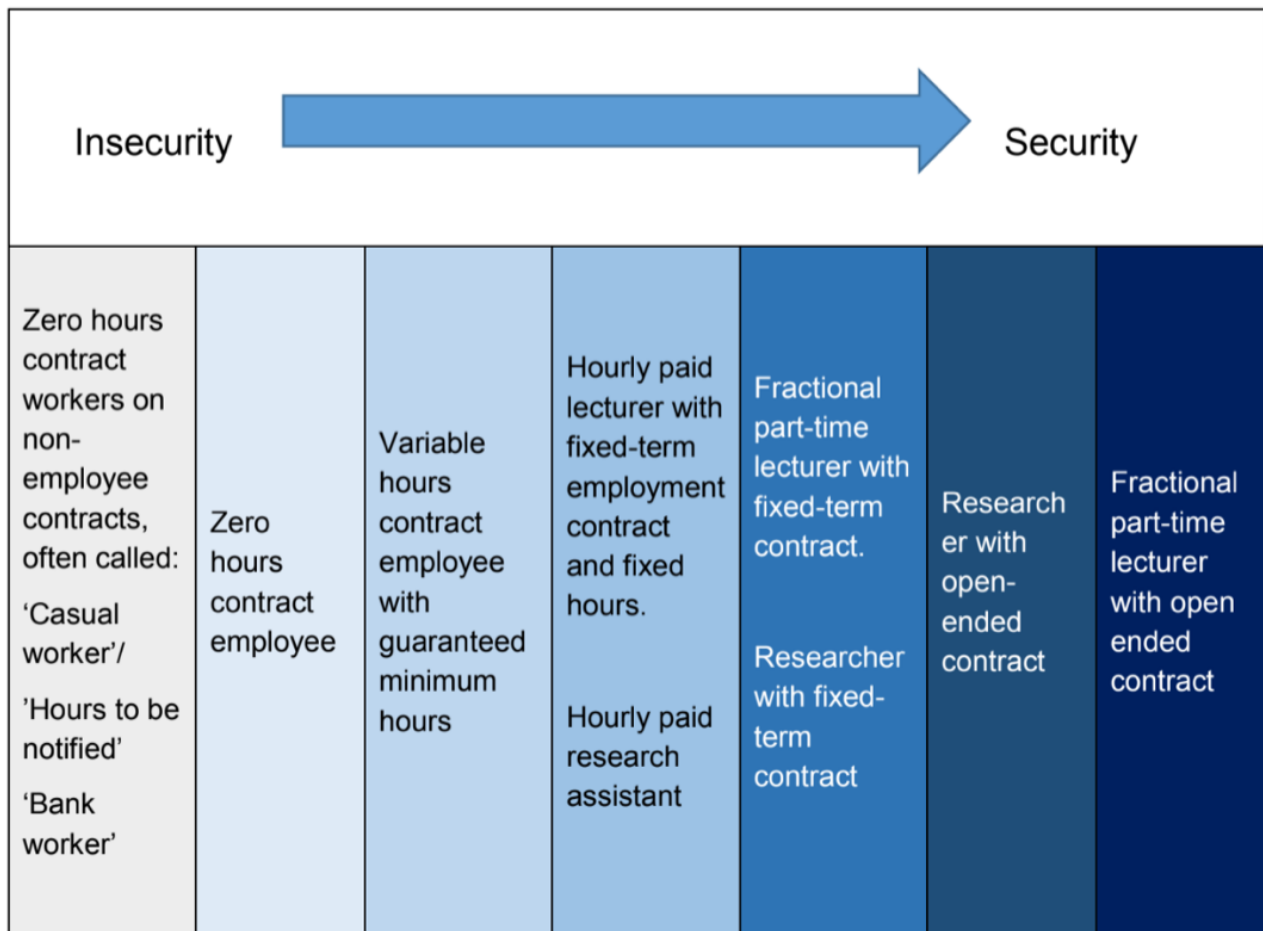
Hourly-paid teaching [...] ruthlessly exploits its [graduate] students. It's a form of employment which, for over a year, left me virtually broke for three-month periods until payday at the end of term. [...] What the current payment situation seems to assume is that hourly supervision is simply a form of supplementary work for those with full-time faculty or college jobs, or simply a bit of pocket money for students of independent means to have extra. Yet the tripos seems to depend to a large extent on precisely such work.

BETTER TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

Insecurity is a major problem in the University of Cambridge. While many academics take on hourly-paid work as part of their contractual obligations, others have zero-hour contracts or no contracts at all, and often lack basic employment rights such as sick pay, holiday pay, parental leave and pension contributions. There are varying degrees of insecurity in employment. Some staff-members have highly secure contracts, some have highly insecure contracts. There are also many stages in between.

The HR data for 2017-18 shows that between 1,100 and 3,000 staff members in the University of Cambridge led seminars, lectures, and laboratory demonstrations without a long-term contract; roughly 47% had some form of Worker's Agreement in place, but the rest were working on a purely 'freelance' basis.

The spectrum of casualisation



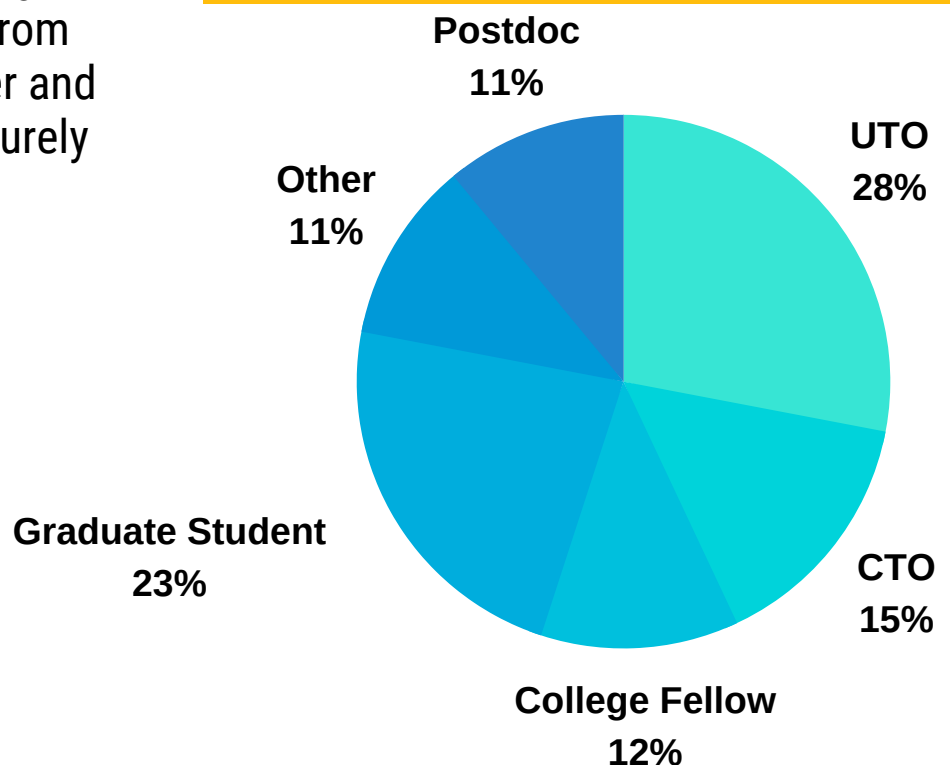
In both 2016-17 and 2017-18, **34%** of undergraduate supervisions across the University were provided by graduate students or staff members constituted as 'other' by University HR. This means that at least a third of supervision teaching was provided by staff without a long-term contract. A further 23% of all University supervision was provided by other staff-members (such as post-docs and research fellows) who may also have insecure contracts.

Teaching staff on insecure contracts are often unable to realise their full potential as supervisors. Hourly-paid staff go to great lengths to ensure that their teaching is consistently of the highest quality. But insecurity also leads to anxiety and over-work, as well as to practical difficulties, such as applying for mortgages. **Students stand to benefit** from supervisors who are happier and healthier through being securely employed.

This is also a **gender-equality issue**: female staff working without a contract are ineligible for maternity pay. For mothers returning to work, the University's Returning Carer Scheme only applies to staff 'whose primary role is undertaking research'; even research-active staff have been denied access to the scheme because their main paid work has been hourly-paid teaching.

UCU's claim is for all hourly-paid teaching to be covered by a contract.

The quality of Cambridge's teaching is rightly recognised as world-class. But in order to protect this unique aspect of the University of Cambridge, fair contracts and proper access to benefits are needed. World-class teachers deserve world-class conditions.



How the University's supervision hours are distributed across the different types of worker (2015-16). UTOs are University Teaching Officers; CTOs are College Teaching Officers.

PROPER PAYMENT FOR HARDWORKING SUPERVISORS

Hourly-paid work takes a number of different forms, and payment rates vary a great deal.

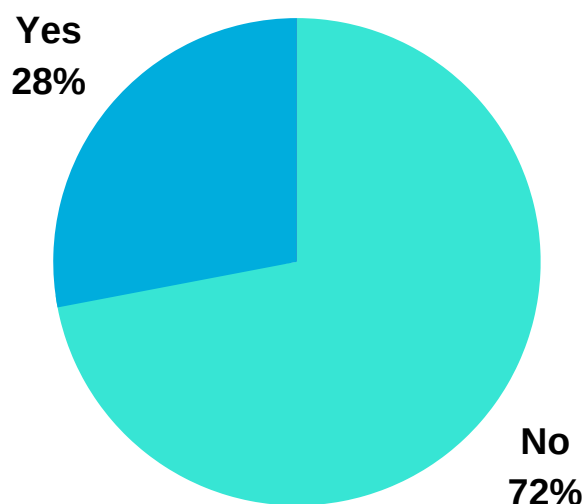
Lectures, seminars, laboratory demonstrations, and a number of other faculty-specific forms of teaching (e.g. **examples classes** in Applied Mathematics, **language classes** in MML) are paid at rates set by the University, and increase annually in line with University-wide scales. These rates are broken down into an hourly rate plus a 'holiday pay' top-up of about 14%. The 'holiday pay' for hourly-paid staff represents a payment top-up to compensate them for the lack of paid holiday. In 2018-19, the total hourly payment rates ranged from £83.20 for a 1-hr lecture to £11.39 for a 1-hr Project supervision of 3rd year undergraduates in Biology. These differences reflect in part a difference in assumed preparation time, but this is not explicit.

Other kinds of work, such as **examining**, are fixed by the University on a different scale. These rates have not increased since 2008, which represents a **25% real-terms decrease** in ten years.

Colleges pay an hourly rate for supervision teaching. The colleges have agreed a standard minimum 'intercollegiate' rate: this is the *de facto* minimum hourly rate paid to freelance supervisors, and it increases annually in line with University-wide scales. These rates were **initially formulated in 1969-70**; their structure has not been reviewed since. It is not known whether these rates were originally intended to include preparation time. This rate ranges from £29.20 for one pupil, to £35.78 for two pupils, up to £44.46 for six or more.

There is enormous variation in what colleges pay above this rate for their fellows. But the **vast majority** of hourly-paid workers who responded to our survey receive no top-up above the basic hourly rate.

Is your hourly rate of pay supplemented?



Payment for hourly-paid teaching presents a complex picture. Across the board, though, there is a sense that this situation needs to be improved. Rationalising the payment for preparation time would be a significant step forward. 96% of survey respondents 'agreed strongly' that they would like to be paid for preparation time. By not factoring in preparation time, these payment rates often lead to very low rates of hourly pay once preparation is included. 39% of respondents to the UCU staff survey reported being paid less than the Real Living Wage (£8.45 per hour at the time of the survey) when preparation time was factored in for hourly-paid teaching.

The rate of pay, relative to other professions, is demoralising.

undermining of sense of worth and self-respect and basic professional dignity.

UCU is calling for better pay

Our anti-casualisation claim has made the following demands that relate to rates of payment:

- For preparation time to be recognised and included in the pay at an agreed University-wide rate;
- For the rates of pay for examination and assessment to be adjusted to today's prices and pegged to the national pay scale: pay for examination (calculated as piece work) has been frozen since 2008, despite price increases of between 21.4% and 29.4%;
- For the University to negotiate with UCU and then communicate as a University-wide standard a base rate for hourly-paid college supervision (including preparation time).

Eventually, the last straw will come.

Embitterment towards the system in terms of how teaching is allocated and how merit is not a part of the allocation of teaching; the so-called training is abysmal and fosters an environment where those more concerned about exerting power over undergrads to assuage their egos are allowed teaching.

The Faculty of English operates as a medieval caste system in terms of transparency, equitability & opportunity.

As individual [graduate] students, we need to seek out teaching opportunities without having any clue or any support from ANYONE about how to do so. Supervisors don't help with this at all. This creates discrepancies – people who are more well connected to the Oxbridge way of life automatically get ahead – they know the right people to approach, they look the part, etc. International students or even locals who are slightly more introverted don't stand a chance. In the absence of a system in place, getting even some simple teaching experience under your belt depends on personal networks.

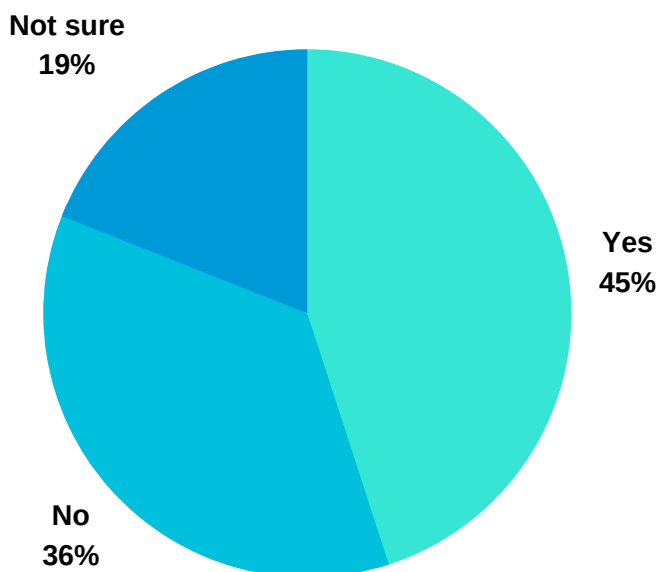
A MORE EFFICIENT AND MORE EQUAL SYSTEM FOR ALLOCATING TEACHING

Among the responses to our survey, knowing the person who assigned the teaching was the **single most common route** to teaching opportunities (personal contacts were the main source of teaching for more than half of the respondents). If personal networks rather than areas of expertise determine the allocation of teaching, the abilities of the most able teachers will be going to waste.

Personal networks often also result in **poor lines of communication** from paper convenors to individual supervisors, who are regularly left uninformed.

Respondents to our survey report that they are often not informed about changes to exam papers and rubrics, which can have serious consequences for students.

Are you routinely informed of changes made to the courses you teach?



Teachers who are less established within the Cambridge system and Cambridge networks will have fewer teaching opportunities. Conversely, turning down teaching when necessary is more difficult in a system based on personal contacts. More than half of those surveyed cited fear of losing future teaching opportunities as a reason for taking on an excessive number of teaching hours.



UCU is calling for an overarching system for the fair and transparent allocation of teaching.

This would be agreed as the University-wide standard and communicated to faculties and departments for implementation. This is essential to ensuring that teaching is allocated fairly, that staff are not overworked, and that standards are kept high.

The environment in which we teach – at worst windowless spaces a little larger than a broom cupboard, and clearly regularly repurposed, with zero relevant facilities – is dispiriting and incommodious for supervisors and students alike. Securing these rooms is a laborious and stressful process often subject to last-minute changes by colleges and the Faculty, which entirely upsets supervising schedules. Perhaps more/improved space could be reserved for those of us without designated College rooms, and/or perhaps the students could be at least minimally informed of the conditions under which we work. I regularly experience students' surprise (and at worst barely veiled contempt) as to the supervising environment – from vast conference rooms in which we perch at the edge of a long table to smelly attic rooms with broken and mismatched chairs - which inevitably affects their sense of the credibility of our teaching.

Supervision rooms, bookable by any one for free – desperately needed!

FAIR ACCESS TO TEACHING RESOURCES

Hourly-paid teachers do not always have access to resources adequate to facilitating high-quality teaching. With no office and poor access to teaching rooms, hourly-paid teachers have to swim against the current just to do their job.

More than a third of our survey respondents described their workplace facilities as **very bad or fairly bad**.

Most hourly-paid teachers **do not have access to a room in which to prepare their teaching**, but almost **70%** of our survey respondents said they would appreciate having access to such a room.

Because most hourly-paid teachers don't have an office, they have to book a room in which to teach. These rooms can be **awkward to book and are often over-subscribed**. 85% of our survey respondents said they would like it to be easier to book teaching rooms and three quarters of respondents said they would like to have better access to teaching facilities.

I often feel rather like an inconvenience to more established faculty [members] when I need to use their offices or book rooms in order to teach. I often end up looking for a quiet corner somewhere just to do things like review notes!

UCU is calling for the University to guarantee the availability of facilities for hourly-paid teachers.

Space is essential to allow hourly-paid teachers to prepare their teaching, give supervisions and seminars, and print and photocopy teaching materials.

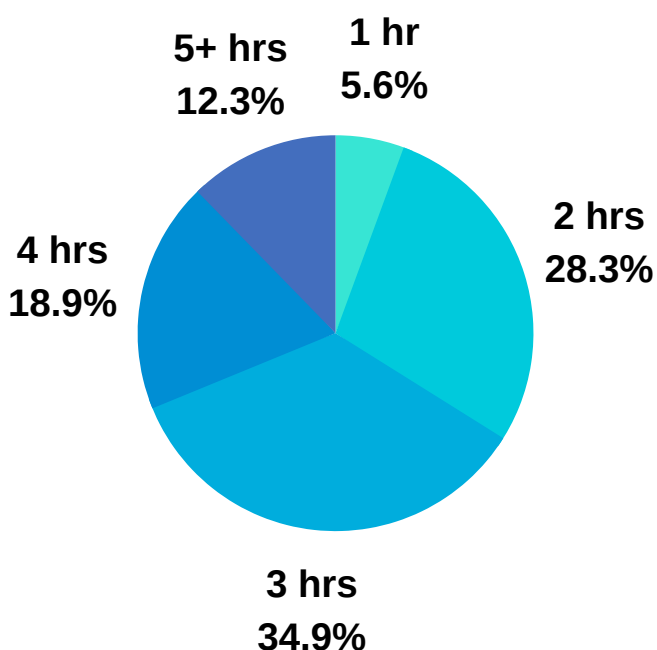
WORKLOAD

Our survey respondents reported taking on more hours of teaching than they would like because of:

- **pressure** from colleagues (25%);
- **fear** of losing future teaching opportunities (59%);
- **financial necessity** (59%);
- and a sense of **obligation** to their students (59%).

More than half of survey respondents did not feel there was an adequate connection between the quality of their teaching and their future career prospects.

For every hour of paid work, 35% work a further 2 hours, 19% a further 3 hours, and 12% a further 4 or more hours:



This means that for more than a third of respondents, their hourly paid is, in fact, under the Real Living Wage.

I have found the workload (relative to remuneration) crippling

Supervision payments should make up a proportion of the salary appropriate to the proportion of the teaching load they represent.

UCU demands:

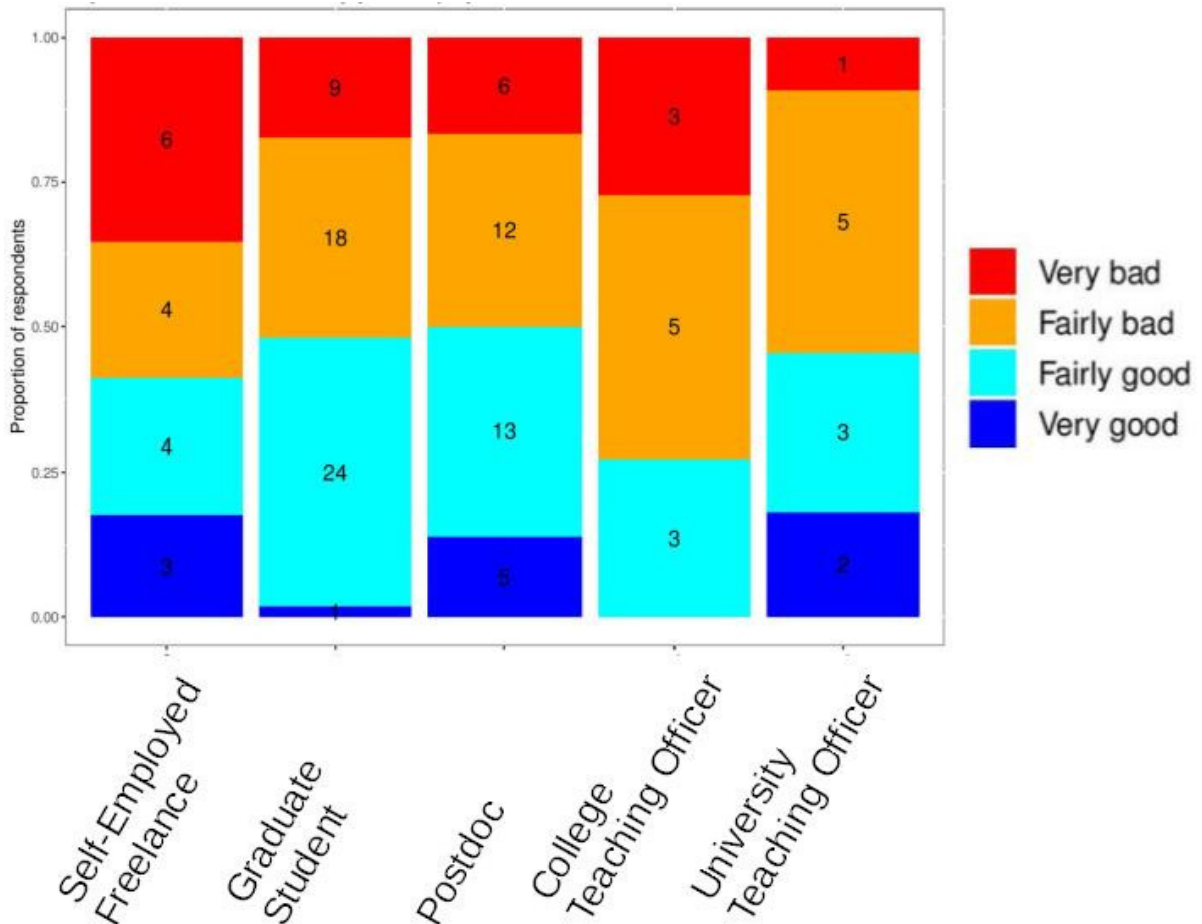
- a **fairer** spread of teaching loads;
- **payment** for preparation time;
- **contracts** to regulate the number of hours taught.

WHAT NEXT?

Hourly-paid teaching accounts for a significant proportion of all teaching at the University of Cambridge. However, many of the people who carry out this important work are doing so without contracts, for less than the Real Living Wage, and without access to adequate facilities. The situation is compounded by the inefficient and non-transparent ways in which the work is allocated, the widespread failure or inability of faculties and departments to communicate with those teaching their courses, and the corporate disregard for the people who labour under such unfavourable conditions.

The picture which emerges is one of an institution which expects to receive high-quality services in exchange for minimal remuneration and which relies on the talents of its workers to make good its own structural deficiencies. This is why Cambridge UCU is fighting for decent contracts, fair pay, rights at work, respect for workers, and the fair allocation of teaching. If you want to help **RAISE THE BAR** for working conditions at the University of Cambridge, sign the pledge, join the union, and support our anti-casualisation campaign.

How do you rate your working experience in terms of your sense of being valued by your employer?



OUR ANTI-CASUALISATION WORKING GROUP

Our working group is campaigning to reverse the spread of casualisation – the conversion of stable, secure jobs into short-term, part-time, temporary or hourly-paid work. These terms are bad for staff and bad for universities, but are rapidly becoming the norm in higher education.

If you want to talk about casualisation, contact:
casualisation@ucu.cam.ac.uk

JOIN UCU TODAY

- UCU is the largest trade union in HE
- UCU offers support, advice and legal representation to its members
- We campaign together to improve working conditions for everyone

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