

Paid Training for Self-Employed Undergraduate Supervisors

Cambridge UCU and Cambridge SU.

Paper for Anti-Casualisation Working Group and STEC

Background: the current situation

1. Undergraduate supervisions constitute a core part of the teaching offered at Cambridge University. In 2017-18, each student at the University of Cambridge received an average of 43.9 hours of supervision teaching - [see CUCU 2019](#).
2. The Senior Tutors' Committee (STC) and the General Board's Education Committee (GBEC) expect everyone who supervises undergraduate students to engage in appropriate training. New undergraduate supervisors can attend a face-to-face session either with their Department, or centrally with the CCTL.
3. It is mandatory for undergraduate supervisors who supervise at Cambridge to complete both an interactive session and the appropriate accompanying online training module.
4. According to ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) and FLSA (Fair Labor Standards Act), if an employer requires a mandatory training course, then the employer is expected to pay the employee, who has the right to be paid for the time spent on the course.
5. In 2017-18, 45% of total undergraduate supervisions were provided by casualised staff, specifically graduate students (24%), postdocs (10%) or staff members categorised as 'other' (11%). These workers are treated as self-employed, they are paid only through the standard per-supervision pay rate, and they are NOT paid for the training they must undertake in order to supervise - [see CUCU 2019](#).
6. The lack of systematic paid training for undergraduate supervisors is expected to be having a major impact on the quality of teaching and standards.
7. UCU and the SU are actively campaigning to improve the working conditions of hourly-paid staff at the University and the Colleges. Especially in light of the collapse of the academic job market due to COVID19, Colleges risk a big reputational damage if the dramatic underpayment of undergraduate supervisors is publicly exposed.
8. In 2020, the Graduate Union presented a paper to STEC about payment for training for graduate students who supervise and teach. STEC did not reach a conclusion on the paper, and discussions have stalled.

Recommendations

9. Everybody who supervises undergraduates as self-employed should be paid for the time spent on any teacher and supervisor training.
10. Irrespective of the potential impact of teaching opportunities on the future career progression of undergraduate supervisors, teacher training should be considered part of the job that they are offered and should be regularly paid.
11. STEC should resume discussions about payment for training with CUCU representatives involved in these meetings.

References

CUCU, 2018. Cambridge UCU anti-casualisation claim - November 2018. Available at:

<http://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Anti-casualisation-claim.pdf>

CUCU, 2019. Hourly-paid teaching Report. Available at:

<http://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/hourly-paid-teaching-report/>