

## **2153 Employment Rights for Postgraduates Who Teach: No to Casualisation in HE**

Proposer: Madeleine Colledge (Postgraduate Education Officer)

Seconder: Ruth Flaherty (Postgraduate Committee)

Union Notes:

1. In 2012 an NUS Report into the experience of postgraduates who teach found that 'one in four postgraduate teachers thought the allocation of teaching was unfair.'<sup>1</sup>
2. Five years since this report, this should be improved upon by the University of East Anglia. A piece of research commissioned by the uea(su) Postgraduate Committee found the following:
  - A. Only 58% of declared Associate Tutor positions were transparently advertised.<sup>2</sup>
  - B. Over 77% of PhD Associate Tutors experienced no formal application process when applying for work.<sup>3</sup>
  - C. Over 38% of Associate Tutors received no training, or were trained after starting teaching.<sup>4</sup>
  - D. Contracted pay for Associate Tutors is often not reflective of actual hours worked. Many PhD students who teach do not receive pay that is inclusive of prep time, marking, or office hours.
  - E. Not a single PhD Associate Tutor who participated in our research had been made aware of their ability to join a trade union by the university.
3. Becoming a member of University and College Union (UCU) is free for PhD students who teach, and can provide a source of professional advice for employment rights and additional training.
4. Teaching opportunities are vital for PhD candidates who are self-funded, or want to continue on to an academic career.
5. The UCU calculates that 68% of research staff in higher education are on fixed term and insecure contracts. A further 54% of all academic staff in higher education institutions are employed on insecure contracts.
6. In certain schools at UEA, over 50% of teaching is delivered by Associate Tutors on casual contracts.

Union Believes:

1. That the rise of casual contracts in higher education is compromising the basic employment rights of thousands of academic staff.
2. That the use of casual contracts leads to job insecurity and should be condemned.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nus.org.uk/Global/1654-NUS\\_PostgradTeachingSurvey\\_v3.pdf](https://www.nus.org.uk/Global/1654-NUS_PostgradTeachingSurvey_v3.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.uea.su/pageassets/postgraduate/thehonestyproject/PhD-Students-as-Associate-Tutors-report-June-revision.pdf> (page 4)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.uea.su/pageassets/postgraduate/thehonestyproject/PhD-Students-as-Associate-Tutors-report-June-revision.pdf> (page 5)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.uea.su/pageassets/postgraduate/thehonestyproject/PhD-Students-as-Associate-Tutors-report-June-revision.pdf> (page 9)

3. That the hiring and training of Associate Tutors is poorly managed and monitored at UEA, resulting in the exploitation of our PhD students who teach.
4. This can lead to undue strain on PhD students' mental health.
5. The lack of a transparent recruitment process for all Associate Tutor positions can result in those who have established relationships with their school or supervisor profiting over others.
6. The lack of clear HR processes in recruitment can result in BME, Female, or LGBT+ PhD students being less likely to obtaining teaching experience due to unconscious bias.
7. Students at UEA have the right to be taught by well supported and adequately paid academic staff.
8. Tackling exploitation of those at 'the bottom of the chain' in low security areas, like that of PhD Associate Tutors, benefits job security across the sector as a whole.
9. That all postgraduates who teach should be offered a contract that properly reflects the work they are expected to do.
10. That the recruitment process for postgraduates should be fair, transparent and equitable.
11. That postgraduates should receive a fair rate of pay for all hours worked.
12. The university should continue to implement and monitor the recommendations of uea(su)'s 'PhD Students as Associate Tutors'<sup>5</sup> Report.

Union Resolves:

1. To replace policy 1589 'A Better Deal for Postgraduates that Teach' with this policy.
2. To mandate the Postgraduate Committee to work with other Student Unions across the country in a joint campaign to encourage PhD Associate Tutors to join UCU.
3. To mandate the Postgraduate Education Officer to continue to work with the university to implement and monitor the recommendations of uea(su)'s 'PhD Students as Associate Tutors' Report.
4. To mandate the Postgraduate Education Officer to publicise UEA's Policy on Postgraduate Research Employment<sup>6</sup>.
5. To mandate the Postgraduate Education Officer to continue to push for UEA to publicly sign UCU's Postgraduate Employment Charter<sup>7</sup>.
6. To mandate the Postgraduate Committee to use UCU's Postgraduate Employment Charter in an awareness raising campaign for PhD employment rights.
7. To mandate the Student Officer Committee to support UCU in any current, or future, campaigns to win continuity of employment and fairer contracts for casualised staff.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.uea.su/pageassets/postgraduate/thehonestyproject/PhD-Students-as-Associate-Tutors-report-June-revision.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.uea.su/pageassets/postgraduate/thehonestyproject/Policy-on-Postgraduate-Research-Student-Employment-in-Teaching.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [http://studentsunionucl.org/system/files/attachments/nus- ucu\\_pg\\_employment\\_charter.pdf](http://studentsunionucl.org/system/files/attachments/nus- ucu_pg_employment_charter.pdf)