

## HE NATIONAL STRIKE DECLARED WEDNESDAY 25 AND THURSDAY 26 MAY

UCU have declared a two day HE national strike on 25 and 26 May 2016, following the HE pay ballot in which two thirds of members voting supported strike action and three quarters action short of strike.

Members have also been instructed to work to contract with effect from 25 May 2016, meaning they will refuse to work overtime, set additional work or undertake any voluntary duties like covering timetabled classes for absent colleagues.

The dispute has arisen following a pay offer of 1.1% from the employers body, the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA). UCU described this as "an insult", saying universities could afford to pay more and that it does little to address the real terms pay cut of 14.5% suffered by higher education staff since 2009.



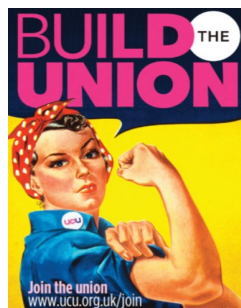
Bham Uni Jan Protest v job cuts

The squeeze on staff salaries comes at a time when pay and benefits for university leaders have increased, on average, by 3%, with the average pay and pensions package for vice-chancellors standing at over £270,000 p.a. Indeed in the West Midlands the University of Birmingham Vice-Chancellor was shown to be among the top earners nationally in 2013/14, pocketing a whopping £410,000. This at a time when members jobs are being cut!

HE Members have sent a clear message by voting for strike action - after six years of real-terms pay cuts—that they are no longer prepared to tolerate a continued squeeze on their income. Industrial action which impacts on students is never taken lightly, but staff feel that they have been left with no alternative.

### NATIONAL RECRUITMENT WEEK 3

16-20 MAY 2016



**Branches are all set for UCU's third National Recruitment Week (NRW3)!**

Activities already planned include: Members meetings with Regional Office staff in attendance; surgeries; stalls;

Café drop in stalls with surgeries; door knocking recruitment around staff rooms; pensions seminars and surgeries for all staff; emails to all staff with 10 reasons to join leaflet attached. If you need any help or would like someone from region to come out to your branch there are still some slots left on a couple of days. We have a limited stock of promotional materials too, so if you need anything just let us know! Here's to building on the successes of NRW2! Send us your pics of any activities for inclusion in our newsletter

Email Lesley Foley on [lfoley@ucu.org.uk](mailto:lfoley@ucu.org.uk)

# UCU EXPOSES 'ENDEMIC' USE OF INSECURE CONTRACTS IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

UCU published two reports in April looking at the endemic use insecure contracts in both further and higher education.

The research found that in universities 54% of all academic staff, and 49% of teaching staff are employed on insecure contracts, whilst in colleges around 34% of teaching staff are on similar contracts.

## HE SECTOR

In the HE study, *Precarious Work in Higher Education: A Snapshot of Insecure Contracts and Institutional Attitudes*, UCU reports on the “hire-and-fire culture of insecure working” within HE, claiming some 54 per cent of all academic staff and 49 per cent of teaching staff at UK universities are employed on “insecure contracts”. An even larger proportion of academic staff at more junior levels are on such contracts, and “fixed-term employment is the norm” for early careers staff.

In recent years, the introduction and increase of tuition fees has encouraged a more consumerist agenda in HE with students expecting “value for money”. However, universities have simultaneously become reliant on casual teaching staff to deliver this.

According to UCU this endemic casualisation in the sector does not gel with government plans for a teaching excellence framework (TEF) which will measure teaching quality in institutions. It sees TEF as a prospective decision-making tool for students deciding where to study. UCU say more must be done to address the prevalence of insecure contracts amongst those delivering the teaching and that employers are failing to accept the link between quality teaching and decently paid, secure teaching jobs

## FE SECTOR

UCU has catalogued more than 22,000 instances of FE teaching staff being employed on “precarious” contracts yet colleges argue that they need flexibility.

The UCU report, criticises many colleges for using hourly paid, term-time only, and variable hours (including zero-hours) contracts. The union argues that these contracts create a deal of uncertainty and worry for staff, and leave many vulnerable to financial hardship. Indeed, one branch reported that one of their lecturers also works in a sandwich shop to make ends meet, because their wages are so poor. The union also says that casual workers often miss out on employment rights afforded to permanent employees, such as maternity leave or redundancy rights.

In the 220 colleges that supplied workforce data to UCU, more than a third of lecturers and other curriculum-delivery staff were employed on “precarious” contracts .

Kidderminster College, part of Newcastle College Group is highlighted as one of those with the highest proportion of teaching staff on precarious contracts, at 68 per cent .  
<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/8166/New-report-highlights-extensive-use-of-insecure-contracts-in-colleges?list=1676>

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/weekinnews> 15April

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/stampout>

## ITS NOT ALL DOOM AND GLOOM HOWEVER....

### SUCCESS FOR STOKE-ON-TRENT REPS AS ZERO HOURS CONTRACTS SCRAPPED

The Principal at Stoke-on-Trent College has confirmed to reps Fiona Brown and Ruth Horsley that 20 staff have now been removed from zero hour contracts to guaranteed minimum hours contracts. Congratulations to the reps for their hard work on this.

# REGIONAL ROUND UP

## Positive outcome to contract talks at Warwickshire College Group

After four months of protracted joint union/management negotiations, agreement has been reached on proposals outlining changes to terms and conditions of Business Support and Lecturing staff. Congratulations to UCU reps John Sullivan and Jackie D'Arcy and Teresa Corr, WM RSO. An original proposal of 900 contact hours was overwhelmingly rejected and 864 hours was agreed by 74% of members. Sick pay was left at 6 months' full and 6 months' half pay. Contact time after hours and travel between sites has been shelved for now.

## WEST MIDLANDS BLACK MEMBERS FORUM—26 MAY 2016 1800 hrs



The next West Midlands Black Members' Forum will take place at Alpha Tower on 26 May 2016, at 1800

hrs. It is just over a year since the group started and it has since gone from strength to strength. This meeting will have Malia Bouattia, the new NUS President as a guest speaker. Malia will be talking about working with student unions, Prevent and racism on Campus. If interested, email Lesley Foley or Dave Muritu ([lfoley@ucu.org.uk](mailto:lfoley@ucu.org.uk) / [dmuritu@hotmail.com](mailto:dmuritu@hotmail.com))

## SELFIE OF THE WEEK AWARD

Stratford-upon-Avon College strike again! Best selfie from Fair Pay in FE Day of Action 11 May



## INAUGURAL WEST MIDLANDS DISABLED MEMBERS' MEETING SUCCESS

Inspired by Paul Lunn, West Midlands Regional Disabled Members Officer, the first West Midlands' Disabled Members' Forum took place on 19 April 2016 at Alpha Tower. Mark Pilbeam, a blind lecturer at North Warwickshire and Hinckley College was guest speaker. Discussions identified the lack of Disability Leave Policies. For instance, cancer sufferers who need time off for chemotherapy courses are having it added onto their sick leave record and being penalised when their time off hits trigger points in their institution's sick policy. A disability leave policy would prevent this. Does your college have a Disability Leave Policy? If so let us have a copy—if you are interested in becoming a Disabled Members' Rep at your institution contact Paul Lunn:

[ab9364@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:ab9364@coventry.ac.uk) It is hoped to hold future meetings in different venues around the region so watch this space!!

## SOLIHULL COLLEGE LECTURERS IN LUNCHTIME REDUNDANCIES PROTEST



Redundancies have been announced at Solihull College which are targeting 3 UCU branch officers.

Members mobilised to show what they think of this in a lunch time protest on 12 May The consultations are still on-going.

## FE AREA REVIEWS LATEST

### BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL

UCU officials have had meetings with the Principals of South and City College and Bournville regarding the merger and TUPE transfer of staff from Bournville to SCCB - merger date is anticipated to be 1 August 2016.

### MARCHES AND WORCESTERSHIRE

The FE Commissioner's recommendations likely to be:

**Telford College** and **New College Telford** (6th form College) merge to form a new FE College

**Shrewsbury College** and **Shrewsbury Sixth Form College** merge to form a new 6th Form College

**Herefordshire College of Art** converts exclusively to HEI status (at present they have both FE and HE provision)

**Herefordshire and Ludlow College** and **Heart Of Worcestershire College** remain as they are

**North Shropshire College** merges with **Reaseheath Agricultural College**

**South Worcester College** merges with the **Warwickshire College Group**

### STOKE-ON-TRENT AND STAFFORDSHIRE

It seems there is no prospect of **Stoke-on-Trent FE College** and Stoke-on-Trent 6th form working together, the 6th form preferring to become part of a Multi-Academy trust (MAT)

**Stafford College** and **Newcastle-under-Lyme** are seeking to merge by 1 September 2016.

**South Staffordshire College** staff have been informed of a potential collaboration with **Walsall College** but no details are available at present

Next meeting of the unions with the FE Commissioner will take place on 26 May.

### BLACK COUNTRY AND COVENTRY & WARWICKSHIRE AREA REVIEWS

First meeting of the unions with the FE Commissioner will take place 20 May 2016 and 27 May 2016 respectively



### FAREWELL TO GERALDINE EGAN

Sadly for UCU, Geraldine Egan is retiring in June, after working for the union since NATFHE days.

Geraldine was Regional Official for East Midlands, then moved across to run West Midlands and Western Regions in 1999, which was quite a feat. Latterly she became National Pensions Official as she needed to work part-time when her daughter

started school. She has been instrumental in setting up retired Members' Branches nationally and representing the interests of UCU members at national level at USS, TP and Government meetings.

Geraldine was a prolific activist in the region for many years before her NATFHE/UCU days. In the

early 1970s she was an NUT activist working in the WM Young Teachers Section. She was also a teacher at Birmingham Children's Hospital responsible for organising the schoolwork on the wards. In 1984 she was a major organiser of miners' food collections and Women Against Pit Closures, later becoming Chair of the Birmingham Miners Support Committee. Indeed, in 1985 she was the first woman to become Birmingham Trades Council President. In 1987-1992 she was the Co-ordinator of the Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre. As well as that (!) she was a TU studies tutor, governor of 2 FE Colleges, sat on Birmingham University Court, and was Chair of the Disability Rights Organisation. Paul Mackney told me that he wrote a reference for her when she applied for a job in which he stated, "She is probably *the leading woman trade unionist in the West Midlands area*"

We will all miss Geraldine very much

If you would like to know more details about when Geraldine leaves contact Chris Mason ([cmason@ucu.org.uk](mailto:cmason@ucu.org.uk))

#### DIARY DATES

16-20 May—UCU National Recruitment Week 3  
25 and 26 May HE National Strike  
26 May Black Members Meeting (Alpha Tower)  
28 and 29 May Gay Pride Parade with UCU Stall

