

A Trade Union Culture to Fight Casualisation

The fight against casualisation requires an egalitarian, inclusive trade union where those in a stronger position stand alongside the vulnerable and where national policy is respected.

Fixed-term, hourly paid and agency workers with low institutional status do not benefit from elitism. We need a predominantly trade union culture, with its tradition of equality, rather than a professional association culture where members can be seen as having the same status as in the institution. UCU is moving in the trade union direction and this needs to be universal!

Active branches, with a strong upward flow of democracy and decisions made at the grassroots, will tend to support and include the casualised and make them want to join.

Activists (on all kinds of contract) have achieved good national policy such as opposition to ALL compulsory redundancies. It is crucial that everyone works to implement it.

Job insecurity makes it potentially risky to raise your head above the parapet, so the tradition of all for one and one for all is key. Recently agreement was reached on the progressive fractionalisation of hourly paid lecturers at the College of North East London, following a collective grievance procedure mounted by the local branch and negotiations with the UCU regional official.

It is important to support vulnerable workers who organise. Teaching Assistants (TAs) at Glasgow University held well-attended meetings in the autumn in protest

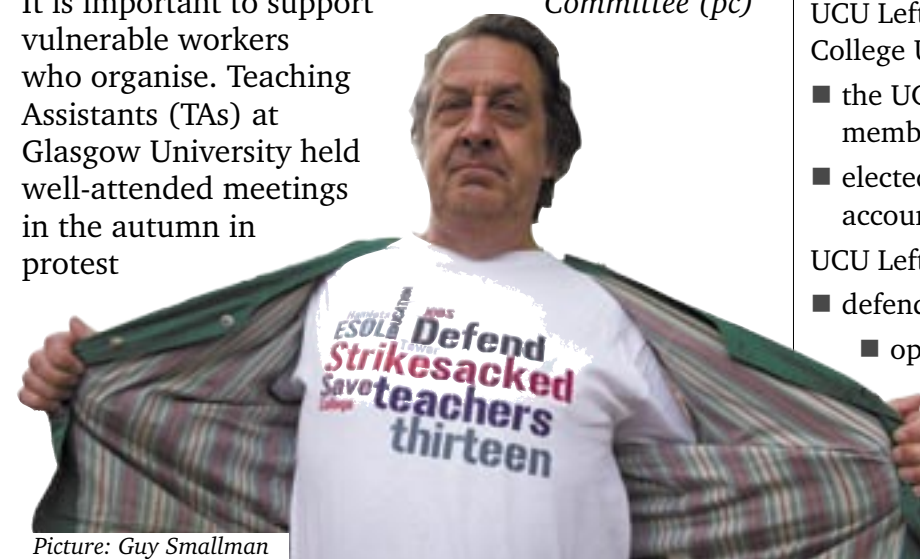
against employment on an 'ad-hoc' basis, 'progressing' to a zero hours contract after a year if they earn enough. UCU and the TAs are meeting with the University to negotiate a better deal. TA organising has also led to improvements in pay and hours in several departments.



Members on casualised contracts can be marginalised at work, so positive encouragement of activism is needed, with reserved places at every level of the union. Casualisation undermines everyone's terms and conditions; more and more of us are fixed-term, so UCU's future depends on the recruitment of the casualised; and a pool of low-paid non-members with no secure income could lead to some being persuaded to act as strikebreakers.

The national UCU annual meeting of members on casual contracts will be held on 26 February. The deadline is 5 February for motions, and 12 February for delegates and nominations to the Anti-Casualisation Committee. If your branch has not arranged participation in this yet, why not take action now?

Jean Crocker, Co-Chair Anti-Casualisation Committee (pc)



Picture: Guy Smallman

Fighting the cuts at UCL

UCL management is attempting to implement 6 percent cuts across the university. Even with the current financial crisis, UCL is in a strong financial position. There is no need for compulsory redundancies. UCL is using the financial crisis as a ruse to remove specific individuals and save money by increasing the workload of remaining staff.

Other universities, notably London Metropolitan University (LMU), have implemented redundancies en masse. The resulting solidarity between staff helped to initiate strike action. UCL has learned from LMU's mistake and is using salami tactics to hide the scale of redundancies. It is an attempt to undermine solidarity and prevent staff and students joining up and forming a university-wide opposition.

When the Vice Provost announced cost cutting exercises, he attempted to make everyone believe that staff salaries are a departmental expense. In fact the majority of staff salary is paid from a central pool. Once a post has been created and central funding confirmed from HR, there is no direct relation between a staff member's salary and a departmental budget. There are some exceptions to this rule when staff are funded by grants or temporary staff are employed for a specific need.

Departments have since used this misconception to justify redundancies as a cost reduction. Even though a department may 'survive' this round of redundancies, upper management has indicated that there will be more to follow (probably 10% next year).

The Provost is quoted as saying "we have not received any cuts in government funding yet, but we need to prepare for possible cuts in the future." He wants to build a war chest of cash now, paid for in jobs, in preparation for possible reductions in future government funding. The facts contradict the Provosts' claims: student enrolment is up, student fees are increasing, alumni donations have been at an all time high, and there is currently £110m in the bank.

UCL council has approved in principle the setting up of an Academic Redundancy Committee. This decision sets a very dangerous precedent for the future, and undermines the very basis of academic freedom. The university ceases to be a community of learning and instead becomes merely an ideas factory. Public trust in academic research would be destroyed. Inevitably there is a risk that academics will be under pressure to prioritise well-funded research and to put the interests of funders ahead of the advancement of scientific knowledge. Research staff working with academics who are made redundant are also under threat.

The UCU campaign so far has shown up the hollowness of management's case. The threatened 10 redundancies in ISD have been reduced to 1. But even 1 redundancy is 1 too many.

UCL UCU is determined to fight these cuts and has a mandate from members to ballot for strike action to fight compulsory redundancies.

Join UCU Left

UCU Left is a national organisation of University and College Union activists. It is committed to ensuring that:

- the UCU has a democratic structure through which members can determine policy
 - elected officers and professional officials can be held accountable.
- UCU Left seeks to:
- defend educational equality
 - oppose the consequences of neo-liberal marketisation
 - oppose all forms of racism, sexism, oppression and imperialism.

Join online at www.uculeft.org

How to vote

We need a strong UCU with a campaigning leadership

VICE PRESIDENT
Sean Vernell

GEOGRAPHICALLY-ELECTED REGIONAL NEC SEATS

LONDON & EAST (HIGHER EDUCATION)
Mark Campbell
Jane Hardy
Jim Wolfreys

NORTH EAST (HIGHER EDUCATION)
Elizabeth Lawrence
Gavin Reid
Jeff Fowler

NORTH EAST (FURTHER EDUCATION)
Dave Gibson
Vanessa Maughan

NATIONALLY ELECTED SEATS

(HIGHER EDUCATION)
Mark Campbell
Christine Vié
Sue Blackwell
Dominique Lauterburg

(FURTHER EDUCATION)
Richard McEwan
Craig Lewis
Mike Barton

EQUALITY SEATS (WOMEN HIGHER EDUCATION)
Veronica Killen
Marion Hersh
(WOMEN FURTHER EDUCATION)
Alison Lord

CASUAL VACANCY (HIGHER EDUCATION)
Marion Hersh

Elections run from 8 Feb to 5 March

STV VOTING SYSTEM

To maximise votes for progressive candidates we ask you to do the following:

- Please use your votes to **first endorse all UCU Left candidates** and only after that use lower preferences for other progressive candidates in each relevant list; and
- Give your highest preferences in the UK-Elected list to UCU Left candidates **from your region.**

✕ Election Special

HE in crisis

Build their resistance

Last summer the news was all about the crisis of the banking sector. Now politicians of all major parties are shifting the debate to the need for public sector cuts.

Just before Christmas, Peter Mandelson announced further cuts in the budget for universities. This brings the cuts to £533m. He raised the prospect of more two-year degrees.

He also encouraged universities to maintain quality and continue expanding access to HE! This was not an April Fool's Day message, although that might have been a more suitable date for such an announcement.

Such a level of cuts can only mean a threat to academic standards, educational provision and jobs.

More universities will resort to compulsory redundancies. Already at least 6000 jobs in the sector are at risk. Such



Picture: Guy Smallman

drastic job losses will mean workloads for those staff left will go through the roof. More managers will be pressurised to maintain standards by pushing their staff to work well beyond contract. Meanwhile tuition fees will go up, if the cap is removed. Students will be justly indignant about being asked to pay higher fees while universities are cutting staffing and new building projects.

How will UCU members in HE respond to all this? No doubt some will accept privatisation and marketisation as the only means of making up the shortfall in public

spending. Some will just try to work even harder because they care about their students.

More will become ill with work-related stress. Some will seek early retirement. None of these understandable responses, however, will address the crisis facing the HE sector. The only realistic course of action is collective resistance. We need to build a public sector alliance to defend

education and public services. We need to involve students and their parents in the struggle for a decent public sector education service.

We need to take industrial action in defence of jobs and education. And we need an NEC which is prepared to lead the fight. This means it really matters who UCU members vote for this year when electing their NEC.

It is important that UCU members in HE vote for HE NEC members prepared to lead a serious fight back in defence of education, jobs, pay and conditions and vote for Sean Vernell as FE Vice-President.

Liz Lawrence, NEC (pc)

Vote UCU Left

FIGHT FOR AN ALTERNATIVE VISION

A decent living wage

It is unfortunate that the Further Education pay ballot result went narrowly against taking industrial action. Members voted by a small majority of 132 votes not to strike (49.1% voted to take action whilst 50.9% voted against on a 27% turn out).

Many of us found that branches would vote for action when members were presented with an argument that framed the fight over pay in a wider educational context and when it was explained that with £1.4 billion in college reserves, and billions spent on bailing out bankers, the money was there to pay lecturers a decent living wage.

However, the impact of cuts in funding leading to mounting job losses and the wider recession clearly on this occasion made many lecturers feel that pay was not the issue to fight on at the moment, despite the unanimous lead from the FEC and the strong vote to reject the pay offer at the special pay conference.

Nonetheless, almost 50% of those who participated voted for a hard-hitting campaign of escalating industrial action despite the attempts of many college Principals' to influence the vote.

Fight to Defend Education

Our fight on pay is part of the wider fight to defend jobs and education provision in FE. It is part of the wider fight also to defend Adult and Higher education. UCU launched its broad campaign to defend Further, Adult and Higher Education on the 26th January at the lobby of Parliament. £915 million cuts in

Higher education and £720 million in Adult Education will leave young and old, alike, with a much narrower chance to gain an education that allows them to protect themselves against the impact of the recession.

It will be the poor and the most vulnerable in our society who will be denied equal access to education. We cannot avoid this fight. At the lobby we also launched our alternative vision for education, with our post-16 education manifesto.

If we are going to win we need to ensure every job cut, every pay cut and every piece of casework is framed in this wider context.

A united campaign to defend public services

The fight to defend Education will not be won by those of us who work in the sector fighting alone. We will need to link up with all those who work in the public sector.

All the major political parties have made it clear that they will be looking to cut back drastically on public sector funding after the election. We therefore need to start now in forging a national alliance of action that is capable of defeating these attacks.

This is why the Right To Work conference in Manchester, supported by UCU, is important. It brings together all those fighting to defend public services. Trade unionists, student activists, anti war and anti racist campaigners, environmentalists, pensioners, community campaigners all need to come together to map out a strategy to defend jobs, pensions and services.

Likewise the National Pensioners Convention has called



Tower Hamlets College UCU members celebrate after their victorious all-out strike to defend jobs and education. Determined action stopped compulsory redundancies, halted cuts to course hours, and won a range of further concessions.

Picture: Guy Smallman

for a nationwide demonstration on the 10th April in defence of Public Services supported by 15 national unions including UCU. The election for Vice President and NEC positions also provides an excellent opportunity for all those who want to build the campaign to defend education to vote for those who won't be afraid to lead such a fight.

Every activist needs to ensure that they get the biggest vote possible for all UCU Left candidates and use the election to widen the network of activists in every college.

Sean Vernell, NEC (pc)

Defending education * promoting equality

UCU left has always argued that Equality is central to our vision of education and is an industrial relations issue. Many of our most active supporters have developed in the union through their Equality work and all our candidates in this election are committed to promoting Equality.

The fight for equality and against discrimination and oppression, whether in respect of racism, sexism, disability discrimination or homophobia and transphobia, is likely to be brought into even sharper focus in the coming period. Post-16 education is facing enormous threats as the government (whichever government!) attempts to claw back the billions poured into the banks in attempts to mitigate financial collapse.

UCU has to rise to this challenge. UCU Left supporters will be arguing for a strategy, a national campaign of information and action which can unite our membership around the defence of education and resistance to the

inevitable threats to jobs, courses and educational opportunities as well as to our pay and pensions which will develop in the coming weeks and months.

In the current context of 'savage cuts', which the Russell Group of universities have rightly claimed could turn the HE clock back hundreds of years, many university and college managements will be tempted to retrench staff training on Equality issues and back pedal on equality and diversity in general.

Branches and Equality reps will need to keep an eagle eye on the equality aspects of course closures and threats to jobs. We should not hesitate to demand Equality Impact Assessments where they suspect discriminatory practice. Such EIAs can be used alongside the threat of disputes and industrial action to try to force managements to think again.

These disputes are best fought through collective industrial action rather than casework and there is much potential for campaigning

unity with students and other campus unions and local communities. We have already seen that such campaigns can win if we are prepared to organise effectively, such as at Tower Hamlets, Barnsley College and Liverpool University. Even where branches are not yet threatened with significant cuts now is the time for branches to consider organising local CALL (Campaigning Alliance for Lifelong Learning) meetings.

Regions need to be proactive in implementing Regional Equality Networks. UCU Left supporters have already done this in Northern Region and others are following suit as part of the roll out of the NOP (National Organising Plan), which itself was an initiative of UCU Left supporters.

The lesson is clear: if you value Equality and want a union which vigorously promotes Equality, vote for UCU Left candidates in the NEC elections.

Laura Miles, NEC FE LGBT rep (pc)

F*OFSTED! Weapon of Mass Demoralisation

How do New Labour control teachers and lecturers? We are a collective of intelligent, articulate citizens with a public sector ethos and humanist values, and with unrivalled access to the hearts and minds of young people. We are a formidable constituency. So formidable indeed that the IMF, in its drive to marketise education, has described teachers as 'an institutional block to change'.

For the market to prevail and the barbarians to take control, educationalists have to be disempowered.

The tool? Ofsted - the secret police of the education department whose role is to undermine teachers from within. They do this in a systematic and ruthless way. They set impossible and unachievable standards, deliberately setting us up to fail.

Because teachers care about standards and are often highly self-critical, self-esteem is our Achilles heel. We internalise the so-called failure, and this has a corrosive impact on self-esteem. When you feel undeserving, it is much harder to demand better pay and conditions. Our failure is the bosses' opportunity, and Ofsted is a weapon of mass demoralisation more potent than any drug.

No matter how often you have been through an Ofsted inspection, you can't get it right: the private companies that carry out the inspections have

We have to demand:

- The abolition of Ofsted
- An end to graded internal observations and punitive, oppressive observation regimes
- Internal quality control processes that are supportive and developmental

different expectations and prejudices; their judgments are never moderated and they are never asked to look at the same institution independently of each other as a most basic check on their reliability.

And of course they have a built-in incentive to fail an institution - the inspectors can return as consultants to ensure success in re-inspection. All sectors have their parasites and education is no exception.

If the dark cloud of Ofsted gathered over educational institutions only sporadically, we might be able to shake off the effects. However, its malign influence has penetrated deep, and now shapes the daily quality control mechanisms within colleges. Internal observation regimes increasingly mirror the Ofsted process, with managers dropping in with little or no warning, and grading teachers using Ofsted criteria.

These grades are used punitively to discipline some teachers and get rid of others. The observation regime itself generates a pervasive atmosphere of unease and insecurity - 'satisfactory' work is deemed not good enough, and all teachers struggle to work harder.

There is no evidence that grading classes improves teaching standards, but a wealth of evidence that teachers are leaving the profession due to increased stress and workload.

Jenny Sutton