

End the gender pay Gap \* Stop the  
abuse of casualised contracts \* The fight  
for pay is a fight for the future of HE



# Defend Education

Support for the two UCU strike days (25 and 26 of May) initiating our pay campaign is gaining momentum. The strikes follow our successful ballot - 65% vote for strike action and 77% for action short of a strike. Our employers have not addressed falling pay in the sector, the yawning gender pay gap or the insecurity and low pay of staff on casualised contracts.

due to increased national insurance and pension contributions in April, never mind the 14.5% decline since 2009. However, the miserly 0.1% increase from the original 1% 'offer' shows the employers are worried by our action.

These inequalities run very deep. Students face the highest levels of debt in the OECD for wanting a university education. Most of the politicians who

imposed fees had a free university education. Senior management earns more than the prime minister and continually abuse their own pay mechanisms to achieve this, showing contempt for the public sector equality ethos. Then to cap it all workers in the sector face job cuts, wage cuts and continually rising workloads.

A fight over pay is about challenging our employers to recognise that we, the workers, are the heart of HE, not expensive new buildings and campuses. Pay as a proportion of total income into

universities has been consistently falling. Non-pay expenditure by contrast has been rising from around 30% of total expenditure in 1970s to 45% in 2015, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). This expansion of buildings and campuses (often into countries with dubious human rights

## End the abuse of casualisation

*Insecurity, withheld or delayed wages, no maternity pay or proper holidays, not knowing from day to day whether you will be working - the satanic mills of the industrial revolution? No, universities in the 21st century. According to HESA data over half of academic staff are on insecure contracts. Nearly half of UK universities use zero hours contracts for teaching. Two thirds of research staff are on fixed term, often very short contracts. Many research staff work multiple contracts in different institutions to make ends meet. 82,000 academics are hourly paid teachers or similar. Many staff remain on casualised contracts for their whole career or until they leave the sector they love because they cannot cope with this hand to mouth existence any more. Casualised staff do the same high quality work as other staff and deserve permanent (fractional) contracts on the same pay scales as everyone else.*

Our action follows the success of other public sector workers, junior doctors and teachers. They have successfully placed their disputes (against the imposed junior doctor contract and the threats of action against forced academics) into a wider political context. This approach has won them widespread support. We have to follow their lead.

Members are resolved to fight over HE pay and deeply angry over inequality and discrimination. Female academics earn on average £6,000 less than their male colleagues. Up to 50% of university staff employed lack secure employment and the terms and conditions of permanent staff. The 1.1% 'final offer' does not even address the 3-4% pay cut

## What do we want? Equal pay When do we want it? 1970

*Nearly half a century after the Equal Pay Act women in universities earn on average over £6000 less than their male colleagues or work for one and a half months for free. The total spend on women academics is £1.3 billion less than for their male colleagues. The 'elite' Russell group universities are amongst the worst offenders. The University of Leicester and City University are national scandals with gender pay gaps of nearly £10,000 and over £12,000. Discrimination in promotion is rife, with over half of academics women, but only 23% of professors. As well as contributing to the gender pay gap, this shows that universities do not value women's work and give them less opportunities. We cannot wait for another half century to end this injustice. We demand equal pay now.*

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records and which are unsafe for LGBT workers) will put real financial strains on the viability of some universities, despite rising surpluses. Universities are becoming less and less efficient as money is bled out to 'special projects', loan repayments, outsourcing, consultants, bonuses and other dodgy practices. Some are already feeling the financial strain.

In the 21st century the insecurity and exploitation of casualisation, the gender and race pay gap and other inequalities should have been abolished. They are still deep rooted, sometimes with names changes to hide bad practice e.g. for example some universities claim they don't have staff on zero hours because they don't use that terminology! Our demands for a decent salary, ending the gender pay gap and secure fractional contracts, without job losses for those on casualised contracts, are part of the wider battle to defend and improve the quality of higher education from managements who do not understand its social value.

As illustrated by the recently announced HE Bill, the Tory government aims to increase privatisation, give free entry to 'private providers' and further increase student fees. We believe in a publicly owned, democratic, high quality public university system

funded by taxation. They seem to believe in short term profiteering by 'private providers' who will dip in and out of the 'market' without any concern for the impact on students and staff or existing universities.

We also now need to discuss taking the campaign forward with further strike and other action over the summer and after. An exam marking boycott is a powerful tactic. However, to use it effectively we need to talk with members about how it will be carried out and our response to the threat of pay docking. UCU must defend every member faced with pay deductions with escalating strike action. Members have to be 100% certain that they will not be left to stand alone. They need to be certain that the union has an agreed response to any such attack and will not settle the dispute until pay deductions are reimbursed. We need to prepare members for a marking and exam boycott.

Our union Congress and Sector Conferences are taking place in Liverpool in June 1-3. They provide a good place for discussion and the option to present emergency motions on the dispute. The national negotiating timetable was set up to try and prevent us affecting exams. The employers are angry that we are managing to take effective action. We need to keep hitting them ... hard.

## **To make our strikes as successful as possible activists in all UCU branches need to act quickly to build support.**

- \* Emphasise the issues of equality and discrimination. Many branches are using a theme for each of the strike days, e.g. 25 May on gender inequality, with strike leaflets on the gender pay gap, and 26 May on casualisation and the poverty pay of many union members.
- \* Encourage members to come up with their own innovative actions. Suggestions so far include helium/hot air balloons and cakes of different size to indicate the gender and casualisation pay gaps and senior management pay, suffragette colours for the gender pay gap day and UCU colours for anti-casualisation.
- \* Talk to students, explain about the action, ask them to pass motions of support and hang banners from student unions.
- \* Have a draft action plan for your branch, including open meetings for all members. These should aim at getting wider involvement in the strike.
- \* Send out a press release to the local media and be ready to talk to them.
- \* Tweet, blog and post photos and videos about the action.
- \* Treat all members as potential activists.
- \* Plaster the institution with placards, use suffragette or UCU colours in advance of the strike days.
- \* Talk through the process of picketing – many have never done this before.
- \* Invite reps from the other campus and student union to join you on the day and to speak at rallies.
- \* Talk to non-members and encourage them to join the union. They can take part in strike action from the moment they join.
- \* Plan for two days of strike. Decide the duration of picketing and organise rallies and marches when it ends. Some areas are holding local rallies on one day, and a coordinated rally across your region or devolved nation on the other strike day.
- \* Should you have a local rally on the first day, and a coordinated rally across your region or devolved nation on the second?