

CASUALISATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Annual report into casualisation at the University of Glasgow

Following UCU Glasgow's 2020 report on casualisation at the University of Glasgow, the branch entered into negotiations with management on the issues raised. A summary of those discussions is given below, and as it describes, one of our suggestions was that the university reports annually on the state of insecure work in the institution. They declined to do this. As a result, we have decided that it would be helpful if UCUG provides an annual update on some key issues. In this report for 2021, we outline some statistics around staff placed 'at risk' of redundancy, and report on the anti-casualisation working group from the last year.

If you want to get more involved or discuss any issues raised here, please get in touch with Richard Shaw (richard.shaw@glasgow.ac.uk), who is the branch fixed-term representative; Rosie Hampton (r.hampton.1@research.gla.ac.uk), the GTA rep; or Lina Nass in the branch office (ucug@glasgow.ac.uk).

For more information on these issues, see the 2020 UCUG report 'The Realities of Casualisation at the University of Glasgow':
<https://ucuglasgow.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/ucu-glasgow-anti-casualisation-report.pdf>

UCU Glasgow Anti-Casualisation Subcommittee
October 2021

State of job security at the university

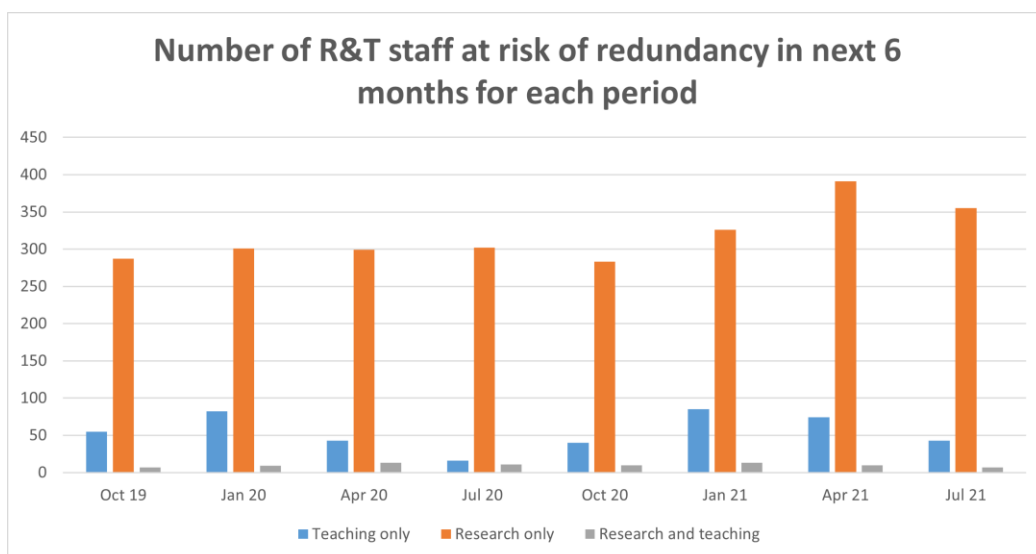
- Record levels of job insecurity
- Well over one thousand staff at risk of redundancy in the next six months
- Particularly high levels of insecurity for technical, and research and teaching staff
- In the last six months, over 100 staff have been made redundant

Record levels of job insecurity have arisen at the University of Glasgow following the pandemic. The figures produced by the university's Collective Consultation Forum in July indicate that 1149 staff are at risk of redundancy for the period October 2021 to March 2022. This is an increase of 131% over the equivalent period for the previous year, and 400 additional people at risk of redundancy than for any period for which we have data. Undoubtedly the majority of additional staff at risk of redundancy because of the pandemic are technical staff (estimate just over 500). However, this figure also includes a record number of people at risk of redundancy with Research and Teaching (R&T) contracts, at 395. The numbers of Management, Professional and Administrative staff at risk (126) is high but not out of range for previous years.

The bulk of R&T staff at risk of redundancy are on research only contracts (355). This is approximately fifty higher than most recent periods. While we don't have the current number of researchers, figures from a recent equality impact assessment would suggest that this is more than a quarter of all staff on research only contracts.¹ Many of the research posts created in the pandemic have been drawing from multiple short term funding sources, which would be better supported using a pool model of researchers, rather than one that assumes that posts will terminate when a funding source ends.

At forty-three, the number of staff on teaching only contracts at risk of redundancy is within the normal range for recent years, despite the university being reticent to offer permanent contracts during the pandemic. This suggests that we may have had some success at improving job security for those on teaching contracts. It should be noted that the proportion of staff who are at risk of redundancy who are subsequently made redundant is low in recent years, ranging from 9% (Jan – Jun 21) to 21% (April -September 2020). The high numbers of people at risk of redundancy reflect how contracts are managed at the university, rather than a lack of demand for people's skills. Nevertheless, between April and September 2021, 102 posts were made redundant and a further 54 of the staff who were at risk of redundancy resigned.

Overall, in the coming year we need to make sure that the increased insecurity of researchers occurring during the pandemic is reversed.



¹ University of Glasgow (2021) REF2021: Equality Impact Assessment.

Anti-casualisation working group report

After publishing 'The Realities of Casualisation at the University of Glasgow' in February 2020, UCUG representatives engaged in a twelve-month process of negotiations with the university over the issues raised in that report. Some progress was made in particular areas, and we were pleased that some of our ideas were welcomed by the university. We believe that – at least potentially – we are in a better position than we were at the start of the process. However, it is also the case that progress was relatively slow and there is still a very long way to go to tackle the large amount of insecure employment at the University of Glasgow.

Areas with progress

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

Points of agreement:

- Longer contracts to be better enforced
- Working groups in local areas to monitor pay rates and conditions

Some years ago, UCU negotiated with the university a policy that GTA 'contracts should be for up to three academic years where possible (but may also be for one or two based on the individual's period of study at the University)'. Through the more recent process it became clear that this was not happening in many areas of the university. There is now a renewed commitment to ensure this is happening, and UCUG have seen evidence in certain schools of longer contracts being used.

Failed to agree:

- UCUG proposed monitoring mechanisms to monitor actual hours undertaken to do work, on the basis of which levels of payment would be based. The university would not accept this.

Trial of pooled, permanent Research Associates

- Agreement for a trial to be undertaken

This proposal was about creating permanent (or open-ended contracts with no fixed funding end dates) RA positions in schools that could move between different projects, to improve job security. We proposed trialling this in one area, and we are pleased that the university accepted this. We hope that this process will develop in the coming years into a significant expansion of secure employment.

Equalities

- An equalities impact assessment was requested and undertaken on different types of contracts.

The EIA assessment most significantly demonstrated an overrepresentation of BAME staff in less secure contracts. We are pleased that the university agreed to undertake this piece of research but, of course, the point is to do something to improve the situation. No progress in this respect has yet been made.

Areas with no clear progress

Joint public statement

UCUG proposed making a joint public statement, at the start of the negotiations, setting out a commitment to reducing insecure employment, and open and transparent reporting of progress. This was accepted in principle. Despite multiple redrafts made by UCUG based on feedback, however, this was never ultimately agreed, and no alternative wording was ever offered by the university.

Bridging funding

UCUG proposed making a significant budget commitment to bridging funding, again potentially on a trial basis. We suggested a central pot of money to which schools would apply. The university insisted that where appropriate bridging funding already happened on an informal basis and could see no reason to formalise this.

Redeployment processes

UCUG proposed using qualitative data to assess and monitor the university's redeployment process for people whose jobs are considered at risk (i.e. surveying or speaking to individuals who experience the system.) This was refused.

Professional development

UCUG proposed establishing a formal expectation, with a concrete amount of time (hours or portion of contract) that should be allowed for professional development for staff on less secure contracts. In discussion, we simply requested a formal way of monitoring the commitments that the university has made in the researcher concordat to ten days of professional development for researchers annually. The university believes that this cannot be monitored. UCUG is, however, in ongoing discussion with colleagues involved in the researcher concordat on this issue.

Presumption for secure employment

UCUG proposed considering mechanisms for enforcing stricter requirements when making business cases for new roles that the assumption should be in favour of permanent employment. We were told that this is largely the case already. We suggested that there must therefore be an issue with workforce planning, as short-term contracts were still repeatedly being used. This discussion did not result in any concrete outcome.

University proposals

UCUG suggested that if shared principles – i.e. a desire to ensure greater security of employment at the university – were agreed, then as well as our own proposals we would welcome suggestions from HR colleagues on how to achieve this. No suggestions were made.

Transparency and reporting

UCUG proposed annual reporting of statistics on the proportion of staff on insecure contracts, average contract length etc. We suggested there should be a dedicated university page to host information on the issue. These proposals were rejected. UCUG has decided therefore to attempt to fill this gap by regular reporting ourselves.

Continuing work

It was agreed that not all these discussions were completed, even though the specific working group was being wrapped up. To monitor what has been agreed, and to continue discussion other relevant issues, UCUG and the university to use the existing Collective Consultation Forum (CCF).