

Surrey
Branch

UCU
University and College Union

Newsletter



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Transforming UCU: free membership for postgraduates who teach

Effective from 1 October 2017, if you are a PhD student teaching in HE, UCU will make your union membership free. We think this covers around 70,000 (mostly younger) staff - the majority of whom are struggling at the start of their academic careers.

HE has high expectations of young staff but often gives little back to them. These staff members need UCU most, yet their membership density remains low. We want to help young staff get the best out of their careers. Pushing for better conditions from the bottom benefits

both established members and the profession as a whole. We all know that exploitative employment models creep upwards.

It is a big offer and valid for four years (or until a more secure job is achieved). We need to remove every possible barrier in the way of young staff joining our union.

Sally Hunt, UCU General Secretary

Please pass this information on to colleagues at University of Surrey who you think would benefit from this offer.

UCU represents academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, administrators, managers, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates.

JNCC Meetings...

The Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee meetings are a platform for directly influencing University policies and procedures in order to make a positive difference for staff and UCU members. The UCU Branch at Surrey puts forward its position, concerns and recommendations on a wide variety of issues, looking to improve the long term welfare of those affected by proposed changes, and acting as the voice of UCU members. The JNCC consists of the University Senior Management Team and representatives of the three recognised Trade Unions: UCU, Unison and Unite. Here, we report on some important discussions affecting the UCU membership.

Reporting back on the summer JNCC.

Career Tracks

During the Summer JNCC in July, the University reported back on proposals to change the current career tracks, following a request from UCU for further information. This item will have particular significance for University of Surrey Teaching and Research Fellows.

Senior Management identified the key issues as: lack of progression for Senior Teaching Fellows and a requirement for more clarity and recognition for practitioners who don't fit with the traditional research requirements.

The University will also be undertaking further work on the research career pathway.

Surrey UCU welcome plans to revise the current career tracks which will make promotion smoother for Teaching and Research Fellows. Surrey UCU have since discussed this item with Senior

Management to help ensure that the new system will be operated fairly as regards promotion criteria.

Workload Planning

On this item, UCU commented "Some members of teaching staff have been asked to provide or confirm records of their timetabled teaching hours, on the understanding that this will be used for a new workload allocation model. UCU have in the past asked to be kept informed of any plans to create a new workload model, and so would like an update on this."

The University gave an update with regards to the academic planning tool that has been developed to capture plans in more transparent way and which should be in place for mid-September. The tool is a database aimed to reflect academic workloads and can be updated

...The Voice of UCU

and amended as required. Each school and department has been asked to complete the tool after training.

Senior Management reiterated that this was not the 'old' version of some years ago which was highly formulaic, but due to HoDs involvement using local judgement, it should be a much more transparent and user-friendly version. Feedback would be essential to the effective implementation/trialling of this new model.

UCU suggested that extra/out of hours work by academics should be recorded and taken into account in the new model and that credit should be given where it's due. UCU also asked to be briefed on the new model as the union has been contacted by members of teaching staff concerned over timetables/hours, a request which the University agreed to.

Hourly Paid & Fixed Term Contracts

UCU have proposed and attended separate meetings with Senior Management on the issue of precarious contracts. Within the JNCC, following the discussions that took place in March 2017, UCU requested an update as to the route from Hourly Paid Lecturer to a fractional contract. UCU proposed a further meeting to discuss:

1. Decreasing the 200 hour cap

2. Instituting a university wide multiplier in line with the vast majority of HEIs to cover preparation, marking and out of class student contact.
3. A minimum guaranteed hours contract for those who remain on a variable hours contract.
4. Minimising the use of Fixed Term Contracts for mainstream academic grades.

The University fed back data on the current number of staff members on Hourly Paid Contracts. Senior Management noted that:

1. No cap has been formally agreed
2. At present there are no standard multipliers across all disciplines
3. The University is already minimising the use of academic Fixed Term Contracts.

UCU also requested a review of the Fixed -Term Employee Policy.

Revision to the MEQ scheme

UCU requested information on planned changes to the MEQ process, and asked to be consulted fully before any changes are formalised. UCU restated concerns with the recording of MEQs and their use for appraisal targets. The University agreed to consult with UCU before formalisation of any changes.

If you have any questions regarding JNCC meetings, please contact us: cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk

Fixed-term regulations: requesting confirmation of permanence

Surrey UCU has been helping members transfer from a Fixed-term contract to a Permanent contract with the aid of the UCU template letter found here:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/3567/Fixed-term-regulations-requesting-confirmation-of-permanence>

Gaining permanency gives you an increase of security with enhanced redundancy rights. Surrey UCU are continuing to explore the problems encountered by members dependent on external funding and the associated pressures on contract continuation.

Under Regulation 8 of the Regulations, employees have the right to regard their position as permanent if the following conditions are met:

- the employee is on at least their second contract with the same employer or the contract has been previously renewed; and
- the employee has at least four years' continuous service; and
- the use of a fixed-term contract was not justified on objective grounds.

The four years' service must be continuous with the same employer. It does not, however, affect your rights if you have worked in different departments or had changes to your contract in that period.

Some breaks in service may be regarded as a temporary cessation of service and not a break in contract. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis but seek advice from Surrey UCU if you think this may apply to you.

Whether or not the use of the fixed-term contract is justified on objective grounds will be determined on a case by case basis.

Whether or not your post is permanent after four years is a matter of fact in law - you do not have to do anything nor do the regulations require the employer to take any action.

However, if you believe that by virtue of Regulation 8 you are a permanent employee, you can request in writing from your employer a statement that your contract is no longer fixed-term and that you are now a permanent employee. Your employer must respond within 21 days of your request either:

- confirming that you are a permanent employee or
- providing a statement that your contract remains fixed-term including an explanation of any objective justification for such an assertion (Regulation 9).

If you would like help and advice on your contract status please check the information and template letter on the UCU website, and then contact Surrey UCU for more detailed guidance.

As first point of contact, please email the Surrey UCU Branch Administrator, Colette Maxfield: cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk

Surrey UCU and Congress 2017

Our Casework Coordinator and FHMS Rep Alison Cottell attended Congress this year to represent Surrey UCU.

At congress this year there was a strong focus on issues such as Brexit, pay, and Union strategy in the wake of anti-trade union legislation. Issues about workload, stress, and mental health were also raised by a number of HEIs and clearly continue to be a problem in the sector.

Full details of all motions debated can be found on the UCU website and it is worth checking out the range of issues that UCU have resolved to deal with – a list which includes the pressure to use Panopto lecture recordings, and an increasing use of private consultants to undertake projects, which is seen as wasteful and often unsatisfactory.

Surrey University UCU submitted and carried an amendment to a motion proposed by City of Liverpool College regarding legal provision for UCU members. The original motion sought to ensure that UCU reps received adequate legal representation from UCU in the wake of several reports of victimisation of union reps.

Surrey UCU suggested that legal provision for all UCU members is reviewed since we believe that legal services should be as accessible as possible for all of our members. The motion plus amendment was passed and if you would like more information on any aspect of Congress 2017 please visit:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/Congress2017>

Or contact our Surrey UCU Branch Administrator: cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk



Surrey UCU Committee

Roles: 2017-2018

Surrey UCU held its AGM on Friday 4th August, and the following roles were confirmed for the upcoming academic year:

President - **Vacant**

Secretary - **Vacant**

Casework Coordinator - Alison Cottell

Treasurer - Annette Kratz

Equality and Diversity Rep - Annette Kratz

Health and safety Rep - Chris Burt

FHMS Rep - Alison Cottell

FEPS Rep - Chris Burt

FASS Rep - Lampros Stergioulas

Committee Member - Rosalind Malcolm

Committee Member - Nigel Gilbert

Committee Member - Dennis Baker

Committee Member - Barbara Steel

Postgraduate Rep - **Vacant**

Teaching Fellow Rep - **Vacant**

Pensions Rep – **Vacant**

Rep for Part-Time staff - **Vacant**

Membership Secretary – **Vacant**

Professional Services Rep - **Vacant**

Surrey UCU has dedicated facilities time (paid time) for UCU reps. If you were interested in a vacant role, you would be entitled to reasonable paid time off and facilities to undertake union duties and attend UCU training. If anyone would like more information on this topic, contact: cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk

Join UCU today!

Join UCU now, it takes only 10 minutes online: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/join>

Alternatively you can ring the Membership Team: 0333 207 0719

Non academic staff at University of Surrey could choose to join our sister union UNISON. Academic-related staff may consider joining UCU or Unite – contact a representative to discuss which is most suitable for you.



Unions are effective through the strength of their membership. Members can contribute in ways that suit their personalities, spare time, skills and capabilities. All queries on this subject will be warmly welcomed: cmaxfield@ucu.org.uk