

Cardiff University UCU motion

Motion: Support for PGR as Staff Campaign Employees

This branch notes:

- That UCU management has refused to withdraw notices of redundancy for two members of casualised, fixed-term, UCU staff engaged to lead the PGRs As Staff Campaign
- That the Unite UCU branch, representing UCU staff, has declared a dispute on this basis, and staff have voted in favour of industrial action in defence of jobs in a consultative ballot.
- That it is UCU policy, overwhelmingly passed at HE Sector Conference 2023, that the PGRs As Staff Campaign should continue, be expanded and extended (HE 23 and HE 24), adapting the model to organise precarious workers across post-16 education.
- The UKRI funding body, which provides funding for 20-30% of UK doctoral students, is currently consulting on revising both stipend and eligibility practices under the 'New Deal for Postgraduate Research' initiative.
- That Congress 2023 also passed policy (Motion 27) mandating increased resourcing for UCU's organising which prioritised casualised and PGR staff issues.
- That the two staff members were employed on fixed-term contracts of 22-months.
- That 22-month contracts fall below the 24 month contracts that UCU policy demands for our own members (Motion HE14 of 2019), and furthermore that they do not provide workers with basic employment rights such as protection from unfair dismissal.
- On July 18th, the General Secretary responded to an open letter written in support of the PGR As Staff campaign employees, confirming the retention of 0.6 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. This is an improvement of 0.1 FTE from the originally intended plan.
- The response letter does not definitively repudiate the use of sub-24 month contracts, the redundancy notices served to the two staff members in question or the overall reduction of 0.4 FTE staff work for a campaign mandated by conference.

This branch believes:

- That the work of the PGRs As Staff campaign has been a resounding success so far, bringing tangible changes for members inside the workplace and within the union.
- That the overwhelming decision of Congress and Sector Conference to support the extension of this work must be respected.
- That UCU should not dismiss critical PGR As Staff campaign employees while key funding bodies are undertaking discussions in direct relation to the aims of the campaign.
- That UCU should model the employment practices we demand for our own members.
- That short-term, casualised contracts should not be used for UCU's staff.
- That the failure of UCU management to withdraw the redundancy notices, triggering a dispute with Unite, is a threat to our own disputes. UCU management bear full responsibility for resolving this dispute.

This branch resolves:

- To mandate the Branch Committee to write to the General Secretary commending the work of the PGRs As Staff Campaign Leads, expressing our deep disappointment in the decision to make the posts redundant, urging her to immediately withdraw the redundancy notices, and furthermore to avoid the use of such casualised contracts in future.
- To support the Unite UCU branch in their fight against these redundancies including:
 - Sending messages of solidarity to the branch committee and the affected staff members.
 - Sending a donation to the branch's hardship fund if the branch votes for industrial action.
 - If the Unite branch takes industrial action, to send a delegation to any picket lines, expressing solidarity with staff in dispute.
 - To make a public statement of solidarity with Unite UCU, disseminating it on our branch social media and in branch emails.
 - To call upon our members as individuals to write to the General Secretary calling upon UCU management to withdraw the redundancy notices and avoid casualised contracts for UCU staff in future.

Carried at quorate Cardiff University UCU meeting 26 July 2023