

EMERGENCY BRIEFING

BEYOND HESA*: PAY AND WORKING CONDITIONS FOR CASUALISED STAFF IN OXFORD COLLEGES AND THE DEPARTMENT FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

October 2023

* 'HESA' is the acronym for the Higher Education Statistics Agency, the official agency which collects, analyses, and disseminates data about higher education in the UK, usually on an annual basis.

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1) Introduction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document, written by academic staff working in the Colleges and departments of the University of Oxford, has two purposes. First, it aims to raise awareness in Oxford about the issues discussed; for the staff employed by the Collegiate University, it specifically aims to produce useful knowledge for local campaigns. Secondly, it is intended for Senior Management at the University and its constituent Colleges. The briefing presents key findings from a survey for casualised workers which Oxford UCU conducted in Trinity Term 2023. On the basis of these findings, it sets out some questions and proposals, both at the end of each main section and in the Conclusion.

The two focus-points of this report are governed by different systems within the Collegiate University. One focus-point is academic staff at the Department for Continuing Education, a department of the University of Oxford. The other focus is teaching staff employed solely or primarily by Oxford Colleges—that is, by charities technically independent from the University whose missions nonetheless include overseeing and delivering the core teaching of Oxford University undergraduates. The reasons for selecting these two focus-points, and for combining them in a single report, are explained below.

Given the entrenched nature of several problems identified by the survey, some of this briefing's recommendations necessarily imply an extended timescale for development and implementation. Oxford UCU would welcome constructive engagement on these proposals—through the Vice Chancellor's ongoing Pay and Conditions Report, through the existing local bargaining and consultation mechanisms, and through new specialised arrangements. Some of the recommendations made, however, are not of this kind. **The acute crisis faced by University of Oxford and College staff demands immediate action.** The survey results highlighted the crisis as follows:

1) PAY

Once marking and preparation time is included, the pay of hourly paid workers is often less than the National Living Wage. Meanwhile, waged staff often subsist on small fractional contracts, at risk of if not actually in poverty – i.e., with an annual household income of less than 60% of the UK median income.

2) INEQUALITIES

Women are especially affected by these conditions, since they are much more likely to occupy casualised roles. The evidence suggests that extremely low pay produces a lack of ethnic and socio-economic diversity, and discriminates against disabled staff (among others).

3) PRECARIETY

The survey data shows that hundreds of University and College staff members are effectively locked into a cycle of short- or very short-term contracts, sometimes lasting decades.

4) UNMANAGEABLE WORKLOADS

Because casualised academic work in Oxford is generally insecure and poorly paid, staff often juggle roles which together amount to far more than full-time equivalent hours.

IMMEDIATE CONTEXTS

UNIVERSITY PAY AND CONDITIONS REPORT

The Pay and Conditions Report (herein referred to as ‘Report’) commissioned by the Vice-Chancellor at the start of 2023 is a welcomed initiative, especially in its acknowledgement that significant administrative resources are required to address employment-related concerns across the University. Oxford UCU understands the Department for Continuing Education to be formally covered by the Report’s remit, as well as by the ongoing Integrated Staffing Strategy.

Oxford UCU acknowledges that, by contrast, the working conditions of College-only staff lie beyond the Report’s formal, technical remit. Understandably, however, many staff members who work in the University are not completely familiar with its structural complexities. College-only employees include non-academic staff such as scouts and caterers, as well as teaching staff on whom Oxford’s world-renowned educational system depends.¹ In short, they comprise potentially thousands of staff members who devote much of their working lives to the essential care and education of University students. Those staff members can be forgiven for believing that they are therefore counted amongst ‘all staff groups across the University’—the Report’s repeatedly stated focus.² **Many College-only staff members will be dismayed to learn that they are not counted as such.**

The authors of this report object in part, then, to the *manner* in which College-only academic workers have been excluded from the Report’s formal remit, and what that may reveal about management staff’s valuation of the teaching of University students (for more detail, see pp. 32-33). This briefing examines the conditions of two quite different sets of teaching-focused staff. That their working conditions are so similar may indicate a wider devaluation of teaching across the Collegiate University.

College-only and Department for Continuing Education academic staff also appear together in this briefing because of the lack of reliable public data about their working conditions. Despite being the sole employers of many academics delivering the University’s compulsory undergraduate teaching, Oxford Colleges do not submit data to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The many Zero Hour Contracts of tutors working at the Department for Continuing Education also do not appear in HESA data. A central aim of the preliminary work for the University’s Pay and Conditions Report, according to public statements by Steering Committee members, has been to fill the ‘gaps in the data’. **The working conditions of**

¹ Section 4 of this briefing indicates this dependence in more detail.

² <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/pay-and-conditions-report>

College-only teaching staff, on whom the University's reputation partly relies, are covered neither by HESA data nor the Report. This briefing, then, is a first attempt to address one of the largest 'gaps in the data' which the Report is not in fact seeking to fill.

'FORWARD TOGETHER'

In her 2023 Oration, the Vice-Chancellor insisted that the interlocking parts of our 'devolved institution' must 'move forward together'.³ The Vice-Chancellor and members of the Report's Steering Committee have noted publicly the importance of their conversations with the Conference of Colleges (see pp. 33-34 for further discussion). Such concerted activity will be necessary for solving many of the problems raised below, especially concerning the casualised labour underpinning the tutorial system. Reform to that system, given its complexity, requires considerable administrative resources.

That complexity is not, of course, completely unique. While Oxford UCU acknowledges the numerous differences in the relation between the University of Cambridge and its constituent Colleges, Cambridge's supervision system operates on the same fundamental principles as Oxford's equivalent. Many of the concerns raised in this briefing also dominate the supervision system, as campaigns by Cambridge UCU have demonstrated.⁴ Recently, however, the Cambridge Colleges, University, the Office for Intercollegiate Services (OIS) and Cambridge UCU's Justice for College Supervisors campaign (J4CS) have jointly declared their intention to implement a University teaching review focused on the supervision system.⁵ Given the claims and intentions of Oxford University's own Pay and Conditions Report, given the urgent ethical case set out in this briefing, and given the example set by Cambridge's OIS in engaging with UCU's research, **how can senior management across our Collegiate University justify avoiding to attempt equivalent concerted reform?**

The complex issue of the University's and the Colleges' wealth cannot be covered by this briefing. In the context of financial difficulties facing the University, the Vice-Chancellor declared that 'it's time that we too calculate the full range of costs to teach our students if we are to better understand our business model'. As noted above, the University's Pay and Conditions Report is not in fact seeking to calculate 'the full range of costs to teach our students'. This briefing draws attention to some fundamental human costs of the Collegiate University's 'business model'. Considering the stark patterns it outlines, the following question should inform discussion of potential financial solutions to employment concerns across the University. **Given the publicly stated values of the University and the Colleges, what has a higher ethical priority than the chronic and worsening conditions of the casualised staff on whom the Collegiate University's world-leading education system depends?**

³ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2023-10-03-vice-chancellors-oration-2023>

⁴ <https://justice4collegesupervisors2021.wordpress.com/>

⁵ For example, <https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/joint-statement-on-the-j4cs-campaign>

2) The 2023 UCU Survey

DATA AND METHODS

The principal source of data examined for this briefing is the Oxford UCU Hourly Paid and College Workers Survey (2023), which ran from “Week 0” to “Week 9” of Trinity Term, as well as one additional week in July. **The survey received 233 anonymous responses, generating 770 pages of data.** Based on their submissions, the respondents were divided into six identifiable subgroups (see [Table 1](#)).

This briefing does not focus on salaried and hourly paid departmental staff (other than the Department for Continuing Education) for the following reasons. Firstly, the University already supplies staff data on these workers to Oxford UCU (as well as to HESA) as part of its recognition agreement with the union. Secondly, those workers are included in national UCU industrial actions, including the current UCU Rising campaign. This is not true of the other staff in the survey. Oxford UCU certainly believes that casualisation in the departments is an urgent issue: the initial survey data for other departmental staff reinforce this, and future reports will return to casualisation in the departments, widening the variety of job types to include (for example) Departmental Lecturers and fixed-term researchers.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF DATA

As well as the survey’s mix of 89 essay-based, quantitative, and multiple-choice questions, respondents were given the opportunity to send further relevant material to the Oxford UCU Anti-Casualisation email account. Approximately thirty submissions were received in this way. Several correspondents were approached for, and gave, interviews based on their emails.

CORE DATASET

Three responses from tutors at the Department for Continuing Education were identified as duplicate submissions, and therefore also excluded. The remaining 192 survey responses form the ‘core dataset’ upon which this briefing draws. As fractions of the total possible number of respondents, the subsets of respondents are small.⁶ Nevertheless, the figures involved are not insignificant, especially for some job types. Together, participants spent just under 58 hours filling in the survey. The cumulative knowledge produced by staff intimately describing their own daily working conditions cannot be discounted.

Unsurprisingly, the data provide more revealing insights into some aspects of the Collegiate University than others. In general, the humanities were overrepresented and the sciences underrepresented by participants across job types. But if the survey data can only be taken to indicate that *some* employees’ conditions are exploitative, that is not an ethically defensible reason for avoiding reform.

⁶ For example, University of Oxford HR estimate that there are approximately 1,000 hourly paid tutors at the Department for Continuing Education.

Table 1. Subgroups of survey respondents, with corresponding departmental breakdown.

Job Type	Number of Respondents				
	TOTAL	Humanities	Social Sciences	MPLS, Medical Sciences	Subject not stated
Hourly paid college staff	77	41 (53%)	17 (22%)	18 (23%)	1
Stipendiary Lecturers	53	33 (62%)	7 (13%)	10 (19%)	3
Hourly paid tutors from the Department for Continuing Education	49	41 (84%)	2 (4%)	6 (12%)	
Hourly paid staff from other departments of the University of Oxford	34	12 (35%)	13 (38%)	9 (27%)	
Junior Research Fellows and other college-based postdoctoral researchers	18	16 (89%)	2 (11%)		
Salaried staff from departments across the University of Oxford	4				

The authors of this report expect internal readers rigorously to examine its findings and the transparently presented data on which it is based. We also expect those readers to be equally rigorous about equivalent information they may already possess. For example, views about necessary teaching preparation time obtained informally and second-hand—rather than directly but anonymously from casualised staff themselves—are considerably less reliable than the data presented below.

Indeed, the responses of College teaching staff made this especially clear. **An unsettling theme was the fact they chose not to share concerns with line managers for fear of jeopardising future employment.** Even anonymous respondents to the UCU survey were deeply concerned about whether their responses might get back to their line managers. A

potential problem with data obtained through both official surveys and informal discussions is therefore that casualised respondents, in particular, seem likely to censor their feedback. While Oxford UCU would welcome attempts by the University and Conference of Colleges to institute their own survey, there may also be methodological limitations to such an approach.

Overall, then, there are strong grounds for considering the data on which this briefing is based to be the most reliable currently available.⁷ This report does not claim that its data reveal a detailed and universally representative picture of the teaching systems that it examines. But it does, at the very least, lift the lid on a world-famous teaching system about which remarkably little public information exists. This report's purpose is to make an ethical and political case about the teaching that underpins the University's reputation, a case whose urgency is supported by the clarity of the trends present in a not-insignificant data set.

SURVEY-WIDE FINDINGS

Given the differences in pay structure between the job types examined in this report, the patterns set out in the separate individual sections are the most pertinent. However, some general patterns are revealing.

PAY

Across all respondents, the percentage of workers whose real wage met the Oxford Living Wage (expressed either hourly or annually) was approximately 36%. By 'real wage', Oxford UCU means the wage calculated not solely on contact teaching hours, but also on the marking and preparation time required to deliver that teaching satisfactorily. Sections 3 and 6 break down the relevant figures for hourly paid respondents at the Colleges and the Department of Continuing Education, respectively.

CASUALISATION AND DIVERSITY

The concerns about diversity that emerged from the data were both urgent and complex. Although the weight of statistical evidence varied (a fact which should, itself, prompt careful consideration), the survey suggests that across the Collegiate University, women, staff of colour, and disabled staff are particularly affected by casualisation.

The data on women produced the most consistent numerical trends. National UCU statistics show that women and nonbinary staff are more likely to occupy casualised posts.⁸ In Oxford, those staff members also seem to be over-represented in the most casualised and badly paid roles. While a relatively small minority of permanent Professors at Oxford are women, 57% of hourly paid respondents to the survey were women ([Figure 1](#)). 67% of the hourly paid respondents teaching at the Department of Continuing Education were women. In salaried roles, the proportion of female respondents fell to 43.5% ([Figure 1](#)).

⁷ Even the existing datasets on the University workers examined by this briefing are very small. In collaboration with Sums Consulting, the Department for Continuing Education ran its own Tutor Survey in 2022, for which it received 39 responses—seven less than the Oxford UCU survey.

⁸ *Second Class Academic Citizens: The Dehumanizing Effects of Casualisation in Higher Education* (UCU, 2020).

At the same time, **the survey indicates that the Colleges and University may currently be failing to meet their diversity targets among workers for whom HESA staff data are not available.** Only 7.7% of respondents reported belonging to an ethnic minority. Of those staff members who chose to record their ethnicity (84.7% of respondents), 91% were White British, White American, or White European.⁹

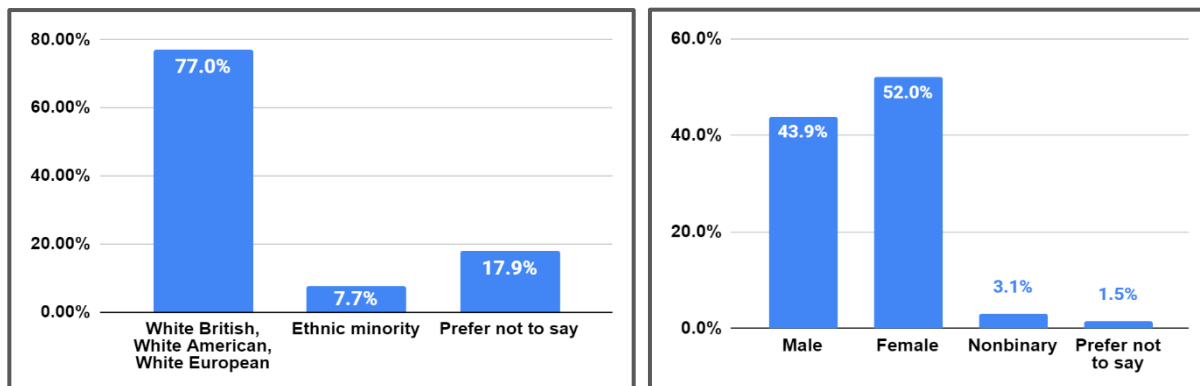


Figure 1. Ethnicity (left) and gender (right) of respondents.

According to the most recent University of Oxford Equal Pay Audit, there are no significant disability pay gaps among non-clinical academic staff.¹⁰ This would make the University a positive outlier, given that the Trade Union Congress's analysis suggests that the national disability pay gap currently stands at 17.2%.¹¹ The present survey did not gather enough evidence either to confirm or question the University's statistics. However, several respondents with a declared disability commented that they felt unsupported in their workplace (the University and/or Colleges), and that low pay and lack of access to sick leave created multiple barriers in their working lives.

CASUALISATION AND DISCRIMINATION

A majority of respondents (52.7%) stated that they had experienced unequal treatment as casualised staff, compared to their permanent colleagues. Sometimes this was very direct, such as being repeatedly passed over for promotion, or being told that a lower academic status (not being a College Fellow) contributed to delays in dealing with multiple harassment complaints (see p. 19). Sometimes the treatment was subtler, but persistent. For example, casualised staff frequently reported being made to feel unwelcome or "invisible" at meetings. Such interpersonal concerns, especially with line managers, have consequences for workloads and pay: casualised staff are often handed jobs at short notice, or have jobs cancelled at short notice, without the consideration which permanent colleagues are afforded.

⁹ To be clear, Oxford UCU does not wish to see more casualisation among Black and Brown staff. Yet the underrepresentation of these staff in the survey data, especially among Stipendiary Lecturers, suggests that the present system may effectively be excluding people of colour from taking up roles which, however imperfectly, currently offer important footholds in Oxford's academic institutions. At the very least, the 'Hourly Paid and College Workers' survey underlines the urgent need for Oxford Colleges to publish transparent publicly available data, along the lines of the University's submissions to HESA.

¹⁰ The most recent Equal Pay Audit available was published in 2020; a new audit is due later in 2023.

¹¹ 'Non-disabled workers paid 17% more than disabled peers' (TUC, 2022).

This situation was worse for women and nonbinary staff. While 32.1% of male Stipendiary Lecturers had experienced unequal treatment based on their casualised status, for women the figure was more than twice as high, at 71.4%. The dataset for nonbinary Stipendiary Lecturers was too small to draw statistical inferences from. **Notably, however, across the entire survey all nonbinary staff reported experiencing unequal treatment due to casualisation.** The evidence discussed in every individual section suggests that issues of discrimination based on job-type and on gender identity are mutually compounding. This aligns with trends identified in previous research by Oxford UCU at the branch level, as well as UCU nationally.¹²

PRECARITY

Staff were asked to rate their experience of working at Oxford in terms of their access to training and development opportunities, their pay, and their future job security. For every question, the combined scores of ‘fairly bad’ and ‘very bad’ accounted for a majority of responses (see [Table 2](#)).

Table 2. Survey-wide responses on training and development, pay, and job security.

	Very bad	Fairly Bad	No opinion	Fairly good	Very good
Training and development	28.6%	30.1%	24.0%	12.2%	4.1%
Pay	29.6%	34.7%	8.2%	19.9%	8.7%
Job security	44.9%	29.1%	11.2%	10.7%	3.1%

Although respondents often felt that conditions were bad across the board, a hierarchy of issues emerged. **44.9% of respondents rated their job security as ‘very bad’, the worst score across all categories.** While a majority of respondents rated their access to training and development opportunities as ‘fairly bad’ or ‘very bad’, almost a quarter (24%) said that they had ‘no opinion’ on the topic. For job security, the proportion of respondents with ‘no opinion’ figure dropped to 11.2%; for pay it fell further to 8.2%. This suggests that the main priorities of casualised staff are improved pay and contracts.

¹² See *Precarious academic work in Oxford* (Oxford Brookes UCU and Oxford UCU, 2022); *Precarious work in higher education* (UCU, 2021).

3) Hourly Paid College Tutors

KEY FINDINGS

- On average hourly paid College participants worked **3.5hrs** per paid contact hour
- The average real wage of those tutors therefore ranged between **£8.42/hr** and **12.63/hr**
- Preparation time for tutorial teaching was generally as high in the sciences as in the humanities

DATA ASSESSMENT/THEMES

REAL PAY

Hourly paid tutors at Oxford regularly earn less than the Oxford Living Wage

The survey asked participants to state the number of contact teaching hours involved in teaching a tutorial course and then the total number of hours worked to satisfactorily deliver that course (i.e., including course preparation and marking). The mean number of total hours worked per contact hour was a minimum of 3.5.¹³

Dividing the standard tuition rates by this figure produces a series of real wages.¹⁴ The uplifted standard tuition rate for teaching a single student in Trinity Term 2022-23 (£29.48/hr) corresponds by this calculation to a real wage of £8.42/hr. For the rate for a tutorial group of two (£36.86), the corresponding wage was £10.53; for a group of three (£44.22) it was £12.63. In that Trinity term, the National Living Wage was £10.42 (as of April 2023); the Oxford Living Wage was £11.35/hr (as of November 2022). Only when participants' average preparation time is applied to a tutorial group of three does their real wage rise fractionally above the Oxford Living Wage.

¹³ Figures for marking and preparation hours in the College sections of this report should be considered a minimum, since participants regularly gave them in the form 'at least X hours'.

¹⁴ Producing general statistics about effective pay is complicated by factors including the number of students in a tutorial and the number of times a tutorial session is run. Tutorials with 1, 2, and 3 students are all common. The average figure of 3.5hrs included workloads for individual tutorials as well as for groups of two and three (numerous participants mentioned that their rate of pay was £28.91, the rate for individual tutorials for most of 2022-23). Tutors vary the number of students in a tutorial not only across papers within the same subject but also within a single tutorial course; tutorials in practice also range from 30 to 90 minutes. Since tutors are therefore most likely to be aware of their working hours in terms of effective 'stints'—blocks of hours taught, and additional blocks of preparation and marking time—the survey asked the question in those terms, producing an overall average to be set against the different rates for group sizes. The survey question was designed in particular to extract an accurate figure for preparation time, by allowing participants to include course preparation beyond the work immediately preceding tutorials, but also to avoid inaccurately inflating preparation time for repeat teaching (multiple tutorials on the same topic will all carry a marking load, but may require no additional content preparation than for one tutorial).

There are evidently different ways of calculating such figures, given the complexity of tutorial arrangements and payment systems, but the overall picture given by participants' preparation time is stark and clear. In their comments, **respondents regularly confirmed that their effective pay was less than the minimum wage.**

Those statements correspond with other recent attempts to gather data on hourly paid teaching of undergraduate papers at Oxford University.¹⁵ They are corroborated by (and corroborate) equivalent recent findings about the supervision system at the University of Cambridge.¹⁶

PREPARATION

The current payment system discourages preparation and student care

80% of hourly paid College tutors described their experience of preparing classes within paid time as either 'fairly bad' (20%) or 'very bad' (60%). 80% of tutors also described their experience marking work within paid time as 'fairly bad' (27%) or 'very bad' (52%).

In their comments, hourly paid tutors regularly observed that their pay encourages a lack of preparation, given that this is effectively ignored by the standard tuition rate. In the words of one tutor, 'the more work I put into preparing and therefore helping students [the] more [that] confers if anything a financial disadvantage on me'. The survey data, and the high rating of Oxford's undergraduate teaching, suggest that **hourly paid tutors accept extreme 'financial disadvantage' in order to help their students properly.**

DIVERSITY

Tutorial pay enforces a lack of diversity

A significant theme in the comments of hourly paid tutors concerned their inability to make ends meet without relying on private income. Several hourly paid respondents noted that they relied on their parents' money. One of the few respondents of colour acknowledged that someone else in their household was paying their living expenses. **Several tutors also pointed out that the reality of tutorial pay belies both the Colleges' and the University's rhetoric about improving diversity.** There was little ethnic diversity amongst hourly paid College tutors. Of those who chose to identify an ethnicity (86% of respondents), only 9% did not identify as White British, White American, or White European.

¹⁵ An internal survey conducted in the 2021-22 academic year by graduate students in the Mathematical Institute (which employs at least 80 doctoral students to teach advanced third- and fourth-year undergraduate courses) found that those students were working at less than the Oxford Living Wage once preparation and marking was factored in. *Casualised Academic Labour at the University of Oxford* (Oxford UCU, 2022), 4.

¹⁶ A 2019 survey of hourly paid supervisors at Cambridge found that, while only 5.6% of respondents worked on average for just one additional hour per paid teaching hour, 28.3% worked an additional two hours, 34.9% worked an additional three, and a full 31% of respondents worked on average 4-5 additional hours per paid teaching hour of supervision. *Hourly-Paid Workers at Cambridge University: A Report* (Cambridge UCU, 2019), p.12.

One hourly paid participant noted that, because of what she identified as a ‘learning disability’, the time in which she was expected to mark submitted work was much less than the time it actually took her to do so, implying that those expectations adversely affect neurodivergent tutors in particular, further depressing their real rate of pay.

SUBJECT COMPARISONS

The data call into question the assumption that tutorials in the sciences require very little preparation, and in particular much less preparation than those in the humanities (meaning that the standard tuition rate is exploitative only for some subjects). The following chart ([Figure 2](#)) averages the number of preparation and marking hours required per teaching hour for each subject in which respondents gave the data.

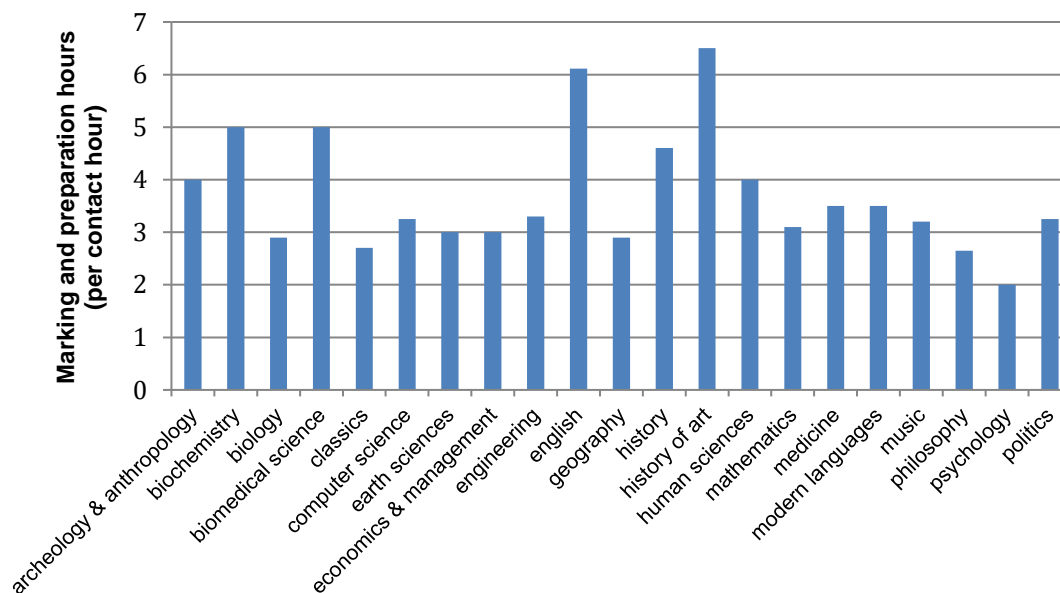


Figure 2. Marking and preparation hours per contact hour (by subject), for hourly paid College tutors.

While the marking and preparation time of participants in some humanities subjects—notably English and History of Art—was especially high (6.1 hours per tutorial teaching hour and 6.5 hours, respectively), this preliminary data also suggests, for example, that computer science and mathematics tutorials may require similar marking and preparation time per teaching hour to tutorials in music, modern languages, and politics. (Participants in all those subjects did on average a little over 3 hours of marking and preparation for each tutorial hour).

GENERAL WORKING CONDITIONS

- 62% of hourly paid College tutors described their experience of being valued by their employer as either ‘fairly bad’ or ‘very bad’.
- Several participants noted that they kept silent about their experiences because complaining might jeopardise references and future employment.
- Several participants complained about Colleges’ practice of employing tutors on Non-Stipendiary Lectureship contracts but asking them to do the job of Stipendiary Lecturers.

QUESTIONS AND PROPOSALS

1. In documentation concerning hourly paid teaching, the Conference of Colleges should acknowledge and factor in the significant preparation and marking time required for the distinctive form of teaching that is the tutorial system. Unless a larger data set attained through reliable methods produces an alternative figure, **one hour of tutorial teaching should be considered to entail an average total of 3.5 hrs of work.**

2. The Senior Tutors' Committee should raise the standard tuition rate **to ensure that the tutors of Oxford University undergraduates are likely, at the very least, to receive in real terms the Oxford Living Wage.** Multiplying respondents' average total work hours per tutorial hour (3.5) by the Oxford Living Wage (£11.35/hr) produces a starting tuition rate (for singleton tutorials) of £39.73/hr. Nonetheless, the hourly paid participants teaching English to Oxford undergraduates would need to be paid £69.30/hr to receive on average the Oxford Living Wage.

The notion that Oxford Colleges cannot afford to raise the standard tuition rate was disproved by a policy adopted earlier in 2023 by one of the least wealthy Colleges.¹⁷ This policy states that where hourly paid external tutors have been delivering 'substantial' teaching work, such as 'teaching a whole cohort / for a whole paper', the College 'will normally employ them' as Stipendiary Lecturers. This policy more than doubles the pay that those tutors receive on the standard tuition rate.

3. The Senior Tutors' Committee should recommend that, to cover a continuous teaching need, Retained or Non-Stipendiary Lectureships (as opposed to Stipendiary Lectureships) be given only to tutors who receive a full academic grade salary, or a large fraction of that salary, from outside the College.¹⁸

The aforementioned new policy of one Oxford College towards Stipendiary / Non-Stipendiary Lectureships states that current Non-Stipendiary Lecturers whose teaching 'de facto equates to a SL [Stipendiary Lectureship] stint should be offered SL contracts'.

4. Given participants' statements about their socio-economic situation, **how does the extremely low pay of hourly paid tutors align with Colleges' public commitments to the equality and diversity of academic staff?**

5. To address these ethical issues, the Senior Tutors' Committee should **set up a working group, or a series of working groups, in which tutors working at all tiers of casualisation are represented.** This action should connect with equivalent University action examining the consequence of departmental decisions for tutorial teaching (see p. 35).

¹⁷ For this report, the working group has decided not to name specific Colleges in either positive or negative contexts.

¹⁸ The appropriate role of Non-Stipendiary Lecturers varies considerably, including between subjects; it is especially complex in subjects such as medicine. In such cases, Oxford UCU believes that appropriate practice would also be covered by a general recommended policy such as the above. Such a policy would also cover possible instances where tutors actively seek Non-Stipendiary Lectureships: academics wanting the more flexible hours arrangements, but much lower pay, of Non-Stipendiary contracts will have a significant alternative income.

4) Stipendiary Lecturers

KEY FINDINGS

- Every hour of tutorial teaching required two additional hours of marking and immediate preparation
- Supposedly part-time contracts for Stipendiary Lecturers constitute what one participant dubbed an 'hours-disguising arrangement'
- This has strikingly negative consequences for diversity:
 - **100% of participants stating their ethnicity identified as white**
 - **The highest paid Lecturers were far less likely to be women**
- Some College employment practices appear to contravene UK law

DATA ASSESSMENT/THEMES

PAY

Part-time pay constituted most participants' academic salaries

Stipendiary Lectureships are often considered posts that supplement research positions or departmental appointments. 75% of respondents, however, held no such appointment, meaning that their Lectureship pay constituted their academic salary.¹⁹ **Participants' mean salary was £20,200.** 60% of participants (31) earned less than £25,000; for 23 of those, this pay was their academic salary. As indicated by the diversity statistics below, only a limited demographic can subsist on such salaries.²⁰

Stipendiary Lectureships are also often considered highly temporary positions for early-career scholars. **However, the mean number of years in post was 6.6, and 48% of respondents were over 35.**²¹

¹⁹ This high figure could in part be a consequence of the over-representation of humanities subjects among respondents. Nonetheless (though the sample size is evidently very small), 7 of the 10 respondents from MPLS and the Medical Sciences divisions had no cross appointment. More significantly, the simple number of participants whose College pay is their academic salary is noteworthy in itself (given the sample size of 53), however representative this statistic is.

²⁰ At the time of writing, the median rent price of a one-bedroom property in Oxford, calculated as a yearly sum, is £18,876; the average price is £23,388.

Source: https://www.home.co.uk/for_rent/oxford/current_rents?location=oxford

²¹ These figures may suggest that older Lecturers and those in post for a relatively long time were over-represented among the survey's respondents, but the fact that Colleges do not submit public employment data renders all such judgements speculative. Were that speculation to be accurate, then the mean salary indicated above is also likely to be un-representatively high, since participants in post for longer usually had a higher salary.

TUTORIAL PREPARATION

Each one-hour tutorial entailed on average 3 hours of academic work, including for highly experienced Lecturers

The survey asked Stipendiary Lecturers to state the average number of hours they spent per week on marking and preparation in addition to their stint hours. **The mean number of real hours worked per stint hour was a minimum of 2.9**, a figure that excludes all administrative, pastoral and other duties, as well as general course preparation outside term. Even for experienced tutors, tutorial teaching therefore requires considerable preparation: over half of participants had been Stipendiary Lecturers for at least 4 years, and some mentioned that the preparation time they recorded was considerably less than in previous years.

While those who did less preparation had often held their positions for the longest, there were numerous exceptions. One Stipendiary Lecturer in post for 15 years spent an additional 3.3 hours of preparation for each stint hour. For this preparation figure, a 'full-time' (12 hour) teaching stint entails 51.6hrs of work solely to teach and prepare for tutorials every term-time week—that is, excluding all administration, pastoral care, and other academic duties also included in Stipendiary Lecturers' contracts.

NON-TUTORIAL WORKLOAD

While their pay is calculated on a fraction of their teaching workload, Stipendiary Lecturers are expected to perform the range of duties enfolded into full-time salaries

A theme in Lecturers' comments was that their 'part-time' contracts would be full-time ones at other institutions. Some participants noted that they spent significantly more hours per week undertaking administrative and welfare duties than the teaching time on which their pay is calculated. One observed: 'A large amount of my time is dealing with student welfare matters. Despite there being a [...] Fellow at the College, I am usually the first port of call for students with welfare/academic concerns.'

Indeed, 38% of participants indicated that they were either technically or effectively the Organising Tutor for their subject. Participants performed a wide range of other important services to their Colleges (beyond outreach events, admissions, and open days), including serving as SCR presidents and harassment advisors. 39% of participants also regularly taught over stint, which also considerably lowers effective pay rates.

It was clear from participants' comments that research remains central to their lives—and indeed, forms another essential part of their duties, since Colleges expect them to keep up with the disciplines that they teach. However, the relative lack of financial support was restrictive.

While Colleges are also unlikely to pay Tutorial Fellows for such duties other than through their teaching stints, the same work is acknowledged by a much larger benefits package and, more importantly, covered by a main University salary.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Stipendiary Lectureships consequently select for the most privileged academics

One respondent (a Law tutor) described the structure of Stipendiary Lecturer contracts as 'hours-disguising', addressing the consequences for Lecturers' diversity:

*[P]art-time [College] contracts which are advertised as 8h/week have the same teaching load as that of full-time, permanent Lectureships in other universities [...].²² This is both impossible to sustainably carry out alongside a rigorous postgraduate degree and financially unfeasible to pursue after a degree for working class academics. By considering contact hours only as working time, Colleges falsely advertise full-time-equivalent teaching opportunities as being part-time. **Oxford therefore enjoys the benefits of world-class teaching and research while pushing first-generation/working class academics out of academia, into poverty, or both.***

The socio-economic diversity of Stipendiary Lecturers evidently intersects with their ethnic diversity. **100% of Stipendiary Lectureship participants who chose to identify their ethnicity (80% of respondents) identified as White British, White American, or White European.**

GENDER DIVERSITY

Stipendiary Lectureship pay may be systemically sexist

Overall, female Stipendiary Lecturers reported a worse experience in their role than their male peers. [Table 3](#) shows the proportion of respondents who considered their access to training and development, their pay, and their job security either 'bad' or 'very bad'.

²² This is the participant's claim. The authors of this survey sought instead to compare Stipendiary Lectureship roles with what Colleges consider to be their closest equivalents: fixed-term teaching positions. We were able to engage in detail about requirements for two such positions: a 1-year full-time teaching replacement job in History at the University of Aberystwyth, and a 1-year full-time teaching replacement job in Comparative Literature at the University of St Andrews. (For the purposes of comparison, a full time Stipendiary Lectureship requires either 12 hours/week of contact teaching time for 24 weeks (if hours are non-weighted) or 8-12 hours of teaching time for 24 weeks (if hours are weighted).) The Aberystwyth position required approximately 8 hours/week of contact teaching time over 20 weeks, but with only a minority of those hours carrying a marking load. The St Andrews position entailed 10 hours/week of contact time over 21 teaching weeks, with marking requirements only for some papers. Neither advertisement mentioned pastoral responsibilities. Both positions were paid at the equivalent of Grade 6 or higher, as opposed to the Grade 5 to which Stipendiary Lectureships are restricted. Overall, expected contact hours vary for full-time positions, but this evidence supports the claim that full-time Stipendiary Lectureships entail more teaching time, a significantly higher marking load, significantly more pastoral responsibility, and significantly less pay than equivalents elsewhere in the sector.

Table 3. Proportion of respondents who considered their access to training and development, their pay, and their job security either ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’.

	Training and Development	Pay	Job Security
Men	50%	53.6%	60.7%
Women	59.1%	68.2%	72.7%
DIFFERENCE	9.1%	14.6%	12.0%

This qualitative data is corroborated by quantitative findings. Among the 15 worst paid Stipendiary Lecturers, there was a roughly equal balance between men and women; but by contrast, **80% of the 15 best paid Stipendiary Lecturers were men**. Expressed as a salary for a 40-hour week, the Oxford Living Wage amounts to £23,608; of those Lecturers who earned more than this salary, 74% were men.

Stipendiary Lectureship pay correlated closely with stint hours. Female Stipendiary Lecturers, then, appear less likely than their male counterparts to have stints approaching ‘full-time’. This would not be surprising: women are more impacted by casual working conditions, and less able to afford gradually to build up their stinted hours.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Colleges’ treatment of Lecturers sometimes appears to contravene UK employment law

UK government employment regulations currently state that *any employee on fixed-term contracts for 4 or more years will automatically become a permanent employee, unless the employer can show that there is a good business reason not to do so*. Such a case would be difficult to make, given the experience that Lecturers gain in a unique system, the stunningly low cost of their labour, and the administration involved in employing a new Lecturer. **Nonetheless, numerous Colleges seem not to fulfil this obligation.** The survey shows that one College, for example, has employed a Stipendiary Lecturer for 7 years continuously on a fixed-term contract; another has done so for 9 years.

Another College appears to employ Lecturers on 11-month contracts, to avoid—or such was a respondent’s assumption—the aforementioned obligation. On its website, that College claims “to offer our Tutors both support and autonomy”, and to “recruit *and retain* the best Tutors [emphasis added]”.

INDIVIDUAL COLLEGE CULTURES

Every College admitting undergraduates appeared multiple times as respondents' employers, except Harris Manchester (which appeared once). This was partly because many Lecturers held positions in different Colleges.

Respondents sometimes singled out the culture of individual Colleges. Several complained about a specific practice at (yet another) College: employing Stipendiary Lecturers at a stint that covered as little as a third of the required or requested teaching hours. No adjustments were made after the respondents repeatedly alerted either a Tutorial Fellow or the Senior Tutor figure to this situation. The only complaints of this kind concerned the same College, which also received the highest overall number of critical comments.

RECOGNITION

Participants regularly noted the extreme difference in recognition and benefits between Tutorial Fellows and themselves, despite contributing at least as much teaching, administration, pastoral care, and research.

One respondent, waiting to hear about harassment cases concerning a permanent Fellow, was told that 'the college process for a non-Fellow complaining formally about a Fellow was complicated'—by implication more complicated than if the respondent had the status of a Fellow.

GENERAL WORKING CONDITIONS

- Although most Colleges seemed to move Stipendiary Lecturers at least some way up the five-stage pay scale (as recommended by the Senior Tutors' Committee), there are notable exceptions. For example, **one participant in post for 14 years remained on the lowest recommended spine point.**
- Several Stipendiary Lecturers noted that they did not complain about their working conditions because doing so might jeopardise references and future employment.
- Some participants noted that they were regularly unable to book teaching rooms in their Colleges, and that they had to get changed and ready for teaching in lavatories because they had no space of their own.

QUESTIONS AND PROPOSALS

- 1. All Colleges should fulfil their obligation to offer employees open-ended contracts after four continuous years of fixed-term employment.** The Senior Tutors' Committee should censure the tactic of producing contracts of less than 12 months to avoid these obligations.

2. Why do Colleges not consider Stipendiary Lecturers, in financial terms, to be academic staff? The University's salary scale stipulates that pay Grades 1-5 are for 'support staff' and that Grades 6-10 are for 'academic related staff'. **The Colleges collectively decide to restrict Stipendiary Lecturers' pay to Grade 5 of the University's salary scale** (National Pay Spine points 23-27).

At the time of writing, examples of Grade 5 posts advertised by Colleges include an Accommodation Assistant and a Finance Bursar's PA. Those roles are evidently as essential to Colleges as academic ones, and require extremely high skill levels (for complete clarity, the authors of this report are in no way suggesting that such roles are of any lesser value or difficulty than those of Stipendiary Lecturers). Stipendiary Lecturers' roles do, however, require highly specialist expertise acquired through years of expensive and competitive training. That some tutors responsible for running academic subjects at some Colleges are not even considered in financial terms to be academic-related staff encapsulates the Collegiate University's valuation of those workers. Stipendiary Lecturer salaries should be attached to at least Grade 6 of the University salary scale.

Oxford UCU understands that some Colleges have recently advertised teaching replacement positions, paid at Grade 6, which might otherwise have been Stipendiary Lectureships. The authors of this report commend this move in its acknowledgement that teaching undergraduates is an academic activity.

3. To overcome the 'hours-disguising' devices in Stipendiary Lectureship contracts:

a. Stipendiary Lecturers who are organising tutors (contractually or *de facto*), or who undertake considerable organisational and pastoral duties, should be granted one to two additional stint hours not to be filled with contact time reported via TMS. This is already the practice at some Colleges in some subjects.

b. Stipendiary Lectureship contracts should also include hours for research, given Colleges' (appropriate) expectation that Lecturers are also researchers, or at the very least maintain pace with their discipline. Earlier in 2023, one of the least wealthy Colleges adopted a policy under which Stipendiary Lecturers with a teaching stint of 5 or 6 hours receive an additional stint hour 'in respect of the need to keep up with research'; lecturers with stints of 8 to 10 hours receive two extra hours.

c. A full-time stint for a Stipendiary Lecturer should be 8 hours not 12 (in line with CUFs). If every hour of teaching requires on average two additional hours of preparation and marking, then a 12-hour stint entails 36 hours spent purely on teaching each week in term (for new Lecturers this figure is likely to be higher). To conceive a 12-hour stint as equating to a full-time role of 37.5 hours per week therefore leaves only 1.5hrs per term-time week for Lecturers' wide-ranging administrative and pastoral duties. Since those duties appear often to take more time than teaching, **'full-time' Stipendiary Lecturers are expected potentially to work far beyond the maximum weekly working hours stipulated by UK employment law.**²³

²³ Those maximum hours are an average, and the above calculation applies only to term-time weeks. Outside term, however, Lecturers undertake other time-consuming work as part of—not independently

5) Junior Research Fellows (JRFs) and other college-based postdoctoral researchers

KEY FINDINGS

- There is a significant pay disparity amongst JRFs and postdocs across Colleges
- Pay disparity between respondents was clearly visible along gender lines
- Disconnections between departments and Colleges can produce an isolated and poorly integrated academic experience

DATA ASSESSMENT/THEMES

Pay for JRFs and postdoctoral researchers appears to be less of a concern than for the teaching-focused staff investigated in this report. Respondents' mean and median pay was roughly £35,000. Compared with teaching staff, respondents also did not generally consider workload to be a problem: 72.2% rated their workload as 'fairly good' or 'very good'. However, respondents expressed a range of other concerns that are inseparable from the themes of the teaching-focused sections in this briefing.

PAY DISPARITIES

Gender pay gap

A gender pay gap was troublingly visible within the sample of respondents. **Of the lowest paid half of respondents, 7 of 9 were women. Of the highest paid half, just 2 of 9 were women.** The mean pay for women was £32,102; the mean pay for men was £35,508. Expressed as a percentage, this formed a 9.6% gender pay gap for college-based postdoctoral researchers.²⁴ This preliminary data therefore corresponds to the findings of the previous section in suggesting that, while women are more likely to occupy casualised rather than permanent academic positions, women may also be much less likely to occupy higher paid fixed-term or part-time academic positions.

Differing College pay

There was a significant gap in salary between the highest and lowest paid respondents, which appeared to depend on their College. The two lowest salaries were £20,000 and £22,474 while

from—their College duties, notably research and general course preparation (which is not covered by the figure of two additional hours), as well as direct duties such as admissions.

²⁴ This is less than the university's mean gender pay gap of 18.1% (according to the University of Oxford's 'Gender Pay Gap Report 2022'), but such differences remain striking given the posts' comparable obligations.

the two highest were £42,000 and £42,026, creating a difference of £22,026 between the highest and lowest salaries.

While some of the lowest paid respondents had benefits such as a free single room in College, the absence of an option to take a 'housing allowance' meant that those respondents were *required* to live in College in order to subsist in Oxford. This was considered exclusionary for many researchers who have dependents or who need other living arrangements.

Differing pay by position

A breakdown of the data by position indicates that **JRFs are amongst the lowest paid researchers, contrary to the position's prestige**. The mean pay for JRFs was £32,669 (£34,532 including annual research allowances); by comparison, other postdoctoral positions such as Career Development Fellows (CDFs), joint JRF-CDF positions, or project-based postdoctoral fellows had a mean pay of £37,821 (£40,656 including annual research allowances). This can partly be explained by CDFs having different contractual responsibilities, such as contracted teaching hours.

TEACHING

Low rates, high expectations

Respondents without contracted teaching hours observed that they were nonetheless expected to take on teaching work for their College (or other Colleges), but that in doing so they were paid at the extremely low rates examined in Section 3 of this briefing. Several respondents who noted this poor rate also observed that their teaching was integral to the running of their College.

The responses also suggest that **at least some departments rely heavily on JRFs as hourly paid workers**. One respondent in particular noted the 'huge amount of both underpaid and unpaid labour' expected from 'a faculty of which I am not formally a member.'²⁵

A common concern among respondents was that Junior Research Fellowships sometimes are, and may increasingly become, repositories for College teaching and administrative responsibilities which lack the appropriate pay and contracts, and which are not clearly advertised. In other words, the concerns about tutorial pay and non-tutorial workloads examined in the previous sections of this briefing appear also to affect positions advertised as research-only or research-focused.

ELITE APPOINTMENT

14 of the 18 respondents had received their doctorate from either a Russell Group university or an R1 research institution in the U.S. Only 2 out of 18 respondents were graduates of a

²⁵ Like the College teaching staff investigated in earlier sections, JRFs are the employees of Colleges but not of departments (unless additional and separate arrangements are made).

post-92 university. Notably, 6 of the 18 respondents had been awarded their DPhil (PhD) from Oxford.

This striking apparent bias towards internal candidates is bound up with concerns raised above (about teaching) and below (about integration), in that the JRF system often appears to assume a familiarity with Oxford's teaching system, expecting JRFs to have the right contacts to secure opportunities and integrate themselves.

INTEGRATION

Department-College communication

7 of 18 respondents had found it either 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to integrate into their department, because of the lack of communication between the University and Colleges. **Several respondents had discovered too late their omission from mailing lists about research seminars, meetings, and other key departmental events.** This was the case even for a participant who had previously studied *and* worked at Oxford, who noted that 'communication between faculty and colleges regarding short-term employees is very poor', affecting JRFs as well as College Lecturers.

FUTURES

This was one factor behind participants' concern about the capacity of their fixed-term position to provide appropriate professional development. **No respondents felt that their fixed-term position left them with 'very good' future job security.** 66.7% of respondents (12 of 18) considered their JRF to be 'fairly bad' or 'very bad' for their future job security.

Despite the concerns stated above about the pay and volume of teaching, 6 of 18 respondents also stated that they had struggled to gain *useful* teaching experience. Respondents commented that the means of gaining such teaching was opaque, hindering their preparation for the job market. In a variety of contexts, then, respondents felt that they were assumed to have prior knowledge of the Oxford system.

QUESTIONS AND PROPOSALS

- 1.** The Conference of Colleges should oversee its own survey of JRFs and College-based postdoctoral researchers. Special attention should be given to the possible gender pay gap highlighted by this report.
- 2.** College teaching responsibilities should be appropriately remunerated, and clearly set out in both advertisements and contracts.
- 3.** Colleges and departments should develop mechanisms for allowing JRFs to participate fully and immediately in their discipline. *Recent positions such as the 'college liaison officer' are highly welcome but should be developed and more widely adopted.*

6) The Department for Continuing Education

KEY FINDINGS

- The average time spent working on back-to-back short-term contracts at the Department for Continuing Education is more than 10 years
- Including unpaid preparation time, on average tutors earn £10.81 per hour
- Female staff are most affected by precarity and low pay in the department

DATA ASSESSMENT/THEMES

INTEGRATED STAFFING STRATEGY

Recent talks between the Department for Continuing Education, the Tutors' Working Group, and Oxford UCU have been making progress; but there is still much work to be done

Since the Oxford UCU Hourly Paid and College Workers Survey closed in Summer 2023, the situation at the Department for Continuing Education has in some ways improved. Management have recently shared an 'Integrated Staffing Strategy' for moving at least some of the approximately 1,000 hourly paid tutors currently working at the department onto fractional contracts, potentially starting in September 2024.

Oxford UCU would like to acknowledge this step forward, and branch representatives will continue to engage in these discussions in good faith. Nevertheless, **there are outstanding concerns which have yet to be addressed**. These include the nature of the projected pay structure for tutors, and the mechanism for determining what fraction of a full-time contract tutors will be offered. As these concerns relate directly to the testimonies which tutors shared in the survey, we have decided to publish our analysis of the historic and current issues in the department. We hope that the analysis presented here will facilitate a satisfactory resolution to the talks, as well as underlining the need for immediate action to address those problems which are still ongoing.

“SERVICE PROVIDERS”, NOT EMPLOYEES

Tutors at the Department work for decades on 10-week contracts for services

The survey asked tutors at the Department for Continuing Education to report how many years they had been teaching. **The mean time worked at the department was 10.3 years**. More than 89% of respondents had been tutoring in Oxford for 4 years or more. Government regulations state that *any employee on fixed-term contracts for 4 years or more will automatically become a permanent employee, unless the employer can show there is a good business reason not to do so*. However, because tutors at the Department for Continuing

Education are usually classified as contractors, rather than employees, only a small minority have moved onto permanent contracts.

Because tutors are technically ‘workers’ for, rather than ‘employees’ of the University, they are only entitled to statutory holiday pay and sick leave.²⁶ They do not have the option to join the University Superannuation Scheme. There is no clear route for tutors to take on further responsibilities, or to advance into better paid roles; this flat structure means that experienced tutors feel particularly undervalued. Indeed, several tutors noted that full-time posts within the department tended to be offered to newcomers from outside, ‘as if hourly paid tutors are not qualified enough’. Such hiring practices exacerbate the sense that the workforce is unofficially segregated.

LEGAL CHALLENGE

The legality of the contracts issued by the Department, for decades, is now under scrutiny

Two tutors, Rebecca Abrams and Alice Jolly, have recently brought a **formal legal challenge against the University of Oxford**. Abrams and Jolly both teach on the MSt in Creative Writing at the Department of Continuing Education, where for over four years they have campaigned for an end to the inappropriate contracts for service used in the department. During this period the Society of Authors trade union wrote repeatedly to the University on these matters. In July 2022, both tutors’ contracts for services were not renewed, breaking a cycle of fifteen years of regular renewals, a move which they argue amounts to unfair dismissal. Their case will be heard at Reading Employment Tribunal in 2024, where Abrams and Jolly will be represented by Leigh Day solicitors.²⁷

HOURLY PAY AND MARKING FEES

Some tutors working the equivalent of full-time hours earn less than £15k p.a.

The nominal hourly rate for teaching and preparation at the Department for Continuing Education is paid at Grade 7, Stage 8 on the University of Oxford’s casual pay spine (currently £22.70). Marking is technically paid at a piece rate, although in recent years there have been efforts to peg marking fees to the Oxford Living Wage (currently £11.35/hr). The rationale for paying marking work at half the headline rate of pay for teaching is opaque. **Tutors are paid at Grade 7 for teaching, and at Grade 1 for marking;** yet both activities are essential to the proper delivery of courses and for student learning, and require tutors to be ‘well-qualified academically with experience of teaching and researching at University level’.²⁸

²⁶ For the legal distinction between employees and workers, see the guide provided by the Advisory, Conciliation, and Arbitration Service, ‘[Types of employment status](#)’ (reviewed 22 September 2023).

²⁷ See Leigh Day’s press release: ‘Oxford University lecturers on personal services contract claim employee status’ (2023). More context is given in Richard Hall’s article in the *Guardian*, ‘Academics sue Oxford University over “Uberisation” of teaching contracts’ (23 January 2023).

²⁸ According to the Department of Continuing Education’s own [personal specification for tutors](#) [accessed 08/09/2023].

The survey also highlights broader issues with the nominal hourly rate of pay. Tutors were asked to state how many hours they were paid for, and how many hours they actually spent preparing and teaching a well-established course, i.e., one which they had already taught several times previously. Although evidently the survey only offers a small snapshot of trends within the department, the responses received suggested an extremely troubling dynamic.

For tutors teaching repeat online courses with limited direct student interaction, the amount of paid time was more likely to roughly match the number of hours worked. However, in courses with face-to-face or online seminars, on average tutors performed an additional 1.1 hours of unpaid labour per paid hour. As such, the average real hourly rate of pay was £10.81. Several tutors who teach 12–15 courses a year for the department **reported that they were working the equivalent of full-time hours, ‘or more’, and yet were earning less than £15,000 annually.**

DEVELOPING NEW COURSES

To develop a new course, tutors are often paid less than half the UK Minimum Wage

In addition to the routine underpayment involved in teaching and marking existing courses, many tutors emphasised the huge amounts of unpaid labour required to develop new courses. **On average, the amount of time required to plan a new course and produce the necessary teaching materials and resources for students was 8.5 times longer than the paid preparation time.** Consequently, the real hourly rate of pay for developing and teaching a new course is often significantly lower than the UK Minimum Wage.

For example, to develop and teach a new 10-week face-to-face course, with a two-hour class each week, tutors are often paid for 43 hours. This includes 23 hours of preparation and 20 hours of teaching. Exclusive of holiday pay, this amounts to £976.10 (£22.70 x 43). However, on average the actual number of hours worked is 215.5, giving an effective hourly rate of £4.53.

In subsequent iterations of the course, tutors will need to prepare less. But even assuming that after the first run, tutors both are paid for, and actually spend 20 hours preparing for each course (an assumption which the above section on ‘hourly pay and marking fees’ suggests is conservative), it will still take five iterations before the tutor’s average hourly earnings reach a rate at or above the Oxford Living Wage (see [Figure 3](#)).

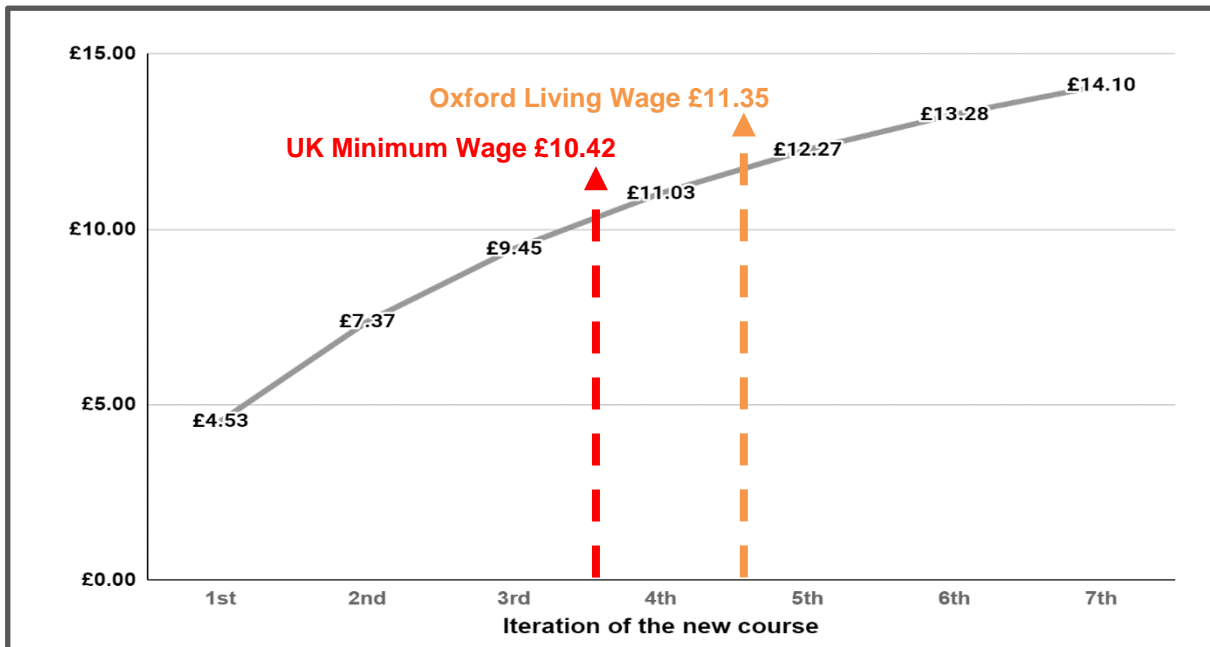


Figure 3. Real hourly pay over all iterations of a new course, for a tutor in the Department of Continuing Education.

PRECARITY

As tutors were only too aware, their lack of guaranteed hours mean that they shoulder all the financial risk if a course is cancelled

Despite the fact that it inevitably takes several cycles before a tutor can recoup the initial investment in time for designing a course, from term to term, and year to year, there is no guarantee that the Department for Continuing Education will keep running it. Tutors are frequently asked to pitch new courses to the department, to ensure that highly engaged students do not exhaust the options available to them. In any case, tutors state that after 3–5 years most courses require major overhauls to bring them up to date with recent developments in the field.

Beyond these regular cycles of developing, pitching, maintaining, and re-writing courses (hours which are largely unpaid, or paid a token amount) there are also cases where the Department for Continuing Education pulls a course, either because it is undersubscribed, or for other unspecified reasons. Several tutors stated that they had experienced having one or more of their courses cancelled at short notice. In these cases, the tutor is not paid at all, even though they will have spent time (in some cases many hours, particularly if it is a new course) in preparation. **It is not surprising, therefore, that 82.6% of tutors rated their experience in terms of future job security as bad, or very bad (54.3%).**

VIDEO PRODUCTION

Tutors work twenty times the amount of paid time allocated to video production

Developing any new course for the Department for Continuing Education involves many hours of unpaid work. However, there are certain types of courses for which the number of unpaid hours is usually even higher. Several tutors noted that ‘Weekly Oxford Worldwide’ courses (WOW courses) can be particularly labour intensive to prepare, since this often involves writing and recording an online lecture series.

Tutors are paid only one additional hour per lecture, which is supposed to cover the time spent recording and uploading this content. Yet in reality, tutors reported that it took them an average of twenty hours to write, script, make slides for, record and edit a high-quality one-hour video. **Taken together with the time needed to prepare other materials, this makes the average hourly pay for designing and teaching a new WOW course £2.13.***

*[(Gross pay = 53 × £22.70) ÷ (Actual hours worked = 565)]

ERRONEOUS PAY, TAX, AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT PAYMENTS

The complexity of the current payment system punishes vulnerable workers

Because tutors often work on a variety of courses simultaneously, and receive different teaching payments, holiday pay, and marking fees for each course, often months in arrears, it is complicated for them to predict their total monthly earnings, or to check that what they have been paid is correct. Recent investigations by tutors have shown that they are often underpaid against their contracted hours.

As of summer 2023, the Department for Continuing Education has attempted to address this issue by introducing a new online pay-breakdown reporting system. This is welcome. It has made it easier for tutors to identify payment errors, at least for tutors who have signed up to the system, which is currently “opt-in” only. But correcting these mistakes still often takes months. Even when backdated earnings are finally paid, this can cause problems for tutors’ self-employed status. It is difficult for tutors to explain these erratic lump sum payments in their annual tax returns.

Meanwhile, for tutors receiving Universal Credit work allowance, the problem is still more acute. Several staff members described how unexpected one-off payments had taken their monthly earnings over the Universal Credit ‘taper rate’, triggering a net loss in their income. “[During the initial phases of the COVID-19 pandemic] I learnt that my courses increased in recruitment by 400%. I was awarded a one-off prize but this messed up my universal credit payments.” Often the workers affected had serious health conditions, who as such were amongst the most vulnerable staff across the Collegiate University, and who therefore avoided raising issues with HR in case it should lead to further unaffordable complications.

Managers at the Department for Continuing Education have said that they cannot realistically take account of all staff members’ tax/benefits scenarios when making one-off payments. **But**

there is an obvious alternative – if tutors were employed on fractional contracts, then calculating their monthly pay and benefits would be simple.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The current system appears to intensify the gender pay gap at the University of Oxford

Two striking demographic trends are visible in the survey data. The first relates to the age of respondents from the Department for Continuing Education: 65.4% were over the age of 54, and of this group, fully half were over the age of 64. Ordinarily, one might assume that an academic in the middle or approaching the end of their career might have reached their maximum earning potential. As detailed above, however, **at the Department for Continuing Education tutors are “held” at a low rate of pay throughout their university career.** It is sometimes suggested that the reason tutors choose to work on these short-term contracts is that they have retired from other commitments, and enjoy the flexibility. In fact, there were only a couple of tutors in the survey for whom this description was accurate. By far the majority of tutors in the age category 65–74 said that they continued working on temporary contracts because they had no other choice.

The second demographic trend was even starker. 67.3% of the respondents from the Department for Continuing Education were women. Plausibly, one reason that older women may form such a large proportion of the department’s hourly paid staff is that, perhaps for caring reasons—childcare, caring for adult family members, kin, etc.—earlier in their careers these academics left the workforce, and then later needed to take a job with flexible hours, and/or were excluded from more secure employment. More research is needed to confirm this hypothesis, but there is some evidence among the tutors’ testimonies which would seem to support this interpretation:

“When I first started teaching at Oxford I was in my early 40s, with two small children. The occasional hours (often at weekends and evenings) seemed appealing and could be fitted around my parenting responsibilities. I imagined my position and pay would improve with time. Plus we had the safety net of my husband's full-time employment salary. Fast-forward 15 years and I'm now 60 years old, divorced and with no pension, having had no career progression at Oxford in all that time, no professional training or development, no recognition of the time and skills I've given to the university, and no formally recognised qualifications to take forward into other employment.”

Taken together, the survey data and testimonies from the Department for Continuing Education have obvious implications for the University of Oxford’s equality and diversity targets, including its compliance with the Athena Swan Charter.

QUESTIONS AND PROPOSALS

1. Senior Management must engage with the Tutors Working Group and UCU to develop and implement new permanent contracts for tutors at the Department for Continuing Education.

All tutors should be offered open ended contracts of employment as soon as possible. These contracts should be fractional, and the process of calculating the fraction of a full-time equivalent role already being performed by tutors should be empirical and transparent, taking account of all hours worked, not just those currently paid. Intensive coordination between HR, the Tutors Working Group, and UCU will be needed to agree the final form of the contracts, but the new Open University Associate Lecturer contracts should be taken as the initial benchmark.

2. UCU recognises that the new contracts for tutors will take time to develop and implement. However, **there is an urgent need to address the issues of low pay and precarity in the department now**. To this end, the following temporary measures should be adopted immediately:

a) To tackle the routine underpayment in the Department for Continuing Education, all tutors should receive an additional multiplier for the teaching hours they work. Evidently, the current survey only offers an indicative snapshot of working practices in the department; but in the absence of more comprehensive data, the additional multiplier should be at least 3 hours per hour of direct teaching.

b) Tutors should receive a further enhanced multiplier for developing new courses, and, separately, for any time spent producing videos for courses. Until a more complete review is published, the multiplier for each task should be at least 10 hours per taught hour in class, or 20 hours per hour of video.

c) The marking fee should be raised to a point where it equals the standard hourly rate for face-to-face teaching (i.e., Grade 7, Stage 8 on the University's casual pay spine).

7) Conclusion

HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXTS

UK HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING

University-level discussions of pay and conditions regularly note the ongoing funding crisis in UK higher education, greatly exacerbated by the freeze in undergraduate tuition fees. The statements of management personnel across the Collegiate University suggest that they consider themselves to be different from their peers in other universities who implement highly exploitative policies in order to improve their institution's financial position. UCU hopes that the practical response to this briefing by senior management across the Collegiate University will encourage the hundreds of survey respondents—and the thousands of casualised workers occupying their roles—to share in that perception.

COMPARATIVE UNIVERSITY PAY AND CONDITIONS

There is a widespread assumption in Oxford University that the conditions of academic staff are at least better than those of their peers elsewhere in the sector. Other studies have questioned the validity of that assumption in some contexts. An LSE UCU report this year found that on average (across the institutions that it studied) 40% of University staff are now fixed-term. **The proportion in Oxford was 66%.**²⁹ The true figure is likely to be much higher, given that the Colleges and the Department for Continuing Education employ a very large number of fixed-term and casualised staff but do not submit data to HESA.

This report has not focused on casualised departmental workers, but several hourly paid University workers made stark comparative statements about their pay and conditions. For example, one respondent was the sole lecturer for a core, popular undergraduate finals paper, for which a University department paid him £19.58/hr for 8 hours of lecturing and two hours of preparation time for each lecture (a fraction of the required preparation time). A much less prestigious higher education institution paid him, for the same work, £56/hr with one hour of preparation time for each hour taught, which results in almost double the pay for eight hours of lecturing. The participant also earned £40/hr teaching his subject at a local state school. That the up-front rate for state school teaching was double that for lecturing a core paper to Oxford University undergraduates raises questions about the University's commitment to diversity (see below). **An experienced senior academic serving as graduate course convenor in another University department likened his hourly paid contract to that of a 'fast food company'**. While offering a lower wage than departments in other Universities, the contract demanded that he assign to the University all intellectual property of a course he had

²⁹ *The Crisis of Academic Casualisation at LSE* (LSE UCU, 2023), p. 11.

developed for a decade.³⁰ Oxford University reserved the right to terminate his contract immediately without reason, making no mention of the participant's right to appeal.

COMPARATIVE COLLEGE PAY

In the Framework Agreement of 2004, UCEA and UCU (then AUT) established that the entry-grade for teaching-only staff in the University sector would be Grade 7.³¹ Comparison between grades at different institutions is complicated, but Stipendiary Lecturers' pay is restricted to Grade 5 when even Oxford University's internal policy is that academic-related staff should be paid at Grade 6 or above (see p. 19). The survey data illustrate that Stipendiary Lecturers are often given a wider range of responsibilities than many entry-level teaching-only staff.

A comparison with Cambridge University's supervision system suggests primarily that hourly paid tutors/supervisors at both institutions continue to receive, in real terms, less than the National Living Wage. Cambridge's University's payment rate, however, is higher than Oxford's by a non-negligible amount. **At the start of 2023, Cambridge's rate for an individual one-hour tutorial was almost 15% more than Oxford's equivalent.** Oxford's rate for an individual tutorial at the start of 2023 was still less than Cambridge's equivalent in 2018.³² Moreover, for the academic year 2023-24, an indicative proposal by the Bursars' Business Committee in Cambridge has proposed an uplift from last year of between 8.2% and 9.6%, significantly higher than Oxford's equivalent.³³ Oxford UCU also understands that an agreement between Cambridge, the OIS, and J4CS now exists to pay all new supervisors £100 to attend training, and an additional £100 upon the approval of their first report.³⁴ This is not to suggest that the situation at Cambridge is satisfactory, but to indicate that **the Conference of Colleges is significantly behind its Cambridge equivalent in valuing hourly paid workers who deliver undergraduate teaching.**

LONGER-TERM DISCUSSION POINTS

UNIVERSITY VALUATION OF TUTORIAL TEACHING

In several recent communications, the Vice-Chancellor has described the University's 'core mission' as 'teaching and research'.³⁵ Those communications have also celebrated the University's 'gold' rating in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The labour of the casualised staff whose conditions are addressed in this briefing underpin the University's

³⁰ The participant had also taught his seminar course at the University of Bristol which, unlike Oxford, paid him 'a sensible amount'.

³¹ See the [JNCHES Framework Agreement for the Modernisation of Pay Structures](#), and the [JNCHES National Library of Academic Role Profiles](#).

³² For group tutorials the difference is smaller, but remains.

³³ <https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/joint-statement-on-the-j4cs-campaign>. The Bursars' Business Committee has been in discussion for several years with UCU about the origins and rationale of its rate. https://www.ois.cam.ac.uk/files/intercollegiate_re-charge_rates_for_supervisions_2022-23.pdf

³⁴ <https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/an-update-from-the-university-and-colleges-on-the-justice4collegesupervisors-campaign>

³⁵ For example, <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2023-10-03-vice-chancellors-oration-2023>

reputation as a teaching institution.³⁶ As noted above, participants in the survey expressed their love of teaching and their concern for students. College-only participants noted that they were often a first port of call for students' welfare as well as academic concerns. Such staff members form, as one participant put it, the 'backbone' of Oxford University's celebrated teaching system.

Yet, only ten days before the Vice-Chancellor's congratulation of academic teaching staff for the University's TEF result, the University's own Pay and Conditions review quietly confirmed its exclusion of those College-only staff from its remit, without any announcement or statement of thanks.³⁷ If half the University's core mission is teaching, it is remarkable that University management can brusquely ignore the working conditions of the staff on whom the University relies to deliver core teaching, while taking public credit for their labour at exactly the same time.

COLLEGE VALUATION OF TUTORIAL TEACHING

Colleges are registered charities, with missions similar to the University's. The government website for the Charity Commission for England and Wales offers a summary of each College's charitable activity—how it 'spends its money'. Examples include the following: 'The advancement of education and learning through the provision of teaching and education support to approximately 600 resident undergraduate and graduate students [...]'; '[The] College fosters excellence in education and research. The College is committed to equal opportunity'. The survey data indicate that Colleges are reliant on hourly paid tutors and Stipendiary Lecturers to deliver their charitable mission. **That those tutors are so poorly paid, and in some cases not fully considered to be academic staff, raises questions about Colleges' fulfilment of their charitable duties** (whatever proportion of their income is already spent on teaching).

CONCERTED UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE ACTION ON TUTORIAL TEACHING

In recent years, student numbers have increased and curricula have expanded, without an equivalent increase in permanent academic University staff, who themselves face increasing bureaucratic pressures. The combined effect of these factors exerts increasing pressure on the tutorial system, which until now has been absorbed by a growing reliance on deeply underpaid casualised staff. This cannot be the solution.

³⁶ The UCU working group does not have access to the methodologies behind the University's TEF submission, but the public thanks from the Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education to 'Colleges' and 'College senior tutors' indicate that tutorial teaching, as expected, lies at the heart of this rating. In the extremely unlikely event that undergraduates were asked to distinguish between teaching received from joint appointments and from College-only staff, students are in practice unaware of such differences.

³⁷ The question submission form in a registration link provided by the University bulletin of September 18th 2023 contained a statement in parentheses to this effect. Shortly afterwards, a very brief statement appeared in the FAQs section of the review's pages on the University website.

Responsibility for Oxford's reliance on underpaid casualised College workers lies partly with departments. A separate study by one of this report's authors found that the tutorial teaching stints of joint post-holders at one University department covers at most 30% of the tutorial teaching that the department explicitly requests the Colleges organise in order to deliver its curriculum. This means both that a stunningly high proportion of tutorials are taught by College-only staff and that some University post-holders deeply over-work themselves by teaching over-stint. This situation is caused partly by the department's uniquely high student:staff ratio, which is itself caused by admissions decision-making at the College level.

Reform therefore requires large-scale cooperation between the Colleges and departments, and will greatly benefit University post-holders as well as College staff. Some other departments, particularly in the social sciences, have developed relatively centralised systems for organising and distributing tutorial teaching. Those systems may be instructive to other departments.

Despite not having an ongoing, publicly heralded and purportedly universal Pay and Conditions Report, the University of Cambridge is taking direct steps to reform its equivalent to the tutorial system. Over the summer of 2023, Cambridge University Council announced that 'the University and the Colleges should collectively seek to address the issue of excessive workloads on both students and staff as a priority', setting up specific working groups to make recommendations.³⁸ Public discussion of interactions between representatives of Oxford University's Pay and Conditions Report and the Conference of Colleges have so far focused on College benefits for APTFs on high permanent salaries. Oxford UCU acknowledges the importance of this issue, but is deeply concerned about how much of the Colleges' resources it might take up. **The question of additional benefits for a comparatively small number of permanent staff members on high salaries cannot compete on ethical grounds with the concerns about casualisation raised in this report.**

VALUING DIVERSITY

In an interview with a national newspaper shortly after her inauguration, the Vice-Chancellor aptly stated that, as the University admits more students from diverse backgrounds, 'there are areas that we need to work on [to make Oxford] a place that they do feel included in'.³⁹ The staff featured in this briefing sit across from students in their compulsory and most academically intimate teaching situations. Indeed, the survey data suggest that casualised or part-time College-only tutors are regularly in charge of subject-areas at their Colleges. And yet the preliminary data indicates shocking trends about the diversity of those tutors—trends which are entirely expected given their low pay and the current cost of living. The working

³⁸ https://www.seniortutors.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/2023.05.11_joint_statement.pdf. See also <https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/an-update-from-the-university-and-colleges-on-the-justice4collegesupervisors-campaign>

³⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/jan/10/oxford-universitys-new-vice-chancellor-to-investigate-staff-pay-and-conditions>

conditions of the teaching roles examined in this briefing therefore constitute an especially urgent area 'that we need to work on'.

More generally, the University and the Colleges are publicly committed to diversifying their staff and student bodies. **If the Collegiate University is serious about diversity and inclusivity, it must materially improve the conditions of the bodies of staff examined in this briefing.**

IMMEDIATE AND SHORT-TERM REFORM

WORKING GROUPS

The authors of this report request that the Steering Committee of the Conference of Colleges establish a working group to examine the urgent ethical concerns about College teaching raised here.

Oxford UCU also requests that a branch of University action on the Pay and Conditions Report focuses on University undergraduate tutorial teaching. This would entail wide-ranging assessment of how action in departments can help to reform the Collegiate University's reliance on highly casualised and un-diverse teaching staff. Oxford UCU requests that committee members of the Pay and Conditions Report also make the exploitative conditions of many College-only academic staff a central topic in their discussions with the Conference of Colleges—especially given how directly the University benefits from the labour of those staff members.

UCU requests that the University's ongoing Pay and Conditions Report takes note of, and is properly joined up with, the Integrated Staffing Strategy in the Department for Continuing Education.

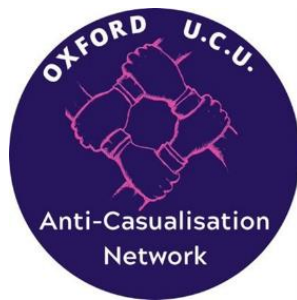
PAY AND CONTRACTS

The survey data shows that the priorities of casualised staff are improved pay and contracts. These should be prioritised: rewards and benefits outside of pay should be considered, but must not substitute for urgent wage and contract reform. **Above all, hourly paid tutors across the Collegiate University should receive, as a bare minimum, the Oxford Living Wage calculated on a data-informed average of the total hours required to deliver teaching hours satisfactorily, rather than merely on those teaching hours.** Earlier sections of this report have set out the most reliable data currently available on average required preparation time for hourly paid tutors at the Colleges and the Department for Continuing Education.

REQUESTED RESPONSES

This report, authored only and entirely by academic staff at Oxford University, has set out a series of questions and requests. The authors of this report request a response from the University's Pay and Conditions Report and from the Senior Tutors' Committee.

Any Oxford University students and staff with thoughts or questions about this report—especially those affected by the working conditions that it examines—are encouraged to get in touch at oxfordanticas@gmail.com.



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