

CAFAS Update No. 84

28 June 2016

Council for Academic Freedom & Academic Standards

Website: www.cafas.org.uk

AGM & Meeting:

Saturday 9 July

1.00pm

Room MAL G16

Birkbeck College

Malet Street

London WC1

Underground: Euston, Euston Square, Goodge Street, Holborn, Russell Square

From the Chair and Secretary of UCU London Metropolitan University Coordinating Committee

Dear colleagues

You may have received an email this week from the General Secretary, Sally Hunt, about a new [UCU Workload Survey Report](#). From Higher Education, 12,113 people took part. Sally's summary noted the following:

The results are astonishing. Our report has 5 key findings:
staff in both the higher education and

further education sectors are working an average of more than two days unpaid every week
workload is unmanageable and unsustainable for the majority of academic staff and lecturers
staff are taking on more responsibility and administration
student expectations have increased
professional and career development is suffering as a result of increasing workload pressures.

In the context of the planned restructure of London Met, which revolves around deleting permanent staff and relying on even more "permanently exploited" HPL/zero hours staff, plus Graduate Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows, plus everyone remaining doing more work, we think there are some other aspects of the Workload Survey that need to be noted. For example:

- A culture of long working hours exists amongst early career academics. 26.9% of all teaching assistants reported that they are working more than 60 hours FTE per week on average and 13.4% work more than 95 hours FTE. One in six academics aged 25 years or under work 100 or more hours per week when part time appointments are adjusted to their full time equivalent.
- Academics engaged in teaching reported a severe increase in workload over the past 3 years. Nearly half of responses from those employed on teaching focussed and teaching and research contracts reported that their working hours had increased significantly over the past 3 years.

The kind of hours being reported across the sector routinely exceed the European Working Time Directive (not mentioned in the VC's latest email, where he talked about the benefits of the EU) and [are known to increase the risk of stroke](#). At London Met last year the main reason for sickness absence was "mental health" reasons, including stress, depression and anxiety. The financial cost of this was in excess of £470,000. When you take into account probable undeclared sickness absence from academics too afraid to have their sick leave recorded, plus the fact that some of the physical reasons given for absence (e.g. stomach disorders) may in fact have psychological causes, then the real financial cost is likely even higher.

Two stress surveys at London Met in recent years showed that we are in the "red zone" on most of the measures used by the Health and Safety Executive, meaning that urgent action is required. Yet the restructuring proposals want to increase Formal Scheduled Teaching to near-maximum and the VC wishes to speed up coursework turnaround times (first piece of work to be returned within a week). Should you falter under this new regime of increased insecurity and higher workload, then the management observation of your lectures - described by Peter McCaffery as "judgmental" - will be there to pin the blame on you rather than the conditions you are working under.

A couple of years ago, Alexandre Afonso wrote an article titled "[How academia resembles a drugs gang](#)", which commented on the increasing insecurity of HE jobs both in the UK and elsewhere. This included the observation from the US - who are the poster child for the future of UK universities - that:

"The Chronicle of Higher Education **recently reported** about adjunct lecturers relying on food stamps. The person mentioned in the article declares a take-home pay of \$900 per month, which is sadly not that far away from the \$3 hourly rate of the drug dealer, but for a much more skilled job".

The Guardian last week included an article headed "[I've lost out on 100 academic jobs. Is it time to give up?](#)"

These articles are indicative of the remorseless march of higher education in the direction of marketisation and privatisation. Yet despite this depressing news, UCU has had a spate of recent victories in which draconian managements have been forced to backtrack. One such story is from Newcastle University, as reported on [the UCU website](#). Another such story is from the FE sector, where the Branch Secretary at Sandwell College reports:

"At a packed branch meeting, in excess of 50 members, Sandwell College UCU accepted a new negotiated Teaching, Learning and Observation Policy which is ungraded, has no link to capability and will generate negotiated outcomes along with reducing the need for re-observations. The branch declared a dispute in December last year and balloted for action in January following the refusal by management to drop the punitive and reductive TLO policy which was being solely used for performance management. After 1 day of strike action and 16 weeks of an observation boycott, the branch feels we have a developmental scheme that will reduce the negative impact on teaching staff that the observation process previously had. Thank you to those who gave us support and advice and congratulations to the branch for their strength and resolve".

The common thread in these stories is not the negotiating ability of UCU

representatives, but rather the willingness of the wider membership to support those reps by taking industrial action.

At the parliamentary launch of the Alternative HE White Paper this week - attended by representatives from the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, and Scottish National Party, the Shadow Higher Education Minister, Gordon Marsden, described the wording of Vice-Chancellor Raftery's OCOC Update on 31st May as "Orwellian jargon and marketing flim-flam". If colleagues at London Met want to avoid this university's future being one of "a boot stamping on a human face - forever", then it will probably be necessary to show the kind of resolve demonstrated by colleagues at Newcastle and Sandwell.

Regards,
David Hardman (secretary)
Mark Campbell (chair)
For the UCU Coordinating Committee
University and College Union at London
Met

London Metropolitan University managers are currently attempting to pursue a programme of 'one campus' that involves sale of buildings and closure of some courses at the City Campus. This involves huge reduction of staff and union leaders by way of 'redundancy' and victimisation. Students are suffering. For further information and petition go to: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/no-to-job-cuts-and-trade-union-victimisation-at-london-met>

Please see UCU London Met blog for further information.
<https://uculondonmet.wordpress.com/>

Racism in the Workplace: (1) The Trade Union that established a racist and sexist discriminatory policy that applies to all trade unions. Free download at www.theplebeian.net

This policy, which is still the legal precedent (January 2016), achieved legal recognition at a hearing of the Court of Appeal, after previously being revealed at an Industrial Tribunal by a union official, who is now a peer in the House of Lords. Read *'The Anti-racism Myth: A Flight into the Cuckoo's Nest,'* which covers the Weaver v NATFHE Race Discrimination Case, especially chapters X, XV & XVII. The case revealed that the union (NATFHE) had a hidden policy that discriminated against members of ethnic minorities and women, known only to officials and officers but not to rank and file members. The policy refused advice and assistance to women and ethnic minorities when they brought cases of harassment and discrimination against other union members.

This discriminatory policy was discovered during the cross examination of a union official, David (now Lord) Triesman, when he was put under the spotlight at the Weaver v NATFHE Industrial Tribunal hearing. This official admitted that the policy applied even when the complainant's case had merit, which, according to the Tribunal's conclusions, the Weaver complaint against a union officer did have. Read also chapters II to VII, XIII to XVII to see the actions of the NATFHE West Midlands' Regional Official, Regional Officers and National Officials/Officers in trying to cover up the original complaint of harassment made by an Asian woman lecturer against a union lay-officer at Bournville College, Birmingham. This comprehensive account exposes the union's manoeuvres both at branch, local and national level to put pressure on the complainant to withdraw her complaints. Download the full account for free at www.theplebeian.net

CAFAS Update seeks to provide an open forum for opinion and discussion.

Items do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council.

In College Turmoil, Signs of a Changed Relationship With Students

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/23/education/in-college-turmoil-signs-of-a-changed-relationship-with-students.html?action=click&contentCollection=Europe&module=Trending&version=Full®ion=Marginalia&pgtype=article>

Campuses are places for open minds – not where debate is closed down | Jonathan Haidt Sunday 10 April 2016

<http://gu.com/p/4t7yt/sbl>

Mordechai Vanunu

http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/09/israel-fresh-charges-nuclear-whistleblower-mordechai-vanunu?utm_source=esp&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=GU+Today+main+NEWS+H+categories&utm_term=171145&suclid=13152035&CMP=EMCNEWEML661912

NOTICES

AGM

Please send nominations for all places on the Committee to the Chair, John Fernandes.

AGM & Meeting

**Saturday 9 July 2016
Room MAL G16,
Birkbeck College**

**AGM 1.00-1.30
Reports and election of Committee**

Meeting 1.30-4.00

Agenda

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Minutes of 3 October 2015 Meeting**
- 3. Academic Freedom**
- 4. Casework**
- 5. AOB**

DO YOU BELIEVE

- That academic standards have been dumbed down throughout the higher and further education sector?
- That this decline has been accompanied by the escalating rhetoric of ‘excellence’ and ‘world-class’?
- That the number of contact hours between teachers and students, which the Dearing Report described as a proper measure of the quality of education, has been reduced across the board?
- That there are all sorts of pressures on examiners to pass candidates who would previously have failed?
- That it is far easier to obtain Firsts and Upper Seconds than it used to be?
- That practices which used to be treated as academically unacceptable, or even as cheating, are now widely regarded as normal and inevitable.
- That the effect of the RAE and other pressures on academics is to increase the quantity of research, not the quality, and to restrict innovative and critical thought?
- That there are pressures, often of a commercial nature, to avoid certain areas of research, or to falsify results or to distort their conclusions and significance?
- That, despite lip-service to the importance of teaching, universities and colleges take little account of this in career advancement?
- That academic values have been largely displaced by market values?
- That the stated ‘mission’ of universities to serve the community has been abandoned in favour of commercial priorities?
- That education in the UK no longer has the status of a right bringing social benefits, but is instead treated as a commodity to be bought and sold?
- That discrimination against women and ethnic minorities is still rife in the employment and promotion practices of tertiary education, despite the multicultural community it is supposed to serve?
- That the work of the union in fighting discrimination and victimisation can usefully be

supplemented by specialised advice and support from an organization which focuses on issues of academic freedom and standards?

If you believe that many or most of these propositions are true, you ought to be a CAFAS member and your UCU branch ought to affiliate. Membership Secretary & Treasurer: Kirit Patel, Tel: 0208 427 9770, kiritone@live.co.uk If you would like a speaker from CAFAS to address a branch meeting, contact: John Fernandes , 07551823361 johnfernandes500@gmail.com

CONSTITUTION

CAFAS' aims are outlined on the membership form. The full constitution can be obtained from the Chair or www.cafas.org.uk. CAFAS was founded in February 1994. It depends on subscriptions and an active membership. It meets in March/April, June and September/October.

Have you paid your SUBSCRIPTION?

Please send your cheque or standing order to the Membership Secretary, Kirit Patel, 19 Greenhill Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1LD kiritone@live.co.uk, Tel: 0208 427 9770

Next deadline: 1 September 2016

Please send letters, news items and articles to:

Pat Brady
patrick.brady28@gmail.com &
Geraldine Thorpe
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You can also send us items at any time for earlier publication on the website.

Next Meeting

Please check the website for venue and date.

Committee

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