

# Employing Temporary Teaching Staff in English and Creative Writing

## Introduction

This short document outlines good practice for Departments of English (or equivalent units) employing temporary staff.

There is a wide range of temporary staff: for example, some are research students; some in post-doctoral positions or 'PhD plus'; some without permanent jobs; some – often creative writers – who teach in addition to other work. There are other forms of temporary staff too. This guidance aims to cover this range, although not everything will be relevant to every case.

The document draws extensively on Royal Historical Association's 'Employing Temporary Teaching Staff in History' and NAWE's 'Employing Lecturers in Creative Writing Using Short-term Contracts'. It is based on three themes: fairness, integration and development.

For some temporary staff, this period is a crucial part of the professional and personal development for temporary teachers and researchers, whether they go on to careers in academia or in other fields.

### **1. Fairness. Employment must be fair.**

- a. Temporary staff, including those on hourly employment, should be offered formal contracts with standard employment rights which comply with UK legislation on part-time and short-term workers.
- b. Temporary staff should be put on the payroll, so that they are paid on time, regularly, without prompting and at the level promised.
- c. Fractional contracts -- those expressed as a proportion of an FTE -- should be based on a realistic assessment of time required not only for teaching but also for preparation, marking, and any administrative roles, including time spent attending any required meetings, staff development/training sessions.
- d. Contracts for teaching based on hourly rates should include preparation and marking time, especially for course convenors.
- e. Hourly-paid teaching contracts should allow for any administrative roles allocated to the member of staff, including time spent attending any required meetings.
- f. Hourly-paid teaching contracts should include payment for time spent attending staff development/training sessions.
- g. Taking into account hours required for preparation, marking and administrative work, temporary staff should be are paid at least the Living Wage.
- h. In ordinary circumstances, temporary teaching staff should be offered contracts and informed about the courses they are teaching at least a month before the teaching term begins. Wherever possible, this should be done earlier. If an institution is unable to draw up contracts in reasonable time, a letter of appointment should be issued as soon as possible to confirm the institution's commitment to employ the Lecturer.
- i. Any extremely short-term contracts are undesirable.

## **2. Integration. Temporary staff should be integrated into the Department (or similar unit).**

For those on short-term teaching contracts a few simple things, such as being included on email lists and invited to seminars, makes a large difference to their experience. To this end, they should be:

- a. Introduced to academic and administrative colleagues, especially those in their own area of research interest, and to each other.
- b. Included on staff email lists and invited to staff events, both academic and social.
- c. Given representation on teaching committee (or similar) and, where appropriate, on other representative bodies. They should be included in all appropriate management briefings and meeting.
- d. Given a guide to all administrative procedures, a list of key contacts and of important dates.
- e. Given appropriate guidance and support for the content of their teaching
- f. Clear who to contact about any difficulties, especially:
  - 1) receipt of their pay;
  - 2) the conduct of teaching;
  - 3) rooms
  - 4) equipment (e.g. projectors, PCs in rooms)
  - 5) student problems. This last point is particularly important: ECRs are often the sympathetic recipients of student problems, but it is vital, for both their well-being and that of the students, that they do not carry the burden of student difficulties alone, but know how to get support.
- g. Allocated a mentor, ideally someone in their own research area (but who is not their PhD supervisor).
- h. given the contact name of their union representative (we note that UCU gives free membership to temporary staff).

**3. Development. Colleagues on short-term contracts should be included in all the activities that enable them to perform well and develop in their roles.** These may include course briefings, technical training, subject, departmental or institution-wide meetings and professional development.

- a. Temporary staff should be included in any peer-review or personal development processes within the department.
- b. Temporary teaching staff should be offered training, and paid for the time required. Ideally, they should be encouraged and supported in working towards becoming Associate Fellows of the Higher Education Academy (scheme details at: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/associate-fellow/applying-to-become-an-associate-fellow>).
- c. Advice should be available regarding research and career plans, probably from the people assigned the mentoring role.
- d. Institutional support, including mentoring, library access and affiliated status, should be available to recent doctoral candidates in the year following completion of their studies. The same facilities should be offered during vacations, including the summer, to people on 10-month or term-time only contracts.
- e. Wherever possible, institutional support should be available to temporary staff preparing funding applications and other research activities.
- f. Temporary staff should have full access to the evaluation processes related to their courses, such as student-staff meetings, student feedback questionnaires and external examiners' reports.

## **Addendum**

There is a very full document from NAWE, "Employing Lecturers in Creative Writing Using Short-term Contracts" which, in addition to general issues of good practice, highlights some issues specific to Creative Writing.