

Cardiff UCU's Vision for the University

Our vision is for a university that resists the harms wrought on the sector by the marketisation of Higher Education. Marketisation has led universities away from their core functions of education and research, to the detriment of students and society as a whole. It is also the root cause of the decline in staff pay, working conditions and academic freedom. As such we call for a Higher Education system that is publicly owned, publicly funded and driven not by market pressures but by a vision of service and education and research as public goods.

Specifically we call on UEB and the Vice Chancellor to work with us towards achieving:

- A publicly owned higher education system that is free and accessible to all.
- Governance structures that are transparent, accountable to staff and students and democratic in their decision making.
- A University that works to combat historical injustices including but not limited to colonialism, racism, sexism, ableism, religious and linguistic discrimination.
- A workplace that recognises that job security, job satisfaction and a good work-life balance are essential to the wellbeing of staff and students and to its resilience and long-term success.

As a union branch we are committed to defending and improving our working conditions. Our main current priorities are around anti-casualisation, reasonable workloads and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

We want a university where every worker is securely employed. By this we mean a guaranteed continuity of gainful employment (i.e. ongoing consistent work and payment). Cardiff University unnecessarily uses contracts which do not fit this description in a wide variety of situations, with dramatic and damaging consequences. Permanent contracts for all staff should be the norm, with fixed-term or atypical contracts being used only in very specific circumstances agreed with the unions. A climate in which every few years, new redundancy schemes are announced (at Cardiff they have typically been voluntary, but often compulsory redundancies were not ruled out if the scheme is not taken up by a sufficient number) is deeply damaging to staff wellbeing and morale. A working environment where workers are securely employed is best for staff, students and for the overall function of the University – for both the sustainability and consistency of high quality research and teaching.

As a matter of urgency, we call on the University to move every employee with over four years of continuous employment (including those on contracts with 'relevant factors') onto open-ended contracts in line with legal expectations, and to work with us to revise the use of seasonal contracts.

We want a University where all workers can fulfil their contractual obligations within their contracted hours and where workloads are fair and equitable across the whole institution.

We call on the University to work closely with staff and the unions in the implementation of fair workload tariffs. In schools where the agreement between the University and UCU on the union involvement in the new workload model was honoured, tariffs were fairer and more realistic. It is particularly urgent to set up separate tariffs for Graduate Tutors/Demonstrators who cannot be expected to work under the same tariffs as other staff.

Workload tariffs are not, however, an adequate solution to excessive workloads. Universities should be actively campaigning against a system where they are forced to compete for students and funding. Universities should also oppose the use of unrealistic metrics that lead to unsustainable pressures on staff working conditions, including performance expectations.

We want a University that works meaningfully according to the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. This includes being an actively anti-racist institution, advocating religious freedom, being LGBTQ+ allies, promoting gender equity, and fighting ableism and other forms of discrimination. We envisage an institution that continually learns about EDI and anti-racism, that does not pressure survivors of discrimination into emotionally loaded labour, and that is intersectional in its understanding of these issues. This can only be achieved if considered in relation to employment status, pay and working conditions – who the university chooses to employ and under what conditions.

A priority should be to achieve equal pay regardless of gender, race and disability, ensure reasonable adjustments are implemented when needed, and line managers are trained to deal with the needs of the workers they manage. We call on the University to immediately close the pay gaps and reduce the ratio between the highest and lowest paid in our institution, to develop blind recruitment procedures and review its promotion processes.

We believe that each institution, and particularly those in Wales, can show leadership by breaking away from enthusiastically following the toxic and widely discredited marketised model of HE. Rather than following a model that mimics top-down, anti-democratic, corporations we call for a university that follows its own path, based on the values it wishes to uphold. Where it faces pressures from market forces, it should expose and confront those pressures rather than conforming to them wholesale. This includes actively campaigning against tuition fees and for a new public funding model for the sector. There are pockets of the University already challenging the practices that come from the marketisation of HE and those can be expanded. Only then can students, staff and management work together towards a better sector for everyone.