

Working to Contract at the University of Manchester : UCU Advice

In the notice of industrial action sent to Dame Nancy Rothwell on October 6th, action short of strike (ASOS) was described as follows: *“our members will work to their contracts in the form of working no longer than their contractual working hours and not undertaking any voluntary activities”*.

The following advice is divided into two parts: first, advice regarding contractual hours; second, activities that are definitely voluntary;

Contractual hours

There is plenty of evidence that university staff face unreasonable work pressures and demands to work beyond their contracts, but typically, non-academic contracts refer to a *“nominal 35 hours”* and academic contract to *“a notional minimum of 35 hours”* per week, with both expected to *“work such hours as are necessary for the proper discharge of discharge of duties”*.

We recommend that members work in line with their contractual hours. If ordered to undertake tasks that would entail working more hours, **it is legitimate to ask the relevant line manager (which is normally the Head of School) to specify, in writing, what other contractual obligations should be sacrificed in order to make time for them.**

If anybody feels they are being coerced or bullied into doing more than their contractual hours, please contact the UMUCU office on ucu@manchester.ac.uk.

Voluntary activities to be boycotted

1. PDR - Performance and Development Review:

UCU has a firm agreement that, while management are obliged to offer PDRs to all staff, staff participation is voluntary.

2. PREP - Personal Research Expectations Plan:

Management tries to pretend PREP is separate from PDR, UMUCU views PREP as being part of or a substitute for PDR and therefore voluntary.

3. FPRT - Faculty Peer Review of Teaching:

We advise members not to volunteer as Reviewers and, if they have volunteered, to request that they be allowed to un-volunteer.

4. Open Days/UCAS days:

For the PSS staff and Admission Tutors who run them, these are contractual, but we ask other members not to volunteer to take part in them.

5. School, Faculty and University meetings, including eLearning Showcases etc.:

Boycott wherever attendance is voluntary

6. Additional advice for academic related staff:

You do not have to undertake any work not in your contract. You may decline to participate in public engagement events where attendance is voluntary and to cover for absent staff. You need only work your contractual hours each week.

7. RRE/Pure – Research Review Exercise, for which Pure is the online database of publications:

We recommend members comply (when they have time) with requests to put papers on Pure but not to identify which of them are likely to be judged internationally excellent (3*) or world leading (4*). Please contact the UMUCU office on ucu@manchester.ac.uk for advice if put under pressure to do so.

8. eProg - online system for monitoring progress of PhD students:

Annual Reviews are part of the summative assessment of PhD students so should be completed. However, other non-essential activities, such as quarterly reviews, will have to be prioritised alongside other contractual duties. Again, please contact the UMUCU office on ucu@manchester.ac.uk for advice if this leads to undue pressure.

Supporting each other

In all cases, it is will be easier to say no collectively than individually. We must not let individual members become isolated or become exposed to bullying by managers. Therefore, **we ask that UCU members in work groups (research teams, discipline areas, Schools etc.) discuss what work they are not going to do as a result of working to contract.** This involves sharing knowledge of contracts and identifying which duties are voluntary and lie outside them – with perhaps some gentle pushing at boundaries to see which are and which are not going to be challenged by line managers and the University’s lawyers. If you contact the UCU office (ucu@manchester.ac.uk) we will try to arrange for an Executive Committee member to deal with any queries and perhaps come and discuss any issues that arise at a lunch-time meeting.

When invited to participate in activities or to attend events that are voluntary, you might like to reply along the following lines:

"Thank you for the invitation but I am a UCU member and, as I hope you know, UCU members are currently working to contract as a result of the Senior Leadership Team's - in our view unnecessary and unjustified - decision to make two PSS staff in FSE compulsorily redundant. Since attendance at the event is voluntary, it falls out with my contract so I will not be attending."

Finally, **please set up an email auto-reply**, such as:

"I am a UCU member and am working to contract as a result of the continuing industrial dispute at the University over the compulsory redundancy of PSS staff in FSE. This means it may take me longer than usual to reply to emails."