

August 2023

UCEA Briefing on ‘Employment contracts in HE’ infographics

This, our sixth annual set of infographics examining ‘Employment contracts in HE’, seeks to clarify facts and figures behind a key issue for HE sector employment. All our infographics use information from the latest ([2021-22](#)) available HESA data. These infographics aim to present accessible information of sector level data showing the use of different contractual forms for both academic and professional services employees. We include seven individual infographics over two pages, each responding to a key question.

This latest HESA data may well feel ‘dated’ but members have been clear that they continue to seek updated facts, figures and infographics and for such information to be utilised locally. Hopefully local level work will mirror UCEA’s ongoing proposals to continue work with the sector trade unions to develop a better understanding of the data and of the practices and arrangements within HE institutions to support those in hourly-paid and variable employment.

It is important to recall that it was successful joint work by UCEA and trade unions back in 2016 that led to the addition of new fields in the HESA Staff Collection that record ‘zero hours’ and ‘hourly-paid’ employees for the first time, as well as identifying those employees who are apprentices. This in turn delivered new information for our initial contracts infographics.

Despite ongoing difficulties and challenges, UCEA will continue in its efforts to engage with the trade unions at sector level to address the complexities in this difficult area. However, any inability to work jointly will not prevent our work on these important and evolving issues.

We provide in the Annexe some explanatory information notes to limit text-heavy explanations within the infographics themselves.

These infographics are available as individual jpeg attachments on the [UCEA website](#) and we encourage their use. Feedback, suggestions and examples of similar infographics used at local level will always be well received.

Annexe - Notes on the ‘Employment contracts in HE’ infographics

Page 1

The first page of infographics on Employment contracts in HE focuses on proportions of different HE contracts and how the balance has been changing.

The first, **‘In what proportion are different contracts used in HE?’**, shows how open-ended contracts account for the vast majority of the employment contracts in HE, separating ‘Academics’ and ‘Professional services’ for further clarification and comparison. Using the HESA data, and full-time equivalents (FTEs) to enable a meaningful apportionment, the infographics show the very small proportion of FTE that is attributable to individuals on ‘atypical’ contracts. With reference to the ‘Note’, HESA data for atypical engagements cover academic roles only.

The second infographic, **‘Is the balance between fixed and open-ended academic contracts changing?’** examines the trends in open-ended against fixed-term academic contracts. The

updated data are examined over five years, showing that the sector is slowly reducing - rather than the claims of increasing - its reliance on fixed-term contracts for academic staff. This infographic examines the entire academic population, including those engaged exclusively in research.

In the third infographic we have refreshed details in the key question, **'How do the contracts in HE teaching differ between subjects?'** This infographic examines just those academic roles engaged in the delivery of teaching and shows that the majority (nearly 75%) of teaching delivery is done by staff with open-ended contracts, before looking at the figures for contracts in teaching delivery across three main subject groupings.

Page 2

The second page of infographics provides updated information through key questions relating to open-ended and fixed-term employment contracts, including different staff categories.

'Why are fixed-term contracts used for teaching?' is, understandably, text heavy but nonetheless helps to illustrate some of the wide range of reasons that may determine a HE institution's decision to offer a member of teaching staff a fixed-term contract.

The fifth infographic, **'How do contracts vary for different types of lecturers?'** provides insight into how the prevalence of part and full-time working and the use of hourly-paid and salaried staff between the largest group of academics – lecturers and professors – and the smaller group engaged to support teaching delivery we call 'associate lecturers'. Factors behind these figures include that 'associate lecturers' are most likely to be industry professionals, postgraduate students or postdocs, often providing specialised teaching and/or help to cover temporary absences of substantive academic colleagues. Some of these individuals have other careers or may be directly engaged in research activities, limiting time for engagement in delivering teaching activities.

The sixth, **'Which academic disciplines used zero hours contracts most?'** shows the limited extent of 'zero hours contracts' in use, with continuing education (those delivering short courses and evening classes) being the area of delivery where their use was most common.

The seventh and final infographic, **'Does the source of funding influence the prevalence of fixed-term or open-ended contracts?'** demonstrates that research posts and fellowships are the area where we see by far the higher percentages of fixed term contracts in use and that this broadly mirrors the extent of funding from external sources, which are in general limited term research grants. In the main academic population, we see just 7% of professors and lecturers on fixed-term contracts, again mirroring the extent of external funding sources.