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Industrial dispute against IT redundancies

**The Work-to-Contract**

The work-to-contract is a form of industrial action short of strike action (ASOS). In the UCU ballot for industrial action, there was 90% support for this form of action against these compulsory redundancies.

As Universities rely on staff working over their hours to cover all the work necessary to get the job done well, a work-to-contract is an effective form of action if undertaken in a comprehensive and collective way.  Our aim is to demonstrate to the senior management at our institution that we are serious in our insistence that they come to their senses and cease their pursuit of compulsory redundancies in our IT team – a team of staff whose work has been central to holding the University together in 2020.

The action applies to all UCU members and is combined with strike action. Strike action and ASOS are complementary elements of our strategy to win this dispute.

**What am I doing when I am working to contract?**You are withdrawing the large amounts of good will and unpaid labour the University relies upon to run smoothly week-to-week.

**How do I work to contract?**

The central elements of the work-to-contract are drawn out of the ‘[Code of Practice on Issues Relating to Hours or Work and the Allocation of a Lecturers’ Duties](https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/ucu/reference-library/).’ UCU members who work in other areas – professional services, IT staff – should use their own working week ‘reasonable’ hours to follow the guidelines given here:

Working-to-contract involves:

* Working no more than your contracted hours in any given week. For us at University of Brighton that means 37 hours. How you divide up the weekly hours will depend on your own circumstances but the principle is that once you’ve reached 37, you stop work: anything not done cannot be done in that week and must be carried over to the next week. In that next week, the same principle applies. See the sample weekly-work-diaries in the Appendix.
* Performing no additional duties once you have reached your weekly total hours worked. This may mean some of your research, marking or semester-two prep do not get done in any one week. They must be ‘carried over’ to the next week.
* Attending no meetings in relation to duties for which you have not been allocated hours in your workload.
* Refusing management requests to reinstate classes or other activities you did not do because you were on strike.
* Refusing management requests to extend your working week to make up for activities lost because of lockdown.
* Undertaking no duties that breach health and safety policies or other significant employer’s policies. In the context of this pandemic this includes a number of issues (see below).

**Concretely, what does the work-to-contract involve?**

1. Begin keeping a weekly work diary, totting up your hours as you go. Once your hours get to 30, decide what remaining part of your work you can complete in that week and what will need to be rescheduled if you are not to exceed your contracted hours. Sticking to your hours does not involve declining to undertake any particular task for which you have been allocated hours. It does mean that we will need to refuse to carry out tasks in any given week for which we have already exhausted our contractual hours. Tasks will inevitably be delayed if they cannot be completed within a 37-hour week but they will be completed once you can find the contractual time within which to do them. Additionally, many of us have, due to the pressures of workload, fallen into the habit of eating lunch at our desks whilst working. This is unhealthy and unhelpful to any sense of job satisfaction. Use the work-to-contract to reestablish the habit of taking a lunch-break!
2. Make a list of the tasks or activities that you have been unable to get to each week and post it in the W2C page at <http://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/ucu/wtc-things-there-were-no-time-for/> That way we can build up a picture of the collective effect of our industrial action.
3. Ensure that you abide closely to the rules, especially in relation to health & safety and working from home. Follow the guidance for [Display Screen Equipment](https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/) (DSE) users. Take the recommended number of breaks from your screen and include these in your work time as it is our employer’s responsibility to keep us safe when working for them. Do you have appropriate furniture for working from home such as an adjustable office chair and a desk? Do you have a separate keyboard for your laptop that can be set at the appropriate height to avoid repetitive strain injuries? What about a footrest? If not, you may find that you are unable to work consistently until such equipment is provided. Are you using some of your own equipment for university work? All equipment including broadband is subject to failure and periodic outages. Given the University’s treatment of our colleagues you may be disinclined to benefit the University by undertaking any repairs or upgrades to your own equipment at your own expense. If such problems take time out of your working day, do not make up that lost time when your systems are running again.
4. Use the following email signature and auto-response for the duration of the work-to-contract*.*

*As part of Brighton University UCU’s industrial action to*[*#SaveBrightonITStaff*](https://twitter.com/search?q=%23SaveBrightonITStaff&src=hashtag_click)*, I will unplug once I have completed my contracted hours every day: this means I am unable to give the university free labour or work hours outside of my contracted hours. This will mean a delay in my reply to your email.* See  <https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/ucu/> for more details.

1. Do no work on evenings or at weekends unless you are getting time off *in lieu* during the week to compensate for it. Do not work any Saturday Open Days unless you have been allocated hours in your workload to do so, and even then, count these hours within your 37 hour week.
2. Follow the locally agreed [Code of Practice on Lecturers’ Hours and Duties](https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/ucu/reference-library/). <https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/ucu/reference-library/> Take a lunch break every day, as the agreed code of practice stipulates, and encourage your colleagues to do the same.

Discover what a life reasonably balanced between work and home feels like. UCU’s actions are based on a desire to see a positive, respectful and cooperative culture at the University, not to entrench division. We cannot control the response of those with whom we are calling for negotiations, but we can do what we can to shift cultures and relationships in our immediate contexts, in the short term. Part of that means refusing the managerial treatment of working hours as elastic. Our students as much as ourselves will benefit from rested and unstressed working relations and environments.

**UCU Coordinating Committee**

Sample ASOS Diaries for Lecturing Staff

**School A**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Early morning | Late morning | Lunch time | Early afternoon | Late afternoon | Evening | Summary |
| Mon | Prep for lecture (120 minutes); first lecture (90 minutes) | Follow-up meeting with students (30 mins minutes); emails (20 mins) | Work on equalities project(60 mins) ; lunch (30 mins) | Curriculum refresh work (60 mins) | Prep for morning’s meetings (60 mins) Write up work-diary when 7 hours of work completed. | No work unless timetabled classes that appear in your workload | Day’s work – 7 hours 20 mins.  List here work not completed in the given daily time allocation  e.g. – Marking (120 mins)  e.g. – Seminar 2 Teaching prep (90 mins)  e.g. – emails (60 mins). |
| Tues | Dissertation supervision meetings (4 x 20 mins: 80 mins) | Dissertation supervision meetings (6 x 20) – 120 mins). follow up activities (30 mins) | Tutorials (9 x 20 mins) – 180 mins. | Semester Two prep - MyStudies, Panopto – 30 mins | As above: conclude day with prep for following day and diary. |  | Day’s work – 7 hours 20 mins.  List uncompleted work. |
| Wed | Prep for course board/committee meeting -90 mins  Marking – 120 mins | Course meetings (60 mins) | Prep for research group workshop (90 mins) | Research group workshop (60 mins)  Emailing tutorial info (30 mins) | As above |  | Day’s work – 7 hours 30 mins.  List uncompleted work. |
| Thurs | Checking admissions folder (30 mins); liaising with marketing and course team on new marketing materials (90 mins). | Seminar 1 prep (30 mins).  Seminar 1 (90 mins) | Seminar 2 prep (30 mins).  Seminar 2 (90 mins) | Follow up work – emails (30 mins); attendance registers (30 mins); liaise with colleagues re students struggling/not attending (40 mins) | As above |  | Day’s work – 7 hours 40 mins.  List uncompleted work. |
| Fri | Reading draft dissertation work (90 mins); reading draft PhD work (120 mins) | Lecture prep for following week (90 mins) | Meeting with course reps over new curriculum developments (60 mins) | Research for dissertation reading recommendations 60 mins) | As above |  | Day’s work – 7 hours 10 mins  STOP WORK. YOU HAVE NOW COMPLETED YOUR CONTRACTED 37 HOURS. HAVE A WEEKEND.  List all the work you have not been able to complete this week in the shared google doc at |
| Sat | No work unless you have an allocation for weekend work in your WAMS. |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**School B**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Early morning** | **Late morning** | **Lunch time** | **Early afternoon** | **Late afternoon** | **5 – 5.30pm** | **Summary** |
| **Mon** | Attend Committee meeting 9 – 9.30 | 9.30 – 1pm Catch up on emails including some research related matters. | 1 – 2 pm; have a walk | 2 – 3pm Attend committee meeting. | 3 – 5pm review / fine tune prep for week’s teaching. | Do work diary and list work not completed in the given daily time allocation | Day’s work – 7 hours 30 mins.  List here work not completed in the given daily time allocation  e.g. – research admin (45 mins)  e.g. – teaching prep (30 mins)  e.g. – emails (30 mins). |
| **Tues** | 9 – 10.30 answer emails; MT call with colleague to discuss next Sem’s teaching | 10.30 – 1 pm (online) studio teaching | 1 -2 pm | 2 – 4.30 pm (online) studio teaching. | 4.30 – 5.00 follow up issues coming out of tutorials. Do registers and notes. | As above | Day’s work – 7 hours 30 mins.  List uncompleted work. |
| **Wed** | 9 – 1 pm Research project work |  | 1 – 2 pm lunch | 2 – 3pm office hour | 3 – 5pm Teaching prep. | As above | Day’s work – 7 hours 30 mins.  List uncompleted work. |
| **Thurs** | 9 – 10.30 TRA  Check through Risk Assessments for x 15 students’ | 10.30 – 1 pm (online) studio teaching | 1 – 1.30 meet with course reps | 2 – 4.30 pm (online) studio teaching | 4.30 – 5 do work diary etc | Do not go past 5pm. You have already done 7.5 hours. | Day’s work – 7 hours 30 mins.  List uncompleted work. |
| **Fri** | 9 – 10.30 MT meeting on Student Discipline case. Liaise with Discipline officer. | 10.30 – 1 pm (online) studio teaching | 1 – 2 pm lunch and some exercise | 2 – 4.30 pm (online) studio teaching | 4.30 – 5 as above. |  | Day’s work – 7 hours  STOP WORK. YOU HAVE NOW COMPLETED YOUR CONTRACTED 37 HOURS. HAVE A WEEKEND.  List all the work you have not been able to complete this week in the shared google doc at |
| **Sat** | No work unless you have an allocation for weekend work in your WAMS. |  |  |  |  |  |  |