

# Universities destroying fabric of education by exploitation of precarious and low-pay staff, says IFUT

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The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has accused university managements of undermining the entire basis of how third-level teaching is provided as a result of continued attempts to enforce low pay exploitation of lecturers and researchers.

Mike Jennings, General Secretary of IFUT has also called for the immediate publication of the Report of the Expert Group on Part Time and Temporary work in Higher Education which was promised as part of the Lansdowne Road Agreement to address this issue.

"The Report has still not been issued a full six months past its deadline and the Department of Education seems not to care," he said

Recent surveys suggest that close to half of casual contact lecturers are paid less than €10,000 annually, forcing them to survive below the poverty line. "Some universities are driving down wages by a combination of policies, including:

- Paying for the actual lecture hour only - with no recognition of time necessary to prepare lectures, liaise with students or deal with exam setting and correction
- Introduction of nine and 12 week mini-contracts
- Delivery of even core modules by part time staff who cannot do any paid research.
- Regularly there are no standardised pay scales.

"In the case of UCD, official policy explicitly states that all professional researchers are only 'trainees' and therefore have no right to security of employment.

Mike Jennings said that women are particularly vulnerable to this type of exploitation, with no no maternity pay or sick leave provided.

"When Minister Ged Nash commissioned University of Limerick to do a study of zero and low hours contracts, universities emerged as one of the worst offenders.

"Universities should reverse this short-sighted strategy before it fatally undermines teaching at third level. The next Minister for Education must also take a hands on approach to ensuring that education standards are not reduced in this way. Immediate publication of the Expert Group's Report is a first necessary step to begin to address the issue," Mike Jennings said.

**For further information on this media release please contact:**

John Gallagher - John Gallagher Consulting - Tel. 087 9369888

Mike Jennings - General Secretary, IFUT - Tel. 087 6776747.