

Cush report exposes extent of low pay and zero hour contracts in universities, says IFUT

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The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has welcomed publication of the Expert group on Fixed term and Part time employment in lecturing in Third Level in Ireland (Cush Report), but highlighted that it does not address the issue of research and researchers, where a substantial portion of precarious employment is located.

IFUT General Secretary, Mike Jennings, said that while the report provides a welcome acknowledgment of a huge problem, “it is very regrettable that Cush was so forcibly prevented by Department of Education from even considering the area of research and researchers.

“In para 2.1 of Report it is accepted that researchers are the most exploited sector. Imagine doing a report on exploitation in the retail trade and confining it to counter staff and ignoring delivery, warehouse, cleaning staff etc.

“The report still manages to highlight the extent of exploitation in universities. It is shocking that even now the Universities refuse to admit the number of hourly paid lecturers! (Para.2.5) This is the worst locus of exploitation.

Cush for the first time acknowledges the existence of zero hour contracts in Universities, Mike Jennings said. “Many people will be shocked at the fact that this most notorious form of exploitation is propping up our Universities.

“The claim by universities that they need to maintain staff in precarious employment because of their increasing reliance on charitable donations (Para.4.2, Vii) would be amusing if it were not so serious and damaging for the lives and livelihoods of so many people.”

“The equivalent report for first and second level commissioned at the same time was published in September 2014, as confirmed in para 2.4. Universities did not even provide data to Cush until 27 January 2016.

“This disgraceful delay proves they do not care about their reputation for bad employee treatment. IFUT will insist on the immediate implementation of recommendations in the Report and will campaign for their application to all staff,” he said.

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