

Academic staffing: fighting for the principle of quality teaching and research

Sophie Cotton

It's our responsibility as unionists to defend and improve upon the research and teaching function of our university. We know that this is under attack across the sector.

So far, strikes have won us some baseline improvements: a 13.5% reduction in casualisation, and a 25% cap on Education-Focussed Roles. Sadly though, this is simply not enough to defend the research-teaching nexus.

Management's package, including our hard-won concessions, would see a massive increase in EFRs, and could see balanced 40:40:20 academics down by another 5% from current levels to just 40% of the academic workforce.

Management's claim that balanced academics will "continue to be the overwhelming majority" of academic staff is a lie. It is based on the exclusion

of casual, EF, and research-only roles, which have ballooned out over the last two decades. In reality, as shown in the below graph, balanced academics have already declined from 70% to 45% of staff, and that's before management's planned EFR boom.

This is why it is absolutely crucial that we demand:

- 1. **At least 20% decasualisation;**
- 2. The **Education Focussed cap must not exceed 20%**, as a proportion of permanent teaching staff; &
- 3. **500 jobs** for casual staff.

This is bare minimum we need to stop the attack on the research-teaching nexus, ensuring that teaching excellence and research excellence go hand-in-hand, and securing the future of the university.

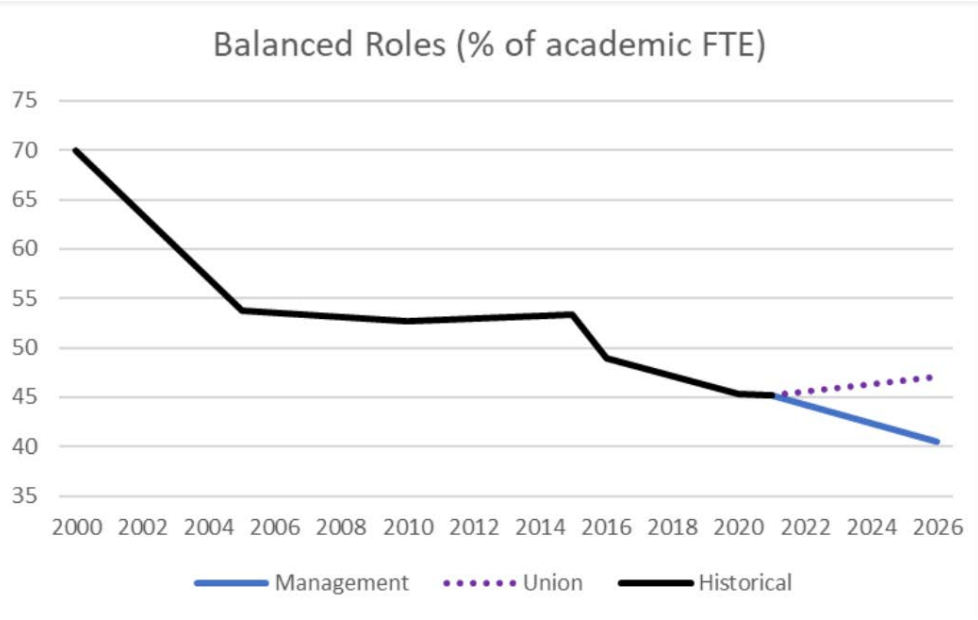


Fig 3. The proportion of balanced roles as a % of academic FTE on management versus union revised claims



Call out for next issue and contact RAFA

Do you have a report from your workplace area at the University of Sydney? RAFA would love to hear from you. Let us know the challenges you face, the types of conversations you and your colleagues are having, and your ideas to take the struggle forward by writing to: rafausyd@gmail.com, contact us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, or call Jean on 0449 646 593.

Rank and File Action Bulletin



We can't afford to lose: onwards and upwards in 2023

We've made incremental gains in the past 19 months of campaigning, and held off the worst attacks on our conditions – attacks that management has desperately and relentlessly pursued.

We simply cannot afford to give up now. Our strike campaign is a crucial bulwark against the neoliberal assault on quality teaching and research that this university should stand for.

The strike demands are simple and fully justified:

- Withdraw the attack on 40:40:20
- Provide a real pay rise
- Give casuals sick pay and pay for every hour worked
- A 20% EFR cap and 20% decasualisation
- Population parity for First Nations Staff

No amount of management spin can fool us.

40-40-20 is a right!

David Brophy

NTEU members can be proud of their achievement in fending off the attack on the 40% research allocation that continuing academics receive. But the concept of an academic job that involves 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% service, remains on the chopping block. A revised proposal would now allow managers to unilaterally identify staff they consider to be underperforming in the "service" category and assign them extra teaching.

This is just as unacceptable as the initial proposal. In some respects, it's worse. Previously,

Let's leave today's strike with resolve to build the union, tackle management's misrepresentations, inform our colleagues and build participation for our next action. Big, well attended strikes send a powerful message of support for our demands. Serious member engagement is our only way to deliver the victory that we desperately need.

Today's strike will send a clear message. But if management still won't relent, we'll have to be back on strike in week 6, and embark upon a ballot for new bans to increase the pressure.

Contents

- **40-40-20 is a right** — David Brophy
- **No to a real pay cut** — Jean Parker
- **Academic staffing: fighting for the principle of quality teaching and research** — Sophie Cotton

the idea was to shift the balance of work from research to teaching. Now, what they're saying is that academics just don't work hard enough, i.e. that we're slacking off. At a time of increasing workload strain, this is an insult.

"Service" refers to what is formally known as "Governance, Leadership, and Engagement" (GLE). It's a nebulous category, encompassing everything from unit coordination, service to one's field, to engagement with the media and public. There isn't a single USyd academic who's not spending 7.5 hours a week on this range of tasks. (cont. next)

40-40-20 is a right! (cont. from p. 1)

The fact is, though, much of this is not well captured by workload formulas. Service duties often arise on an ad hoc basis. The time we might spend refereeing journal articles, or giving public lectures, isn't something that can be calculated in advance. It seems that USyd management's estimate of people's service load is based exclusively on tasks like discipline-level undergraduate coordination, which come with pre-allocated hours. But these "service roles" form only a small part of what academics do within GLE (and these roles are also being cut in parts of the university – a coincidence?).

What they're proposing isn't just insulting and unfair, it's unworkable. USyd academics do plenty of service, and plenty of teaching too. University negotiators need to stop wracking their brains to find more ways to squeeze extra teaching out of us, and fully withdraw the attack on 40:40:20.



No to a real pay cut!

Jean Parker

Management's pay offer takes staff backwards at a time when the cost of living in Sydney is through the roof, when we are working more intensively, and when the University of Sydney is richer than ever. Just like the rest of corporate Australia, whose profit-driven price gouging represents 30% of the inflation we are experiencing, the University of Sydney has profited handsomely out of the increased exploitation and suppressed wages we have endured since the start of COVID. Recent polling shows 83% support for workers to get pay rises in line with inflation. Workers at the ABC (Mark Scott's old battleground) are taking a lead by demanding a 6% pay increase every year of their new agreement. With 6 days of strike action under our belt, USYD staff must support this by sustaining our fight for a pay rise of CPI+1.5% or 5% per year (whichever is higher).

In the last year the cost of rent in Sydney rose 30%, electricity is up 26%, and bread up 14%. Inflation is sky-rocketing, taking our wages backwards, and management's offer would continue this real pay cut.

Nevertheless, Management wants HEO4 Admin assistants to take home \$3,882 LESS in real terms than they did in the term of the last EBA! And tutors to take home \$2,219 less than under the previous agreement! And HEO6 Librarians will lose \$4,824 in real pay compared to the status quo.

Management's claims that their pay offer is "sector-leading" simply don't stack up. It is below the percentage rises at other universities. But *even if* we accept their claim we need to excise from our minds the pay cuts during two years of bargaining, *and* their claim that a compounding is mathematically preferable, *even then*, Sydney Uni's offer is below any comparable university! *Management's offer doesn't stack up.*

The final furphy is the \$2,000 one-off bonus in 2023. We need to be clear. This is a one-off bonus that management waved over our heads at the last staff forum as blackmail, enticing us to accept real pay cuts and attacks on conditions in return for momentary relief to the cost of living pressures. As the figures show (Figs. 1 & 2) even including

	Expiry-to-expiry pay increase per year		Compounded increase, signing-to-expiring, per year		University Operating Result (2021)
WSU	3.67%	(1 st)	5.43%	(2 nd)	\$ 143m
ACU	3.64%	(2 nd)	5.37%	(3 rd)	\$ 47m
UTS	3.54%	(3 rd)	5.83%	(1 st)	\$ 122m
UTAS	3.37%	(4 th)	3.81%	(5 th)	\$ 170m
USYD	3.34%	(5 th)	5.14%	(4 th)	\$ 1,048m

staff bonuses in the calculation, Management's offer promises a real pay cut!

Staff won't be fooled. We know wages are going backwards. We know workloads are going up.

We need a real pay rise, and that's why the biggest meeting of the campaign so far voted for escalating strikes and new bans, exactly the formula for an NTEU victory in 2023.

Real & Nominal Pay, B1 Academic, inc. bonuses

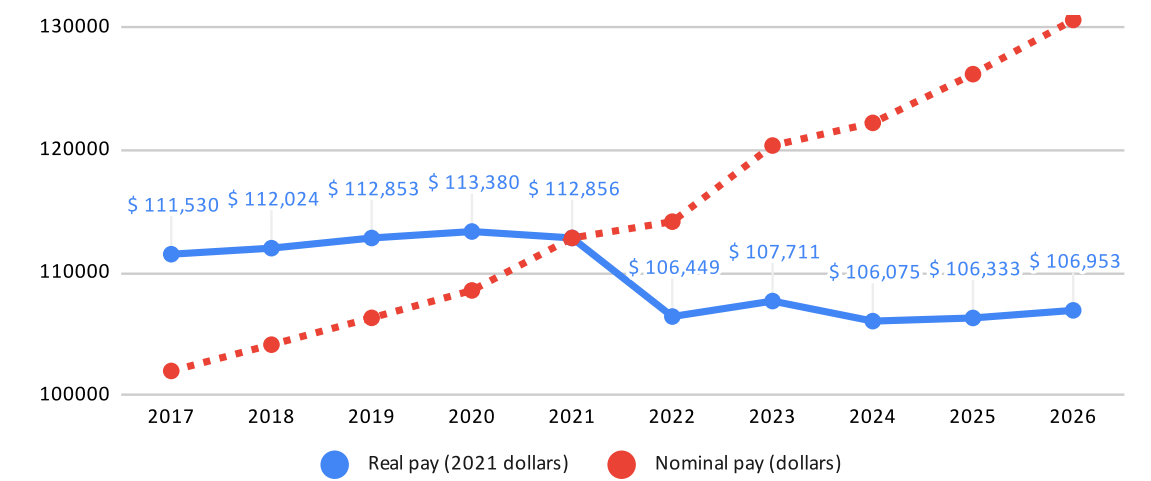


Fig 1. Real (solid) and nominal (dashed) pay for a level B1 academic, including one-off bonuses, showing a large real pay cut of 5.33%

Real & Nominal Pay, HEO5, inc. bonuses

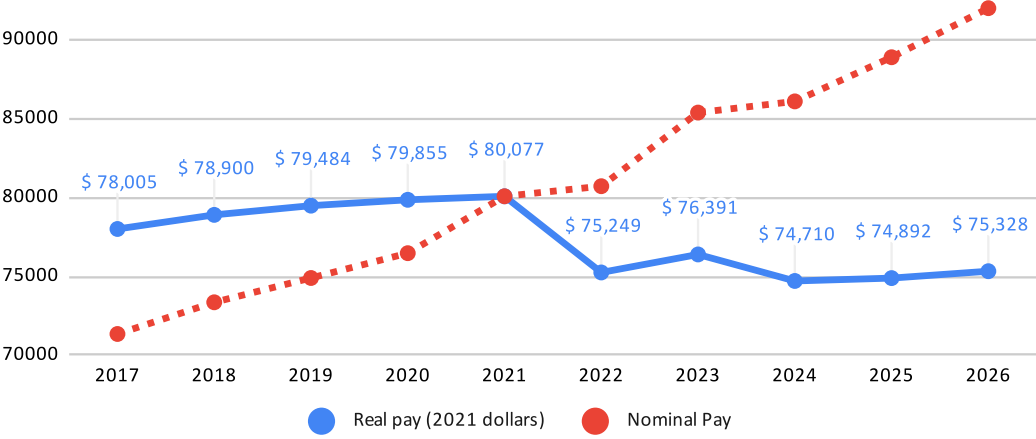


Fig 2. Real (solid) and nominal (dashed) pay for a HEO5 professional staff member, including one-off bonuses, showing a large real pay cut of 5.33%

Calculate your real pay cut under management's offer.

