

States of Precarity

Action Plans for creating more equitable working conditions for colleagues on fixed term contracts

This document contains five Action Plans outlining best practice guidelines designed to support and advocate for people on fixed term contracts in HE Geography. While the plans focus on fixed term working conditions, many of these recommendations hold broader relevance for limiting precarity in academia. All recommendations are derived from a discipline-wide survey and subsequent focus groups as part of the [States of Precarity research project](#). This document contains the following **Action Plans**:

1. [Institution](#) Action Plan
2. [Heads of Department / School and administrators](#) Action Plan
3. [Departmental / School](#) Action Plan
4. [Colleagues of precariously employed staff](#) Action Plan
5. [PhD supervisors and Postgraduate leadership](#) Action Plan

Using the Action Plans

Each action plan has specific action points (listed and numbered on the left-hand side) with the action in bold text. These points can be realised in different ways, across different timescales:

- A. First steps:** Initial changes that can be made with little resource and over a short period of time.
- B. Building momentum:** Opportunities to build on initial changes to change working cultures and practices
- C. Maintaining lasting change:** The tools for longer term change.

While seeking to outline good practice, we recognise the role of sectoral, institutional and departmental dynamics in impacting and informing precarious employment. Equally, intersectional factors as outlined in the [States of Precarity report](#) will shape individual capacities for action and individual vulnerabilities. These Action Plans offer general guidance and are designed to be adapted as relevant to different institutional and individual contexts with different structures of accountability and power. They are designed to support wide-spread collective action and resistance across different areas and scales of influence.

Embedding the Action Plans

The Action Plans can be used as departmental discussion points or can be embedded into institutional and departmental working cultures in a number of ways, including:

- EDI committees
- Athena Swan action plans
- Statements on research culture for assessments (e.g. REF)
- RACE Equality Charter action plans
- Stonewall action plans and inclusion activities
- Supervisory meetings
- Performance reviews

Each Action Plan is accompanied by a short blurb explaining who it is written for, including a list of potential job/role titles that we suggest should consult each resource. We recognise that people occupy multiple and, at times, conflicting roles and may identify with more than one of the groups targeted in these plans. While separate resources, more than one Action Plan may thus be relevant to you.

List of acronyms

DTP:	Doctoral Training Partnership
ECR:	Early Career Researcher
EDI:	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
FTC:	Fixed Term Contract or Colleague
HE:	Higher Education
HEI:	Higher Education Institution
HoD/HoS:	Head of Department/Head of School
PGR:	Postgraduate Researcher
PI:	Principal Investigator
REF:	Research Excellence Framework
RGS:	Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
UCU:	University College Union

ACTION PLAN: INSTITUTIONS

*Institutional policies and processes are amongst the biggest factors in producing the conditions for precarious working. This action plan collates **institutional changes** that our research suggests are needed to facilitate and ensure better working conditions for precarious staff. This action plan is intended to inspire a collective push for change, whilst calling on leadership to act.*

*Examples of positions relevant to this action plan: **Individuals in leadership positions at Departmental/School level and higher up, Union members and leadership, RGS working groups.***

ACTION PLAN: INSTITUTIONS				
ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
1	Improve contract terms	<p><i>Make probation proportionate to the length of the contract</i></p> <p>Fixed term colleagues are often kept on lengthy, repeated and/or endless cycles of probation, leading to increased feelings of precarity and insecurity.</p>	<p><i>Implement minimum contract lengths of at least 12 months</i></p> <p>Contracts shorter than 12 months pose significant challenges in terms of housing and securing continuous work. These contracts should be avoided where possible.</p> <p><i>Incorporate time for research, writing, mentoring, professional development, and/or grant applications in all contracts</i></p> <p>Applying for grants and academic publishing are a time consuming yet essential part of academic labour and progression. Fixed term colleagues often struggle to balance these needs</p>	<p><i>Develop policies that ensure paid parental leave for all regardless of contract type</i></p> <p>Not all HE institutions have specific policies in place for postdoc or other FTC parental leave. This means that depending on contract type or funding body, some people are denied parental leave as documented in our survey.</p> <p><i>Reduce dependency on short-term teaching-only contracts</i></p> <p>Prioritise phasing out short-term teaching-only contracts and</p>

ACTION PLAN: INSTITUTIONS

ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
			<p>against heavy workloads, yet universities frequently benefit from the resultant outputs.</p> <p><i>Secure funding for visa and relocation costs for all new colleagues, regardless of contract type</i></p> <p>Relocation and visa costs pose significant barriers for people to take up fixed term positions. This can unevenly affect some colleagues (e.g. with caring responsibilities, disabilities, financial difficulties, and/or people from minority ethnic backgrounds).</p>	replace them with longer contracts that allow for meaningful career development and longer-term departmental flexibility.
②	Mentoring support	<p><i>Make existing mentoring schemes visible to new employees</i></p> <p>Mentoring support is essential to career development and mentors play a crucial role in making precarious colleagues feel supported.</p> <p>Consider how and where mentoring is offered and supported within your institution.</p> <p>Consider how and where mentoring is</p>	<p><i>Set up voluntary cross-departmental mentoring schemes for FTC staff</i></p> <p>Mentoring schemes beyond a School or Department can play a significant role in building cross-institutional knowledge and exploring different career paths or avenues for collaboration.</p> <p>Promote and support the creation of cross-departmental mentoring</p>	<p><i>Implement new mentoring scheme ensuring mindful pairing of mentors/mentees</i></p> <p>Consider pairing mentors and mentees based on factors beyond academic interest - e.g. people seeking mentoring on work/life balance, navigating academia and caring responsibilities, or identity-based challenges.</p>

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ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
		advertised and ensure that all colleagues know what to expect from the process.	schemes for FTC staff.	
③	Training for mentors	<p><i>Make training opportunities for mentors visible</i></p> <p>There are inconsistent levels of mentoring support. Quality training to develop skills in professional mentoring plays a key role in addressing this.</p> <p>These opportunities should be clearly advertised.</p>	<p><i>Make mentoring training mandatory</i></p> <p>To ensure consistently good mentoring, make mentor training a requirement. This can be offered internally, or through external bodies like the RGS.</p> <p>Mentoring and mentoring training should be accounted for in workload models.</p>	<p><i>Develop and roll out mentoring training schemes addressing the challenges of precarity</i></p> <p>There is a lack of awareness of the experiences of precarious employment amongst many permanent and senior members of staff.</p> <p>Ensuring awareness among staff, and especially mentors, of the broad challenges of fixed term and precarious working is important to create a better work environment for precarious colleagues. The States of Precarity project report and wider resources are valuable tools to support awareness building.</p>
④	Programmes for career development	<p><i>Make career development programmes accessible and visible to all staff</i></p> <p>Training and skills development is important for securing a permanent</p>	<p><i>Set up peer support networks for fixed term colleagues</i></p> <p>Peer support is important to strategic career development and mental health. Set up semi-structured peer</p>	<p><i>Adapt existing career development programmes to account for the specifics of fixed term work</i></p> <p>Like mentoring, career</p>

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ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
		post. Provide fixed term colleagues with time to pursue relevant training. This might include grant writing and impact training.	support networks whilst recognising the time commitment needed to do this work.	development programmes need to reflect the challenges associated with fixed term and precarious work.
⑤	Access to internal grants and funding	<p><i>Build knowledge and awareness</i></p> <p>Ensure that existing funding opportunities and support systems for developing quality funding applications are clearly signposted and advertised, and that eligibility criteria are listed at the top of emails and documents to avoid wasted time.</p>	<p><i>Make fixed term colleagues eligible to apply for internal grants, travel bursaries, and other funding</i></p> <p>Colleagues on FTCs are often excluded from internal funding opportunities. This can make it difficult to access funds for essential career development activities such as research, conferences, and workshops.</p>	<p><i>Establish earmarked funding opportunities for fixed term colleagues</i></p> <p>Recognising the specific challenges associated with fixed term employment, small pots of money to support activities like conference attendance and research seed funding can go a long way.</p>
⑥	Positive leaving	<p><i>Recognition and avenues of support</i></p> <p>Consider sending an email that explicitly outlines the leaver's contribution to the department. Quotes from such letters can be extremely useful for future job applications. Consider outlining any ongoing institutional and career support that might be available. Offer advice on next steps, e.g. managing email access and other accounts.</p>	<p><i>Secure access to email, library resources, and career support for three months after the end of a contract</i></p> <p>Immediately losing access to email, IT, library and career services can have detrimental effects on people's career development. This is true for PhD candidates as well.</p>	<p><i>Invest in interview training for fixed term colleagues and postgraduates</i></p> <p>Provide access to professional services or opportunities in departments to give mock interviews and presentation feedback. This ensures that fixed term colleagues feel supported in their efforts to move on to their next position.</p>

ACTION PLAN: INSTITUTIONS

ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
⑦	Building knowledge and active engagement with precarious working in HE	<p><i>Monitor the use of fixed term contracts across the institution</i></p> <p>Collate information about the extent and use of different types of fixed term contracts. Use this data to inform strategic discussions on the use of fixed term contracts at an institutional scale.</p> <p><i>Engage with AdvanceHE reports on themes relevant to academic precarity</i></p> <p>Build knowledge about where the university sits in relation to national trends on the use of fixed term contracts. This exercise could also contribute to Athena Swan actions/planning.</p>	<p><i>Embed use of fixed term contracts in strategic discussions</i></p> <p>Table precarity as a topic of discussion in relevant committees such as EDI committees. Use this to identify core areas that need improvement and develop strategies on how to address issues. Raise whether dedicating a specific role, such as 'fixed term reps' would aid in supporting such knowledge building and activities/ actions in response.</p>	<p><i>Implement suggestions</i></p> <p>Engage with suggestions from EDI committees and secure meaningful implementation of ideas.</p> <p><i>Secure and provide funding to address EDI issues exacerbated by precarity</i></p> <p>The effects of precarity are not evenly felt. Internal funding is needed to support fixed term colleagues with practical considerations (e.g. visa and relocation costs which can be prohibitive for them taking up new positions). Institutions could also consider supporting further research into understanding the impacts of precarity in HEI (e.g. through internal funding or supporting externally funded project applications).</p>
	Pathways to permanence	<p><i>Identify pathways to permanency</i></p> <p>Identify what pathways to permanency currently exist within your institution.</p>	<p><i>Strategise</i></p> <p>Develop appropriate models to support pathways to permanency that suit your institution.</p>	<p><i>Implement pathways to permanency</i></p> <p>Support and promote the implementation of further</p>

ACTION PLAN: INSTITUTIONS

ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
		Identify different UK HEI models supporting permanency (e.g. Nottingham Fellowship).	Consult with fixed term colleagues to get feedback on these proposed pathways. Consider the collection and monitoring of data on the use of FTCs across Departments/Schools to inform discussions about institutional hiring trends.	pathways to permanency as identified through strategic discussions, as well as consultations with fixed term colleagues.
9	Postgraduate support	<i>Ensure representation</i> Ensure postgraduate representation at strategic meetings.	<i>Listen and identify needs</i> Precarity is experienced by people across career stages, including postgraduate students. Representation at strategic meetings should include giving meaningful voice to postgraduates.	<i>Employment opportunities</i> Employment opportunities are needed for postgraduate students with decent pay and contracts, such as paid teaching experience. Secure equal access to such opportunities across the institution. <i>Extensions of stipends</i> Funded PhD candidates are often required to complete a fourth year of unpaid work. Consider options for stipend extensions at your institution.

ACTION PLAN: HEAD OF DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL AND ADMINISTRATORS

*This plan is targeted at **Heads of Departments/Schools and administrators**, with the expectation that they will facilitate and push for action to work towards better working conditions for fixed term staff. Some of these actions may be carried out by the Head of Department/School themselves or be delegated to relevant staff within the Department/School.*

*Examples of positions relevant to this action plan: **Heads of Department, Heads of School or Faculty, Deputy Heads of Department/School, colleagues with College level roles, School administrators and Operations Managers.***

ACTION PLAN: HEADS OF DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL AND ADMINISTRATORS				
ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
①	Ensuring positive integration of new staff	<p><i>Set clear and realistic expectations for new FTC staff</i></p> <p>Before arrival, facilitate transparent conversation about contract length and expectations (e.g. what are the realistic chances of contract renewal and extension?).</p> <p><i>Prepare for arrival of new staff</i></p> <p>Consider putting new starters in contact with colleagues pre-arrival to provide practical advice on relocation (e.g. good areas to live in, childcare and schooling options etc).</p> <p>Ensure that all new staff, including FTC staff, are allocated an appropriate</p>	<p><i>Develop a departmental handbook with resources for new staff</i></p> <p>This could include things such as lists of acronyms, key points of contact, key committees, a short glossary of leadership roles and accompanying responsibilities, key services, essential 'how to' guides, support for navigating internal online systems used in education and research, links to key processes (e.g. expense claims).</p> <p><i>Lobby for relocation and visa costs</i></p> <p>Lobby your institution to secure funding to cover relocation and visa costs for new colleagues.</p>	<p><i>Secure funding for visa and relocation costs for all new colleagues</i></p> <p>Relocation and visa costs pose significant barriers for people to take up fixed term positions and can increase their vulnerability to exploitative management practices. This disproportionately affects people with caring responsibilities and people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Work to secure funding for all new colleagues.</p>

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		<p>workspace and added to relevant mailing lists.</p> <p>To support the integration of new staff, introduce them to the Department/ School via email or in person. Where appropriate, make fixed term colleagues aware of opportunities to have a staff profile on departmental websites to facilitate making wider connections.</p> <p>Facilitate meaningful conversation about specific needs (e.g. adjustments, disability accommodations) as well as aspirations for career development (see Mentoring support below).</p>	<p>Promote inclusive line management</p> <p>While HoDs/HoSs often hold line management roles for FTC staff, this can also be overseen by a range of other staff, including PIs. Share any relevant line management guidance with line managers when new FTC staff join. Consider making training for line managers compulsory. Make sure that FTC staff have more than one point of contact with core academic staff to reduce their vulnerability to poor or exploitative management.</p>	
②	Mentoring support	<p>Establish mentoring needs of new staff</p> <p>Facilitate a conversation about specific mentoring needs and assign a mentor based on this. Some people may have specific needs based on career aspirations and personal circumstances. When relevant, specific conversations should be had about the challenges of FTCs.</p> <p>Assign appropriate mentor(s)</p>	<p>Build capacity within the Department/School</p> <p>Create awareness of institution-wide support schemes.</p> <p>Ensure that mentors, including PIs, receive mentoring training, for example through RGS and RGS research groups or through internal university schemes. Mentors should be aware of the challenges of FTCs.</p>	<p>Maintain effort and collect/implement feedback for ongoing improvement</p> <p>Ensure that both mentors and mentees have opportunities to provide feedback on the process on an ongoing basis.</p>

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ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
		All FTC staff need appropriate mentorship, regardless of contract type. For some, mentorship is tied to the role of PIs. When possible, assign a second mentor (internal or external to the Department/School) to grow the professional networks of FTC staff and to reduce their vulnerability to poor management.		
③	Foster a culture of open communication	<p><i>Create visibility about FTCs</i></p> <p>Make resources about FTCs and the challenges associated with precarious work available to all staff.</p> <p>Clearly display States of Precarity posters in your department.</p>	<p><i>Learn from FTC colleagues</i></p> <p>Foster a culture of disclosure by having explicit conversations about the needs of FTC staff. Build this into initial meetings. Consider ‘mentoring up’ schemes where fixed term colleagues get an opportunity to share their experience with people in senior management positions.</p>	<p><i>Implement suggestions</i></p> <p>Collate suggestions and issues raised by FTC colleagues and ensure meaningful implementation. This will require ongoing feedback.</p>
④	Job/ task allocation	<p><i>Support strategic task allocation</i></p> <p>Actively consider how the allocation of departmental tasks, including admin jobs and ad hoc teaching, may benefit or negatively affect the career development of FTC colleagues.</p>	<p><i>Monitor and adjust workload</i></p> <p>Ensure that FTC staff, who may struggle to say no, are not overworked. Formal workload models often do not account for the many small tasks that are allocated on an ad hoc basis to fixed term colleagues. Where no model exists, this can be</p>	<p><i>Incorporate time in all contracts for research, academic writing and grant applications</i></p> <p>Applying for grants or academic positions and academic publishing are time consuming. Fixed term colleagues often</p>

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			<p>exacerbated. Monitoring workload may mean strategic conversations with FTC colleagues which include guidance on how to balance commitments and when to say no.</p> <p>Creating new teaching material is time consuming. Be mindful that fixed term staff should be allowed adequate preparation time.</p>	struggle to balance these needs against heavy workloads, yet universities benefit from their outputs.
5	Representation, visibility and value	<p><i>Make visible and promote the work of precariously employed colleagues</i></p> <p>Make work visible through Department/School newsletters. Encourage colleagues to put FTC names forward for recognition. Do this on their behalf where appropriate.</p> <p>Include FTC colleagues in departmental conversations and have FTC representation on committees as appropriate. This should be factored into workload.</p>	<p><i>Include FTC colleagues in departmental processes</i></p> <p>This means giving FTC colleagues an active voice at departmental meetings as well as including them in processes like the REF. For example, where REF mentorship is offered, this should be extended to FTC colleagues to build understanding and experience of the process.</p> <p><i>Ensure access to internal funding</i></p> <p>Making internal funding in the form of small pots of money (e.g. for conference attendance) available to FTCs supports them practically in terms of their career development and contributes to making people feel</p>	<p><i>Maintain effort</i></p> <p>Ensuring visibility and value is not a one-off activity. It must be embedded in long-term changes to departmental culture.</p>

ACTION PLAN: HEADS OF DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL AND ADMINISTRATORS

ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
			valued in the Department/ School.	
⑥	Making leaving more positive	<p>Mark the event</p> <p>Use Department/School meetings to recognise the contributions made by the person who is leaving.</p> <p>Send a letter recognising individual contributions made by the person leaving. This can be valuable for future job applications and cover letters.</p> <p>Carry out meaningful exit interviews</p> <p>Use exit interviews to gain insights into what the Department/School can do better to support FTC staff.</p>	<p>Lobby for access to email account for at least three months after leaving</p> <p>Losing access to professional email accounts negatively impacts people who change institutions often. This also affects PhD students. This small change can make a big difference.</p> <p>Consider honorary fellow status</p> <p>Offering such status to leavers can show appreciation and support leavers in extending access to key resources such as email accounts, IT and library services.</p>	<p>Implement changes from exit interview data</p> <p>Implement, where possible, insights and suggestions from FTC colleagues who have left/are leaving.</p>
⑦	Collating and sharing materials	<p>Identify and consult existing resources to build knowledge</p> <p>Identify institutional resources that reference precarity and fixed-term contracts (e.g. policy, Athena Swan action plans, EDI networks or plans, REF statements). Consult wider external resources (e.g. UCU reports).</p>	<p>Collate materials</p> <p>Collate these institutional resources to build a knowledge base and identify examples of good practice (e.g. responses and interventions). Share these collated resources and best practices with relevant Committees (e.g. Athena Swan, EDI).</p>	<p>Share materials and building networks</p> <p>Consider how/where examples of good practice can be shared (e.g. between institutions to build networks) and/or with external organisations/ bodies (e.g. learned societies, UCU) to build community resources.</p>

ACTION PLAN: HEADS OF DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL AND ADMINISTRATORS

ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
⑧	Pathways to permanency	<p><i>Identify pathways to permanency</i></p> <p>Identify what pathways to permanency presently exist within your institution.</p> <p>Identify different UK HEI models supporting permanency (e.g. Nottingham Fellowship).</p>	<p><i>Lobby for pathways to permanency</i></p> <p>Lobby for improving pathways to permanency at your institution (e.g. through collective representation to management, posing questions at open meetings).</p>	<p><i>Implement pathways to permanency</i></p> <p>Support the implementation of further pathways to permanency.</p>

ACTION PLAN: DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL

This plan is targeted at **Departments/Schools** as collectives and communities with a vested interest in securing the best possible working environment for all. This is a call to collective action at the Departmental/School level. Precarity cannot be solved at the scale of the Department/School, but mutual care and community building are powerful tools of resistance.

Examples of positions relevant to this action plan: **Staff in research leadership roles, staff in teaching leadership roles, staff in Departmental/School leadership roles (e.g. EDI leads).**

ACTION PLAN: DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL				
	ACTION	A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
①	Evaluate departmental hiring practices and contractual terms	<p>Consider how implicit biases around mobility impact shortlisting or hiring</p> <p>At the point of shortlisting or hiring, be mindful that the capacity to relocate is determined by a range of factors, including but not limited to finances, health or caring responsibilities. Mobility should be proactively discussed as a source of implicit bias against candidates who have remained at the same institution or in a particular region for a prolonged period of time.</p>	<p>Implement minimum contract lengths of at least 12 months</p> <p>Contracts shorter than 12 months pose significant challenges in terms of housing and securing continuous work. These contracts should be avoided wherever possible.</p> <p>When designing grant applications, try to allocate for longer-term PDRA positions, with 12 months being a minimum duration.</p>	<p>Continue to evaluate hiring practices and use of FTCs</p> <p>Strategic discussions around the use of short term contracts need to be ongoing. This includes both the length and the substance of contracts offered.</p> <p>Incorporate time for research, writing, mentoring, professional development, and/or grant applications in all contracts</p> <p>Applying for grants and academic publishing are a time consuming yet essential part of academic labour. Fixed term colleagues often struggle to balance these needs against heavy workloads,</p>

ACTION PLAN: DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL

	ACTION	A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
				yet Departments frequently benefit from the resultant outputs.
2	Foster a culture of open communication	<p><i>Do not normalise overwork</i></p> <p>Explicitly or implicitly normalising work beyond contracted hours leads to exploitation and devaluation of academic labour. The same is true of overwork in general. This hurts everyone.</p> <p>Consider avoiding emailing outside of standard work hours or include a statement within them, recognising that out of hours replies are not expected; and/or encourage the use of the scheduled email function so emails arrive during standard work hours irrespective of when they are sent.</p> <p>Taking up a new position is time consuming. Make sure to allow adequate preparation time for fixed term colleagues to ideally avoid or at least reduce the risk of overwork.</p> <p><i>Account for mentoring in workload models</i></p> <p>Mentoring is valuable for both</p>	<p><i>Create visibility</i></p> <p>Make resources about FTC and the challenges associated with precarious work available to all staff (see States of Precarity website).</p> <p><i>Learn from fixed term colleagues</i></p> <p>Foster a culture of disclosure by having explicit conversations about FTC needs at a departmental level.</p> <p>Consider ‘mentoring up’ schemes where fixed term colleagues get an opportunity to share their experience with people in senior management positions.</p>	<p><i>Implement suggestions</i></p> <p>Collate suggestions and issues raised by FTC colleagues and ensure meaningful implementation. This will require ongoing feedback.</p>

ACTION PLAN: DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL

	ACTION	A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
		individuals and the development of the institution. However, it can be time consuming, and this important labour must be formally accounted for.		
③	Support representation and visibility	<p><i>Embed FTC colleagues in research culture</i></p> <p>Ask colleagues on FTCs if they would like to contribute to the departmental research culture by, for example, organising research group meetings or internal workshops alongside permanent colleagues. Such invitations should be extended to colleagues on teaching focused contracts. Avoid framing this as an expectation.</p>	<p><i>Embed FTC colleagues in departmental management</i></p> <p>Issue a call asking for and/or nominate colleagues to act as representatives to support fixed term colleagues at key departmental meetings and provide a point of contact for raising concerns anonymously. Where workload models are in place, such roles should be included and captured.</p> <p><i>Precarity and EDI</i></p> <p>EDI Committees and leads should build understanding about how precarity impacts the Departmental/ School. This may include data-gathering and/or events (e.g. holding workshops bringing together FTCs, amending staff surveys to include questions about precarity, resourcing external speakers to share tips on solidarity building).</p>	<p><i>Maintain efforts</i></p> <p>Representation needs to be thought of as an ongoing process. Maintain efforts by ensuring that outgoing FTC representatives are replaced and actively encourage participation in research culture when new staff joins.</p> <p>EDI Committees and leads should be resourced to develop Departmental / School-level goals and actions related to precarity. This could form part of Athena Swan initiative work. Alongside gender, such actions should be intersectional and attentive to diverse struggles precarious staff face (e.g. related to sexuality, disability, nationality, caring responsibilities).</p>

ACTION PLAN: DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL

	ACTION	A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
			Events should be hybrid where possible, to maximise participation. Raise whether dedicating a specific role, such as a 'precarity rep' at Departmental/School level would aid in supporting knowledge building and actions in response.	
4	Building departmental knowledge and active engagement with precarity	<p><i>Engage with AdvanceHE reports</i></p> <p>Build knowledge about where your department/school sits in relation to national trends on the use of fixed term contracts. Consult websites such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and AdvanceHE to obtain relevant data and resources.</p>	<p><i>Embed precarity in strategic discussions</i></p> <p>Include precarity as a core issue of discussion across relevant committees (e.g. departmental meetings, Athena Swan, and departmental EDI committees).</p> <p>Consider including precarity as a subject of data collection that feeds Athena Swan applications.</p> <p>Raise issues identified at the departmental level in cross-institutional EDI meetings as a way of lobbying for wider change.</p>	<p><i>Implement suggestions</i></p> <p>Collate suggestions from committees and departmental data and form an implementation strategy based on the needs identified.</p>

ACTION PLAN: COLLEAGUES OF PRECARIOUSLY EMPLOYED STAFF

This plan is targeted at **colleagues** in a Department/School and includes actions designed to facilitate and encourage all staff, across career stages, to support colleagues experiencing precarity.

Examples of positions relevant to this action plan: **All staff on permanent and open-ended contracts, including academic (teaching and research), technician and professional services staff.**

ACTION PLAN: COLLEAGUES OF PRECARIOUSLY EMPLOYED STAFF				
ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
①	Listening and cultivating empathy	<p><i>Listen and facilitate conversation</i></p> <p>Make time to discuss the effects of fixed term contracts and precarity with your colleagues. Check in periodically. This might be over coffee or lunch or extending invitations to social activities.</p> <p><i>Do not normalise overwork</i></p> <p>When possible, model and promote good work-life balance - e.g. by not sending emails out of working hours where possible. Consider including a statement in emails that you do not expect out of hours replies.</p>	<p><i>Support community building</i></p> <p>Support the creation of opportunities and spaces for colleagues on fixed term contracts and ECRs to come together to build a community (e.g. early career meetings or research seminar series). If appropriate, attend and show support for these meetings.</p> <p>Encourage (but do not expect) FTCs and ECRs to attend departmental research activities and meetings.</p>	<p><i>Maintain efforts</i></p> <p>Consider precarity beyond the contract and stay in touch with colleagues on fixed-term contracts after departure.</p> <p>Think about how community building for fixed-term and ECR colleagues could be formalised (e.g. through the formation, resourcing and promotion of an ECR network).</p>

ACTION PLAN: COLLEAGUES OF PRECARIOUSLY EMPLOYED STAFF

ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
②	Recognition	<p><i>Facilitate and support opportunities</i></p> <p>Make a point to recognise and show up for fixed-term and early career colleagues, for example by facilitating opportunities and supporting colleagues presenting at internal research seminars.</p>	<p><i>Make FTC colleagues visible and promote their work</i></p> <p>Fixed-term colleagues report not feeling valued by their departments and/or institutions. Play a role in responding to and countering these feelings by making visible and promoting the work of FTC colleagues, e.g. in emails, newsletters, websites, and meetings.</p>	<p><i>Recognition through reward</i></p> <p>Nominate fixed-term colleagues for internal prizes and rewards, e.g. discretionary awards. Encourage fixed-term colleagues to apply for internal and external awards, e.g. share opportunities, offer to write a reference letter.</p>
③	Building understanding and inclusion	<p><i>Facilitate inclusion</i></p> <p>Talk to colleagues on fixed-term contracts to better understand how their working conditions can impact their roles and lives. Support the inclusion of colleagues on fixed term contracts through inviting them to Departmental/School events, and requesting invites be extended where appropriate.</p>	<p><i>Extend inclusion</i></p> <p>Raise the issue of precarity, including fixed-term contracts, as an issue for discussion in relevant Departmental and School meetings and committees (e.g. departmental management meetings; EDI Committees; Athena Swan meetings). Ask for an outline of what measures are taken to listen to, and support, precarious colleagues.</p> <p><i>Be an ally</i></p>	<p><i>Embed inclusion</i></p> <p>While remaining mindful of the workload of fixed-term colleagues, identify opportunities to integrate the views and experiences of fixed-term colleagues, e.g. through ECR Committee positions.</p> <p>Adapt staff/culture surveys to include questions about fixed-term contracts and precarious working and engage with these issues in the context of Athena Swan activities.</p>

ACTION PLAN: COLLEAGUES OF PRECARIOUSLY EMPLOYED STAFF

ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
			<p>If you see or hear of instances where colleagues behave in inappropriate, disrespectful or exploitative ways towards those on FTCs, challenge this behaviour (e.g. active bystander allyship), share concerns with leadership (e.g. HoD/ HoS), and, if necessary, report via institutional tools (e.g. Report + Support, to which many UK Universities subscribe).</p>	<p>Suggest and request the implementation of such positions and actions, with accounting in workload as appropriate.</p>
④	<p>Supporting career development while considerate of workload</p>	<p><i>Advocate for fixed-term colleagues</i></p> <p>Advocating for the workload of fixed-term colleagues includes supporting the setting of boundaries while prioritising responsibilities most useful to career development, and speaking up where actions/tasks are allocated to fixed-term colleagues and may be more appropriate for a permanent member of staff.</p> <p>Share opportunities for career development and further employment, e.g. funding schemes, fellowships, job adverts. Offer to review career progression materials, e.g. papers, grant applications.</p>	<p><i>Build career development opportunities</i></p> <p>Consider opportunities to invite fixed-term colleagues to collaborate, e.g. internal/external grants; papers, workshops.</p> <p>Connect colleagues with relevant contacts in your network who may support wider career development opportunities, e.g. grant applications, visiting researcher roles.</p> <p>Ask fixed-term colleagues about their experiences of being</p>	<p><i>Ongoing support</i></p> <p>Consider how you might continue to offer support by keeping in touch with fixed-term colleagues, e.g. continue to share opportunities and offer to write reference letters.</p> <p>Develop and embed Department or School-level initiatives to support fixed-term colleagues, e.g. events on fellowships, CV writing, and navigating the job market.</p>

ACTION PLAN: COLLEAGUES OF PRECARIOUSLY EMPLOYED STAFF				
ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
			mentored. Offer formal or informal support, e.g. guidance on next steps and navigating the job market.	
⑤	Lobbying for change	<p><i>Advocate for continued employment</i></p> <p>Voice support for the renewal of fixed-term contracts. Advocate for longer contract terms and for fixed-term colleagues to be made permanent, e.g. in Departmental/School meetings, in discussions about operational planning.</p>	<p><i>Call for change</i></p> <p>Request and collate information about Department, School, and/or institutional practice in relation to processes that can adversely impact fixed-term colleagues, e.g. contract length, probation length. Raise these processes for discussion, e.g. at departmental meetings, in School committees such as EDI, Athena Swan, to develop propositions in response.</p>	<p><i>Lobby for change at the institutional level and beyond</i></p> <p>Lobby your institution with propositions responding to processes adversely impacting fixed-term and precariously employed colleagues. This includes internal actions (e.g. sending letters (see templates), questions to University level committees), and external actions (e.g. engagement with Union activities and resources around casualisation in HE).</p>

ACTION PLAN: PhD SUPERVISORS AND POSTGRADUATE LEADERSHIP

*This plan is targeted at **PhD supervisors** who face the challenge of providing PhD candidates with an honest introduction to the job market without normalising unhealthy work cultures, as well as those holding Departmental/School **Postgraduate leadership roles**, who can support in consistently embedding such changes across their Department/School. Not all PhD supervisors are on permanent contracts, which may impact their capacity to deliver on some of these points, though not their capability for effective and considerate guidance.*

*Examples of positions relevant to this action plan: **Academic staff supervising PhD candidates, Department/School Postgraduate Directors/leads.***

ACTION PLAN: PHD SUPERVISORS AND DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL POSTGRADUATE LEADERSHIP				
ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
①	Career mentoring	<p><i>Flag job and career development opportunities</i></p> <p>From the outset, facilitate discussions about career development. Share relevant opportunities and highlight where to find these (e.g. University doctoral training, temporary job banks, teaching/ demonstrating; funding body and DTP-provided training and placements, teacher training and qualifications (e.g. AdvanceHE)).</p> <p>Share opportunities for employment and provide advice on where to look for these (e.g. Jobs.ac.uk; University careers services). Provide feedback on job</p>	<p><i>Highlight a range of career paths</i></p> <p>Provide guidance on relevant funding bodies and schemes suitable for career-stage. Share examples of funding applications.</p> <p>Facilitate conversations about transferable skills and opportunities beyond academia (e.g. non-HE research institutions, policy, industry). Facilitate introductions to relevant contacts.</p> <p>Organise events to highlight different career pathways (e.g. PhD alumni panel; external speakers</p>	<p><i>Co-develop research ideas</i></p> <p>Where appropriate, co-develop grant proposals and research ideas with and costing in PhD candidates as they near completion of their degree.</p> <p>Facilitate introductions to relevant research contacts and networks.</p>

ACTION PLAN: PHD SUPERVISORS AND DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL POSTGRADUATE LEADERSHIP

ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
		<p>applications and CVs. Share templates/examples.</p> <p>Provide guidance on activities supporting career development (e.g. publications and publishing strategies).</p>	<p>from industry and policy).</p> <p>Recognise that PhD students take diverse journeys (e.g. careers beforehand) and have different identities and experiences (e.g. visas can exclude PhD candidates from some opportunities). Tailor advice as appropriate.</p>	
②	Support career development while remaining considerate of workload	<p><i>Consider workload issues</i></p> <p>Support PhD candidates in setting boundaries and prioritising commitments that are most useful to their career development. Discuss career development in relation to PhD timelines, supporting PhD candidates to reflect on the 'when' of career development opportunities.</p> <p>Ensure that PhD candidates are aware of the need to maintain a healthy work/life balance. Highlight policies relevant to leave (e.g. in PGR handbooks), and support PhD candidates to take leave. Think intersectionally - PhD candidates have different commitments (e.g. caring</p>	<p><i>Build career development opportunities</i></p> <p>Consider opportunities for PhD candidates to get meaningful and CV-building work experience in relation to your work and the work of Departmental/ School research groups. This may include developing/ sharing teaching opportunities, workshop organisation roles, and small-scale research opportunities. Be clear on what opportunities involve, time commitment and remuneration.</p> <p>Recognise potential financial barriers around career</p>	<p><i>Ongoing support</i></p> <p>Maintain contact with PhD candidates following completion. Provide ongoing opportunities for feedback on applications and, where appropriate, share insights into hiring processes.</p> <p>Recognise that post-PhD experiences vary and PhD candidates face different barriers as they navigate the job market (e.g. challenges international applicants face in trying to secure sponsorship).</p>

ACTION PLAN: PHD SUPERVISORS AND DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL POSTGRADUATE LEADERSHIP

ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
		responsibilities) and diverse identities which can impact their experience in ways you may not directly understand or be familiar with.	development opportunities (e.g. conferences). Signpost to internal and external funding pots.	
③	Building cultures of open and honest communication	<p><i>Listen and facilitate conversation</i></p> <p>From the outset, take time for open conversations about how PhD candidates are doing and concerns they may have (e.g. finances; the job market). Listen and recognise that PhD candidates may have a clearer picture of recent developments. Where applicable, make yourself familiar with how PhD stipends work. Talk openly about aspirations and goals.</p> <p><i>Facilitate community building</i></p> <p>For many, PhDs can be isolating. Consider how you can support PhD candidates in building community (e.g. facilitate introductions to other PhD students and early career researchers in the Department/School, signpost to PGR Committee representatives who can</p>	<p><i>Encourage reflection and manage expectations</i></p> <p>Facilitate critical conversations about the value of labour and the diversity of both ways of being an academic and experiencing academia (e.g. recognise intersectional challenges and barriers), rather than normalising an 'idealised academic', overwork and self-exploitation as a necessary part of academic life.</p>	<p><i>Maintain efforts</i></p> <p>Facilitate regular check-ins to normalise honest and open communication. Treat such conversations as ongoing.</p>

ACTION PLAN: PHD SUPERVISORS AND DEPARTMENT / SCHOOL POSTGRADUATE LEADERSHIP

ACTION		A. FIRST STEPS	B. BUILDING MOMENTUM	C. MAINTAINING LASTING CHANGE
		share details of social activities, signpost to University-wide PGR networks).		
④	Lobbying for better conditions	<p><i>Build solidarity</i></p> <p>Meaningful structural change often takes time. Meanwhile, supervisors and postgraduate leadership can take steps to foster and build solidarity across career stages. Make it clear that voicing opinions, proactively seeking better conditions, and advocating for the right to a better working life now and in the future is legitimate and welcome.</p>	<p><i>Opportunities for paid work</i></p> <p>Lobby for opportunities for PhD candidates to get relevant teaching and research experience alongside their doctoral degree. Such work should be fairly compensated and accompanied by a clear contract. Conversely, work to protect them from exploitative teaching workloads.</p> <p>Recognise that PhD candidates can occupy dual positions as students and staff. Be clear on roles and expectations. Share relevant feedback (e.g. module evaluations) to support career development and logging/ evidencing achievements.</p>	<p><i>Extensions of stipends</i></p> <p>Funded PhD candidates are often required to complete a fourth year of unpaid work. Consider lobbying for options for stipend extensions at your institution and from funding bodies.</p>