

*disclaimer: below an informal translations of the Dutch version

Call: inventory of contract inflation

It is currently common knowledge that the workload at the Dutch universities is high and many academics have to put in structural overtime. In addition, we have noticed that the percentage of fixed-term contracts has been steadily increasing over the past years. Not only with respect to the temporarily funded research projects, but also in terms of regular teaching. In particular, job insecurity has led to high competition among academic staff in the hope of a permanent position or advancement to a higher position. Meanwhile, this seems to have led to contract inflation - you are expected to work more hours than you are paid for, and continuous work is increasingly done by employees on fixed-term contracts. In addition, it appears that employees are more and more expected to perform work that is not in accordance to their position or job level, but belongs to a higher position.

We therefore invite everyone to take a critical look at their contract based on the topics listed below and to contact us if one of the following situations applies. The more reports we have, the greater the chance that we can actually improve the current situation.

1. Structural overtime

- In case of a part-time appointment:

You have a part-time appointment, for example, as a lecturer for 0.7 fte, but the work assigned to you cannot be carried out within your working hours. You should be able to substantiate this, preferably by means of timekeeping. You could also ask for an extension of your contract if, over a period of three months, you work more hours than is stated in your contract.

- In the case of a full-time appointment:

You have a full-time appointment, for example as an assistant professor for 1.0 fte, but the work assigned to you cannot be carried out within your working hours. For example, your research tasks are not carried out or are shifted to your evenings, weekends and/or vacations. You should also be able to substantiate this, for example, with teaching standards, criteria for research output, etc.

The CLA¹ contains the following agreement:

"It will only be possible to reduce the workload at universities if employees are given a realistic set of duties. In other words, it must be realistically possible for employees to complete their duties in the agreed number of working hours. Transparent agreements need to be made about the ratio between education, research, knowledge transfer and other duties and about the workload standards applicable within each – for example, standards in respect of teaching duties, in which consideration is given to the teaching itself and also to lecture preparation and course development. For instance, universities could establish bandwidths for the ratio of education to research. It will also be important to allocate duties properly within a team. The set of duties must be determined at a local level as much as possible."

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2. Fixed-term contracts

- “Fake” fixed-term contract

These are called “fake” because fixed term contracts are a means to employ people for one-off projects or e.g. maternity leave cover.

You have a fixed-term appointment, for example as a lecturer. You contribute to regular educational activities. This can for example be substantiated with descriptions from study guides of previous years. Also, the number of participating students is reasonably stable. Your appointment is not a temporary replacement of a permanent employee (e.g. on maternity leave).

The CLA contains the following provision:

“The parties to the collective labour agreement believe that the flexible team of academic employees, particularly among lecturers and researchers at the university, must not be any bigger than necessary and explainable. Therefore, the parties to the collective labour agreement have agreed that this will be a subject of discussion in the Local Consultation of the individual universities, taking local circumstances into consideration.”

- You have applied for a vacancy with your current employer and are not invited as an internal candidate:

You have a fixed-term appointment, e.g. as a lecturer. Your contract expires and vacancies appear for the education you are already providing. You perform your work satisfactorily as demonstrated by the existence of a positive annual interview (or the absence of a negative annual interview).

The CLA contains the following provision:

“ When recruiting assistant professors, in the framework of good career policy, priority will be given to existing lecturers and researchers who have obtained their doctorates. After employees as referred to in Article 9.13, they will have preferential status as internal candidates in the event of equal suitability.”

- Sham rolling contracts

You have been temporary employed by the university. They would like to reinstate you on a new fixed-term appointment on the condition that you take at least 6 months off work, for example by working elsewhere for at least 6 months.

- No embedding guarantee

You have a fixed-term appointment but are not allowed to apply for an NWO research grant because it would lead to a permanent appointment.

3. Tenure Track

You have a fixed-term appointment with a Tenure Track provision in which the Tenure Track does not lead to a higher position (e.g. from assistant professor to associate professor), but in which the Tenure Track leads to the conversion of the fixed-term appointment into a permanent appointment within the same position, or only leads to a permanent appointment within the same position but at a higher level (e.g., from assistant professor 2 to assistant professor 1).

The Agreement CLA² contains the following provision:

“The current tenure-track as referred to in Article 6.6 of the collective labour agreement (the formally defined pathway toward permanent employment in a higher academic position for academic staff) will be maintained.”

² [https://www.universiteitenvannederland.nl/files/documenten/CAO/2021/CLA_agreement_2021-2022_\(def\)_eng.pdf](https://www.universiteitenvannederland.nl/files/documenten/CAO/2021/CLA_agreement_2021-2022_(def)_eng.pdf)

4. No permanent appointment after obtaining a VIDI grant

The CLA stipulates that VIDI candidates are entitled to a permanent position upon being awarded a VIDI grant.

CLA Article 2.7 paragraph 5:

"The employment contract of academic staff who have been awarded a VIDI grant shall be converted into a permanent employment contract on the condition that the UTQ is attained within the time frames stipulated for this purpose."

Nevertheless, some VIDI candidates appear to receive, for example, a Tenure Track appointment rather than a permanent appointment after being awarded.

5. Appointment of a non-existent position or unnecessary combination of two related positions

- Junior University Lecturer.

The position of Junior University Lecturer does not appear in the university job classification system.

- Lecturer/researcher instead of an assistant or associate professor.

For the classification of an employee, it is necessary to choose a job profile. In some situations it is difficult to choose a profile, because goals and result areas of different job profiles apply equally. In that case, there are two different functions or a combination function. In this case, there must be a substantial difference between the nature of the work and there are usually also two separate work situations/workplaces with separate supervisors. This is commonly not the case for a lecturer/researcher

6. Classification in too low a function/at too low a function level

Through your personnel officer, but also on the basis of the VSNU UFO grading instrument version 5 - August 2021³, you can review the grading criteria for various jobs and job levels, including e.g:

Lecturer	level 1-2-3-4
Researcher	level 1-2-3-4
Assistant Professor	level 1-2
Associate Professor	level 1-2
Full Professor	level 1-2

Form

Report your contract inflation at contractinflatie@aob.nl

Please provide at least the following information:

- University:
- Position/ job level:
- Contract fixed-term/ permanent:
- Size of contract (in hours or fte):
- Report concerns (short description):
- Additional information (attachments/copy of contract if necessary):