



University College London UCU Branch

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Malcolm Grant
President and Provost, UCL

Wednesday, 8 August 2012

Peter Fonagy
Psychoanalysis Unit, UCL

Dear Professor Grant and Professor Fonagy,

We note that the unpaid internship jobs advertised through the Anna Freud Centre and based at UCL have been taken off the AFC website, after our open statement (<https://t.co/1g3dONqK>) garnered a great deal of public support, and sparked critical articles including Ben Goldacre's blog (<https://bengoldacre.posterous.com/another-unpaid-researcher-post-in-uk-academia>) and *The Guardian Higher Education Network* (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2012/aug/02/unpaid-research-internships-academic-hypocrisy>).

Thank you for recognising the serious concerns raised by staff, students and members of the public. As you will have gathered, we believe that unpaid positions such as these are discriminatory, damage career development opportunities for students and early career researchers, and are ultimately harmful to the Academy and the important work done by our institutions and the researchers working in them. Clearly, we are not alone in these beliefs.

Beyond points of principle, as we are sure you will have noticed yourselves, the terms of the internships offered appeared to violate UCL's current HR policy (www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/internships.php). Current UCL HR policy limits unpaid internships to four months. Internships lasting four months to one year require a weekly expense allowance.

Furthermore, the duty of a university to provide a properly supportive environment for researchers' development is not only a commonly recognised principle but is to be assessed in the forthcoming REF. Requiring early career researchers to be able and willing work for free if they wish to obtain experience that could be important to their progression is far from supportive.

The Anna Freud Centre's subsequent response cited limited funds as the reason for offering the posts unpaid. We agree that it is a sad state of affairs that projects of such potential impact are insufficiently funded. However, the normalisation of the use of unpaid labour can only encourage and legitimise the under-funding of research, which in the long-term is in nobody's interest. Staff and students and their unions have been

protesting HE funding policies in the strongest terms for some time, and we invite the leaders of our institutions to endorse and join those protests as a more just and appropriate response to the underfunding crisis than asking early career researchers, who are not responsible for it, to shoulder the burden.

We believe this incident offers an opportunity for UCL and the Anna Freud Centre to demonstrate their positive commitment to ethical employment practices and the development of early career researchers, by helping to end the use of unpaid labour. We are writing to request that you commit to a revision of Human Resources policy applying to both UCL and the AFC. This revision should be conducted with the participation of the UCLU student union as well as trade unions at UCL (and AFC where appropriate), and should have as its goal a rigorous new policy that prohibits unpaid internships (as distinct from voluntary work and work experience placements) and ensures that workers at both institutions are paid at a rate appropriate to their duties – in all cases, above London Living Wage.

Please note that since this issue has become one of general interest across UCL and the Anna Freud Centre and beyond, we are publishing this on our website as an open letter. We do hope that you decide to take up this opportunity and will be happy to work with you in the development of new HR policy. Please let us know what you intend to do. Thank you in advance for your response.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Geoff Williams, Dr. Saladin Meckled-Garcia, UCL UCU joint co-Presidents