

Organising for people and planet

A guide for UCU green reps

This quick guide for green reps has been designed to complement UCU green rep and Green New Deal training, which you are strongly urged to attend. Details of UCU courses can be found on the training pages of the website: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/training> Introduction to being a green rep training is on a video which is sent out to new green reps. You can contact training@ucu.org.uk or the bargaining and negotiations team on environment@ucu.org.uk or your regional office.

Background

There is strong scientific consensus that unless carbon-based energy use is radically reduced, the world faces a climate and ecological crisis in which the poorest will suffer the most, but all of us will be affected.

UCU's founding Congress in 2007 committed UCU to play its part in 'greening the campus' and 'greening the curriculum' and to assist campaigns for sustainable national policies and local practices. In 2021, UCU launched a Green New Deal (GND) for Universities and Colleges, it brings together policy set by both UCU and NUS within a negotiating and bargaining framework. Green reps, climate and sustainability Continuing Professional Development (CPD) offerings and UCU green rep discussion list are available to members to support them in progressing work in these areas.

Branches that have a high membership density and high level of activity tend to have better working conditions. They also tend to be more pro-active in campaigning for improvements, rather than having to react to threats from the employer. In order for the membership to remain active, involved and informed, a branch needs to elect representatives to take on different roles.

The role of the green rep

Any UCU member with an interest and drive to progress workplace solutions in addressing the climate and ecological crisis is encouraged to put themselves forward to be elected into this role within their branch. Green reps can work in a similar way to other union reps by raising awareness of green issues in the workplace and making sure they are included in the negotiating/bargaining agenda. A main concern would be to agree a joint approach. UCU green reps are a fundamental part of the branch organising and bargaining machinery. Their role is vital in ensuring that employers address the climate crisis and

sustainable ways of working, ensuring the workforce is fully engaged with in the transition to greening the sector.

The name used for green reps is very much up to the local branch, UCU refer to them as 'green rep' as it is an increasingly recognised term and often in the eyes of employers encompasses issues outside of their often very narrow view of an environmental agenda. Others may refer to them as 'climate reps', 'environment reps', 'sustainability reps' etc.

Organising and action green reps are encouraged to progress with their branches include:

- consider how you can work in your branch and in partnership with your students' union (or equivalent) to raise awareness around the green agenda and progress a Green New Deal in your workplace
- consult with members around climate and ecological emergency issues – surveys and discussion forums can be useful for this
- organise members around climate and ecological emergency issues, including climate justice. See our Decarbonise & decolonise 2030 'quick guide' for a useful introduction to what we mean by climate justice
- attend and encourage members to attend UCU CPD courses related to climate and sustainability as a means of initiating work in this area
- progress curriculum and programme development, recognising the training, capacity and resourcing needs to support educators to be part of this Just Transition for a Green New Deal
- ensure environmental and climate issues have a place on the agenda at branch meetings
- get involved in UCU's national and regional environmental networks and structures
- in conjunction with your branch, negotiate with management around policies and procedures see the Green New Deal for bargaining advice and positions
- familiarise yourself with current UCU policy
- sit on relevant institutions committees to represent your UCU branch on climate and sustainability issues
- develop a local UCU strategy to respond to employer initiatives, the **Green New Deal** provides a useful framework for this
- monitor workplace environmental and sustainable standards
- conduct a workplace environmental audit
- work with other branch reps i.e., ULR/H&S/ to address and highlight workplace, local and national and environmental issues
- take part in UCU's green rep network to learn more about what is happening at other branches and share best practice
- work toward negotiating facility time for the role of a UCU green Rep e.g submit a claim.

Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee (CEEC)

Facilities time

Unfortunately green reps currently have no statutory rights to time off for trade union duties or activities. These roles are often, but do not need to be restricted to, integrated into other reps roles, such as health and safety officer. Branches are urged to negotiate with their employer for facility time for green reps, and this has been incorporated in the UCU GND.

In an effort to address this shortfall, green reps may benefit from mobilising members to put pressure on management for facility time for the role. This can be reinforced by highlighting the extent to which environment pervades all areas especially H&S, equality and learning. The greater the backing of your members the stronger your case for facility time.

Other committees

In addition to the CEEC committee in the institution a branch green rep may want to consider sitting on committees such as curriculum or career development, and student support.

Representing members

It is a branch decision who undertakes representation of individual members as this will depend on levels of experience, training, and size of branch. The branch committee may invite the green rep to act as an advisor to other representatives, or to take on some cases themselves.

Let UCU membership team and environment@ucu.org.uk know that your branch have voted you in as a UCU green rep.

Member collaborations

The UCU environment dedicate rep discussion forum and Slack workspace. This is a supportive network for members to connect and grow together with the support of UCU officers and staff.

Subscribe to the green rep discussion forum if you are not already via this link:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/elists>.

If you want to be added to one, email environment@ucu.org.uk.

We wish you the very best for your endeavours as a green rep and hope you enjoy the role. Thank you in advance from UCU for your hard work, commitment and drive to make a positive difference for people and planet.