

University and College Union

To Council
From Wales official
Date 8 June 2020
For Information and decision
Subject Organising report 19/20 and Organising Strategy for 2020-21

Organising Report 19/20

Progress report – 2019/20

1. Membership

Membership in FE & HE has increased by 124 from 6489 to 6583

Membership in FE has increased by 65 from 2557 to 2622

Membership in HE has increased by 59 from 3902 to 3961

2. Training Provided

Stage 1 induction – 6 attended

Stage 2 Introduction to casework – 5 attended

Collective bargaining (incorporating FE national agreements) – 30 attended (3 sessions held; 1 South, 1 North and 1 in West Wales)

3. Get The Vote Out (GTVO)

We have been involved in two disputes and strike ballots in both FE & HE. Everyone has spent a significant amount of time this year assisting FE & HE branches with their Get the Vote Out activities and in supporting HE branches who were engaged in strike action in 2019/20.

4. Priority branches

We have supported 3 priority branches this year. We now have more trained reps and more participation at branch meetings and UCU Wales Congress. These branches are now better equipped to support members.

5. Department reps/contacts

Branches have been actively recruiting department reps and these now need to be added to the list of reps for recruitment at the branch AGM.

6. Organising coordinators

We asked each branch to focus on recruiting organising coordinators last year. We now have 8 branch organising coordinators – 6 in FE and 2 in HE.

This role should be added to the list of reps for recruitment at the branch AGM.

7. Union Learning reps

We asked each branch to recruit a union learning rep. We now have 7 union learning reps – 4 in HE and 3 in FE.

This role should be added to the list of reps for recruitment at the branch AGM.

8. Policy officers

We asked each branch to recruit a policy officer. We now have 16 policy officers – 8 in HE and 8 in FE.

This role should be added to the list of reps for recruitment at the branch AGM.

2020/2021 Organising Strategy

1. Build the Union

Average Membership density in FE Wales is around 36% and membership density in HE Wales is around 34% so there is plenty of scope for recruitment. We would ask each branch to obtain staff data from the HR department and for each branch to look at their own membership density and to start to think about what you can do to increase union membership in your institution. We would strongly encourage each branch to arrange a single item committee meeting to discuss organising and recruitment and to develop an organising plan designed to increase activism and membership density.

2. Branch Development and Succession Planning

All UCU Cymru Branch Officers and activist work tirelessly for the members. The level of time, effort and commitment, is second to none and it is with this in mind that we would like you to think about further development within your branch. As people move jobs, get promotions or leave the sector, we need to think about the succession of branch officers. Along with the training that we already offer we have put together a mentoring programme for new branch activists. Once a member takes the first step to become more involved in the branch, they can access the stage 1 basic training which can help them choose a route they would like to follow, casework or organising or both in some cases.

Once a new activist accesses training we would look to the existing more experienced branch officers to mentor and coach the new activist, supported by the UCU Cymru Support Official or caseworker if necessary.

The mentoring programme has been designed that it will not take up too much of your valuable time and would entail you and the new activist communicating through 6 face-to-face meetings over a coffee, or telephone or online contact, which ever suits both you and your mentee. It is envisaged that it should last no longer than six months, unless you both feel there is a need to continue.

The mentoring programme is a great way to support new activists on their journey to becoming branch officers, committee members and representatives, building and keeping the union strong. There will be a short training session for branch officers who would like to be mentors, this will be available from the autumn term.

3. Department Reps/Contacts

We are asking branches and LAs to focus their organising activities on the recruitment of branch Department Representatives and where this is not possible to try and recruit someone to act as a Department Contact. Please see role descriptions at the end of this document – appendix 1 and 2.

The Contact role can be expanded with time, but as a starting point they might be willing to act as a 'point of contact', referring members with queries/difficulties to relevant branch committee members, putting up posters and other UCU information on department notice boards and distributing newsletters etc.

The Department Rep, if confident to do so, could be tasked with speaking to new staff members about joining UCU, contact the Membership Secretary or other relevant Branch Rep with details of the new members of staff so that they can initiate contact. They could also check and update membership details for the members in their department and ensuring that changes are reported to the membership secretary, so that the changes also translate to the membership system.

Introducing members to activism in this manner will help to build confidence and interest in UCU and could in time lead to increased levels of activism, which benefits the branch and helps build towards its sustainability. Succession planning is essential and the development of activists through the branch structures is a good start.

A network of existing Department Reps and Contacts can be utilised to help with the Get the Vote Out initiatives during disputes by speaking to members in their department, asking if they have voted, circulating information and notifying the branch of any potential problems, so the branch can respond quickly and take any necessary action.

The value of having a representative in each department should not be underestimated. We understand that members who have not been active previously can be intimidated by the idea of getting involved in the branch structures, but the role of the Department Rep or Contact can be a low level introduction to union activities and activism. It can also be an opportunity for those who would like to participate in union activities, but currently are not able to commit to something more involved. For the same reasons it is potentially easier to recruit activists to this type of role, than some of the more prominent roles.

4. Organising Coordinator

We currently have 8 Branch Organising Coordinators and we need to build on this. The role of an Organising Coordinator can be many and varied but its particular focus is to ensure organising remains at the top of the agenda within the branch; co-ordinating organising activity within the branch and acting as a point of contact for organising related matters. This role should include developing an organising plan for the branch to increase activism and membership.

The Organising Coordinator is not expected to tackle organising alone, it is a matter for the branch as a whole but they would be instrumental in co-ordinating organising activities and campaigns. The Organising Coordinator will look for opportunities to organise and may be involved in membership and activist recruitment drives, approaching new members of staff to talk about joining the union and existing union members to promote activism.

NB: This role should be added to the list of reps for recruitment at the branch AGM

5. Recruit new members during Induction

Research carried out by the TUC found that the best time to approach new staff and invite them to join UCU, is when they start their employment. This research also

found that the main reason given for not joining a union is; no one ever asked me to join. We would encourage all branches to start to plan to recruit new staff at the beginning of September. Where there is no formal induction process, the organising co-ordinator needs to be proactive and agree a rota of branch officers and contacts to seek out and recruit new members of staff as soon as they start work at the institution. The Wales office sends an email to all branches / LA's in August prompting you to get involved and recruit members during the induction process.

6. Keeping the office informed of changes within the branch

The Wales Office maintains a list of Branch Officers by name and role for every branch in Wales. These records are used by the Officials so they can contact the most appropriate Rep when the need arises and to make referrals to members that contact the Wales Office directly.

The information on these lists is also used to update the UCU national membership database. The database is used by Head Office to send out relevant information to reps based on their role within the Branch, and for Caseworkers registration is essential in terms of being indemnified for the advice they are providing. It is important that changes to the branch committee are reported to the Wales Office. A post AGM report is essential, but regular updates as changes occur are also necessary.

The ability to organise effectively is predicated on good and accurate information; please ensure that a member of your branch or LA is tasked with this activity.

7. Training

Previously we were not getting enough Branch Officers trained in Wales. We have changed our approach and agreed this with the UCU training officer. There have been some recent changes to the training structure in Wales to allow Branch Officers to progress. The Wales Office provides a variety of introductory training sessions. Training is held in the Tondu office but can be held locally should there be enough Branch Officers to attend. The courses below are all introductory short courses to make them more accessible to Branch Officers in Wales. Where possible we would advise Branch Officers to take up the National 3-day courses.

Stage 1 - Induction to Representing UCU Members This 1-day course is aimed at new reps, department contacts and activists who are or will be undertaking this role in the near future. It will cover aspects of the role of the organising rep and the role of caseworker. A great start for new UCU activists.

Stage 2 - Introduction to Representing UCU Members (Casework) This 1-day course is aimed at Branch Officers whose role includes individual casework. It is quite an intensive course and includes aspects of: The role of the caseworker, casework protocols, meeting the member, the legal framework including EWC and supporting the member in meetings and hearings. The stage 2 course is aimed at Reps who have completed Stage 1 – Induction to Representing UCU Members.

Stage 3 - Introduction to Representing UCU Members (Advanced) This 1-day course is aimed at Branch Officers whose role includes working collectively with members within the workplace. It is an intensive course and includes aspects of: Collective casework, organising, recruitment, running workplace campaigns, communications and GTVO. This course is for reps who have completed Stage 1 and 2 and who have a minimum of 2 years' experience as a Branch Officer.

8. In addition to the above, we will be offering:

8.1 Health & Safety – Conducting Workplace Inspections (Stress and Mental Health)

This one day training course is aimed at all branch officers and health & Safety reps. The course will deal with the issues around workload and provide you with the tools to carry out health & safety inspections. It will also include a session on HSE stress management standards survey. You will also learn about mental health and work related stress.

8.2 Mental Health awareness training

This one day training course is about raising awareness of mental health, particularly stress, depression and anxiety. This awareness session provides the tools and guidance for daily wellbeing management for yourself and your colleagues, signposting and removing the stigma around mental health in your workplace.

8.3 Collective Bargaining training

This one day training course will provide branch officers with an understanding of the collective bargaining process, help you to prepare a claim and negotiate with management. The ability to conduct successful negotiations is paramount to a branches effectiveness and strength. This one day training course is an opportunity for reps and officers involved in branch negotiations at all levels to increase their understanding and confidence to better represent UCU members.

Appendix 1

Branch Department Rep Role Description

The Department Rep will act as a first point of contact for members and may provide basic advice and signpost members to information or a more experienced rep if and when necessary. They can also speak to new staff members about joining UCU, contact the Membership Secretary or other relevant Branch Rep with details of the new members of staff so that they can initiate contact. They could also check and update membership details for the members in their department and ensuring that changes are reported to the membership secretary, so that the changes also translate to the membership system.

Department Reps can also access training provided.

Other duties could include:

Introduce themselves and explaining their function to all new members in the department or immediate workplace.

- explain the role of the union to new members
- investigate all complaints made by members and pass on to the committee if they cannot be resolved informally

- attempt to deal with complaints that are not grievances with informal discussions with managers, union members, or members of the union executive
- act as a referral agent for members with personal problems that require expert assistance
- keep the committee informed about all complaints and how each has been dealt with
- keep members informed about important settlements made by the local association
- encourage members to attend meetings where negotiating issues will be discussed
- pass on the members' priorities to the committee
- pass on complaints about the union and about any barriers to union activity to the committee
- Help to get the vote out in union ballots
- keep union bulletin boards up to date

Appendix 2

UCU Branch contact role description

The Department Contact as a starting point might be willing to act as a 'point of contact', referring members with queries/difficulties to relevant branch committee members, putting up posters and other UCU information on department notice boards and distributing newsletters etc.

With confidence, other duties could include:

- Introducing themselves and explaining their function to all new members in the department or immediate workplace
- Provide information to new staff about the role of the union and invite them to join UCU
- act as a referral agent for members with personal problems that require expert assistance
- keep the committee informed about any issues in the department
- encourage members to attend meetings where negotiating issues will be discussed
- pass on the members' priorities to the committee
- ensure that the members are informed about all membership meetings and about important being discussed at these meetings
- Help to get the vote out in union ballots
- keep union bulletin boards up to date

Agreed by Teams meeting of Council

8 June 2020