

Being a UCU activist: Facilities and time off for UCU reps

As a workplace representative you are entitled to reasonable paid time off and facilities to undertake union duties and attend UCU training.

These rights come from the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (TULR(C)A 92) which states that 'the amount and frequency of time off ... are to be those that are reasonable in all the circumstances.' It also provides for the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) to issue practical guidance on facilities, time off for trade union duties and trade union training.

The *ACAS Code of Practice for Time off for Trade Union Duties and Activities* is broadly supportive and provides examples of what might be regarded as relevant when considering 'all the circumstances.' However it does not provide any prescriptive solutions.

Instead in Section 5 the ACAS Code of practice notes the positive advantages of employers and trade unions establishing workplace agreements that 'reflect their own situation'. UCU also encourages branches to have written agreements for time off and facilities.

If you are a new rep then you will need to find out if you have an agreement. The best way to do this is to speak to previous reps or your regional office. If this fails then ask your personnel office. Be aware that the actual clauses may be in other agreements such as your recognition agreement.

Most UCU agreements allow for:

- accommodation for meetings
- use of notice boards, including electronic communications such as email and internet access
- a set amount of paid remission from classroom teaching (and the associated preparation time) for each rep
- an office for undertaking UCU duties that has access to a computer, phone and locked filing cabinet
- access to free photocopying
- use of internal post and access to staff pigeonholes
- paid time off for UCU union training

Additionally you should check your agreements for rights to consultation over change and your right to information from management about issues that affect collective bargaining.

UCU strongly recommends that you have an agreement with management which covers these issues and that you utilise the training clause to ensure that all UCU reps have received adequate union training.