

University and College Union

To Council
From Margaret Phelan
Date 7 June 2019
For Information and decision
Subject Organising Report 18/19 and Strategy for 2019-20

Organising Report 18/19

Membership

Membership in F&HE has increased by 170 from 6319 to 6489

Membership in FE has increased by 197 from 2390 to 2587

Membership in HE has decreased by 27 from 3929 to 3902

Number of reps

Number of reps in F & HE has increased from 198 to 255

Number of reps in FE has increased from 68 to 99

Number of reps in HE has increased from 125 to 150

Ratio of reps per members

FE: 8 out of 11 institutions have a ratio of at least 1 rep per 30 members

HE: 5 out of 8 institutions have a ratio of at least 1 rep per 30 members

Training Provided

72 reps trained within the last 12 months (mostly on casework)

Support for members who are facing difficulties in the workplace is a key benefit of UCU membership. UCU relies heavily on the voluntary support and commitment of branch officers. The Wales Office provides one day training courses to assist branch officers who are involved in representing members. However, we would advise that where possible you attend UCU's 3 day courses.

During the last 12 months casework training has been provided to meet demand. Training sessions have taken place in FE and HE institutes and in the Tondu office. The Wales Office training includes our Casework Protocols, record keeping and GDPR in addition to the general principles of representing members. Our ability to deliver consistent support to our members is contingent on all caseworkers following the same procedure and same rules. If we stray from that principle, it opens the union up to claims of discrimination, missing time limits and claims of negligence. Another

reason the work we do must be properly recorded is so we can publicise the good work we do on behalf of members. If we don't record our successes then we can't publicise them. In the last 12 months across Wales 72 caseworkers have been trained.

Policy engagement

For much of the academic year we have been without a policy and comms officer and that fact has impacted on the amount of work we were able to get through in relation to policy and comms. Our responses to consultations are available on the UCU web site <https://www.ucu.org.uk/wales> Key areas of work included changes to ANL legislation, which will be introduced in Sept 2020; Review of the Welsh Bac by CYPEC and its report with proposals for change; EWC Code of Professional Conduct and Practice and Interim Suspension Orders and The Adult Learning Consultation.

A big thank you to all of the reps who played a part in producing these results. The success of our industrial strategy is wholly dependent effective organising and membership density- keep up the good work in 2019/20, there is still much to do to prepare for the new post 16 Panning and Funding body.

2019/2020 Organising Strategy

Department Reps/Contacts

As a consequence of GDPR we can no longer use 'all staff' maps of the workplace, so this year we are asking branches and LAs to focus their organising activities on the recruitment of branch representatives/ contacts.

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 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.

The role of the Department Rep can be expanded with time, but as a starting point might be 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 Dept. Rep could also, if confident to do so, speak to new staff members about joining UCU, or at the very least, contact the Membership Secretary or other relevant Branch Rep with details of the new member of staff so that they can initiate contact.

In time the role could also include: checking and updating membership map 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/Contacts can be utilised to help with the Get The Vote Out initiative 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.

Organising Coordinator

The role of an Organising Coordinator can be many and varied but its particular focus is to ensure organising remains on 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 Rep will be looking 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.

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.

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

Recruit a Policy Officer

It is crucial that each branch/LA has a UCU policy contact, who will work with the UCU Wales Policy Officer to gather and disseminate information so that members are kept informed of policy proposals likely to impact on their workload and the quality of delivery; to make sure that they have a say in shaping them.

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

Update Contact Lists held in Wales Office

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.

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

1 - Induction to Representing Members –This 1 day course is aimed at new reps, department contacts and caseworkers 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.

2 – Introduction to Representing Members (Individual)

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 and supporting the member in meetings and hearings.

3 – Introduction to Representing Members (Collective)

This 1 day course is aimed at Branch Officers whose role includes working collectively with members. It is an intensive course and includes aspects of:

Collective casework or general organising and recruitment of new members and running workplace campaigns.

Communication

Establishing effective communication channels with all our stakeholders is essential in order to inform and achieve our strategic aims and objectives for the coming year. UCU Wales has a variety of different audiences and stakeholders, both internally (e.g. members, UCU Wales Committees, UCU Wales Congress, UCU colleagues across the UK) and externally (e.g. Welsh Government, Funding Council, TUC, NUS, employers' bodies). We are committed to work with all of these to ensure that a range of appropriate and accessible communication approaches is developed that meets their diverse needs and interests as well as our own strategic targets. We will endeavour to ensure that all communication is available in English and Welsh, and in a range of formats e.g. braille.

Over the next 12 months we will commit to undertake the following:

- Communication survey: the completed members' communication survey will be analysed and the findings used to inform our communication methods.
- Website: we will continue to develop and maintain the UCU Wales site to include policies and procedures, campaign priorities and toolkits, new programmes and initiatives, training and events, press releases, useful web links.
- E bulletin: we, in collaboration with our members, will continue to provide regular and up to date Wales focussed bulletins that inform members about UCU news, activities and opportunities in Wales.
- Social media: our twitter and facebook pages will be further developed and maintained to encourage two-way communication and engagement by initiating conversations and creating networks.
- Policy seminars and briefings: we will tailor these to communicate our policy priorities and messages to diverse targeted audiences including UCU members' and branches, Assembly Members, Welsh Government, Funding Council.
- Branch Officers and Representatives: we will work closely with these to foster a bottom up approach to communication. Where necessary we will assist in developing their skills and capacity to enable them to communicate the views and demands of their members internally e.g. UCU Wales Committees and Congress, and externally e.g. funding bodies, Welsh Government.
- Events and lobbying opportunities: we will represent UCU Wales at a range of events and, where possible, use these events to communicate our work and priorities for action e.g. Wales TUC events (including WTUC Congress), stalls/fringe meetings at party political conferences.
- Press and media: we will maintain a database of press contacts and develop a press and media strategy for UCU Wales.

Policy/Political work

Much of our activity in this area is created by external bodies in relation to their policy decisions. However we do intend to be proactive in response to HESC motions on governance. Our initial focus will be on influencing the current discussion in Wales about HE governance, including feeding into the work being undertaken by HEFCW, as requested by the Welsh government. A draft paper, produced by the policy official, will be considered by HESC at the June meeting which will form the basis of our engagement and ASKS in relation to changes to HE governance in Wales.

We will also start to engage with the policy contacts in the political parties in Wales to try and influence their manifestos on the matter of HE governance, in conjunction with UNISON.

Date Agreed by Council..... 07/10/09

Signed by Chair of Council 

Signed by Secretary to Council 