

BUILDING UCU



A branch handbook/
code of good practice



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Foreword by Jo Grady

UCU general secretary

We can't wait for a more sympathetic government to come along and fix things for us

This handbook/code of good practice is a key reference document for branches

There has been a long-term decline in the power of trade unions to bring about change in the workplace or the wider political landscape. Successive governments in the UK have been hostile towards unions, and unions have struggled to adapt to their environment.

We can't wait for a more sympathetic government to come along and fix things for us. The solution to the problems we see in post-16 education is to organise more effectively at the level of individual workplaces: to focus on addressing the issues that matter to you and your colleagues, whether that's workload, job security, or racial and gender equality. You can do this by persuading the non-members as well as the members you work with to join the union and act collectively to advance your shared interests.

This handbook/code of good practice is a key reference document for branches. It brings together a lot of UCU material scattered among a variety of UCU sources. For the first time, it also provides accessible material relating to the negotiating process but, more importantly, sets negotiations within a clear framework that we need to build power for collective bargaining if we are to win. It will be the lodestone to update our current training materials.

It is part of a suite of *Building UCU* documents that includes:

- ➔ **Building power in the workplace** - a booklet that takes a deeper look at organising and encouraging more members to get actively involved in UCU
- ➔ **Building effective bargaining** - a summary of the key points from the handbook.

Finally, please bear in mind that this handbook will change as our union grows and changes. Please enjoy it and use it in whatever way you can. If you have any feedback, please write to me using the contact details at the end. In the meantime, best wishes and solidarity.

Jo Grady



Introduction

We want to improve our members' pay and conditions of employment. We know that inequality is still pervasive in our workplaces

To tackle this, we need to look to build our own power; see members as having an essential role in determining our goals

WHY WE NEED STRONG BRANCHES

The secret of union power is having strong and active branches. Building the strength and activity of branches is the most important task facing UCU; everything else flows from this. Not only do local members benefit directly when their branches are strong, active, and capable of making their employer take note, the whole union benefits when it is made-up of well-organised branches. Our ability to bargain collectively, to make either an individual employer or group of employers engage in meaningful collective bargaining, is primarily dependent on our branch organisation.

It is collective bargaining that sets us apart from other organisations like pressure groups and think tanks. It is by working together that individual workers offset the structural advantage of employers and improve their negotiating position.

We know that the way people get power at work is to act collectively. That which a hundred people ask for individually, we can demand collectively. The conditions that UCU members work under are not usually given freely by generous governments or enlightened employers. The vast majority of our terms and conditions of employment have been won by creating enough collective power to negotiate agreements. Even when we win agreements or improvements to the law, we still need collective power to enforce our rights.

We want to improve our members' pay and conditions of employment. We know that inequality is still pervasive in our workplaces. To tackle this, we need to look to build our own power; see members as having an essential role in determining our goals, building capabilities, and translating generalised support for our campaigns into actions in support of their bargaining objectives.

This requires us to think about what we do to deliver meaningful collective bargaining, where our employers have to take our claims seriously. We need to analyse shifts in the external realities we work within; think about changes in the workforce and how these changes affect our strategic leverage. We need to consider how each decision we take, how we spend our time, either builds or diminishes our capacity to bring about change.

UK, national/regional, and local branch organisations all have their part to play. Work is already underway at the UCU centre to provide support to branches to advance local claims and to improve the co-ordination of the union's bargaining



Introduction

Branches are the building blocks of a strong union

Time and time again, the employers' agenda is at odds with what staff consider most appropriate to their educational priorities

work. We are looking at how we provide branches with training, support, and access to bargaining data.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK/CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

This handbook is part of that approach. It is designed as a key resource for representatives by bringing together in one place the main elements that we need to look to if we want to bring about change in our workplaces. It provides:

- **an explanation of key terms**
- **an overview of good practice**
- **references to other sources of information.**

Of course, it is only possible to scratch the surface in a handbook of this type and workplace representatives are encouraged to take advantage of the training UCU offers and the vast array of additional information. Regional and national offices (Scotland and Wales) are also key sources of advice and assistance.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. **The workplace is the foundation of UCU**

The workplace is where the union is best able to protect its members and improve their working conditions. Top-down campaigning, media work, legal work and political work focussed on Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff, Belfast and elsewhere are helpful but they can't deliver for members if the union is weak and ineffective in the workplace. That's why branches are the building blocks of a strong union.

2. **Your interests are not the same as your employer's**

As a union we will sometimes make common cause with an employer or employers (eg. to get more funding from government for public services), but on most matters we have a conflict of interest. Employers cause most of our members' problems and people join us to resolve those problems. Time and time again, the employers' agenda is at odds with what staff consider most appropriate to their educational or research priorities and their needs as workers.



Introduction

Unions are about workers coming together to take control of their own livelihoods

3. It is the process of engaging in collective bargaining that will build the union – not the result

Few people join UCU out of gratitude for a good pay deal in the past or for protecting a colleague from unfair dismissal. Most people join a trade union and get active because they are concerned about what is happening to them today and in the hope that we can win something better through our union tomorrow.

4. You are strongest when you organise yourselves

Unions are about workers coming together to take control of their own livelihoods. As a rep you will sometimes need expert professional advice on strategy and tactics, your legal options, financial issues and other matters; technical support; training; and help with member representation, organising and negotiations activities which branches aren't (yet) ready to do on their own. Your union can help you access those things, but UCU staff shouldn't do anything for you which you are able to do yourself.

5. A well-organised branch is always ready to bring its power to bear on the employer – including through strike action

There are many ways to put pressure on employers. The ultimate threat which a union poses to employers is the threat that its members will withdraw their labour by going on strike. That doesn't mean strikes are always necessary or the best way to get what you want, however. The threat of strike action can be as powerful as the strike itself. That threat on its own can achieve real victories, as can other tactics.

THE KEY ROLE OF THE WORKPLACE REPRESENTATIVE

Evidence from a variety of studies on the wider union movement show that having workplace representatives is hugely important if we want members to develop a sustainable relationship with their union.

Getting involved is rewarding. It feels good to:

- ➔ **help build an active workplace community**
- ➔ **work with others to achieve change in the workplace.**



Introduction

Becoming involved with your union doesn't mean devoting all your time to union activity

Many representatives also find that the experience they develop as a representative enhances their negotiating skills and this in turn has a positive impact on their own professional/personal development.

Becoming involved with your union doesn't mean devoting all your time to union activity. Much of this handbook is about how we build a collective endeavour. How we work together to achieve change, rather than rely on a few key activists.

This handbook/code will be reviewed periodically. The principles it asserts will be used to frame our training.

Printed copies will be updated annually but an online version is available at: www.ucu.org.uk/BuildingUCU



SECTION ONE

Bargaining and negotiating

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Bargaining and negotiating



The branch is the key unit of local UCU organisation. This is where UCU is closest to our members

This section helps branches think about how to approach negotiations with their employer(s). It also makes clear how our collective strength comes from our members working together to get the best deal we possibly can in the short and long term.

In summary, this section:

- ➔ positions workplace bargaining as central to branch life
- ➔ provides a working definition of collective bargaining
- ➔ emphasises the importance of involving members and potential members in setting the bargaining agenda
- ➔ places our need to build power at the heart of our approach to bargaining
- ➔ provides an overview of the negotiating process, and
- ➔ indicates that UCU representatives must be accountable to those they represent.

1.1 THE CENTRAL ROLE OF WORKPLACE BARGAINING IN BRANCH LIFE

The branch is the key unit of local UCU organisation. This is where UCU is closest to our members.

First and foremost, it is at the level of the individual employer where our members and those we seek to represent encounter the employment relationship: Not only on big contractual issues but it is here that members' day-to-day experience of working life is shaped. It is at employer level that national agreements and recommendations (where they exist) are implemented or ignored; where members experience the employer trying to control the organisation of their work, from departmental organisation to the introduction of metrics and assessment criteria; it is at this level that members deal with the consequences of discriminatory practices.

For all these reasons (and many more), it is essential that branches actively engage in collective bargaining with the employer and use a collective, proactive approach to progress their agenda, not just respond to employer initiatives and demands.

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Bargaining and negotiating



At the heart of trade-unionism is the recognition that individual workers are in an unequal power relationship with their employer

At the outset of any campaign there should be a discussion about shifting the balance of power

1.2 WHAT IS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING?

There are various definitions of the term collective bargaining. Sometimes, there is a tendency to focus on legal definitions or on the process of negotiation between union representatives and employer(s), but collective bargaining is about more than that; it is about workers working collectively to build leverage to get the best deal possible.

At the heart of trade-unionism is the recognition that individual workers are in an unequal power relationship with their employer. At the outset of any campaign to improve or defend terms and conditions there should be a discussion about shifting the balance of power. Clearly, having an idea about the number of workers we represent and how many of them are actively supporting a campaign is important, but so too is an assessment of our strategic capacity. We cover this more in section 1.4.

Branches should consider how to work with members to bring our collective power (leverage) to the negotiating table. Often it can seem that the employer holds all the best cards but we always have options.

Typical issues on a bargaining agenda are conditions of employment such as working time, annual leave, equal treatment, training, occupational health, health and safety, the organisation of work and, of course, pay and/or grading matters.

Our agenda needs to be manageable but we can and should try and expand the agenda to cover all manner of issues, from race and gender equality to making our employers address climate change.

The aim of the negotiations is to reach an agreement covering all the employees in the 'bargaining unit'. In essence, this process allows workers to deal with employers as a unified group through a trade union, rather than as individuals.

What does the law say?

The statutory provisions in relation to collective bargaining are minimal. For example, the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 - TUL(C)RA 1992 sets out a legal position in which a 'collective agreement' means any agreement or arrangement made by or on behalf of one or more trade unions and one or more employers or employers'

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Bargaining and negotiating



A recognition agreement provides a framework for industrial relations within an organisation

It sets out the rules and procedures to be used by the union and the employer in carrying out consultation, collective bargaining and representation

associations and relating to one or more of the matters specified below; and 'collective bargaining' means negotiations over:

- (a) Terms and conditions of employment, or the physical conditions in which any workers are required to work
- (b) Engagement or non-engagement, or termination or suspension of employment or the duties of employment, of one or more workers
- (c) Allocation of work or the duties of employment as between workers or groups of workers
- (d) Matters of discipline
- (e) A worker's membership or non-membership of a trade union
- (f) Facilities for officials of trade unions; and
- (g) Machinery for negotiation or consultation, and other procedures, relating to any of the above matters, including the recognition by employers or employers' associations of the right of a trade union to represent workers in such negotiation or consultation or in the carrying out of such procedures.

Where we are recognised, we have a legal right to request specific information from employers that can then be used for collective bargaining purposes.

However, to get these rights, UCU has to be 'recognised' by the employer or employers.

These are limited statutory provisions and we always seek to expand our bargaining agenda by reaching a recognition and procedural agreement with an employer.

What is a recognition agreement?

In brief, a recognition agreement provides a framework for industrial relations within an organisation. It sets out the rules and procedures to be used by the union and the employer in carrying out consultation, collective bargaining and representation.

A trade union is 'recognised' when the employer has agreed that it will negotiate agreements with a union or unions on pay and other terms and

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Bargaining and negotiating



Many employers will be gauging how strong or weak they think local union organisation is and act accordingly

conditions of employment on behalf of a group of workers, defined as the 'bargaining unit'.

Recognition and collective bargaining are legally defined in various pieces of legislation.

The vast majority of our membership are in branches with existing recognition agreements. However, there is a growing sub-sector of our membership who are in subsidiary companies or work for new providers where UCU is not already recognised. Whatever the situation, recognition agreements are sometimes subject to periodic review and many employers will be gauging how strong or weak they think local union organisation is and act accordingly. Of course, we will seek to improve the range of matters we negotiate over but employers may have a different agenda.

Bargaining unit

This is the group of workers on whose behalf UCU conducts collective bargaining. The bargaining unit usually consists of all workers (whether or not in the union) performing a particular role or roles for an employer.

There may be other unions recognised by the employer but these are mostly for different types of workers to those UCU recruits.

Joint negotiating and/or consultation machinery

The recognition agreement should set out the machinery for conducting formal negotiations and consultation. There is normally a committee (called something like the 'Joint negotiating and consultation committee - JNCC') where representatives of management and UCU (or UCU alongside the other recognised campus trade unions) meet. The recognition agreement should detail those eligible to participate, the chair and secretary roles, the timing of the meetings, the setting of the agenda and circulation of papers should be set out in this section of the agreement. Also importantly, if agreement cannot be reached then the recognition agreement will normally refer to procedure for dispute resolution.

What's the difference between negotiation and consultation?

Recognition agreements should be clear on what can be subject to negotiation, and what to consultation. Technically, negotiation commits both parties to reaching agreement, whereas consultation is merely a commitment to seek views.

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Bargaining and negotiating



Some employers confuse consultation with the conveying of information

A skilful negotiating team can often turn what starts out as a consultation process into a negotiation

Some employers confuse consultation with the conveying of information. It is much more than this, as recognition agreements are supported by legislation which requires employers to undertake 'meaningful' consultation on certain issues. In practice, this is more likely to mean the consultation process must be closer to negotiation than a mere information-giving exercise. There should be evidence the employer has attempted to reach agreement, even if agreement proves impossible.

In reality, a skilful negotiating team can often turn what starts out as a consultation process into a negotiation.

Formal and informal bargaining

The JNCC or similar is the formal machinery of bargaining but collective bargaining can take place 'informally' as well, for example between formal meetings or at departmental level.

Often this is appropriate but branches should be aware that employers sometimes try to keep matters off the formal bargaining agenda and out of the JNCC by convening informal meetings of one description or another (working parties, task groups). While it may be appropriate for detailed work to be carried-out in specific groups, branches should be aware that sometimes an employer will create sub-groups to delay the issue, bury it, or dilute union influence. Branches should be alert to this possibility.

Most importantly, branches and workplace representatives (in the case of departmental discussions) should not allow conversations to drift into bargaining where the only engagement is between the management and representatives and members are bypassed in the process.

Further resources

UCU's bargaining department has produced excellent advice on recognition and procedural agreements, some with model agreements:

- ➔ ***Recognition and procedural agreements (RPAs)*** – HE negotiating pack
- ➔ ***Guidelines on local recognition and procedural agreements in FE*** (England), Dec 09
- ➔ ***Winning union recognition in new providers*** – guide for branches

These can be found under 'Recognition' at: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/2969>

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Bargaining and negotiating



An effective branch will not allow the senior management complete control over the bargaining agenda

1.3 SETTING OUT OUR AGENDA

Most branches spend a lot of time responding to issues initiated by an employer. Vast amounts of time are spent dealing with the senior management's agenda; restructurings and organisational change, the introduction of new ways of working, and changes to terms and conditions, to name but a few.

Of course a large part of our role is to defend our people's interests in response to management initiatives, but an effective branch will not allow the senior management complete control over the negotiating agenda.

UCU branches should be using bargaining machinery to take forward workers' agenda, not only respond to employer demands. It is by engaging members in this process that we grow the union.

What do members want to change?

We know that sometimes people join a union as an 'insurance policy' but this is not the type of organisation that UCU strives to be. The branch handbook covers more on the type of organisation we aspire to be in section 2.

We also know that people join unions for 'instrumental' reasons: They want to change their circumstances; to change something they don't like or secure an advance. Finding and pursuing these issues through collective bargaining should form the core of branch activity.

Picking the right issues is essential. But always remember – good issues mean something to the workforce not just because we think they are important. Once you have found one don't be afraid of putting it at the centre of everything you do.

There are many ways to identify the issues concerning members. Regular branch meetings are a way of identifying collective issues that arise. In some circumstances, particularly larger employers, meetings closer to the members in their departmental or school level may be appropriate. Such meetings are vital when the issues are focused on a specific area or group of workers.

Meetings are an important means of gauging members' views but branches successfully use other means of obtaining members views on

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Bargaining and negotiating



Branches and negotiators should not assume they know what members want

Involving members in their union's decision-making processes increases commitment to a union

the issues that should be taken to the management. For example:

- ➔ repeated case work issues can act as a trigger for a different approach to be taken to a systemic cause
- ➔ well-designed surveys can be used by branches to help identify issues members are concerned about or gauge their views on those that have arisen
- ➔ the simple but powerful act of workplace reps talking to people informally can often uncover significant issues (see Section 2 for more information on the systematic, organised use of one on one conversations).

Well organised branches will use a variety of means to identify the issues that members want their union to tackle collectively. The key is that branches and negotiators should not assume they know what members want.

Involving members in their union's decision-making processes increases commitment to a union. At one level this is obvious but branches should think carefully about how they garner those views and how they remove barriers to members' participation.

How do we raise our issues with the employer?

Although there will be occasions where informal discussions take place between employer and union representatives, as previously stated, it is important that these processes do not bypass the members. UCU representatives, whether a branch officer or a workplace representative need to remember that they have a representative function; they are always accountable to members and should proceed on that basis.

However, it is important to be aware that in most situations, the appropriate way to raise issues on behalf of our members is to submit a formal claim to the employer. This should be in writing and should be sent from a branch or regional official. Sometimes this is as simple as a letter but it is often advisable to draft a separate claim document. Using this format helps to:

- ➔ consult members on the content/edit and control different versions
- ➔ set out clearly to the employer what it is the branch wants to change

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Bargaining and negotiating



There is a need to prepare carefully and crucially to think about how to engage members and consider the relative bargaining power of the parties

- ➔ provide clear reference points when in negotiations with the management
- ➔ facilitate a quick way of tracking progress against the claim and reporting back to the relevant constituent bodies.

An example of a claim is attached as resource sheet Appendix 1.

Is the approach the same for reactive bargaining?

Understandably, much of our bargaining is about issues management have raised with us. Often, management will argue that these are not matters for negotiation but for consultation.

Whether a matter is for negotiation or consultation may seem an esoteric point but it can be important for framing the discussions. Although it is not always advisable to get bogged-down over the argument, it is important for UCU representatives to be clear about how they view the issue. A skilled team will often be able to take consultation and, effectively, turn it into a negotiation. These are matters in respect of which it is well worth taking advice from your regional office.

Although there are differences in starting points between proactive or reactive bargaining, the general approach is the same. There is still a need to prepare carefully and crucially to think about how to engage members and consider the relative bargaining power of the parties.

Other tips for dealing with issues raised by the management are:

- ➔ Ask for their proposals in writing.
- ➔ By all means respond verbally but also make sure our position is put clearly to them in writing.
- ➔ Consider if it is possible to widen the issue under discussion for negotiation by raising issues that we have wanted to discuss for a while (for example, if management want to restructure a department, ask them to conduct an equality impact assessment and report on the gender pay gap within that department).
- ➔ Whether the discussions are taking place within the formal machinery or not, get the finally agreed position in writing. Don't rely on minutes

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Bargaining and negotiating



Negotiating skill is no substitute for lack of leverage

Bargaining strength has to be built up over time

or notes of discussions as the sole means of recording the agreement as this can make communicating the proposals to members and future referencing difficult.

1.4 UNDERSTANDING AND BUILDING YOUR BARGAINING POWER

The role of power at the bargaining table

A negotiation starts in the first place because at least one of the parties involved wants to change the status quo. The negotiators try to resolve the differences by finding a new position which is acceptable to both (for the time being).

Negotiating skill is no substitute for lack of leverage. Skill can only offer short-lived advantages. Bargaining strength has to be built up over time from a combination of sound workplace organisation, high membership density, meaningful engagement of members, building relationships with allies and key actors, and finding the right tool to lever a set of negotiations.

This is covered in more detail in Section 2 (pages 43-58).

Points for negotiating teams to consider before meeting the other side

- ➔ The strength you believe you have has a crucial bearing on how you approach the planning and conduct of negotiations.
- ➔ Power is relational; it is where you can exert direct influence over the actions of the other party.
- ➔ Power is of no use unless both parties know about it and hold a similar view of its extent.
- ➔ If you are stronger than the others but they do not know – then you have no effective power. If you are weak and they do not know – you are stronger than you know you are!
- ➔ The skilled negotiator uses or threatens to use power to influence and persuade rather than to defeat.

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Bargaining and negotiating



It is important to note that although you may be the weaker of the two parties, you are never powerless

➔ While negotiators are more likely to threaten to use their power to get a tactical advantage than actually to use it, following through with forms of leverage is often necessary to give substance to each party's claims.

Note: the same is true for the employer team.

It is also important to note that although you may be the weaker of the two parties, you are never powerless.

Both management and union negotiators should think carefully before they take full advantage of the other's weaknesses. This perception of the need to 'live together', however uncomfortably, gives each side some negotiating strength.

Obviously, when the situation is really hopeless, plan to minimise your losses.

Types of leverage

It is possible to reach agreement without the need to bring leverage into play but, more often, you have to leverage the power of your members to put pressure on the employer to achieve your bargaining objectives.

Leverage either needs to hurt the employer economically or create sufficient reputational damage or political pain to induce concessions from the employer.

There are many forms of leverage, the most visible is the strike. However, there are many other forms that, depending on context, may be more effective than short or even prolonged strike action.

Part of the knack is working out what matters to the other side at a given point in time.

Branches should consider what tactics are necessary to achieve the desired change in the employer's approach. This requires thinking strategically about institutional timelines and the key stages, events, and processes involved in the business of the organisation. It means thinking creatively about what type of events and activities we target, beyond teaching activities. Not all members are teaching staff, but so

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Bargaining and negotiating



We need to think cohesively about ensuring all members, including those who don't teach, can be included

often teaching and teaching-adjacent activities are the main targets of our industrial action. We need to think more cohesively about ensuring all members, including those who don't teach, can be included.

In short, branches should be considering a wide range of tactics for achieving what we want.

Members are generally mobilised incrementally, and the level of participation can help gauge support for a campaign.

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Bargaining and negotiating

CHECKLIST ONE

CHECKLIST 1: LEVERAGE ACTIVITIES

Reputational	✓
● Visibly supporting a campaign (wearing badges/displaying posters)	
● Signing petitions	
● Leafleting students	
● Lobbying key meetings or events	
● Media coverage	
Industrial/work based	✓
● Raising matters at work meetings	
● Action short of a strike	
● Strike action	
Political	✓
● Obtaining support from elected representatives (councillors, mayors, AMs, MSPs, and MPs)	
Legal/regulatory	✓
● Pointing out inconsistencies with statutory provisions or case law	
● Health and safety provisions	

Because of the draconian legal position governing the rights of trade union members to take industrial action, it is important that branches keep their regional official apprised of any action that is being considered. They are also able to offer expert advice, ideas, and help arrange for resources to be produced.

UCU's procedures for local industrial action (February 2017) are available at:
https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8473/UCU-local-industrial-action-procedures/pdf/UCU_LocalIndustrialActionProcedures_Oct17.pdf

CHECKLIST 2: POWER ANALYSIS

There are a number of different ways of conducting a power analysis of the environment you are working in.

The key is thinking about the employer and asking yourself:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
--	-------------------------------------

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| ● Where does the power to make the change lie with the employer? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| ● Who do we need to influence, how do we get to them? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|

We should be thinking imaginatively about UCU's own matrix, for example:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ● What resources do we have? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| ● Who are our allies? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| ● Who are the influential figures in each workplace? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|

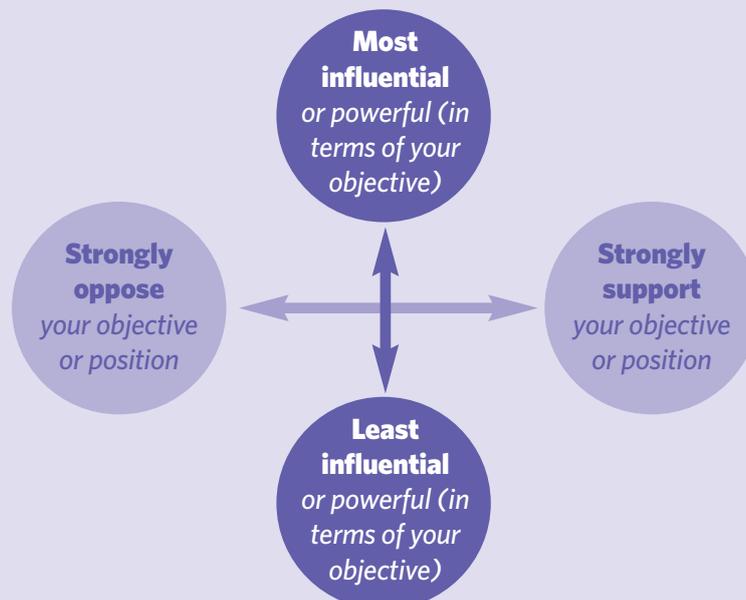
- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| ● What arguments do we need to win them over to our side? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|

A good way of visualising power and influence is to carry out a power map (see overleaf).

Bargaining and negotiating

POWER MAPPING

STEP 1: identify problems and choose a campaign outcome	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First, decide what the problem is. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Then consider what strategic objectives will help you win. 	
Step 2: Determine targets: allies, opponents, stakeholders and neutral parties	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They may be people who we disagree with on many issues. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They may be highly influential or irrelevant – we have to work that out. 	
Step 3: Putting each person or group onto a post-it note, you can map influence to your objective	✓



Bargaining and negotiating

POWER MAPPING

STEP 4: Think about what you need to do to get people to move in our direction?

Powerful but opposition

- How do we move these people/organisations to be more supportive or take action to make them less powerful?

Supportive but not powerful

- How do we move these people/organisations to assist them to be more powerful?

Step 5: Target priority relationships

- Who are they?
- What do they care about?
- Will they be supportive of the campaign?
- Who are they influenced by?
- Who can they/do they influence?
- Who listens to them?
- What impact does being supportive/not supportive have on them?

It is normally the case that the first power map provides an overview, looking at the big picture of the whole employer and associated communities. Where applicable and possible, each sub-group (for example, a department) should be looked at separately where it is possible to identify individuals that need to be approached (and who is best to do so). The priority people to approach may not be the easy, soft, targets. Draw on the resources, knowledge and connections of members – ask, who do they know who could help us?

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Bargaining and negotiating



Collective responsibility is vital

Showing division within the negotiating team only benefits the employer's side

1.5 THE NEGOTIATING TEAM

Who's in the team?

Negotiators are generally members of the branch committee. They are often, but not always, the senior officers of the branch.

Often, the UCU members of the local bargaining machinery are named but sometimes the situation is more flexible. Whatever the case, it is worth thinking about the team you are sending into the negotiations and don't just do it by default.

Many agreements have the provision for additional representatives to be present. This could be useful in enabling one of your members with expert knowledge of the matter under negotiations to attend. It could also be the case that if there are limited numbers then space should be made to ensure that the group most affected by an issue are present during negotiations. For example, if you are holding negotiations over the terms and conditions of casualised staff then it makes sense for at least one of their number to be present.

Collective responsibility

Whatever the make-up of the team, collective responsibility is vital. UCU has members with different opinions and it is healthy for debate to take place within the team. Differences of opinion should, of course, be handled through respectful discussion.

Showing division within the negotiating team only benefits the employer's side. This is one of the reasons why pre and post-meetings are so important. Once an approach has been agreed then it is incumbent on all members of the team to stick to the line. It is also important that team members do not produce their own individualised public briefings and dissent from the agreed approach when they disagree with the majority view.

This can be especially true when the team reaches a joint understanding with the other side on how an issue will be handled.

It is important that negotiating team members are clear that they are performing a representative, not personal role. Inadvertent or deliberate failures in communication can damage the union's credibility as a negotiating agent in the longer term. It is not a sign of weakness to

1

Bargaining and negotiating



A meeting of the UCU team immediately after the negotiating round is always helpful

The team should discuss progress, be clear on the next steps and agree what needs to be communicated to members

maintain a 'professional' relationship – you don't have to like the other side but you do need to maintain credibility as a negotiating agent for our members.

Remember, UCU negotiators are not in the role for life; others come behind and disreputable behaviour in the short-term can weaken the union's credibility as a tough but serious negotiating agent for the future.

Preparation and pre-meetings

The handbook has already referred to the importance of preparation but it is worth restating that it is essential to arrange pre-meetings before the main meeting with the other side. It is vital that the team is clear about:

- ➔ the allocation of roles
- ➔ agreeing signals and use of adjournments
- ➔ discussion of tactics.

But most of all, the important point of pre-meetings is to reinforce constantly collective discipline. A canny opposition will seek to exploit any differences they can find on our side, so stay tight.

Good practice includes a ground rule that if a negotiators cannot make the pre-meeting then they should not intervene in the main meeting without having had the opportunity to consult with the other UCU negotiators (perhaps in an adjournment).

Post-meeting

Understandably, at the end of the meeting many representatives are exhausted or need to rush back to the day job. However, a meeting of the UCU team immediately after the negotiating round is always helpful, even if only to deal with urgent matters and schedule another time to talk. Management will often try to play a longer game and it is important that the negotiating team thinks about how to maintain momentum.

At the end of meetings, the team should discuss progress, be clear on the next steps and crucially, agree what needs to be communicated to members.

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Bargaining and negotiating



Clear, effective communication during negotiation is important as it can help others to understand our point of view

- ➔ Ensure that the message is sent to the members quickly.
- ➔ Review the negotiations with your team.
- ➔ Ensure that the results/implementation are monitored.

1.6 THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS

The aim of negotiation is to reach an agreement.

UCU representatives should not negotiate alone, but as part of a team with complementary skills.

A series of meetings may follow to discuss the issue in depth. When attending these meetings, it is as important to listen carefully and ask questions as it is to present our case well. Clear, effective communication during negotiation is important as it can help others to understand our point of view.

Preparation is key

Before meeting the other side it is imperative that the team properly prepare, including developing a better understanding of the issues to be discussed and, especially, in canvassing members' views.

CHECKLIST 3: PREPARING FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Two types of skills are involved: analysing and planning. Identifying the issues - what is the negotiation about? There may be general issues of varying degrees of importance. Some may not be immediately apparent. There may be a hidden agenda which is masked by the presenting issue over which there seems to be conflict, eg. the real issue may be how decisions are made or who by, rather than a squabble apparently about a specific decision.

Decide on your objectives	✓
● Which of the issues are important to our side?	
● How do these fit with our longer-term strategy?	
● What are the priorities?	
● What is less important or unimportant?	
Assess the opposition	✓
● What issues do they perceive as important?	
● What points will they raise?	
● What is their longer-term objective(s)?	
● What strategies might they adopt?	
Estimate bargaining power	✓
● What do they/we stand to lose by rejecting likely proposals?	
● What do they/we stand to lose by accepting?	

Therefore, what are the chances of our proposals being accepted?

Remember that the other party may look at losses and gains differently. Try to anticipate that in assessing bargaining power. Bargaining power is in the eye of the beholder, i.e. it depends on the other side attributing power to UCU (influencing skills will come into play in restructuring their perceptions).

CHECKLIST 3: PREPARING FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**Tactical considerations (questions for the team to consider before the negotiating meeting)**

How are UCU negotiators going to present the case in such a way as to augment the employer's perception of the advantages of accepting our proposals and the disadvantage of rejecting them?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ● What are the demands/counter demands they are likely to make?
What concessions are we likely to have to give? | |
| ● How much bluff are they likely to employ? What should be our response? | |
| ● What are the demands/counter demands that we will make?
What concessions are we likely to gain? | |
| ● How much room for manoeuvre is likely in our respective positions? | |
| ● Who are the individuals who will negotiate against us? Have they a 'style' which we must counter? Have they weaknesses we can utilise? | |
| ● What can we learn from our last set of negotiations? | |
| ● What are our own strengths and weaknesses as negotiators?
How can we exploit the former and minimise the effect of the latter? | |
| ● What strategies can we use for pre-negotiation power building?
How can we counter theirs? | |

Teams should also be wary of analysing the situation to the point of paralysis!

1

Bargaining and negotiating



Negotiators should try to find out as much as they can about the other side's position, particularly about the strategy they are adopting

The negotiation process, the bit when you meet the other side, tends to follow a standard pattern, which falls into recognised phases.

The negotiating phases

This handbook only gives a brief overview of the negotiating process; it does not cover strategy or tactics in detail but at the end of the section is a link to UCU's training programme.

Importantly, the negotiating process must be seen in context, not least the need for branches to analyse power relationships and think about ways of engaging members and organising to bring leverage to the table when necessary.

Here is a description of the phases.

1. Opening

This consists of the opening statements by both sides. It will probably start with the initial presentation of a claim by the trade union side or a management proposal by those representing the employer or where one of the parties responds to a previously presented case and raised queries and difficulties

2. Testing

Listening and questioning are important activities at this stage. Negotiators should try to find out as much as they can about the other side's position, particularly about the strategy they are adopting. Negotiators should try and find out the other party's objectives, how committed they are to them and to test the assumptions our side may have already made about them during the preparation for the negotiation.

This stage often involves adjournments to collect further information and test out arguments. It also includes identifying the relative importance of issues and fall-back positions.

Good negotiators will use this phase to try and work out if the other party has a negotiating range that means that a settlement is possible (without leverage) or show that no settlement is possible.

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Bargaining and negotiating



During the closure phase, there will be a marked increase in tension as decisions have to be made by each side

There can be a lot of tension during this phase as the difference between the two sides become clearly established. It is important in this phase to state UCU's case with conviction, conveying belief in the arguments presented.

3. Movement

In this phase, both parties should consider making adjustments to their position, seeking to identify the potential shape of an agreement.

Good negotiators will justify their own position by stating the advantages of accepting their proposals and the disadvantages of rejecting them. They will also try to cover up any weaknesses in their case.

Movement must be made if there is to be a negotiated settlement. Here possibilities are sounded out, ideas are floated, tentative proposals are made, and finally areas of mutual accommodation should become apparent.

4. Closing (moving towards a settlement)

This is often the most problematic phase. In this phase the final hard bargaining takes place, when the final points are traded between the parties and a potential agreement will be reached.

During the closure phase, there will be a marked increase in tension as decisions have to be made by each side. Tension will also be high if it now becomes apparent that an agreement cannot be reached. The underlying power situation will come to the fore.

This is the phase in which the final moves are made (or final positions reiterated) and agreement reached and recorded or break down is accepted and negotiations broken off (for now).

Finally, the draft agreement should be listed in detail and an agreed summary decided in writing.

Note: Although all negotiations go through these phases, it is possible for them to move back and forth through phases 2, 3 and 4 before moving forward again.

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Bargaining and negotiating



If negotiators and the branch have been effectively engaging members through good organisation then a final draft agreement should not come as a shock

Getting the draft agreement approved

The job of the negotiating team is to get the best draft agreement that is possible (given the relative power between the parties). In UCU, it is not the job of the negotiating team to sign the agreement before it has been approved by affected members.

In some instances, the negotiating team will report directly to the members, in others via the branch committee. In both cases, it is good practice for the negotiators to agree a collective recommendation. As ever, it is important that negotiators maintain collective responsibility (for more on collective responsibility see section 1.5).

If negotiators and the branch have been effectively engaging members through good organisation (see section 4) then a final draft agreement should not come as a shock. Best practice would be for negotiators (through the branch) to:

- ➔ arrange a meeting or meetings of affected members to discuss the progress made in negotiations (making sure that members have access to the agreement)
- ➔ providing members with a summary report of the negotiations, perhaps in the form of a table tracking progress against the issues
- ➔ put the final position to a ballot of members, normally with a recommendation from the negotiators/branch committee.

Agreements should be documented for future reference and review. Whether the issue is a UCU initiative or an agreement on how to deal with a management initiative has been reached, do not rely on a minute of a committee to codify the understanding.

Implications for the wider union

UCU is a UK-wide union. While on many issues bargaining is fragmented, it is important to keep a wider overview of agreements reached by branches. In many cases, regional officials will be directly involved in negotiations but, if not, branches should keep them informed of developments and the stage reached.

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Bargaining and negotiating



Branches should ensure that they monitor the implementation of agreements and raise any breaches in writing with the management negotiators asap

Regional officials will be able to advise branches where they know of similar issues arising or being pursued elsewhere and if a particular matter requires referring to the union centre for oversight.

Implementation

It is not unknown for agreements to be signed only for real difficulties in implementation to be encountered. It is important for branches to ensure that they do not 'stand down' until the agreement is implemented.

When considering the power relations of the parties, it is useful to think about the employer's internal power matrix. There are often tensions on their side that we should consider when reaching agreement. For example, it may be that the central 'senior management' (perhaps including the Principal or Vice-Chancellor) are those that we need to reach an agreement with, but the implementation will be devolved to departmental, school, or middle-management. These people may not have had any meaningful engagement in the negotiations and may be expected to implement the agreement with insufficient knowledge or resources. Of course, once agreement is reached, the responsibility for dealing with these issues lies with the employer but it is easy to see how such scenarios can quickly cause us a problem and undermine the credibility of the negotiating process. One solution is to agree an implementation plan as part of the agreement.

Branches should ensure that they monitor the implementation of agreements and raise any breaches in writing with the management negotiators asap. There is no need to await the next scheduled meeting of the bargaining machinery but any difficulties should be raised at the relevant forum as well.

1.7 ACCOUNTABILITY AND DECISION-MAKING

In UCU branches, the branch committee must have oversight of the negotiations with the employer.

Although the branch committee will agree who is on the negotiating team, no agreement should be regarded as formally approved until the appropriate body has endorsed the final draft.

Good practice is for all branches not to sign an agreement until it has been approved by affected members. Sometimes this may require an

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Bargaining and negotiating



It is easy for problems to arise, most notably during the final stages of a negotiation

It is good practice for branch committees and negotiating teams to think through some of the issues at the outset of a negotiation

eballot of members particularly if a representative meeting to discuss the agreement is proving difficult to organise. Regional/national offices can advise on the most appropriate means to adopt for the issue under discussion and the local circumstances.

In reality the interaction between the members, the branch committee, and those sent in to negotiate on our behalf can be quite complex. It is easy for problems to arise, most notably during the final stages of a negotiation. It is good practice for branch committees and negotiating teams to think through some of the issues at the outset of a negotiation. The checklist overleaf might help.

CHECKLIST 4: ACCOUNTABILITY AND DECISION-MAKING

- | | |
|--|--|
| ● Decide before a negotiation starts the roles and responsibilities of the various UCU bodies (members, branch committee, negotiating team). | |
| ● Be clear about the negotiating mandate and which group can make adjustments if necessary (including the parameters). | |
| ● Agree how to deal with sticking points in the negotiations. | |
| ● Ensure that there are timely progress reports to the members. | |
| ● Maintain collective responsibility. | |

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Bargaining and negotiating



Negotiators should be aware that it can be an employer tactic to privilege union negotiators with information that they later use as a tactic to create a difference between them and those they seek to represent

Negotiators must be wary of any attempt to divide and rule

1.8 TRICKY ISSUES

Confidentiality

Ultimately, negotiators are accountable to UCU members so it is worth remembering that a collective negotiation with your employer should be done openly. This should be the default position.

Negotiators should be aware that it can be an employer tactic to privilege union negotiators with information that they later use as a tactic to create a difference between them and those they seek to represent. Negotiators must be wary of any attempt to divide and rule.

Side discussions or private meetings?

Often it is suggested that matters of detail are conducted out of the main body (by agreement). In these, the negotiators report back to their side. Such discussions are different to 'private' meetings, which should be avoided. As a rule of thumb, any meeting suggested by your employer that you would be embarrassed to tell your members about should be refused.

Confidential information

On occasions, the other side will offer to share information with a negotiating team on a confidential basis. Often this information can be instructive and build an understanding of the other side's perspective (and therefore helping to establish the parameters for a potential agreement). Be clear, sometimes this information could help reach a deal that is acceptable to members.

However, again good practice is to adopt a default position that information is open and capable of sharing with members. If this is not the case then the employer's side should be asked to justify why the information needs to be confidential. For example, on rare occasions it will genuinely be commercially sensitive. Sometimes it is possible to agree circulation limits, for example agreeing that the information will only be shared with the branch committee but no further, or that others are told confidential information has been received and agreeing what can be communicated.

There are no hard and fast rules but negotiators should consider that how they handle such issues is likely to affect their credibility and, most

1

Bargaining and negotiating



It is not okay for a representative to make an individual determination that the collective decision does not apply to them

of all, should take advice from their colleagues including regional or national officials.

On the occasions when a collective decision has been made to treat information as confidential then this should be respected. It is not ok for a representative to make an individual determination that the collective decision does not apply to them and then leak the information.

1.9 SUMMARY

This section of the handbook has provided an overview of key concepts relating to collective bargaining and good practice for branches to follow. It emphasises that branches should be thinking about how to shift the balance of power by engaging members; that this is integral to collective bargaining rather than seeing negotiations solely as a tactical game.

Section 2 looks in more detail about our approach to organising to build our bargaining power.

Further resources

- ➔ **Appendix 1.1:** Model claim (pages 38 to 40)
- ➔ **Appendix 1.2:** Collective bargaining flowchart (page 41)

MODEL CLAIM (EXAMPLE)

University and College Union: [Name of branch]

Heading [Name the issue eg Workload, Casualisation, Gender pay gap] – formal heads of claim

1. Introduction

As you will be aware the issue of...

[Insert a few brief introductory remarks, possibly showing how a national issue has an impact in the employer in question. If you have a few useful facts, great, but don't worry]

We believe that we have a common interest in improving the contractual terms of employment of staff at [insert employer]. This claim is submitted on behalf of [bargaining group] employed at insert employer].

2. Points of claim**2.1 Statement of intent**

[Not essential but getting statement from management that they are prepared to negotiate over the matter can be very useful; and if they don't then you can feed this back to members, which can also be useful. It is a way of starting a timer].

Our claim is for the university senior management, as an initial step to agree a joint statement as which:

[These are examples only]

- Allows for a joint review of working practices
- Accepts the need for time-limited discussions
- Negotiates a review of relevant policies and working practices
- Provides the leadership across and within schools and colleges and to commit sufficient resources (people and money) to achieve this objective.

THEN INSERT THE POINTS OF CLAIM YOU WANT MANAGEMENT TO NEGOTIATE. FOR EXAMPLE, IF IT WAS ABOUT CASUALISATION, THEY MIGHT BE:

2.2 Removing unequal treatment across department

The university should agree steps, including:

- Ensuring that all [INSERT LOCAL NOMENCLATURE FOR CASUALISED STAFF] staff are paid for the same activities across all Departments
- Ensuring equal access to incremental progression for staff on different forms of contract
- Reviewing the grades paid across schools to ensure compliance with other agreements
- Ensuring equal access to paid time for professional development opportunities.

2.3 An end to the use of 'worker' contracts

Our claim is for the transfer of all people teaching via 'worker' contractual arrangements, whether through external agencies, subsidiaries companies or 'bank' arrangements onto proper employment contracts and their assimilation to the national pay spine.

2.4 An end to the use of zero-hours contracts and controls on variable hours contracts:

Our claim is for all staff employed on zero-hours contracts to be transferred onto fractional employment contracts or, where student demand cannot reasonably be predicted, variable hours contracts with a ratio of guaranteed hours to flexible hours of 2:1

3. Agreement on provision of specific facilities time

Conducting effective negotiations on improving employment will require a significant commitment of time from UCU representatives and in particular those on insecure contracts.

Therefore our claim includes a call for agreement on a specific allocation of paid time off or, in the case of part-time or casualised

staff, paid time on, to allow our representatives to meaningfully participate in the processes around and within these negotiations.

4. **Negotiating forum**

UCU submits this claim as a matter for negotiation. This is a matter pertaining to the pay, terms and conditions of [insert bargaining group] in the main. As such, we want negotiations to be held between representatives of the UCU and the management alone [this depends on your local set-up - take advice].

It is important that the negotiations are conducted in a timely fashion and that the objective should be to reach agreement by the end of the summer term with implementation at [insert date].

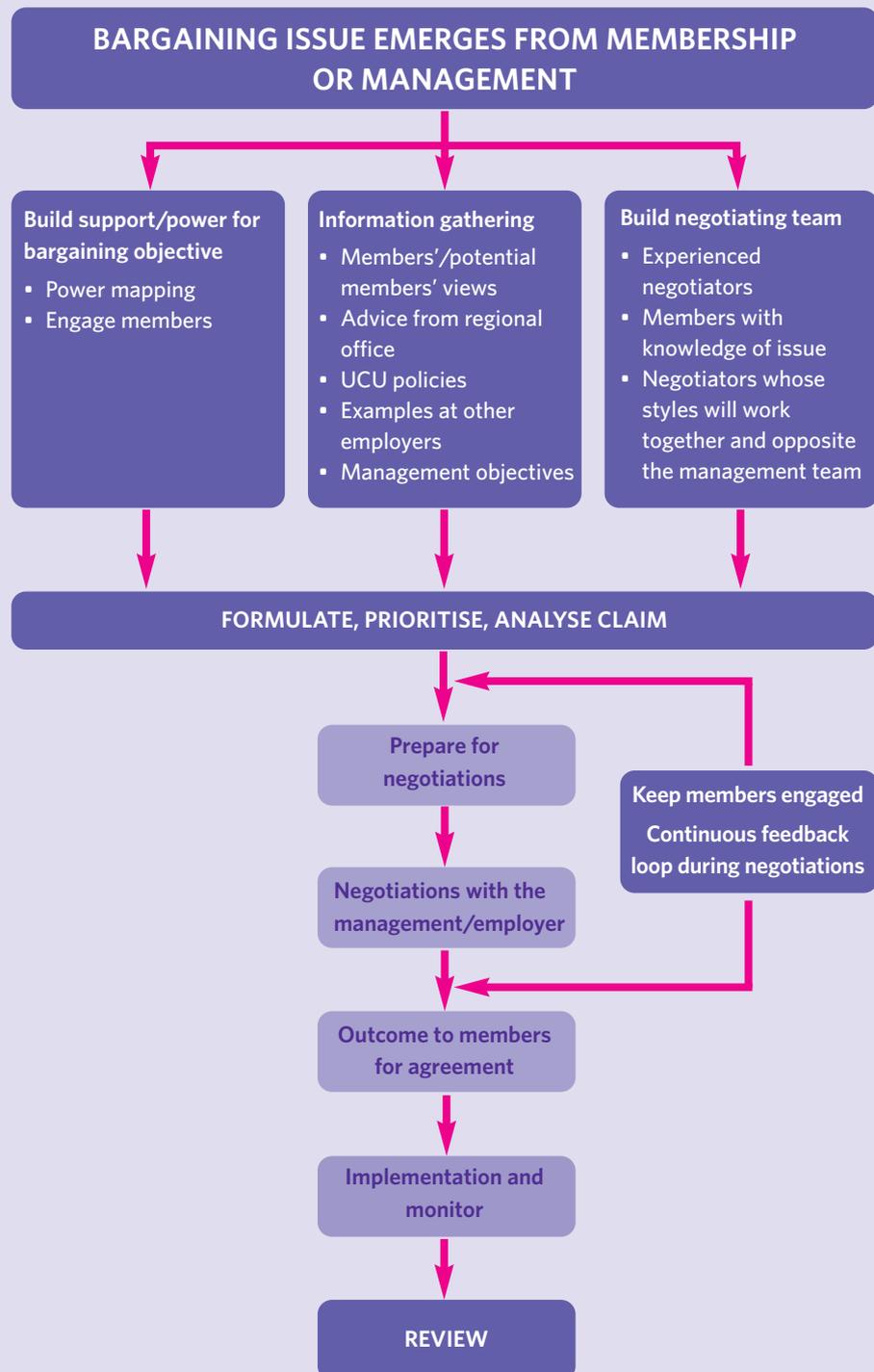
5. **Terms of agreement to be incorporated into [insert employer] policies**

UCU believes that the terms of agreement reached following negotiation should be incorporated into the [insert employer's] policies.

6. **Implementation, monitoring and review**

The provisions of the agreement reached should be disseminated in a manner that provides for uniform application across the [insert employer]. Managers should be fully trained on the provisions of this agreement. The terms of the agreement should be monitored and reviewed after 24 months.

FLOW CHART FOR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING





SECTION TWO

Organising for bargaining power

2

Organising for bargaining power



Low density and low participation can undermine our credibility and ability to influence employers

Organising is not an end in itself. It is not an abstract exercise or a chore focussed on an annual appraisal. Throughout the history of trade unions, it is the organising done by members, supported by officials that has made a difference. We might remember the great speech in a meeting or conference hall but it is the quieter work behind the scenes that makes the real difference. It is a continuous process. It is a social process.

The members are UCU. We know that unions are most successful when we organise ourselves around the problems that members and potential members face wherever they work. We know that branch workplace representatives can make a difference in how they choose to support this process.

There is a direct link between bargaining strength on the one hand, and membership density (the proportion of workers who are UCU members) and participation in the work of the union on the other. Low density and low participation can undermine our credibility and ability to influence employers when we make claims to speak for the workforce. Working on issues that do not directly involve and engage members will always be less successful than when the membership takes ownership of an issue.

A successful organising approach is one that:

- ➔ involves members in identifying issues, finding solutions and dealing with problems
- ➔ recruits, trains, and supports more active and confident representatives from among every work group and workplace
- ➔ takes a 'what can we do about it' approach, rather than 'a leave it with me to sort it out' one
- ➔ builds confidence among members about what they can do themselves
- ➔ reaches out to non-members and attracts them through activity
- ➔ leaves members feeling good about their union and ready to recruit others
- ➔ promotes a model of trade unionism that has a political consciousness and is grounded in collective action, rather than one focussed on individual remedies
- ➔ ensures a legacy of an organised workplace.

2

Organising for bargaining power



Organising works by letting members know they are the union, they do a lot for themselves

This section starts by defining what we mean by organising. It does so not as an abstract exercise but to help branches, even the best organised ones, consider whether they really are ‘member-led’ or if the approach is to leave most of the work and decision-making to a small group of committed activists.

2.1 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ORGANISING?

The ‘organising’ model of trade unionism is a phrase frequently used in debates about how trade unions can increase membership and influence. However, simply saying ‘we are an organising union’ begs a number of other questions, starting with: ‘What are you organising for? Is it to improve political influence, or legitimacy in collective claims, or credibility in our representative role, or to boost the union’s national membership count, or to get members to take industrial action?’

Of course, these are not mutually exclusive objectives but it is important to think why we are organising. We have already given an overview of what an organising approach looks like but the focus of this handbook/code of good practice is that we are organising to build power for collective bargaining.

At its simplest level, the ‘organising model’ is seen as trying to put back into the union those things that happened at the very origins of the movement. Imagine a continuum with, at one end, ‘Union servicing’ and ‘organising’ at the other. Servicing is characterised by membership passivity and low participation in the structures and activities of the union (at any level), with a small group of activists and/or officials carrying out all representational and bargaining functions. Members are only mobilised to support plans made elsewhere and are brought into play only when there’s a need for action. Organising works by letting members know they are the union, they do a lot for themselves and where activists or union staff provide leadership or guidance, it is as part of a conscious mandate given to them by members.

Central to this approach is that organising should be issue based, that is, focused on identifying and resolving grievances with the employer and more often than not by means of oppositional and adversarial collective activity, rather than through ‘partnership’.

2

Organising for bargaining power



Branches should reflect on how well they think they are organised

The organising approach starts with a systematic approach to identifying members, potential members, activists, and the issues that concern them.

2.2 HOW WELL ARE WE ORGANISED?

Branches should reflect on how well they think they are organised. Good practice is for branches to organise branch away days each year when they reflect on current issues and develop a plan for the year ahead. These are often arranged with input from regional/national office.

CHECKLIST 5: BASIC ORGANISING CHECKLIST

Membership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● Do you know how many members you have?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Is membership density well above 50%?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Do you know if areas of the workforce are under-represented (location, department, job-type, protected characteristics)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● Are all branch officer posts filled?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Do you have a departmental representative structure?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Does every member have a departmental representative?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Does recruitment and development of representatives appear on your branch committee agenda?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Have all representatives attended at least one training course?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Are there regularly updated local sources of information (eg. newsletter, website, regular email) for members?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Do members get involved in tasks for the branch?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Does the branch canvass/survey members and potential members on the issues affecting them?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Does the branch meet regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bargaining	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● Is the branch actively negotiating a claim with the employer?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Do members know what issues UCU is currently pursuing?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Do potential members know the issues the branch is dealing with?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Are members in control of the negotiating position of the branch?	<input type="checkbox"/>

This is a basic checklist. A longer checklist is attached as Appendix 2.1 on page 58. This is a more comprehensive list of factors but branches should note that there is no such thing as a perfect organisation. The questions are asked to raise issues that should be considered, not score a branch.

2

Organising for bargaining power



Mapping is the process of obtaining accurate and relevant information about the workforce in a systematic way

2.3 TAKING A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

One of the most important tasks for UCU branches is to know the workplaces within their employer and, if possible, have a better picture than their management.

Gathering the information to achieve this is known as 'mapping'.

Mapping

Mapping is the process of obtaining accurate and relevant information about the workforce in a systematic way. Done properly it should help to build power for collective bargaining. It provides a starting point for most successful union activity, including recruiting, communications, developing activists and campaigning around issues.

It is about getting an idea of where the workers in your workplace are, identifying where your members are, and also your potential members (think of them like this, rather than non-members). It also allows you to compare how strong your membership levels are in a particular area.

There are various ways of undertaking this task. The branch level map should provide an overview of the union across the employer, preferably broken down by departments or geographical locations.

For example, a basic level map would require getting a:

- ➡ list of all the departments in your institution
- ➡ list of all the staff in each department
- ➡ list of members, non-members, and representatives within the departments.

You may need to prioritise what you are going to do according to the information that you can get. In many branches simply getting hold of personnel lists or constructing a staff list from other sources will be a great step forward. Alternatively you could start with just one department.

Analysis

However, as soon as you start pulling the information together, the reality is that you will probably have already been analysing the map. It should be fairly easy to ascertain what proportion of eligible staff you actually have

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Organising for bargaining power



Are we recruiting workers in proportion to the presence of men, women, and protected characteristics in the establishment?

in membership and where your activists are. However at this stage you should be systematic about it.

You may want to order department figures by percentage density, from best to worst, to get a feel for relative priorities or you may want to calculate density by part/full time/casualised, protected characteristic, or any other distinction you think is relevant.

To make best use of the information ask questions like:

- ➔ How does the membership in different work areas compare with the workforce in these areas?
- ➔ Is our membership concentrated in only a few departments or evenly spread?
- ➔ Where do we lack representatives or other activists?
- ➔ What is the profile of our representatives and activists?
- ➔ Are we appealing to every grade of eligible staff?
- ➔ Are we reaching out to part-time or casualised staff?
- ➔ Are the workers we are recruiting representative of the profile of the workforce by protected characteristic?

Within individual workplaces or departments, the map is often more detailed. For a start, reps could take closer look at their departments, looking at:

- ➔ UCU members, potential UCU members (and in some cases, other union members)?
- ➔ the type of workers, full-time, part-time, temporary and casual in the workplace
- ➔ the make-up of the workforce by protected characteristic.

In some workplaces, it should be possible for reps to add even more detail by considering issues like:

- ➔ Which members are active in the workplace and will support me as a UCU rep?

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Organising for bargaining power



The map is not something that should be left to just one person

If one person from each area contributes, it all fits together like a jigsaw

- ➔ Are there any working patterns to consider?
- ➔ What issues matters to those workers? Does a particular issue affect members in one area more than another?
- ➔ Are there any particular agreements, policies and arrangements that apply in their workplace?
- ➔ Who are the managers and influential figures?
- ➔ Who has just started at the workplace?
- ➔ Who is working their notice and just about to leave?

Mapping is essential not just to create a starting point for organising work but this type of information helps with power mapping (see section 1.4). You also need to know where your members are when you need to get the vote out in industrial action ballots.

The map is not something that should be left to just one person. If one person from each area contributes, it all fits together like a jigsaw. This is one reason why having a system of departmental reps is so important. They have the local knowledge.

Remember – the workplace map is not a snapshot to be sent to someone for report or filed. It is a working tool to help build the union. Regional and national offices are available to advise and are often in a position to help branches with basic mapping.

For more information on mapping see:

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1682/Workplace-mapping/pdf/work_map_1.pdf

2.4 RECRUITMENT

Organising and recruitment work builds the capacity of your branch. A coordinated effort to increase membership density through recruitment and retention will pay off in every area of the union's activity but particularly in relation to building power for collective bargaining.

Increases in membership and membership involvement will bring an improved ability to identify workplace concerns, greater credibility with management and will contribute to the development of new activists.

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Organising for bargaining power



If you want to build strength in your branch you must provide people with the opportunity to experience acting collectively

With some initial planning you should be able to integrate recruitment and organisation into all the work the branch does.

For example, taking up the issues that are relevant to under-represented groups within the workforce, taking a claim to management, actively seeking the input of those affected by the issue and reporting back should show that the union is relevant to their concerns and should make the union more attractive to that particular group.

Further resources

A model recruitment letter can be found at Appendix 2.2, pages 67-68.

A list of further resources for recruitment can be found at Appendix 2.3, pages 69-70.

There is even more information on UCU's Build the union micro-site here: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/btu>

2.5 ENCOURAGING MEMBERS TO GET INVOLVED

A branch must be more than a convenient way of grouping members together who happen to work for the same employer. It should be a means for the already active to attract other members to get involved in a collective endeavour.

It follows that an organising branch doesn't consider boosting recruitment numbers (however welcome that is) as the end point. When trying to build strength in a branch there is no substitute for providing people with opportunities to understand their own collective power through experience. If you want to build strength in your branch you must provide people with the opportunity to experience acting collectively, and you must aim to make this as positive an experience as possible.

At the most basic level, branches should send new members:

- ➔ a welcome letter from the branch secretary along with a very short survey (survey attached as Appendix 2.4, page 71)
- ➔ a list of departmental representatives and officers

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Organising for bargaining power



Branches should constantly explore ways of bringing new people into activity

- ➔ recent newsletters or branch communications that give an overview of current issues
- ➔ dates of any branch meetings.

Even better, if new members joined online then branches should encourage workplace representatives to visit them and encourage them to become involved in the life of the branch.

Branches should constantly explore ways of bringing new people into activity. New members are the lifeblood of the union and those currently in leadership positions should recognise that an overdependence on the same faces leaves branch organisation extremely vulnerable. The existing leadership of the branch should be keenly interested in succession planning.

Becoming a member of the branch or other formal committee does not have to be the only way a member should be able to participate and contribute to the union. Not everybody has the capacity or means to stand for election and attend regular committees. The current branch leadership should find ways of enabling members to assist their branch with tasks that are not daunting.

It could be that a member would be happy to assist their union by working on a specific issue facing the branch, either because they have a particular interest in that issue or could contribute some expertise. For example, there are branches that have set up specific task groups dealing with issues such as the gender pay gap, casualisation, or sexual violence. These task groups have taken a lead in developing branch policy, drafting points for claims to be sent to the employer, and engaging other members.

Branches should be communicating with all members every time an issue comes up – but why not send new members a short survey to help identify the issues they are interested in or ways that they could assist the branch?

2.6 ORGANISING AROUND OUR ISSUES FOR BARGAINING

It is always worth remembering why people want the power in the first place - to change something they don't like or secure an advance. These 'issues' should form the basis of all your activity.

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Organising for bargaining power



Good organising issues are important because they mean something to employees, not because we think they are important

Finding the right issues is vital. Good organising issues are important because they mean something to employees, not because we think they are important. Once you have found one don't be afraid of putting it at the centre of everything you do.

What makes a good issue?

People are more likely to join a union and participate in union activities if:

1. they have a sense of grievance or injustice
2. and work alongside others who share that grievance (collectivisation)
3. and believe that there is someone/and identifiable group to blame for their problems
4. and believe the union will be effective: has enough power to deliver benefits at relatively little cost (hope)
5. and combine these elements into a 'narrative' or 'story'.

Note the degree of emotion within these requisites. The more fired up the members are, the better, but leaders also need to make members feel that they can make a difference - hope.

The role of the workplace leader is critical to this phase of mobilisation. They need to:

- ➔ promote a sense of injustice by identifying the issues that can engage different members
- ➔ encourage group solidarity
- ➔ show who is to blame (who is making the decision?)
- ➔ promote a sense of efficacy
- ➔ encourage appropriate forms of campaign action
- ➔ help build coalitions with other sections of the union, other unions and campaigning bodies
- ➔ blend these elements into a 'narrative' or 'story'.

2

Organising for bargaining power



It is important for branches to consider what they can cope with at a given time and prioritise accordingly

Choosing the right issue

When branches and/or reps are choosing an issue they should consider whether it is:

- ➔ widely felt
- ➔ deeply felt
- ➔ winnable (at least in part).

However, these are not the only considerations. Branches should also think:

- ➔ is the issue a sector-wide priority for the union?
- ➔ who will benefit from tackling the issue?
- ➔ will it benefit all or only a proportion of members?
- ➔ will it attract new people to the union?
- ➔ whether the issue strategically important to anticipate new working practices?
- ➔ does the branch currently have the resources/capacity to take it forward?

On the last point, it is important for branches to consider what they can cope with at a given time and prioritise accordingly. It is better to have a successful conclusion to a bargaining campaign over a relatively 'small' issue (although it may not be to the members/potential members affected) than to launch a lot of 'big' campaigns that are soon abandoned.

Strategic choices

Even with what may appear to be 'small' issues, if they fit into a larger strategic plan, they are well worth pursuing.

In higher education an example would be a branch that currently has very few members of casual staff in membership and activity (aside from the moral arguments and the need to build solidarities), you know that these are likely to be the recruiting ground for the future permanent workforce and that there are disproportionate numbers of women in this group. It

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Organising for bargaining power



Local leaders should think to the future, which may mean not responding to the loudest voices

feels daunting to tackle all the ills of a casualised workforce at once. However, the branch could start by developing an understanding of the size of the problem and the action needed to tackle it and then select three points to pursue in its first year of campaigning.

In further education, an example would be of a college wanting to review the way it delivers teaching in the near future. Although membership among main grade lecturers is high, there are very few members amongst associate lecturers, tutors and assessors. In this case speak to the associate lecturers and tutors about the issues that really bother them. For assessors, it might be that they are expected to work out of their car.

In both these examples, the branch could make strategic choices. Local leaders should place decisions on what to prioritise into a framework that asks how those decisions will impact the union's strength on two dimensions: external strategic leverage and internal organisational capacity.

Strategic leverage is the ability to affect outcomes relating to members

Organisational capacity is the capability to translate key strategic decisions into activities undertaken by appropriate people in the desired place.

Importantly, while they also have to deal with the concerns of the existing membership, local leaders should think to the future, which may mean not responding to the loudest voices.

Whatever decision is made, the key is not to launch into a campaign on the issue without properly analysing the environment you are operating within and without thinking through how you are going to engage members and build power before you submit a claim.

Without thinking through what the real objectives are, and without focus, a lot of time and resource can be spent in frantic activity without it really benefitting either the union's strategic leverage or organisational capacity.

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Organising for bargaining power

CHECKLIST SIX

CHECKLIST 6 – POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN CONSIDERING ‘ORGANISING’ ISSUES

Mobilising potential	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● Is the issue one that affected members feel strongly about?	<input type="checkbox"/>
The effect on different groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● Who will gain from the successful resolution of a particular issue?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Who might be disadvantaged?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● What is the potential for the issue becoming divisive?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Are there particular groups of staff/members that you need to convince of the value of union membership? Could tackling this issue support this?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Does the issue affect large groups of staff or a small crucial minority?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perception	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● How is the union likely to be perceived if it does/doesn't tackle this issue?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● Is the issue time limited/deadline driven?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Is the matter likely to get worse if not dealt with immediately?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Will there be any consequences if negotiation on the issue is delayed?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● If negotiations are protracted, how will the workforce be kept interested?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Does the issue have broad and strong enough support to keep staff engaged over a period of time?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● When is the best time to lodge a claim?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● How will this fit with institutional timescales?	<input type="checkbox"/>

continued

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Organising for bargaining power

CHECKLIST SIX

CHECKLIST 6: POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN CONSIDERING 'ORGANISING' ISSUES

Timing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● What is it realistic for you to try and cover in the time available?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● Are you aiming to discuss one or two issues in detail or are you looking to begin initial work on a number of issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Scope	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● Is this issue part of a national campaign/negotiation strategy/policy of UCU?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Management response	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● What response is the issue likely to get from management? How much of a challenge will it be to convince them of your arguments?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● What has their attitude been to similar issues in the past?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information/Evidence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
● Do you have enough information/evidence to support your arguments?	<input type="checkbox"/>
● If not, will this information be easy to access?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other unions and groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
▪ Will other unions and their members/other groups support our case?	<input type="checkbox"/>

See Checklist 3 when preparing for negotiations (see section 1)

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Organising for bargaining power



Branches should be vigilant about management overloading the collective agenda with issues they want UCU to give a union response on

2.7 ORGANISING IN RESPONSE TO MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Section 1.3 noted that branches spend a lot of time and resources responding to management initiatives.

Although there are different starting points between proactive or reactive bargaining, the general approach is the same. There is still a need to prepare carefully and think about how to engage members, the relative bargaining power of the parties (and how to increase UCU's).

Responding to a management initiative can be simpler (but not necessarily easier). To restate the section on collective bargaining, if management haven't already, ask for them to produce written proposals. Make sure you understand these, clarifying where necessary, and summarise the key issues for members and potential members.

Try to find ways of taking the initiative; it may be management's agenda but what are your demands? A good organising team will be able to set management proposals against a bigger background and find ways of making counter-claims to bring our issues to the table.

Be careful about getting incorporated into the management's decision-making framework. And make sure you engage members, especially those most at threat.

Overloading the union as a tactic

Branches should be vigilant about management overloading the collective agenda with issues they want UCU to give a union response on. It is possible that they are genuinely seeking UCU's input, and this is to be welcomed; but it is also conceivable that they are crowding the agenda as a tactic, leaving little time for the issues important to our members to get a proper hearing.

Further resources

➔ **Appendix 2.1:** Checklist - *How well is your branch organised?*

➔ **Appendix 2.2:** *Invitation to join letter*

2

Organising for bargaining power



This section has emphasised the need to build power at a branch level if we are going to increase our effectiveness as a bargaining agent in post-16 education

➔ **Appendix 2.3:** Links to *Build the Union* resources

➔ **Appendix 2.4:** Survey for new members

UCU bargaining guide on organisational and corporate form change:
https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8778/Negotiating-on-organisational-and-corporate-change-a-UCU-bargaining-guide-for-branches-Jun-17/pdf/ucu_negotiatingorganisationalchange_jun17.pdf

2.8 SUMMARY

This section has emphasised the need to build power at a branch level if we are going to increase our effectiveness as a bargaining agent in post-16 education.

Section 1 made the point that engaging members throughout the negotiating process is vital. The next section looks specifically at the different ways members can get involved in the life of their branch. It emphasises the crucial role branches have in developing and supporting workplace representatives.

HOW WELL IS YOUR BRANCH ORGANISED?

Completing this exercise should help the branch get a general sense of the arrangements for formal collective bargaining at an institutional level, and secondly it provides an opportunity for the branch to reflect on its level of organisation.

It is a tool, not a test.

Effective negotiations

1. Does the branch have an up to date recognition agreement?

Yes No

2. Does the agreement include

consultation rights? negotiation rights?

3. Do management negotiate on all contractual matters (eg. new terms of appointment)?

Yes No

4. Does the agreement include (or is there a separate) facility-time agreement?

Yes No

5. Does the agreement include a formal disputes procedure?

Yes No

6. Is the branch has a formally constituted joint union/management negotiating committee?

Yes No

7. How many UCU representatives are there on the negotiating committee

8. Is a pre-meeting arranged for the UCU representatives?

Yes No

continued

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Organising for bargaining power

APPENDIX 2.1

9. Is a pre-meeting arranged for the trade union side (if you negotiate with other unions)?

Yes

No

10. How often does the joint committee meet?

Every month

Every term

Other

11. Are there regular discussions to progress matters between the formal meetings?

Yes

No

12. Who attends the discussions with management?

13. Do management use the joint processes in sufficient time to allow for changes to be made prior to implementation?

Yes

No

14. Do negotiators report back to each branch committee meeting?

Yes

No

15. How are the wider membership involved kept informed of/involved in the negotiations? Please tick all that apply

Regular email updates/newsletters

Branch meetings

Social media

16. How is a final draft agreement approved? Please tick all that apply

By the branch committee

By a branch meeting

Local consultative ballot

17. Is the negotiating team determined by local rule or elected?

Determined by local rule

Elected

continued

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Organising for bargaining power

APPENDIX 2.1

18. Have all the UCU negotiators attended a negotiating skills course?

Yes

No

Building the organising team

1. Are there regular, scheduled meetings of the branch committee/workplace representatives?

Yes

No

2. Are the main officer positions filled?

Yes

No

3. Do you have a departmental reps structure?

Yes

No

4. Do you know which department reps/committee members represent which members?

Yes

No

5. Does every member have a departmental rep?

Yes

No

6. Are new reps/activists offered mentoring and shadowing opportunities with more experienced reps?

Yes

No

7. Are members encouraged to become active in UCU?

Yes

No

8. Are members invited to take on particular tasks for the branch?

Yes

No

9. Are members invited to contribute their ideas and opinions at general meetings?

Yes

No

continued

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Organising for bargaining power

APPENDIX 2.1

10. Is there a network of activists who will help out with the organising work of the union?

- Yes No

11. Does your branch have a plan to increase and sustain the number of Branch Committee members?

- Yes No

12. Does recruitment of new reps appear on your branch meeting agenda?

- Yes No

13. Does the branch committee reflect the profile of the institution in terms of race, gender, age, job category etc?

- Yes No

14. Does your branch have safety, learning, equality and environmental reps?

- Yes No

15. Do the committee and the department reps keep in touch regularly (min. once a month)?

- Yes No

Mapping and charting

1. Is there an accurate local membership database?

- Yes No

2. Does the committee receive termly lists of leavers and joiners?

- Yes No

3. Does the committee receive annual lists of different types of staff?

- Yes No

4. Is membership density above 50%?

- Yes No

continued

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Organising for bargaining power

APPENDIX 2.1

5. Do you know where members work, what they do, their age, gender and who their rep is?

 Yes No

6. Do you know what each of your member's attitude to the union is?

 Yes No

7. Does the local membership database record the involvement members have had with UCU?

 Yes No

9. Do you do the same for potential members?

 Yes No

10. Do you know what percentage or how many of your members have:

 attended a UCU meeting in the past? recruited a new member? been involved in any campaigns? undertaken any form of union activity?

11. Do you know how many members you have?

 Yes No

12. Do all members know who their dept rep is?

 Yes No

13. Do all members know how to contact the branch?

 Yes No

Communication and profile raising

1. Do members know what issues UCU is currently dealing with?

 Yes No

continued

2

Organising for bargaining power

APPENDIX 2.1

2. Do potential members know what issues you are dealing with?

Yes No

3. Has the branch committee discussed its approach to communications (eg. frequency, length, format)?

Yes No

4. Does the branch arrange activities that members can get involved in?

Yes No

5. Does the Branch run any social/fun events?

Yes No

6. Do members of the committee, dept reps and members talk to members and potential members informally about union matters?

Yes No

7. Does the branch hold regular meetings of members?

Yes No

8. Is there a regular local newsletter for members

Yes No

9. Has the branch a social media presence?

Yes No

10. Are UCU posters displayed in the workplace?

Yes No

11. Are there notices displayed telling people about UCU and how the branch can be contacted?

Yes No

12. Does the branch take part in inductions for new staff?

Yes No

continued

2

Organising for bargaining power

APPENDIX 2.1

13. Does the branch send out a welcome letter to new staff?

Yes

No

14. Does the branch send out a new member's pack to all new members?

Yes

No

15. Does the branch have an agreement with the university or FE college for union information to be sent out with induction materials for new staff?

Yes

No

16. Does the branch publicise its successes?

Yes

No

Campaigning and issues

1. Does the branch know what issues members feel strongly about?

Yes

No

2. Does the branch campaign on any issues at the moment?

Yes

No

3. Do you know what campaigns have been run by UCU in the past 12 months?

Yes

No

4. Does the branch develop campaign plans?

Yes

No

5. Does the branch canvass/survey members and potential members about the issues affecting them?

Yes

No

Recruitment and sustainability

1. Does the branch know how many potential members there are in the workplace?

Yes

No

continued

2

Organising for bargaining power

APPENDIX 2.1

2. Does the branch know where potential members work, their age, gender etc?
 Yes No
3. Does the branch have a list or database of this information?
 Yes No
4. Does this list/database record whether these potential members have been approached to join and what their response was?
 Yes No
5. Is it someone's job to ask potential members to join UCU?
 Yes No
6. Is it someone's job to ask new staff to join UCU?
 Yes No
7. Does the branch have special recruitment materials relevant to the workplace/particular groups of staff to accompany the standard membership form?
 Yes No
8. Does the branch set recruitment targets?
 Yes No
9. Does the branch have a plan to increase and sustain the number of committee members and department reps?
 Yes No
10. Does the branch provide lists of members and potential members to reps?
 Yes No
11. Does the branch evaluate membership retention rates?
 Yes No

INVITATION TO JOIN LETTER

Dear colleague

We would like to invite you to join the University and College Union at (name of institution).

We are the nationally recognised body representing professionals in higher and further education.

(Name of institution) UCU members work as [amend as appropriate – lecturers, associate lecturers, tutors, assessors, academics, researchers, administrators, librarians, computer staff, postgraduates who teach and other hourly paid teaching staff], whether on fixed-term or on permanent contracts; whether full-time or part-time. We have a strong core of active members but we always welcome new members and ideas.

UCU – our voice at (name of institution)

Here at (name of institution) we represent the collective interests of all our members and exert influence on decision-making. Your elected representatives meet with the management to negotiate over the issues that you think are important. We constantly seek to improve current conditions, negotiating on wages and conditions at national and local levels, working closely with other unions whenever possible.

Our strength comes from our membership. The more members we have, the more influence we can exert when negotiating on your behalf. If you want to have a say in our collective negotiations then join us and get active.

For current campaigns and local information check out our website at (local or national website link).

[Insert three to five bullet points of local campaigns, emphasising members' engagement]

UCU – our voice for higher and further education staff

Our union fees contribute to representation at a local and national level on professional and educational issues, influencing public debate on further and

continued

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Organising for bargaining power

APPENDIX 2.2

higher education through lobbying politicians and other decision-makers and our media work. The more members we have, the stronger our voice.

UCU - protection at work

Our union also offers members a comprehensive advice and support service. Issues at work need not be faced alone; our members have access to advice and representation provided by our branch, with additional support from the UCU's regional, national, and UK resources, including access to the best legal advice where necessary.

Join UCU - You can join by contacting the (name of branch) office or online at: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/join>

Yours sincerely

UCU BUILD THE UNION WEBSITE LINKS**The basics - build the union**

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/9172/A-few-things-your-branch-can-do-now-to-build-the-union>

Induction presentation

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8956/UCU-induction-presentation/ppt/ucu_btu_inductionpresentation.pptx

Speakers notes for induction

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8979/Induction-presentation-speakers-notes/pdf/ucu_btu_recruitment-speaker-notes.pdf

Putting together a recruitment strategy

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1741/Putting-together-a-recruitment-strategy/pdf/recruit_strategy_1.pdf

Planning a recruitment campaign

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1740/Planning-a-recruitment-campaign/pdf/plan_recruit_1.pdf

Recruitment campaign checklist

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1742/Recruitment-campaign-checklist/pdf/recruit_checklist_1.pdf

Finding non-members

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1754/Finding-non-members/pdf/find_nonmemb_1.pdf

Workplace mapping

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1682/Workplace-mapping/pdf/work_map_1.pdf

Ensuring recruitment of new staff - checklist

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1753/Ensuring-recruitment-of-new-staff---a-checklist/pdf/new_staff_1.pdf

How to approach a potential member

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1743/How-to-approach-a-potential-member/pdf/recruit_approach_1.pdf

continued

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Organising for bargaining power

APPENDIX 2.3

How to answer 'why join?' questions

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1744/How-to-answer-the-why-join-questions/pdf/recruit_faqs.pdf

Being a successful door-knocker

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1745/Being-a-successful-door-knocker/pdf/door-knocking_1.pdf

Running recruitment stalls

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1746/Running-recruitment-stalls/pdf/recruit_stall_1.doc

Activist experience - recruiting stories

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1755/Activist-experience-Recruiting-stories/pdf/recruit_stories_1.pdf

Activist experience - door knocking - it works

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/1756/Activist-experience-Door-knocking---it-works/pdf/experience_doorknock_1.pdf

Raising UCU's profile [promotional items plus posters, templates]

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

Invitation to join draft letter

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/2309/UCU-draft-invitation-to-join-letter-1/doc/ucu_btu_model-recruitment-letter_v1.doc

Newsletter template - 1 side

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/2301/Local-newsletter-template---single-sided/doc/ucu_branch-newsletter-template.doc

Newsletter template - 2 side

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/2302/Local-newsletter-template---two-sided/doc/ucu_branch-newsletter-template-two-sided.docx

Recruitment letter [different from above - FE - different bit of BTU site]

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8978/UCU-draft-invitation-to-join-letter-2/doc/ucu_btu_model-recruitment-letter_v2.doc

Recruitment year planner

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/9143/Recruitment-year-planner>

SAMPLE STAFF SURVEY

Conducting a staff survey can be a good way to find out what members and non-members alike are thinking, helping you in prioritising your branch/LA work. Below is a sample staff survey for you to use and adapt.

Please fill in this questionnaire - we are seeking responses from both UCU members and non-members. We hope that it will enable UCU to address and deliver on issues that really matter to you.

Issues

1. **What are the top three issues that you would like to see UCU tackle at [insert name of employer]? (Please select three)**

[Insert your own issues but, for example]

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Level of pay | <input type="checkbox"/> Unequal pay | <input type="checkbox"/> Gender pay gap |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Race pay gap | <input type="checkbox"/> Workload | <input type="checkbox"/> Stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job security | <input type="checkbox"/> Casual contracts | <input type="checkbox"/> Bullying and harassment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grading | <input type="checkbox"/> Family-friendly policies | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Training/career development | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creating a sustainable- workplace (environmental issues) | | |

2. **Are there any other issues that you believe UCU should be campaigning on? (If yes, please list below).**

- Yes No

UCU and you

3. **Are you a member of UCU?**

- Yes No

continued

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Organising for bargaining power

APPENDIX 2.4

**4. If you are not a member, please tell us why have you not joined UCU?
(Please tick all that apply.)**

- I didn't know there was a union I could join
- No-one has ever asked me to join
- I don't believe in trade unions
- The union isn't for people like me
- Joining a union could damage my career prospects
- I am on a fixed-term contract so I won't be here for long
- The union isn't effective
- N/A

If you don't mind us getting in touch with you to follow-up on any of the issues raised, please provide your contact details:

Name:

Department:

Email:

Include the standard boxes on personal and protected characteristics.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey.

Once completed please return to: (insert local contact details)



SECTION THREE

Developing and supporting workplace representatives

3

Developing and supporting workplace representatives



We know that within our membership is a vast array of experience and creativity that branches could tap into

It is impossible to overstate the significance of having workplace representatives to so many aspects of union organising.

This section invites branches to stand back and consider their approach to recruiting, developing, and supporting workplace representatives. It also provides an outline of job roles but does so recognising that many members are time poor and it is important to think about alternative ways members can support their branch.

3.1 CREATE DIFFERENT ROUTES INTO ACTIVITY

If we truly believe that membership engagement is important to UCU then it follows that we need to find ways of engaging members in a variety of ways.

Taking on formal positions should not be the only way members can participate and contribute to their union. Not everybody has the capacity or means to stand for election and attend regular committees for years at a time. And yet we know that within our membership is a vast array of experience and creativity that branches could tap into.

Some ideas to try are:

- ➔ asking members about their areas of interest
- ➔ making campaigning events as accessible as possible
- ➔ inviting members to get involved in task groups, from helping develop admin and communication systems to working on a claim
- ➔ providing input from their areas of expertise
- ➔ convening social events.

3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKPLACE REPRESENTATIVES

Evidence from a variety of studies on the wider union movement show that the 'key local leader' is hugely important if we want members to develop a sustainable relationship with the union.

3

Developing and supporting workplace representatives



On a wide range of functions members perceive UCU much more positively when there is a local representative present within their workplace

The handbook has focused on the identification of issues as a key step in organising a workforce. It is, of course, worth remembering that often we are not in control of the prime issue, for example, management initiatives.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, we know that member engagement ebbs and flows with 'issues'. Put simply, when there is a live issue effecting a group of members, they are more likely to get involved but what keeps them involved when that issue has been dealt with is the 'key local leader'.

The evidence also suggests that where that person adopts a bureaucratic approach ('leave it to me') member engagement is limited but where they involve members, act collectively, and members 'own' the issue, then engagement last longer, and the dips in membership engagement between peaks of activity are shallower.

Exactly who or what type of person that is will probably depend on the branch context. There is a tendency to look hierarchically at union structures and to consider the branch chair, secretary, or another 'senior' officer as the key local leader. In large employers, this person may still seem remote from the day to day concerns in their workplace. In an organising approach, the key local leader is the workplace representative.

This evidence is replicated within UCU. A report into members' views showed that wherever there is a local representative, UCU is viewed more favourably and is seen to be more effective on every issue, than where a representative is absent.

The evidence is clear, on a wide range of functions members perceive UCU much more positively when there is a local representative present within their workplace. They are more likely to:

- ➔ feel positive about the union
- ➔ engage with union campaigns
- ➔ contribute to internal union democracy.

If we truly believe that membership engagement is important to UCU then it follows that we need to find ways of engaging members in a variety of ways. There is a spectrum of activity and we cover this more in section 4.

3

Developing and supporting workplace representatives



Members who have been involved in campaign activity over the last 12 months are more likely to consider becoming representatives

3.3 HOW TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL WORKPLACE REPRESENTATIVES?

This handbook refers to different types of representative, for example: specific branch officers or roles (see section 3.7), but here we are referring to workplace representatives. They may have a different name (for example, departmental representative), represent broad or more distinct categories of members but the key is that they serve a representative function, speak for and are accountable to the membership.

A good starting point is to look back at the branch and workplace mapping exercise.

Research in UCU indicates that members who have been involved in campaign activity over the last 12 months are more likely to consider becoming representatives.

As well as raising the issue with members at meetings, through email communications etc, engaging in personal one-to-one contact with members in a particular location is likely to be the most effective way. This makes sense as you are starting to build a relationship.

By speaking to members and potential members, by making the branch accessible, it should be possible to find the issues that are most likely to motivate an individual to get involved.

The following tips may be useful:

- ➔ Ask people directly. Putting out a newsletter asking for volunteers is not enough. Think about looking at the workplace map or membership lists, identify those who might be willing and persuade someone they know to approach them.
- ➔ Assure them they will have the backup and support they need. People are more likely to agree if they know the task is manageable and that they will not be alone.

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



Tap into natural social groups in the workplace

Find out where people congregate, who with and when

- ➔ Look for people who are respected and looked up to. It is better to put a little effort into finding the right people now than have to deal with problems later.
- ➔ Look for leaders who are representative of the workforce.
- ➔ Encourage members (where appropriate) who have gone through a successful grievance and/or disciplinary to get active;
- ➔ Tap into natural social groups in the workplace. Find out where people congregate, who with and when. Find union supporters and ask for their help first.

We all know the reasons why people don't become representatives:

- ➔ lack of knowledge (often perceived)
- ➔ worried that there will be a detrimental impact on career
- ➔ concern that they will be expected to undertake tasks alone with insufficient support and guidance

But, probably the greatest is time.

What we don't do is consider the rewards that can come from trade union activity, like:

- ➔ helping to build an active part of the workplace community feels good
- ➔ working with others to achieve change in the workplace
- ➔ many representatives find that the experience they develop enhances their negotiating skills and this in turn has a positive impact on their own professional/personal development.

Tapping into pre-existing collective identities can be a useful way to start organising (it doesn't necessarily build solidarities). We do know that members often feel their primary identity lies as member of an academic school, college department or service department, contractual type), so ask yourself the questions about what is it that concerns workers in that particular area.

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



Each branch will have its own starting point

3.4 IDENTIFY WORKPLACE LEADERS

When you map the workplace you need to identify the leaders in different parts of the workforce. These leaders will not necessarily be union activists or even union members. They won't necessarily be the highest-ranking or most powerful worker in their department. They won't necessarily be the loudest person in meetings. The people you need to identify are the ones who can persuade their fellow workers to take action because their fellow workers trust them. Different leaders will have different ways of doing this, depending on the job they do and the community they come from.

One way to understand what you need to do is to distinguish between 'activists' and 'organic leaders'. You need both types of person to come together if you are going to organise your workplace properly.

These workplace 'organic leaders' might be ambivalent or hostile towards the union - because they are good at getting their own way without relying on the union. It may seem counter-intuitive, but you need them to join and get involved. Their ability to command the trust and respect of colleagues and get things done on their own steam is immensely valuable.

The best way to find out who the leaders are in a workplace is to have one-on-one conversations with workers and ask them about their colleagues. In particular, ask them: 'If you were asked to do a task at work and you weren't sure how to do it, who would you ask for help?'

Another principle to bear in mind is that 'like recruits like'. Young people are better at persuading other young people to join the union, women are better at persuading women, and so on. Try to make sure that organising conversations are taking place between workers who have things in common, on top of the fact that they work in the same place.

Although the ultimate aim is for UCU to be able to intervene at all the levels where decisions about members' work are made and this means working towards a workplace representative in all units, each branch will have its own starting point.

For some branches, recruiting workplace contacts would be an important step forward in branch organisation.

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



New reps and contacts need to be nurtured and branches should consider mentoring systems

3.5 WORKPLACE CONTACTS

Many branches report that people can be uneasy about becoming a full UCU representative but may consider becoming a workplace contact for UCU.

The role of a workplace contact is to let your branch know what's happening in your workplace, and to help the union get messages to its members. It's a good learning opportunity and starting point to get involved in the union. They could do one, a mix, or all of the following:

- ➔ Share information with colleagues and other UCU members.
- ➔ Keep notice boards up to date with UCU information and put up UCU posters and distribute leaflets and newsletters round staff rooms and departmental colleagues.
- ➔ Have regular conversations with members in the workplace.
- ➔ Support people looking to join UCU, either by email or leafleting their offices or possibly door-knocking.
- ➔ Act as a point of contact between the branch and the department: passing information about issues in the department up to the branch and making sure they are taken up; distributing information from the branch to members and non-members.

In practice, local contacts are already quite widely used in our union.

Further resources

UCU's 'Build the union' mini site has more information on local contacts. It can be found at: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/9167/Local-contacts-UCU-on-the-ground-in-every-workplace>

3.6 DEVELOPING REPRESENTATIVES

Mentoring

Having recruited workplace contacts or fully-fledged representatives, what do you do with them? New representatives and contacts need to be nurtured and branches should consider mentoring systems.

A mentoring system has to fit a branch's local circumstances.

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



Practical forms of support can include inviting new reps to observe and assist in advising and organising members

Sometimes a mentor is seen as someone very experienced whose role is to teach a new person the ropes. Others see a mentor as someone who is skilled in asking questions, listening, and encouraging the person they're mentoring to work things out for themselves.

In UCU, something between the two will usually work best.

Practical forms of support can include inviting new representatives to observe and assist in advising and organising members, participating in meetings with management through shadowing and mentoring, and setting up meetings between new and more experienced representatives.

The key roles for a mentor will be to:

- ➔ talk to the representative about their training or other development needs
- ➔ direct them to key people in the branch
- ➔ encourage new representatives to work out solutions to issues as they arise
- ➔ help them find ways to follow up actions from courses and put their learning into practice.

An item on the branch committee

Branch committees should have representative development as a clear point for discussion when they are discussing branch organisation.

Developing and supporting workplace representatives

WORKPLACE REPRESENTATIVE CASE STUDY

This is a short case study of one branch's experience to build workplace representative capacity in the branch by not only recruiting more representatives, but also, crucially, encouraging workplace representatives to take on more significant roles in their areas including, where possible, raising members' concerns with School/Department management. The rationale for this work was threefold:

1. **general member development** and capacity building in the branch
2. **a recognition that branch officers do not have the capacity to intervene** in all the school/department based issues that impact members' working lives but which need a union/collective response
3. **the conviction that a visible union presence for members is most effective** when colleagues see a union workplace representative in their own department – this ultimately feeds into improved recruitment.

The branch:

- ➔ organised a half-day training event for workplace representatives to help forge some sense of collective identity and to share our vision of what the workplace representative's role might look like
- ➔ improved formal and informal information sharing (including a WhatsApp group)
- ➔ encouraged workplace representatives to organise departmental meeting
- ➔ provided further 'organising' training.

In just over a year, there are positive indications that spending the time to develop and support workplace representatives to organise within their departments is proving beneficial. For example:

- ➔ Existing workplace representatives who have stepped down or moving to different union roles have ensured that successors have been recruited.
- ➔ There has been an increase in the number of workplace representatives who organise meetings of members in their areas. During the lockdown some union groups have met online on a regular basis to raise issues and provide support.

Developing and supporting workplace representatives

CASE STUDY

- ➔ Meetings of workplace representatives have proven invaluable in feeding back members' views to the branch committee.
- ➔ Branch communications and policy positions now intentionally built workplace representatives into ways of working – making clear that members should communicate, where possible, concerns to their local workplace representatives rather than directly to branch officers.
- ➔ Significantly, middle management at a more 'local' level are now recognising the need to meet with the local workplace representative.

The branch has identified areas for future work, including:

1. **tackling cold spots in workplace representative recruitment** – finding the key local people
2. **continued workplace representative development** – workplace representatives are inevitably a diverse group. Finding the right balance between bringing people on, and scaring people off
3. **supporting workplace representatives to develop**, and then consolidate, their engagement with local members and interface with local management.

Conclusions

Over a 12-month period trust has been built with the groups of workplace representatives. This has been key to progress

What is clear is that the issues around the coronavirus pandemic, and the budget crisis that was linked to it, highlighted the need for a visible and active union presence at workplace level and the current situation provides both justification and opportunity for us to further build this aspect of union activity.

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



Branches have a major role in ensuring that workplace representatives are provided with and undertake appropriate training

UCU centrally and via regions and nations organises a comprehensive training programme for new representatives

Education and training

Branches have a major role in ensuring that workplace representatives are provided with and undertake appropriate training.

It is a reasonable expectation for representatives to consider that UCU will provide them with the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to carry out the role effectively.

Branches should ensure they have a regular item on their committee agenda to consider the training and development needs of its representatives.

Core programme

UCU centrally and via regions and nations organises a comprehensive training programme for new representatives.

For details see <https://www.ucu.org.uk/training>

Meeting your specific needs

There are already instances of activities within standard courses being customised for specific circumstances. This is often due to the specific needs of a particular branch or region or, commonly, a request for short version of courses to be run.

Branch representatives should discuss their training needs with their regional official.

Specialist and advanced courses

These include:

- ➔ an introduction to learning representatives
- ➔ advanced negotiating skills
- ➔ Transforming UCU - development programme for workplace leaders.

For further information, contact your regional official in the first instance.

3.7 ROLE OUTLINES

These are not job descriptions in the traditional sense. They are included for branches to use when they want to explain the role to those they are seeking to recruit. Remember, roles can be split/job-shared.

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



Workplace representatives are the reason we win campaigns that result in better lives for our members and all working people

They help organise their colleagues into an effective, strong and welcoming membership

Workplace representative

UCU strives to have at least one workplace representative in each workplace and department.

Workplace representatives are the reason we win campaigns that result in better lives for our members and all working people. They help organise their colleagues into an effective, strong and welcoming membership. They:

- ➔ are the first point of contact for members in a workplace
- ➔ talk to members about the union
- ➔ talk to staff about their issues
- ➔ offer advice on issues at work
- ➔ support members with problems/accompanying members in meetings with managers, including internal disciplinary or grievance meetings
- ➔ distribute union information to local members
- ➔ encourage more members to get active in UCU
- ➔ participate in the union's democratic structures
- ➔ promote equality, diversity and fair treatment for all members
- ➔ campaign for better working conditions
- ➔ recruit and organise new members
- ➔ raise members' issues with the branch.

In workplaces where we are recognised, it is good practice for there to be a facility agreement detailing rights to time off for training and to carry out their work. For more information see section 3.6.

Workplace representatives have a right to be involved in how their branch is run and are the most important link between the members and the union.

UCU's expectations of the representative

- ➔ UCU expects that they serve a representative function, speak for and are accountable to the membership they represent.

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



Health & safety representatives are unique in having a detailed basic statutory framework of functions and rights outlined for them

- ➔ There are limits to the role - a representative is not a counsellor, although some of these skills may be required, nor are they a lawyer.
- ➔ The representative should build a collaborative approach with members seeking individual support.
- ➔ Representatives are also expected to be active in their branch, supporting organising and building the branch.

Health & safety representative

Health & safety reps are unique in having a detailed basic statutory framework of functions and rights outlined for them. In short though, the functions are to:

- ➔ examine the causes of accidents in the workplace
- ➔ investigate potential hazards and dangerous occurrences in the workplace
- ➔ investigate complaints by employees relating to their health, safety and welfare
- ➔ make representations to the employer on matters affecting the health, safety and welfare of employees
- ➔ carry out inspections of members' workplaces
- ➔ be consulted by the employer on health and safety matters
- ➔ represent employees in consultations with health and safety inspectors
- ➔ receive information from inspectors
- ➔ attend safety committee meetings - employers are required to establish safety committees if two or more safety representatives request this in writing.

It is also important that UCU's health & safety representatives

- ➔ remain accountable to members
- ➔ report back to the branch
- ➔ feed health and safety issues into the negotiating machinery.

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



It is good practice to ensure that the negotiating team includes a member with knowledge of the issue to be discussed

For further information see Safety Reps and Safety Committees Regulations (SRSC): see the TUC 'brown book' for further information (2014 update):

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/BrownBook2015.pdf>

Union learning representative

Union learning representatives, often known as ULRs can bring the training needs of the workforce to the fore of negotiations. Training (or more often the lack of it or its inadequacy) in an issue that bothers a lot of members and potential members. ULRs promote the inclusion of training as part of the negotiating agenda.

They:

- ➔ find out how lifelong learning could help to resolve issues at work
- ➔ promote learning in a workplace
- ➔ support members to take up learning opportunities
- ➔ encourage active branch membership
- ➔ organise workers around learning
- ➔ support people who want to join UCU
- ➔ recruit new learning representatives
- ➔ feed issues to the branch and into the negotiating machinery.

They have some rights to time off for training and carrying out their duties.

Negotiating team member

This is a key role within the branch. Members of the branch negotiating team are generally drawn from the branch committee (which should include workplace representatives) and comprise the UCU-side of the local bargaining machinery.

It is good practice to ensure that the negotiating team includes a member with knowledge of the issue to be discussed. Drawing members into issue-specific negotiations can lead to them becoming involved across a wider range of branch activity.

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



Some members who would not want to take part in campaigning or negotiating activities are happy to be caseworkers

Key tasks

- ➔ Contribute to the development of the branch collective bargaining strategy, helping to identify key issues and power analysis.
- ➔ Attend and contribute to pre-meetings.
- ➔ Represent the branch in face-to-face meeting with the employer's representatives.
- ➔ Maintain collective discipline in front of the employer's representatives.
- ➔ Participate in debrief session after joint meetings.
- ➔ Maintain accountability to the branch members by reporting back to the branch committee and ensure that members are engaged in the issue, attending members' meetings when necessary, contributing to update bulletins
- ➔ Work constructively with the rest of the team.

Caseworker

One of the key things UCU does is represent individual members. It does this primarily through its network of representatives and caseworkers in Branches, regional UCU officials, and even union solicitors. A caseworker plays a crucial role in this structure as they are the first point of contact for members with problems. They also have an important role in bringing the types of issues being encountered to the attention of the rest of the branch so that, where appropriate, collective solutions can be considered.

Some members who would not want to take part in campaigning or negotiating activities are happy to take-on this role to help their colleagues.

3.8 BRANCH OFFICERS

Model branch rules are available on the UCU website. These are stipulated by rule. In general, branches should try to ensure that they have a core of officers as per below:

- ➔ the chair/president
- ➔ the secretary

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



Facility time is a key resource and it is good practice that branches use the allocation of any 'blocks' of time in a strategic way

- ➔ the vice-chair/vice president
- ➔ the treasurer
- ➔ the membership secretary
- ➔ the equality officer
- ➔ the anti-casualisation officer.

These positions will be declared elected annually at the annual general meeting of the branch.

However, it is important that branches do not get demoralised if they cannot fill all these roles. Much more important is to ensure that members are properly represented on the committee and that the branch committee reflects, as far as is possible, the characteristics of the membership.

UCU's model rules outlining the role of these officers can be found at: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/ucurules>

3.9 FACILITY TIME

Facilities agreements are often part of a union's recognition agreement with the employer. Such agreements should include time off/cover time off for the union's representatives. But they also include other aspects of the union's rights to represent its members, such as information and access to physical resources like rooms and means of communication.

Facility time agreements are part of the mesh of agreements that govern industrial relations in our workplaces. Sometimes they are written down, sometimes they are encoded in written agreements. In every case, their value and their existence are dependent on the commitment of branch officers and members. Being able to successfully defend management attacks on facilities time or being able to extend and improve existing agreements depends on winning the support of members and turning that support into sustained pressure on management through collective bargaining.

Facility time is a key resource and it is good practice that branches use the allocation of any 'blocks' of time in a strategic way. For example, if the branch has agreed a range of objectives that it wishes to work on

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Developing and supporting workplace representatives



Remember people are more likely to get involved where branches are seen as relevant, friendly and inviting and that members are supported

over the next 12 months then it makes sense to allocate facility-time to achieve these. In other words, branches should think carefully about the allocation of time, rather than fall back on previous custom and practice.

There are also different ways of calculating facility time that vary between branches but the crucial point is that representatives should be given enough time off to undertake their trade union role. This may involve further discussion with the employer.

Additional UCU guidance is referenced below and regional officials are also available to advise.

Further resources

UCU has produced guidance on winning facilities agreements. This can be found at:

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/3011/Winning-better-facilities-time-and-recruiting-new-staff---NOP-branch-support-pack-revised-2011/pdf/Facilities_time_booklet_revised_2011.pdf

3.10 SUMMARY

Identifying, recruiting and developing union activists and leaders in the workplace is an ongoing task. Few branch committees look like the ideal with a good representation of workplaces, sites, departments and the members characteristics but remember people are more likely to get involved where branches are seen as relevant, friendly and inviting and that members are supported and not over-burdened when they take the first steps into becoming active.



SECTION FOUR

Membership engagement

4

Membership engagement



It is our job to keep members actively participating in the union, to keep them engaged for the long-term

The best of way of doing this is by building ongoing relationships

In the previous section we noted that having a workplace union representative is a key factor in determining whether a group of members are engaged in the life of their union.

The terms 'participation' and 'engagement' are often used interchangeably but there are subtle differences. Engagement has a meaning for the longer-term, and is less tied to specific events or 'participation opportunities', eg surveys, a meeting, etc. It is about locating power where it should lie, with the members.

Encouraging members to participate actively in the union is vital but when holding these event or activities, being clear that their voice counts starts to signal that they are not being used for a one-off mobilisation but that they are a part of something deeper, an organisation, a movement that exists because of and for them.

Properly engaged members know their contribution is essential to the project or decision at hand. It is our job to keep members actively participating in the union, to keep them engaged for the long-term. The best of way of doing this is by building ongoing relationships.

4.1 WHY IS MEMBERS' ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

Our members are UCU so they must organise themselves around the problems that they and potential members face wherever they work.

A strong union depends on the fullest possible engagement of as many workers within its bargaining unit as possible. This helps our negotiating strength; it ensures that we have credibility. Actively engaging with our members, not just those that turn up to meetings, is a way of ensuring that we are a democratic union.

In a collective bargaining context, it is an essential component of building the power necessary to win deals on favourable terms. Engaging actively with those in the bargaining unit, identifying their concerns, recruiting them to the union all helps that branches are credible representatives of the workforce.

Actively engaging members on the content of claims will not only improve its content but it will also engender a sense of ownership by

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Membership engagement



Ensuring high levels of participation is undoubtedly a challenge

A flexible approach offering a variety of means of participation can provide realistic opportunities for all members to participate

members rather than seeing 'the union' as a third party. Ensuring that negotiators report on progress and obtaining the widest possible involvement in the decision-making process all helps build respect and support for UCU.

Beyond the workplace, UCU is a representative democracy. Members should elect other members to represent their interests, views in regional and national fora.

Branches should, therefore, take practical steps to ensure elected reps take their role on behalf of the wider membership seriously by identifying members' views, expressing them, and reporting back.

4.2 BRANCH RESPONSIBILITIES

A strong union depends on the fullest possible engagement of as many members as possible. This helps our negotiating strength; it ensures that we represent all members and that we are a democratic union.

Ensuring high levels of participation and deeper engagement is undoubtedly a challenge. A flexible approach offering a variety of means of participation can provide realistic opportunities for all members to participate. Members should be actively encouraged to meet and discuss matters of interest and concern. Workplace representatives, health and safety representatives and learning representatives should encourage this through regular contact with their members.

If you identify that some sections of members appear under-represented at meetings it is important to try to find out why and to address the problem. Try holding a special meeting for or survey that sector. And consider whether there are bargaining issues that could be promoted that would attract those members to get involved.

Branches should review communication with members and consider using a range of different methods: newsletters, email and web, phone, meetings, surgeries, surveys, and social media apps which have proven to be a good way to keep people in touch with developments.

The use of 'electronic' communication - email distribution, e-conferencing, virtual meetings, etc can provide a realistic alternative to the 'traditional' meeting, greatly increasing opportunities for some members to get involved.

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Membership engagement



Whether a formal branch meeting, a meeting in the workplace or for a small group of members, it is important that members who make the effort to attend find the experience rewarding

UCU members are also all kinds of different people with differing needs. They may work part-time hours; have caring responsibilities; some with disabilities may be excluded from some meeting venues that are, for them, inaccessible or from receiving information distributed in a single format. Branches should not become disproportionately reliant upon or focussed upon those members employed in one particular section or site.

4.3 BRANCH AND WORKPLACE MEETINGS

Bringing members together is vital for formulating branch policy and democratic decision-making.

Branches should ensure that general meetings are organised for maximum member participation. For example:

- ➔ Ensure good notice of meetings is given.
- ➔ Negotiate with employers to hold meetings in working time.
- ➔ Monitor attendances at meetings to identify if there are sections or groups of members who appear to be consistently under-represented.
- ➔ Check and identify whether access requirements are being met.
- ➔ Ensure that meeting agendas and branch activity are relevant to all sections of members.

Branch meetings should have a clear purpose and it is up to the chair and other experienced branch officers to ensure that all attending are engaged to reach its conclusions.

Whether a formal branch meeting, a meeting in the workplace or for a small group of members, it is important that members who make the effort to attend find the experience rewarding.

Branch officers should:

- ➔ Ensure meetings are friendly and welcoming. It is not only the chair who can help; other officers can introduce themselves to new members and explain the agenda and how the member can contribute.
- ➔ Review the agenda. Is it necessary to lengthily review the minutes of the last meeting and discuss matters arising at the start of the

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Membership engagement



At all times,
we must
remember
that we are
accountable to
our members
for our actions

meeting? Is it necessary to report on a lengthy pile of correspondence received? Could these items be dealt with in a different way? Will a new member's introduction and first impression be a meeting focussed on the past and not on the future?

- ➔ Avoid the use of jargon – so easily done.
- ➔ Ensure debate is conducted in a non-aggressive manner.
- ➔ Ensure that decisions and actions are clear and understood and that members have had notice of major proposals or positions to be considered. It is poor practice to allow motions that seek to establish branch policy to be made 'on the floor' of a meeting. Good practice requires that members have notice of policy positions that could be adopted so they can input. This is not a matter of needless bureaucracy but basic democracy.
- ➔ Not assume lack of comment means agreement to a proposal – ask those present.
- ➔ Ensure that the members who attend know what will happen next and when the next meeting may be called.
- ➔ Ensure that no one member can dominate discussion by virtue of their professional role or employment status in relation to other members present.

Further information

UCU has produced a guide to 'Organising effective branch meetings' which can be found at:

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8996/Organising-effective-branch-meetings/pdf/ucu_btu_organising_effective_branch_meetings.pdf

4.4 SUMMARY

This section has provided a note branch's responsibilities to engage their members in the life of UCU. However, each section of this handbook has highlighted the need for senior branch officials, UCU negotiators, and workplace representatives to look constantly to involve members. At all times, we must remember that we are accountable to our members for our actions.



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