

UCU national executive committee member role outline

1 UCU NEC members

General

- 1.1 The national executive committee (NEC) is the principal executive committee of the union, responsible for the execution of policy and the conduct of the general business of the Union between meetings of Congress, and acting within Congress policy.
- 1.2 NEC members are expected to:
 - represent members, as described by their NEC seat (for example, FE London and the East, women members in HE)
 - engage fully in their roles in the NEC's decision-making structures
 - represent the union's policies to members and to the wider public as agreed through the union's democratic structures
 - support and promote the union's campaigns.
- 1.3 An NEC induction session is offered annually. Other training may be offered specifically to NEC members. NEC members are expected to attend an induction session and are strongly encouraged to attend other relevant training where offered.
- 1.4 It is recognised that the time available to individual NEC members to carry out their role varies considerably, due to work commitments, the ability to get paid time off negotiated for union duties, and personal circumstances including, but not limited to, caring responsibilities.
- 1.5 UCU is committed to negotiating for paid time off for those elected to the NEC. NEC members can seek assistance with this from their regional official if necessary. Unfortunately it is not possible to guarantee that this will always be achieved.
- 1.6 This role outline is not exhaustive. Its main purpose is to provide information and transparency for members about the union's elected NEC and officer roles. Depending on the circumstances, there may be other opportunities or needs for NEC member involvement.
- 1.7 These role outlines are approved by the NEC. Changes to UCU rules or standing orders, or in committee structures, will automatically constitute changes in these outlines, where necessary. Other changes require the approval of the NEC.

Committees

- 1.8 Policy is made by Congress and the sector conferences. The day-to-day operation of the union is carried out by UCU's staff. Much of the discussion and decision making that takes place between those two levels is carried out through the union's committee structure. An appendix is attached which sets out details about the frequency of the committee meetings in which NEC members are, or may be, involved (appendix 1). NEC members are expected to:
- attend meetings of the NEC, their sector committee, and any other subcommittee to which they stand and are successfully elected
 - read reports and committee papers and engage with the issues under consideration, contribute to meetings, and listen to and consider the contributions of others
 - be accountable and open in the decisions they make, and have their voting records at the NEC and its sector committees published.
- 1.9 NEC members have the opportunity to stand for election as members, and as chairs, of NEC subcommittees. Sector committees will elect vice chairs from amongst their members, who have a role in the authorisation of industrial action.
- 1.10 All NEC members, steered by their committee chairs, are expected to conduct themselves in meetings in a way which shows respect and courtesy for other committee members and for UCU staff. All committee chairs and members have a responsibility to actively challenge behaviour and language which is aggressive, intimidating, discriminatory, that misrepresents facts, or targets individuals in a hostile way.
- 1.11 Examples of the matters which NEC members are asked to discuss and decide upon at NEC and subcommittee level include:
- considering the union's priorities and the best use of its resources
 - ongoing industrial and campaign strategy
 - key points of principle in relation to the way in which Congress or conference policy is implemented
 - the union's strategies for recruitment and organising, for advancing equality, for advancing specific policies of the union
 - responses to government or other relevant consultations
 - endorsing responses to situations arising between meetings of Congress or sector conference, for example, attacks on other trade unionists or on educationalists in the UK or abroad
 - approving and amending regulations which are delegated to the NEC under the union's rules (for example, legal scheme regulations, standing orders for certain committees).

- 1.12 The NEC recommends to Congress each year the union's budget and subscription rates, taking recommendations from the strategy and finance committee.
- 1.13 NEC members who hold equality seats are also members of the NEC's equality subcommittee, and of the relevant equality standing committee (an advisory committee). Equality seat holders are expected to attend and contribute to these committees, and to the annual equality conference. The chairs of these committees are elected from among the relevant NEC seat holders.
- 1.14 NEC members have a right under NEC standing orders to submit motions to the NEC and its sector committees. However, it is NEC members' responsibility to make sure that the priorities of the union directed by Congress and sector conference policy, and matters recommended as a result of detailed work in the NEC's sub-committees, are given due time and attention.
- 1.15 There may be areas of collaboration between the union's staff and elected representatives, in committee work and other areas.

Other activities

- 1.16 NEC members may hold additional positions within the union's structures, elected by and from the NEC, for example, on the legal panel, international working group, standing orders and rules group, TUC delegation.
- 1.17 NEC members are automatically members of their local branch committee, and, if from an institution in England, are entitled to attend their regional committee (without vote unless appointed as a representative by their branch). As far as possible, NEC members should be active at all levels of the union. Geographically elected members in particular are expected to attend their regional committee.
- 1.18 NEC members may be approached directly by branches, or by an officer or official of the union, to speak to a meeting or otherwise liaise with a branch cognisant of the NEC member's location or specific skills or interests. This may be in the form of – for example - visiting a picket line or attending a branch meeting to explain a UK-wide campaign or course of action.

Conduct

- 1.19 NEC members are expected to behave professionally in their role. NEC members are expected to act to further the aims and objects of the union.
- 1.20 This includes UCU's stated aim of promoting equality for all throughout the union's work and structures, and actively opposing all forms and harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination (rules 2.4 and 2.5).
- 1.21 NEC members are reminded of the obligations of all members, to abide by the rules and standing orders of the union, refrain from conduct detrimental to the interests of the union, and from all forms of harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination (rule 6.1).
- 1.22 NEC members are expected to behave to other members of UCU, including other NEC members, and to UCU staff, with courtesy and respect. All NEC members

are expected to abide by the *Code of Conduct for UCU employees, Elected officers, UCU members, Branch and Regional representatives* (appendix 2).

- 1.23 NEC members should not, by virtue of their NEC role alone, formally advise on individual casework. Any enquiries received by NEC members in respect of casework should be referred to the relevant regional office or to the head of bargaining, organising, representation and operations. (Where NEC members are accredited caseworkers undertaking casework within their local branch, they may of course continue with this.)

Appendix 1

National executive committee – membership and frequency of committees

1. National executive committee, Further education committee, Higher education committee

In addition to the national executive committee, all members of the NEC are members of their relevant sector committee. The NEC year begins at the end of the annual Congress and sector conference meetings until the close of Congress and sector conference meetings the following year. In each NEC year there are normally:

- 4 one-day meetings of the NEC (normally held June, November, March, May)
- 1 pre-Congress meeting of the NEC
- 4 meetings of the Further education committee and Higher education committee (normally held June, October, February/March, April)

One day meetings of the NEC are normally scheduled to take place 11am – 4:30pm but times may vary. Meetings of the sector committees vary in length and can either be one or half-day meetings. The meeting of NEC held on the afternoon prior to the start of annual Congress is a shorter meeting.

2. Equality committees

Members elected to an NEC equality seat (representative of Black, Disabled, LGBT+, Migrant, Women members) are automatically members of the NEC's equality subcommittee, and the relevant equality standing committee. The equality committee meets twice a year. The equality standing committees (Black, Disabled, LGBT+, Migrant, Women) meet three times a year. An annual equality groups conference is held over 3 days normally in November or December which NEC members elected to an equality seat are also automatically entitled to attend. The equality committee can either be a one or half-day meeting. Meetings of the equality standing committees are normally a half day.

3. Representatives of casually employed members

The two NEC members elected as representatives of casually employed members are automatically members of the anti-casualisation committee which meets 3 times a year and which also holds an annual meeting for staff on casualised contracts in February - March.

4. Other subcommittees

NEC members can self-nominate to be elected to additional seats on the equality committee and UCU's three other sub-committees:

- Education committee
- Recruitment, organising and campaigning committee

- Strategy and finance committee

Members are elected to these committees by the NEC. There is no rule or standing order restricting committee membership. However, it is established practice to recommend that NEC members think carefully about their union workload and restrict themselves to one sub-committee only in addition to HEC/FEC.

The strategy and finance committee meets 3 times a year; the other sub-committees twice a year.

5. Committee chairs/vice-chairs

Members can also self-nominate to stand for election as chairs of the equality committee, education committee, and recruitment, organising and campaigning committee. The chairs of these committees are automatically members of the strategy and finance committee.

Members of the NEC can also self-nominate to the positions of vice-chairs for the sector committees of FEC and HEC.

6. Other committees and bodies

NEC members may also self-nominate for election to the following committees/bodies:

- Academic related, professional services staff committee
- UCU's TUC delegation
- Legal support panel
- International working group
- Stress and bullying working group
- USS Advisory committee
- Teachers superannuation working party

7. Congress and the sector conferences

Congress and the FE and HE sector conferences meet annually usually at the end of May/beginning of June over 3 days. NEC members are automatically entitled to attend Congress and the relevant sector conference.

8. Additional meetings of Congress/NEC/FEC/HEC

During the year, additional (special) meetings of Congress/sector conferences, NEC and the sector committees may take place.

This is more common for sector committees than the NEC, particularly when large (multi-institution) industrial disputes are ongoing.

9. Regional committees

Members of the NEC may also automatically attend meetings of their regional committee (non-voting, unless also appointed by the branch as their representative). Regional committees meet three times a year.

10. Scheduling of committee meetings

The majority of UCU's committee meetings take place on a Friday, however, given the large number of committee meetings in the calendar, there are, by necessity, sometimes meetings on other days.

The draft calendar meetings for the next UCU year (Congress to Congress) is presented to the NEC in early May, and confirmed by the first meeting of the NEC after Congress for that UCU year.

University and College Union

CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

Code of Conduct for UCU employees, Elected officers, UCU members, Branch and Regional representatives

1. This code of practice is designed to facilitate the smooth work of UCU by clarifying the appropriate working relationships between UCU employees, elected officers, UCU members, branch and regional representatives.
2. It is recognised that the NEC and other elected members are concerned with the formulation of policy on behalf of their members. Questions or concerns on the implementation of UCU policy should therefore be addressed to the General Secretary.
3. The General Secretary is responsible to the NEC for: the efficient recruitment and deployment of UCU employees; being the principal line of communication between the NEC and employees; and the day-to-day running of UCU. Any questions on the day-to-day running of UCU must be channeled through the General Secretary or the appropriate official in charge of the department concerned and not directly to any employees.
4. It is recognised that employees may be instructed by their line manager to carry out certain duties (e.g. in relation to the committee work and representation on outside bodies) as part of their job descriptions. However, NEC members and elected officers must not attempt to instruct or question employees on the method of work or the content of that work. In the case of the latter, this must first be raised with the appropriate line manager and/or General Secretary.
5. Requests for assistance from NEC members, other than covered in clause 4, will be made to the General Secretary or according to arrangements made by her/him and notified to all NEC members.
6. The General Secretary will, on an annual basis, inform all employees of the names of the UCU elected officers, committee chairs, chair of panels, working groups and representatives etc.
7. Whilst UCU employees give professional advice and assistance in the course of their duties, they do so with delegated responsibility from their line manager. All staff are accountable to their line manager for their actions.
8. The Code of Conduct will be drawn to the attention of all new NEC members as part of their induction process.
9. Where employees are criticised or their work mentioned in derogatory terms within a forum where they are not represented or have no voice e.g. NEC, Branch meeting, Congress, UCU "chat rooms", or via email debates/discussions,

the chair at the time, national officer, senior elected member or the senior official with responsibility for the discussion group will draw attention to this Code of Conduct and call on the member making the criticism to adhere to this code.

10. If a UCU staff member becomes aware of inappropriate criticism of their work by those in section 1 or behaviour felt to be in contravention to these guidelines, they should report this to their line manager, Personnel department, General Secretary or trade union representative. The recipient of such a report may respond as under section 9, but should also consider other additional appropriate action under the Dignity at Work Policy and the rules of UCU.
11. Should any elected member have a complaint about any UCU employee, they should raise the matter with the appropriate line manager or the General Secretary who will deal with it in accordance with agreements and procedures. There is an established membership complaints procedure that must be adhered to at all times.