

## **Welcome to UCU's new course: 'Strategic campaigning for branch leaders'**

This course has been specially designed for those in leadership positions in UCU branches and it is a central part of UCU's new approach to campaigning and bargaining – an approach that is called the National Organising Plan.

### **What is the National Organising Plan?**

In essence, the National Organising Plan is a massive collective effort to change the direction of the union and make it fit for the challenges of our rapidly changing sector. It affects the way in which we do things at every level of the union, from the grassroots right up to the general secretary.

### **Where did it come from?**

Following her election, the general secretary commissioned a major report into the union – a health check on the union and of how well we were representing our members. Titled 'What do the members of UCU think?', this report was conducted by Professor Jeremy Waddington from Manchester University. At the same time, the union conducted a survey of its membership and its potential membership – its density in every workplace.

The results of both reports made for sobering reading. In brief, we found that

- we are not recruiting as well as other public sector unions;
- that we are not recruiting sufficiently among the youngest workers in our sector;
- that we are not recruiting enough among the growing sections of the workforce – researchers, casualised lecturing posts, women;
- that we need to ensure that our branches have the facilities and the information they need to represent their members effectively;
- that we need to give our branches the support they need to bargain and campaign in a situation where more and more bargaining takes place in a local context
- that we need to focus our work and prioritise around strategically important developments in our sector – localised bargaining, privatisation, casualisation

This is where the National Organising Plan came from. Developed by the union's Recruitment and Organising and Campaigning sub-Committee of the NEC and passed overwhelmingly by its Congress, the National Organising Plan is UCU's attempt to ensure that we address the challenges in our sectors.

## What does the National Organising Plan say?

At the heart of the NOP is the importance of setting priorities that enable the union to face the most significant challenges and to address the union's chief weaknesses.

The NOP identifies 11 priority objectives – some bargaining objectives and some objectives to improve the organisation of the union and build our capacity to achieve those bargaining objectives.

The industrial bargaining and campaigning objectives include:

- Improving pay and conditions of service in FE
- Defending and promoting adult learning
- Continuing defence of national pay in HE
- Monitor the outcome of the Research Assessment Exercise
- Improving conditions of service in HE
- Challenging the marketisation of education

These objectives reflect the fact that in order to grow we need to demonstrate our ability to win improvements in the pay and conditions of service in our sectors.

They also respond to the major challenges in our sector – the erosion of national bargaining structures in favour of local negotiation and the 'marketisation' of public services.

Supporting this, the capacity-building and organising objectives include

- Increasing the number and distribution of reps at workplace level
- Increasing recruitment to the union
- Achieving better facilities time agreements for reps
- Creating a map of pay and conditions in all our sectors to enable us to prioritise and target resources
- And finally, prioritising the training of reps – of which course is a key part

These objectives are focused on ensuring that branches are best organised at workplace level, building the local face of the union and enabling branches to represent members effectively in our sector's working environment.

## Your role as branch leaders

As branch leaders, you are of absolutely critical importance to the success or failure of the NOP, which is why this day has been organised. These days are designed to help build the strategic capacity of the union.

They are about:

- Building our capacity in strategic planning, campaigning and bargaining at local level
- ensuring that branch leaders understand the NOP and are confident in pushing it forward
- helping the union to work together effectively
- They are also about ensuring that you know where and how you can access support.

## **Where you can access support**

Every Regional Committee will have established its own version of the NOP, sensitive to local conditions and regional priorities and is supported by a Regional Office committed to supporting branches in their area.

At Head Office the Campaigning, Organising, Recruitment and Training Team has responsibility for coordinating and supporting staff work in delivering the NOP and reporting to the Recruitment, Organising and Campaigning Committee of the NEC. This team will be working on a range of projects to support the NOP at national and regional levels and can provide branches and regions with support in their own work.

## **Summary**

So, in summary, every part of the union is now working toward the National Organising Plan.

It's a measure of how important the NOP is seen to be in enhancing the power and effectiveness of the union.

In this way, we hope that we can report to Congress next year that the union is in better shape to represent its members and face the challenges of the changing world of work.