

Wales Organising Strategy 2012/13

For a number of years our strategy has focussed particularly on the key areas of Recognition, Facilities and Mapping. We are now close to achieving our goals in relation to Recognition and Facilities, however, whilst Mapping remains our priority going forward, we are expanding the strategy to build on the maps already produced by institutions and encourage their use as an organising tool.

Organising Priorities

Priority 1 – Mapping

We are asking that branches that have not yet engaged in the mapping process do so as soon as possible, so that the map can be used to inform each individual branches organising strategy and as a tool for a targeted recruitment campaign. Support is available in completing the first draft of a map and those requiring assistance should contact the Wales Office.

We are asking those branches with maps to take steps to keep the information up to date.

This is done by requesting starters and leavers lists at the start of the new academic year and updating the map with the information provided and by cross-referencing an up to date membership list with the map to identify members. Again, advice and assistance is available from the Wales Office in connection with this process.

We are also asking for maps to be expanded to include equality profiles and to use this information to encourage membership and activism within UCU in line with the overarching objectives set by the UCU Single Equality Scheme.

On the surface, mapping can seem a daunting prospect, and initially there is some work involved to produce the first draft. However, if the staff lists being used to create the map are supplied electronically, the mapping process is much easier, and if a member with experience of excel is recruited to this task, the first draft can be produced fairly quickly and easily. However, as previously stated, advice and assistance in producing a first draft is available from the Wales Office.

Once the map has been done, the process for keeping it updated is fairly straightforward and the benefits of the map as an organising tool can then become apparent.

Priority 2 – Organising Rep for each Branch

We are asking each branch to recruit/designate an Organising Rep.

The role of an Organising Rep can be many and varied but particular focus is on: ensuring organising remains on the agenda for branches; co-ordinating organising activity within the branch and acting as a point of contact for organising related matters.

The Organising Rep is not expected to tackle organising alone, it is a matter for the branch as a whole, but they may be involved in developing an organising plan for the branch going forward and would be instrumental in co-ordinating the activities and campaigns in line with that plan. The Organising Rep will also be looking for opportunities to organise and may be involved in membership and activist recruitment drives, mapping, approaching new members of staff to talk about joining the union and contacting DAN volunteers, etc

Organising is central to the work of UCU and is essential in building, developing and sustaining a strong and effective union.

Priority 3 – Department Reps

We are asking branches to recruit Department Reps. The value of having a representative in each department should not be under-estimated. We understand that members who have not been active previously can be intimidated by the idea of getting involved in the branch structures, but the role of the Department Rep can be a low level introduction to union activities and activism.

The role of the Department Rep can be expanded with time, but as a starting point might be to act as a 'point of contact', referring members with queries/difficulties to relevant branch committee members, putting up posters and other UCU information on department notice boards and distributing newsletters etc. The Dept Rep could also, if confident to do so, speak to new staff members about joining UCU, or at the very least, contact the Membership Secretary or other relevant Branch Rep with details of the new member of staff so that they can initiate contact.

In time the role could also include: checking and updating the map for the staff in their department, checking and updating membership details for the members in their department.

Introducing members to activism in this manner will help to build confidence and interest in UCU and could in time lead to increased levels of activism, which benefits the branch and helps build towards its sustainability.

Research tells us that the most successful branches are those where the union is 'visible' and Department Reps would go a long way to maintaining the visibility of UCU in the workplace and alleviate some of the pressure on existing Branch Reps by taking on some of the tasks mentioned above.

Recruiting Dept Reps can be approached in several ways, you can advertise via a newsletter or by emailing all members to seek volunteers. Alternatively, the map can be used in this process to enable the branch to identify members within each department that can be approached and asked to act as Dept Rep.

Priority 4 – Recruitment Drive

In line with a UK wide Campaign we are asking branches to undertake a general recruitment drive for new members.

Whilst approximately 20% of members leaving UCU are potentially recoverable, i.e. redundancy from one institution but becoming re-employed at another, 80% of members leaving are lost as a result of retirement, death, going abroad, etc, and it is essential that we increase recruitment to offset this loss.

Throughout this academic year, we will be making contact with branches in three tranches, Sept 12, Jan 13 & March 13 and asking them to participate in a recruitment drive within their institution.

The first step of the recruitment drive will be to undertake a mapping exercise, in line with Priority 1, which will inform UCU of the names and locations of non members within each branch.

The second step is for those identified as non-members to receive a mailshot from head office about joining UCU.

The third step will be for the branch committees to organise a follow up process to contact the non-members following receipt of the mailshot.

Clearly, a mailshot in isolation may generate some new members, but in order for it to be as successful as possible, it is important that we do not overlook or underestimate the value of personal approach when recruiting members.

Visibility of UCU as an active trade union is immensely important when asking potential members to join, as is talking to them about issues within their own workplace, rather than generic issues that have little or no relevance. We are

therefore asking for branch officers to commit to following up the mailshot locally.

As this is a UK wide initiative, the Wales Office will have to report on progress within our branches throughout the process. As such, prior to the mailshot, we will be approaching the branch committee to obtain information on how the mailshot will be followed up and to offer assistance and support as necessary.

Those branches in the first tranche will be contacted shortly, however, if branches in the second or third tranche wish to commence their recruitment drive earlier, please contact the Wales Office to make the necessary arrangements.

Priority 5 – Recruitment of Part time hourly paid (PTH) members

We are asking branches to consider ways of recruiting part time hourly paid members.

The profile of staff working in institutions is changing; there is now a large proportion of staff working part time and those employed on an hourly paid basis are particularly vulnerable when it comes to reduced hours or redundancy. Many of the staff on PTH contracts only accepted employment on these terms because of caring or other responsibilities, many are women, and most find the lack of security associated with this type of employment difficult.

This group of staff are, as prospective members, sometimes difficult to reach, by virtue of their work patterns but the map should identify the staff on hourly paid contracts. This will enable branches to use their resources strategically to recruit new members within this group.

UCU's strength remains with the membership, the more members we have the stronger we are locally and nationally. Recruiting PTH members will not only increase the strength of each branch as a whole, but will also increase UCU's bargaining power in relation to this group of members and encourage management to engage with UCU on issues relating to them.

We would also ask branches to consider recruiting a PTH Rep to the Branch Committee. This not only allows for feedback from PT members to ensure their perspective is considered when decisions are made by the branch committee, but also demonstrates UCU's interest in issues relating to members on hourly paid contracts.

It's equally important to have representation of hourly paid staff on your negotiating committee to ensure that the views and needs of all members are met during negotiations.

Those branches that have made the most progress in recruiting, organising and negotiating on behalf of hourly paid staff are those with hourly paid committee members.

Finally, we also wish to increase the levels of activism amongst women within UCU Cymru structures and recruiting PTH members, and as a consequence more women members, will contribute towards this aim.

Priority 6 – Recruitment of Early Careers’ members

We are asking branches to consider ways of recruiting members that fall into the early careers category, i.e. under 35 and in the first few years of employment.

Planning for the future is essential to the sustainability of branches, and integral to this is the recruitment of members in the younger age ranges. The development of new activists and growth of membership numbers is key to ensuring that UCU has sufficient membership density to maintain its collective strength and remain a voice in the workplace.

Younger members also have much to offer the branch with different experiences

Target branches

This year we are targeting the following branches for assistance with organising in light of mergers:

Gower College Swansea
University of Wales Newport

Strategic Equality Plans

The 2011-2012 Organising Strategy focused on influencing the Public Sector Equality Duties in Wales and subsequently Branch/LA engagement in the development of Strategic Equality plans (SEPs).

The 2012-2013 Strategy looks to build on this work by using the SEPs to identify areas of work for both the HE and FE sectors.

Stage one of this process will be to evaluate the compliance of SEPs with the minimum requirements set out in the Regulations giving consideration to the good practice available. Stage two will be to consider a Wales wide specific equality objective for each of the sectors.

At this stage, it is intended that objective for Further Education will be the completion of Equal Pay Audits and for Higher Education the objective will be progression/promotion (including issues around Professorial grades).

Materials and resources will be developed to assist Branches/LAs in undertaking work at both stages of this work.

HE Branches	Progression
FE Branches	Equal Pay Audits

Training

Training is fundamental to building and developing branches and undertaking training is essential in equipping reps with the knowledge and tools to fulfil their designated role within the branch. Training is not just a way of up skilling, or updating existing knowledge, it also gives officers the opportunity to meet reps from other branches, share experiences, build confidence and rediscover some of the enthusiasm that may have been lost over time.

Training helps to equip newer reps to take on casework (with adequate support from the Branch and Regional Office) and the more reps there are within a branch, who have undertaken training appropriate to their role, the more effective that branch will be.

Getting training off the ground in Wales has not been easy in the last couple of years. During the 2011/12 academic year several courses have had to be cancelled owing to poor take up and clearly cancelled training events are a drain on resources, both in terms of cost implications and the time spent on arrangements only for the course not to run. However, training for branch officers remains a priority in Wales and access to that training is also a major consideration.

For the 2012/13 we are offering fewer courses but hope that the timing and locations of the training will encourage more reps to participate.

We also wish to run training for Organising Reps to support the recruitment of new Organising Reps in Priority 2 and are planning to develop an introductory level one-day training course.

We will also run one of the Early Careers training courses in support of Priority 5, if there is sufficient interest and take up.

Finally, as mentioned briefly in Priority 5, we wish to increase the levels of activism amongst women within UCU Cymru structures, as per the motion passed at Wales Congress 2012. To encourage women members to become more active wish to hold bespoke Leadership Training for women activists.