

# IT'S YOUR TIME LET'S GET IT BACK



## CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

In 2017/18 UCU piloted an ambitious and innovative UK-wide workload campaign. The campaign uses a joined-up approach - incorporating health and safety, campaigning and organising elements. Using the model, in further and higher education, branches are building and growing collective bargaining strength plus resolving local workload claims.

### THE CAMPAIGN MODEL

#### **Investigate! Agitate! Negotiate!**

UCU branches piloting this approach have made full use of the statutory rights available to trade union safety reps. Experience and learning from the pilot schemes is reflected in the campaign overview and accompanying materials. The campaign model is adaptable for all UCU branches and will enable branches to improve their capacity and ability to deliver real improvements for members.

Fundamental to a successful workload campaign is the appointment of UCU *workload reps*. UCU is the first trade union to develop the concept of a workload rep. The role is an amalgam of health and safety (H&S) rep and workplace rep. Workload reps are essentially health and safety reps with a sole focus on workload and work-related stress issues in their workplace department. Their appointment is underpinned by a set of regulations that give them a number of powerful statutory functions, including conducting workplace inspections, investigations and rights to consultation and information.

Employers have specific legal duties to manage and control the risk of ill health caused by work-related stress. Employers often focus on individuals, using an *employee wellbeing and resilience* approach which tackles the symptoms but not the causes.





A primary objective of the campaign is to secure agreements with the employers to implement the HSE Management Standards approach to managing work-related stress. This is an effective way to ensure that an organisational-level approach is taken which tackles the root causes of workload intensification and excessive working hours.

### THE PROBLEM

Excessive demands at work is a growing issue concerning all staff groups in both higher and further education - it has become apparent that almost all staff have a sense of unreasonable increases in workloads and at the same time resources either fail to keep pace, or are in fact diminishing.

Many employers are unrelentingly loading additional work onto staff without giving due consideration to existing workloads and what alternatives there may be; often there is a failure to consult with the individuals concerned, or with their union. Employers mostly fail to undertake a *suitable and sufficient* risk assessment before loading additional tasks on staff. A rigorous approach to risk assessments should ensure staff are protected from increased risk of harm by change to working practices.

### THE SOLUTION

Ever-increasing workloads can be tackled and improvements won if UCU branches approach workload issues from a health and safety perspective, using the extensive rights and powers available to H&S reps. The solution is a process starting with gathering evidence (such as workplace inspections and workload surveys) to require the employers to manage and control the risk of work-related stress consistent with their legal duties; then build a campaign which places specific demands on the employers to improve workloads.

**In the longer term the objective is to ensure that all staff are consulted about their workloads on an ongoing basis and have input into management decisions.**

Workload protection is not about limiting what staff may choose to do - rather UCU wishes to put limits on what employers can demand of employees, by demonstrating the negative consequences of overloading.

We have proved in the pilots that we can stop overloading by getting organised and campaigning hard.

Start now by:

- appointing workload reps and building a campaign team
- gathering evidence via workplace inspections, surveys and data collection
- securing the involvement and support of all staff groups



- participating in and improving the employers' health and safety consultation structures
- campaigning for joint working groups and organisational-level stress risk management
- identifying and campaigning on specific demands via local claims to improve workloads.

### **THE ROLE OF UCU WORKLOAD REP**

UCU is looking to gather evidence into unreasonable workloads via surveys and local workload inspections. In addition UCU wants to raise the profile of workload issues, build support from staff, and identify key issues which will be formulated into a set of demands to the employer.

So the role of the workload rep is to assist UCU in your local work area/department with the following:

- putting up UCU posters and distributing leaflets and newsletters round staff rooms and to departmental colleagues
- acting as a point of contact between the UCU branch and the department: passing information about workload issues in the department up to the branch and distributing information from the branch to members and non-members
- asking non-members to join, either by emailing them, leafleting their offices or possibly door-knocking
- doing planned workload inspections with UCU branch officers and officials by gathering information from colleagues about workload concerns
- encouraging colleagues to complete and return workload surveys

UCU intends to appoint workload reps as formal health and safety reps - with a focus on workload issues. The appointment of workload reps is therefore underpinned by a set of regulations that give you a number of powerful statutory functions and rights which enable the union to build a more effective workplace organisation.

You will NOT be expected to take up a wider role in representing members or meeting managers unless you later want to receive further training and support to take up a wider UCU representative role in the union.

Bespoke half-day training covering the basic statutory functions of a workload rep for UCU branch officers, reps and newly appointed workload reps is available upon request. Please contact [healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk)