



**University and College Union**

**Keele UCU**

**Handbook for Section  
Representatives**

## THANK YOU: A Message from the Branch President

Dear Section Representatives, new and old,

Thank you for taking on this vital role.

You will see in the material included here that the Section Rep is essential to the activities of the local UCU branch. The difference that an active section rep can make is huge. Raising awareness, passing on updates **and**, importantly, letting the Committee know what is happening in your section, keeps the branch dynamic, relevant and strong.

I hope you will find this handbook useful and that you will enjoy your role.

Please let us know if there is anything further we can do to support you in your valued and valuable work.

In solidarity,

Sorcha Uí Chonnachtaigh  
Branch President

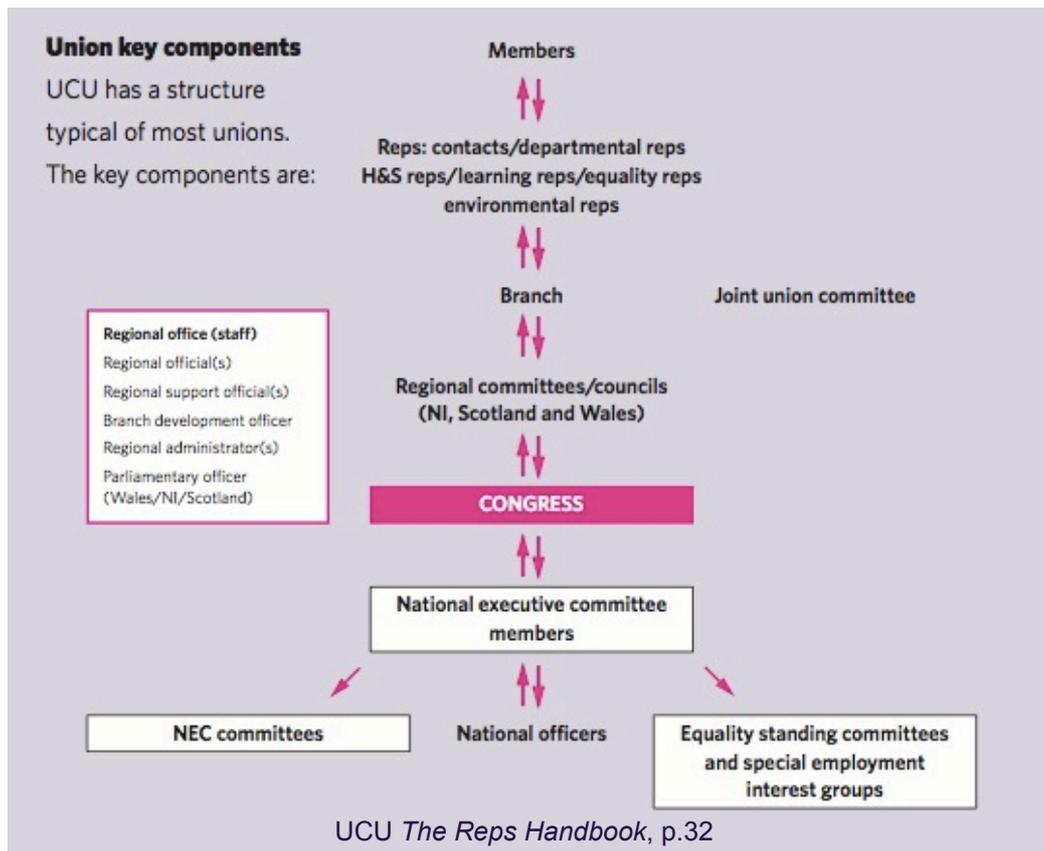
29 January 2018

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## 1. Introduction

Thanks for agreeing to take on this role! Section reps are vital to the work of the union, acting as a link between members and the branch committee. UCU is a grass-roots, member-led organisation. The K-UCU Committee is dependent on members for its mandate, and the section reps strengthen communication between members and the committee.



In this handbook you will find some basic information on what is involved in being a section rep. It is not intended to be comprehensive but to give you a place to start. You can always contact a member of the branch committee if you need further information about any aspect of the role or union activity.

### What is a Section Rep?

A **Section Rep**\* is a school-, programme- or division-based member who acts as a link between members/potential members in their area and the K-UCU Committee.

### What does the role *not* involve?

**Case work:** You will not mediate or represent section members in disputes - this activity is the responsibility of trained union members and is best handled by someone not located in

\* Section is an umbrella term to cover all sorts of units within the university (department, programme, school, division, directorate etc).

the same section. If members are facing difficulties of this sort (disciplinary, grievance), you can refer them to the Personal Cases Coordinator.

**Knowing everything:** you can familiarise yourself with university policies (<http://www.keele.ac.uk/hr/policiesproceduresandguidance/>) but you are not expected to know everything! There are also resources on [www.keeleucu.co.uk](http://www.keeleucu.co.uk) and the main UCU website (<http://www.ucu.org.uk/>). However, you don't have to resolve a member's problem - pass on members' concerns to the Committee or Section Rep Coordinator.

**Forwarding email:** it would be great if you could forward key emails (general or branch) or reminders about K-UCU events and meetings but there's no need to forward all UCU emails.

**Replacing direct communication:** all union members are welcome to communicate directly with the Committee at any time, but you can provide a local presence in your section.

### What does the role involve?

**Strengthening and supporting** the K-UCU by:

- 1. Recruiting:** encourage new staff and non-members to join UCU. Information, flyers and posters will be provided and our Membership Secretary will be happy to help.
- 2. Alerting:** you're a key part of an 'early warning system' to the Committee on any threats to your section, such as course closures or restructuring, enabling the Committee to take swift action and arrange to meet with affected staff promptly.
- 3. Relaying:** we hope you'll disseminate information and reminders to members in your section and feed back your local concerns and issues to us— both individual and collective.
- 4. Organising:** sometimes it may be necessary to take action, and then we'll work with you to help organise members in your section for a campaign.

### Remember

You are not expected to do this alone but to act as a **local link person** for the branch's work in these areas - you can be as active as your commitments allow.

**Member anonymity** is vital, so be sure to get permission from members before passing along names or other information, even to other members or the Committee.

Help members and non-members in your section know that **you are their Section Rep** by displaying your contact details prominently.

### Examples:

- ▶ Provide new staff or non-members with UCU membership information
- ▶ Notify members/potential members in your section that you are their rep
- ▶ Direct members to Committee members for advice and guidance regarding individual or collective issues
- ▶ Encourage attendance at AGMs and EGMs
- ▶ Display/distribute information (flyers, posters, notices)
- ▶ Forward ideas on recruitment, campaigns etc to Committee

## Legal Protection

You are protected against victimisation for union activity.

Members of trade unions have a right not to be victimised for trade union activity. The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (TULR(C)A) and subsequent court decisions give trade union members protection from being:

- victimised on the basis of trade union activity
- refused work on the basis of union membership
- dismissed on the grounds of union membership
- chosen for redundancy because of union membership
- dismissed because of union activity in previous jobs

UCU takes discrimination against union members and representatives seriously and will actively pursue all protections under the law. However, the best protection is to have the support and backing of a well-organised branch and section reps play an important role in strengthening the branch in this regard.

## 2. UCU's Core Activities

The most important aspect of your role is communication. It is crucial to the core activities of the UCU:

1. Recruiting members
2. Organising and campaigning
3. Representing members

You are not solely responsible for any of these tasks. As a section rep, you play a key supporting role in communicating with members and the committee in relation to these activities. If you do want to be more involved in any one of these areas, there is scope for that - just let any member of the committee know.

Below we've pulled together some further information on what UCU does in these areas, with emphasis on the kind of tasks that a section rep could undertake to support the branch (and the union more generally).

## 3. Your Role as a Section Rep

Section Reps engage in four main activities but the workload should be minimal. The four activities are: recruiting, informing, referring, and organising.

More information on all of these follows below.

### 3.1 Recruiting Members

**Recruitment is essential to the union at every level - local and national.**

As a representative institution, our ability to compel employers to listen to us depends on how credible are our claims to speak for staff. If we walk into negotiations as a union representing more than 50% of the workforce, we are more credible than if we claim to speak for staff while really representing only 25%.

## K-UCU RECRUITMENT ACTIVITY

The branch runs recruitment events (often in conjunction with other university events such as new staff inductions), and consider other macro-level methods of reaching non-members. Section reps can help with recruitment in the following ways:

- 1. Identify yourself!** If it is clear that you are the 'local' union person, new staff or other non-members might be more comfortable talking to you about any questions they have about union membership or problems/issues that arise. We will provide you with posters that have a contact box for you to personalise with your details - these can be put on your office door *and* elsewhere in high visibility areas (e.g. post room).
- 2. Following-up new starters:** When people take up a new job, they will often get a welcome pack, with membership application, from the union. However, this can be low priority with everything else they have going on so a gentle reminder from their local section rep can help. We have a sample invitation to join letter (see next page).
- 3. Local meetings:** You can hold meetings for members in your section - if the union activity is seen to be done, it could attract non-members. You might only want to hold meetings if an issue/problem arises in your section, or else you might want to have a 10 minute get together after another regular section meeting (e.g. school meeting) 3-4 times a year.
- 4. Introductory section-wide email:** You can send an email on your local mail list to introduce yourself as the rep for your section - see the template below. This will be helpful to new starters and also to existing staff who are non-members, even if they don't immediately contact you looking for membership information.

## INTRODUCTORY EMAIL TEMPLATE

Now that you are a Section Rep, it would be good to circulate an email to colleagues to introduce yourself. Robin put together the email template below.

This template should be adapted to your local circumstances. We have **bolded** a suggested 'disclaimer' to highlight its importance but you don't need to bold it in your email. If colleagues request to be removed from the mailing list, you can set up a local Google group for those who do want to receive information or contact IT to set up a local UCU mail list (e.g. UCULaw).

Subject: Keele UCU

Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to inform you that I have agreed to take on the role of 'Section Representative' for [your section title] for our branch of the UCU (University and College Union).

As a Section Rep I can help convey any general concerns, issues or suggestions we may have to the K-UCU Committee, and I can also help you stay informed about events and developments that may affect us. You are still encouraged to contact the K-UCU Committee directly (see <http://www.keeleucu.co.uk/> for details), but as a Section Rep I will also offer a 'local' presence. I will not be re-sending union emails you already receive on the Keele UCU mailing list, if you are a member.

If you are not yet a UCU member, I will be happy to provide you with information on the benefits of membership and how to join. Aside from being part of a Union that works to

ensure sector-wide good working conditions, job security, academic freedom, secure pay and pensions, as a Keele UCU member you will also be part of a team that works closely with our own HR and Management groups on your behalf to help form and review policy and advise on a broad spectrum of workplace issues, such as the Dignity & Respect Framework, restructuring and performance appraisal.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. **I have used the [section] mail list, if you don't want to receive further union-related circulars, please let me know.**

Kind regards,

[your name]

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Section Rep, [your section]  
on behalf of K-UCU

## **SAMPLE INVITATION TO JOIN LETTER (FOR NEW STAFF)**

Dear Colleague,

We would like to invite you to join the University and College Union. We are the nationally recognised body representing professionals in Higher and Further Education. We are the representative voice for academic and academic-related staff at Keele.

Keele UCU members work as 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 new ideas.

### **UCU membership advantages include:**

#### **UCU – our voice for university academic and academic-related staff**

Our union fees contribute to representation at a local and national level on professional and educational issues, Influencing public debate on Further and Higher Education through parliamentary lobbying and the national media and negotiating on wages and conditions. The more members we have, the stronger our voice.

#### **UCU – our voice at Keele**

Here at Keele UCU we represent the collective interests of all our members and exert influence on University/College decision-making. We work closely with other campus trade unions where appropriate and constantly seek to improve current conditions. For current campaigns and local information check out our website at <http://www.keeleucu.co.uk/>.

#### **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 local association/branch, with additional support from the UCU's regional and national resources, including access to the best legal advice available.

**Join the UCU** – Keele UCU is only as strong as its membership. The more members we have, the more influence we can exert. If you want to have a say in our collective

negotiations then join us and get active. All UCU members are entitled to attend free union training courses as well.

You can join by contacting the Keele UCU Membership Secretary, Mariangela Palladino ([m.palladino@keele.ac.uk](mailto:m.palladino@keele.ac.uk)) or online at [www.ucu.org.uk/join](http://www.ucu.org.uk/join).

Get active at [www.ucu.org.uk/dan](http://www.ucu.org.uk/dan)

Find out what training is available at [www.ucu.org.uk/training](http://www.ucu.org.uk/training)

Yours sincerely,

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[insert name]

on behalf of K-UCU

**NB:** In future emails, please add the following disclaimer at the end of the message:  
“This email may go to non-members, including management, if you don’t want everyone to read your response, please email me directly.”

## RECRUITMENT INFORMATION

### Benefits of Joining UCU

While you will be well aware of the benefits of union membership, here are some of the highlights to mention to interested colleagues:

UCU is the largest post-school union in the world: a force working for education that your employer and the government cannot ignore. It understands the work you do, and the problems you face. And, of course, the more members UCU has, the more effective the support and protection UCU offers will be.

While you do not want to be too pushy, you might want to reframe the question away from ‘why should I join?’ to ‘can you afford not to be a member?’ Not to have a say in the way your department and indeed institution is run; not to have access to expert advice, up-to-date information and guidance; not to have access to representation, including legal representation, if things do go wrong? UCU can only help you if you are a member.

### How to Join

Online: <https://join.ucu.org.uk>

### Who can join?

Our rules entitle anyone who works (part-time, full-time, temporary or permanent) as an academic, lecturer, trainer, instructor, researcher, administrator, manager, computer staff,

librarian or postgraduate in a UK university, college, prison, adult education or training organisation to join UCU. Keele has two other unions that represent other employee groups.

**NB** Postgraduate students who do any teaching work and sessional teaching staff are entitled to join the Union (with full membership benefits) for free! See: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/free>

### How much does membership cost?

Membership fees depend on your salary - the scale starts at just over £1 per month. Most full-time employees will pay between £10 - £20 per month for the national UCU subscription. Keele UCU branch also has a minimal (and optional) 'local subscription' to support local activities.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/join>

## 3.2 Informing

You facilitate efficient action by the branch by alerting the Committee to any threats to your section, such as course closures or restructuring. You also help to keep your section informed of national and local issues and campaigns that the branch is involved in.

Again, the key emphasis is on two-way communication between the Committee and the Section Reps and between members and Section Reps. We're all responsible for maintaining good communication - see the tips above in section 3.1.

## 3.3 Referring Members for Representation

Your main role with regard to representing members is to:

**REFER:** you will need to refer local members on to the K-UCU cases coordinator (or another committee member depending on the issue they are experiencing).

Section reps **should not** represent colleagues in formal meetings (disciplinary, grievance) with management. **This role can only be undertaken by union members with the appropriate training.** If a colleague approaches you to discuss a problem or issue that has arisen, you should refer them to the K-UCU cases coordinator (Mrs Caroline Merritt: [c.merritt@keele.ac.uk](mailto:c.merritt@keele.ac.uk)). If you have the time, you can do the following:

**Listen:** the most important element of communication is listening. If a colleague approaches you, make sure you have a private space. If you're too busy, refer the case on to the relevant committee member or arrange to meet later.

In all communications with members in your section, be sure to:

**Avoid judgement:** ask questions in a sympathetic manner and avoid 'cross-examining' your colleague.

**Maintain confidentiality:** if your colleague wants you to contact a committee member for case work purposes, you might take a few notes about their case to forward to the relevant person but you should ask their permission to share the information (and keep notes somewhere safe or destroy them).

Occasionally, a colleague may raise an issue with you that involves a conflict of interest. In such a case, you should let them know immediately and then refer them to a committee member.

### 3.4 Organising

As a rep, you play a key role in making the branch and the union stronger. It can be easy to forget that our strength comes from our ability to say to management, with confidence, that we speak for our members and for staff more broadly. That means being active in talking to members; it means identifying a new generation of reps and active UCU members.

Most 'organising' will be done in conjunction with the branch committee, which takes its lead from members. K-UCU activities are based on the concerns and issues expressed by the membership. Mostly, you will not actively 'organise' unless you 'opt in' to a particular branch activity separate to your role as a rep.

- Section reps will organise, if appropriate, on a local level - for example, section-based meetings.
- You will support the organising of the branch/union by communicating to your section's members. Members receive information about UCU and K-UCU activities via the relevant mail lists but if we have an EGM around an issue (e.g. pay), reps can help remind local members with a brief email or by printing and posting the relevant flyer for the event (on their office door, post room, break room etc).
- If the national union or the local branch votes for industrial action, you can support organisation around the action by posting information locally (in your section).

UCU's campaign page - <http://www.ucu.org.uk/campaignupdate> - has more on the national UCU campaigns. In addition to national campaigns, the K-UCU branch focuses on local issues. Again, section reps can forward information to local members or post flyers to support this activity.

UCU has a Developing Activists Network (DAN) for any members who wish to get more involved in union activism: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/dan>.

There are activist and union training opportunities through UCU also:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/training>

## 4. Keele UCU Contact Details

The make up of the branch committee can change from year-to-year, this information will be updated on the website: <http://www.keeleucu.co.uk/committee-members/>

<b>Executive Officers</b>	<b>@keele.ac.uk</b>	<b>x</b>	
Sorcha Uí Chonnachtaigh Officer	s.ui.chonnachtaigh	34519	President, Equality
Fabienne Emmerich	f.emmerich	33139	Branch Secretary
Mariangela Palladino	m.palladino	33397	Membership Secretary
Kay Tong	k.tong	34190	Treasurer
<b>Committee Members</b>	<b>@keele.ac.uk</b>	<b>x</b>	
Ben Anderson	b.anderson	33611	Environment Officer
Bernadette Bartlam	b.bartlam	33939	
Robin Bell Reps	r.bell	33049	Health & Safety, Sec
Rachel Bright	r.k.bright	33466	
Mark Featherstone	m.a.featherstone	34179	Policy
Peter Fletcher	p.fletcher	33260	
Steve French	s.r.french	33609	NSTUC Rep
Bulent Gokay	b.gokay	33512	Black Members Lead
Lorna Lloyd	l.lloyd	33215	
Caroline Merritt	c.merritt	33452	Casework Coordinator
Fiorella Montero Diaz	r.montero.diaz	34595	LGBT Members Lead
Ceri Morgan	c.m.morgan	34076	Policy Officer
Mario Prost	m.prost	33097	
Becky Richards	r.richards	33211	
Claire Slater	c.v.slater	34365	
Tim Smale	t.smale	34561	
Sorcha Uí Chonnachtaigh Lead	s.ui.chonnachtaigh	34519	Disabled Members

## 5. Section Reps List

Chemistry	
Computing & Maths	Peter Fletcher
DRIE	
Estates	
Finance & IT	Sandra Gillham
Foundation Year	Jon Cope
Geography	
GTAs, PGRs, Casual	
HR	
Humanities	Becky Bowler
KMS	Anita Mangan
Law	Fabienne Emmerich
Library Services	Scott McGowan
Life Sciences	William Kirk
LLU	Robin Bell
LPDC	
MAC	Ant Sutcliffe
Medical School & Primary Care Sciences	(Bernadette Bartlam)
Nursing & Midwifery	Harj Kaur
Pharmacy	Gary Moss
Physics & Astrophysics	Jacco Van Loon
Psychology	Mark Trueman
SHAR	Kay Tong
SPIRE	Caroline Merritt
SS&PP	
Student Services	Claire Slater

As of January 2018, we need to recruit a significant number of new reps - if you know of anyone in the sections without a rep who might be good, please encourage them to get in touch with us and perhaps let us know (we can approach them too).