

Facilities Time Agreement for UCU Officers at Loughborough

Introduction

We wish to request an increase of 50% of an FTE (to give 1.0 FTE in total) in the allocation of facilities time for UCU officers to allow us to continue to offer our members the support and service they deserve and so that we can maintain good industrial relations between the union and the university. The demands of personal case work, negotiation, consultation and a marked increase in administrative duties as well as the pressure to serve a membership of almost 700 people all mean that the current allocation of 50% time allocation between five officers is insufficient. Currently the President and Vice President are allocated 15%; Secretary, 10%; and 5% allocated each for the Treasurer and the Membership Secretary. It is important to stress that, alongside their union activity, officers continue to carry out their research, teaching, administration managerial and professional duties to full capacity.

The case for such a request is usually based on one of three approaches: providing an estimate of the amount of time officers spend on union related activity; giving evidence of the time and cost savings to institutions as a result of union activity and intervention; and providing facilities agreement comparators with other institutions. We can provide evidence in support of all three approaches.

Officer time spent

Officers spend time on a range of union related activity from individual personal case work (which has shown a marked increase in recent months), negotiation, consultation and administrative responsibilities. Much of the personal case work involves informal representation and advocacy for members and advice and support on a range of issues. Officers also advise and represent members in formal meetings, for example in Appeals and Hearings and liaise with UCU's legal advisors. Officers also work with and consult Heads of Departments, Deans, PVCs and Personnel Advisors on a wide number of issues relating to personal case work and other matters. Wherever possible, we attempt to resolve members' problems, complaints or grievances internally through informal consultation and joint meetings. It is important to stress that without an increase in facilities time a reduction in the extent of union and officer activity and engagement would be inevitable. This would necessarily result in much longer response time on matters regarding organisation revision, Conditions Of Service, negotiations on revised or new procedures, etc.

It is difficult to be precise about the exact amount of time each officer spends on all union related activity because this is subject to some variation. What we provide below is an estimate, based on an average estimate of weekly activity, of officer time spent on, for example, consultation, negotiation, help and advice to members, administration work and union activity at a local level. We have also included time that is spent on regional and national matters, including regional committee meetings, special sector conferences, congress etc in order to demonstrate the nature and extent of the extra work that we do.

Estimation of Officer Facilities Time

Details	Time dedicated to task (including preparation and attendance and follow up actions)	Comments
<i>All officers are expected and committed to participate in the following meetings and activities::</i>		
Committee meetings (once every three weeks)	2 hours	
General Meetings at least (twice a year)	2 hours	
Annual General Meetings (once a year)	3 hours	
Academic and Related Staff Negotiating Committee Pre Meetings (three times a year)	2 hours	Preparation of agenda items and additional papers for ARSNC: at least 2 hours
Meetings with Vice Chancellor (three times a year)	1.5 hours	
East Midlands Regional Committee Meetings (full sector; three times a year)	3 hours	Additionally, approximately 1 hour preparation and/or follow up actions.
East Midlands HE Sector Committee Meetings (three times a year held at Loughborough)	2 hours (minimum)	Additionally, approximately 1 hour preparation and/or follow up actions.
Attendance at training events or Special Sector National meetings (approximately twice a year per officer)	Approximately 8 hours	
National Congress and Conference (once a year)	Three days	
<i>Officer time dedicated to other activities:</i>		
Consultation Meetings with Other Campus Unions (at least twice a year)	2 hours	
Items for consultation and negotiation*	Approximately 2.5 hours per week per officer	Time spent includes preparation for and attendance at (formal and informal) meetings, preparation of papers for discussion, arrangement of further meetings, agenda items etc.
Personal Case Work	Approximately 3.5 hours per week per officer	Each officer is allocated at least 2 cases each. NB: at times some officers have more than two personal cases; time spent on each case varies depending on the nature of the personal issue. This can include offering personal advice and support, informal consultation with members and others in the university (for example, personnel advisors, HoDs, Deans etc), discussion with legal advisors and regional representatives.
Administration	1 hour per week per officer	Includes specific and general tasks. For example, for Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Personal Case Co ordinator this also includes dedicated time spent on specific admin tasks relating to accounts, database of members etc, preparation of newsletter.
Telephone/e-mail/in-person enquiries from members and advice given	Approximately 1 hour per week per officer	
Consultation with staff at regional/national offices	Approximately 30 minutes per week per	

Evidence of time and cost savings to the university

We hope that the work of UCU at Loughborough, including input from officers as well as committee members, and the consultation and negotiation that takes place between the union and the university is viewed positively and that any request for an increase in capacity in respect of time allocated to officers would be viewed in the same way. We are frequently informed via Personnel that both formal Appeals and Hearings (for example, appeals against redundancy, formal grievance hearings), as well as the need for external mediation, are rare occurrences at Loughborough. We would argue that LUCU plays a considerable and critical role in preventing many cases from progressing to formal and legal proceedings.

All officers carry a relatively high personal case load and the interventions that we make are always, as far as possible, aimed at resolving matters internally and on an informal basis. It is important to consider that without this intervention, the only option for staff who are experiencing difficulties or who have a complaint would be to proceed through the formal routes. The results of the staff survey show that there are members of staff who are experiencing discrimination, bullying and/or high levels of stress. The role that the union plays in helping to mediate these issues is often critical and we also alert the university to potential problems in particular departments or units that show a high level of personal case work undertaken by officers and other committee members.

Facilities agreement comparators

We have already made the request for an increase in facilities time via the Academic and Related Staff Negotiating Committee (ARSNC) and were disappointed to receive a negative response to this request. The work that the officers do should not be undertaken in their personal spare time as this work is not for individual professional development but is important and necessary to support union members effectively and to facilitate and maintain good labour relations at Loughborough. Negotiation and agreement about facilities time should reflect the important and time consuming nature of this work and officer time should be appropriately and effectively allocated according to a formal and recognised agreement. Loughborough University often prides itself on being in line with or ahead of its competitors. Sadly, in respect of union facilities time, Loughborough does not compare at all favourably. As part of the National Organising Plan the UCU Recruitment, Organising and Campaigning Committee (ROCC) has tasked the union with gathering information on facilities time agreements across the entire union. ROCC will be establishing priority areas for negotiating and campaigning to increase the number of written agreements and to ensure that branch reps have the time they need to provide effective representation to members.

Data that are available currently on institutions that have a membership similar in size to Loughborough (ie between 600-700 members) show that all institutions have at least twice the allocation of officer facilities time than is currently agreed at Loughborough. These data don't name institutions but reveal that at least three local institutions with a much smaller membership than Loughborough all have more than double the allocation of facilities time. An East Midlands institution that has a comparable membership (in terms of numbers) to Loughborough provides the equivalent of a 2 fte allocation as part of their facilities time agreement. Furthermore, the aim of the recent negotiations at Nottingham Trent University (which has a union membership similar in size to Loughborough) in respect of facilities time was to reach an agreement that was 'reflective of at least good practice in the sector'. At NTU this meant: 'two FTE's

(equivalent to 2500 hours) (pro rata) for 08/09 and two FTE's (equivalent to 2500 hours) for 09/10 plus 0.48 FTE to be spread over these two years, plus time off for training, plus the provision under section 6.3 of the 'time off' document for 'one-off' type events/issues.' Regional and national campaign officers are aware of the inadequacies of facilities time agreements, particularly in pre 92 institutions and have advised us that the allocation at Loughborough is extremely low.

Our request for an increase in facilities time for union related activity at Loughborough is both genuine and necessary and we ask that the Operations Sub Committee give it serious and due consideration.

* Examples of items for consultation and/or negotiation for each officer over the last four months include: Conditions of Service for academic and related staff; return to work procedures; pensions; death in service; probation for researchers; probation for academic and related staff; personal research planning; the holiday year; the staff survey; pay negotiations; pay and conditions (for example, for particular groups of staff); job evaluation (training); the Healthy Universities Scheme.