

Guidance for Members Seeking Personal Assistance

1. UCU routinely helps members with individual problems arising from their employment by the University of Glasgow. The range of problems that are covered is very wide including, for example, potential disciplinary action, renewal of fixed term contracts, pensions, promotion and career development, study leave, research facilities, and harassment.

Recourse: <http://www.teachersupport.info/fehe> (support services for education professionals) complements the work of the union, offering members free information and advice, 24-hour telephone counselling, online coaching and financial assistance.

2. Members are strongly encouraged to contact UCU as early as possible in the development of a problem. Experience shows that rapid referral to UCU can often nip a problem in the bud whereas if matters are allowed to develop without UCU intervention it may become too late for effective intervention.

3. In particular, any member of UCU who is asked to attend a meeting for disciplinary reasons with their Head of School/Unit, or other person to whom they are responsible, should immediately alert UCU Glasgow. It is our strong advice that they only attend such a meeting in the presence of a UCU representative: however, the final decision on whether to be accompanied is up to the member.

4. Members are advised that, should they find themselves present at meetings where serious issues relating to their performance or conditions of work arise unexpectedly, they should immediately ask for time to seek UCU or other advice. Members are also advised to make their own record, at the time, of any work related incidents or developments which give grounds for concern.

5. Normally the UCU will only offer its help to UCU members of more than 90 days standing, and is not normally able to provide assistance to members who have only joined the Union once the problem has become apparent.

Exceptionally, help in the form of one meeting, or one phone call with a caseworker may be given to non-members (or late joiners) in either of the following cases:

- i) the member of staff has only recently become eligible to join UCU;
- ii) the problem is one which Glasgow UCU believes should be pursued in the general interests of all members.

In all such cases the person concerned must join UCU at the earliest opportunity.

6. Members who seek the assistance of UCU should contact the Casework Coordinator, Margaret at UCU Glasgow Office on Tel: 0141 330 5375 or Email: ucug@gla.ac.uk.

7. Cases will normally be referred to a caseworker. Caseworker/s are UCU members who have undertaken training in the handling of personal cases. They are volunteers who carry out this work in addition to their normal University duties. Caseworker/s are coordinated by the Casework Coordinator, Margaret, UCUG Administrator in UCU Glasgow office.

8. Most cases are dealt with by liaison between the caseworker, the member and the University. Exceptionally, the caseworker may recommend that a serious case should be forwarded to the UCU Scotland office under the terms of UCU's national legal protection scheme.

9. In the rare cases where legal advice is required, this will be obtained by the caseworker in discussion with UCU Scotland. UCU's regulations for legal advice may be found on the UCU web page on legal advice: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1824> (membership number required for access).

10. Personal cases are kept strictly confidential to the Casework Coordinator and those caseworker/s or UCU officials to whom the Casework Coordinator refers the case. Material relating to individuals held by UCU Glasgow is deemed to be held by the National UCU as far as the Data Protection Act is concerned and not by the University of Glasgow. General issues involved in personal cases may be reported to the UCU Committee or UCU membership, but, except with the permission of the member concerned, this will be done in such a way as to protect anonymity. This stipulation should be read in conjunction with clause 14.

11. The University has several formal procedures which can be used to resolve disputes. Experience has shown that cases may often be resolved informally but in some circumstances a more satisfactory outcome can be obtained by using the formal procedures. Members will be advised accordingly; however, the decision on which course of action to adopt rests unambiguously with the member concerned.

12. Advice is given to members on the understanding that:

- i) members will reveal all relevant facts to their caseworker;
- ii) they will consult their caseworker before communicating with management;
- iii) if they seek additional help outside UCU Glasgow this should be done with the knowledge and support of their caseworker;
- iv) they will provide such documentation as the caseworker requests.

Relevant documentation may typically include a CV, a chronology of recent events, and supporting documents. Some documentation may be required at the outset to enable the caseworker to make an

informed recommendation about which procedure should be adopted (see Clause 8). Failure to comply with these conditions, which are essential if UCU is to give its best advice to members, may lead to the withdrawal of the support of UCU.

13. Members who are not happy with their caseworker should inform the Casework Coordinator.

14. Disputes can arise between UCU members in which both parties seek the assistance of the UCU. This may occur when, for example, a line manager and employee are both members of UCU. Disputes can also arise between colleagues where there is no management role. In all such cases UCU Glasgow will normally attempt to resolve the dispute informally by conciliation or mediation. To assist with this the relevant caseworker/s to the two parties will exchange information. The Local Branch will only support a member in a procedure directed against another UCU member if

i) the member has agreed to try to resolve the dispute informally through conciliation or mediation; ii) failure to resolve the dispute informally is not judged (by the Casework Coordinator of the Local Branch) to be due to the unreasonable behavior of the member. 15. Where a UCU member is subject to a University procedure initiated by another UCU member then:

- i) s/he may avail her/himself of support from the University; or
- ii) s/he may ask UCU Glasgow Casework Coordinator to provide her/him with the services of a local committee member who has not had any previous involvement in the case. In some circumstances, the Casework Coordinator may advise that it is appropriate to involve a regional official or Assistant General Secretary from another region who has not had any previous involvement in the case.

16. Members should be aware that caseworker/s drawn from the Local Branch are volunteers acting in their own time, and that therefore there are limits on the total amount of time that they are able to devote to any one case. In particular, once a problem has been resolved, the responsibility of the caseworker is at an end. Should a new problem arise, the member should contact UCU Glasgow Office 0141 330 5375.

17. Members often have cause to be grateful to their UCU caseworker/s. They should be aware that it is the policy of UCU Glasgow that caseworker/s should not accept gifts from members. Grateful members are therefore asked not to embarrass their caseworker/s by offering tangible tokens of their appreciation. They may consider instead making a donation to [Recourse: http://www.teachersupport.info/fehe](http://www.teachersupport.info/fehe)

18. Though care has been taken in drafting this document, it may be that it conflicts, or will in the future conflict, with National UCU advice on personal cases and legal aid. In all such cases, National UCU advice, current at the time, shall take precedence.