

## **Tips On How To Have Good One-on-One Conversations with Members and Non-Members about Joining a Marking and Assessment Boycott**

Our strength as a union comes from our willingness to take action as a collective. *The bigger our numbers, the greater our impact.* But growing the union isn't a task for reps alone -- it's on all of us! In this interactive training, we'll be learning from one another as lay members about how to have effective organising conversations with co-workers ahead of an MAB and beyond.

**>> A one-on-one organising conversation is different than an ordinary conversation because you have a clear purpose and a short timeframe to accomplish it.**

### **Here are some suggested steps:**

**1) Greet your coworker in a friendly manner** and explain that you are a UCU member (or rep, if relevant) and are doing the rounds of offices in your department to talk about the upcoming marking and assessment boycott. For conversations with non-members, clarify that you are seeking to speak to everyone about the MAB as the outcome of our negotiations affects all of us.

**2) Give the co-worker a chance to respond/ask questions** before you go on. Typically, people will take the opportunity to ask questions or share their views on the disputes or other workplace issues. Remember: *listening is at the heart of all good organising conversations!* You should aim for a 3:1 listening to speaking ratio. (See list of do's and don'ts regarding active listening, etc. below for further info).

**3) Respond to any questions raised** about the union, the disputes and/or the MAB and **validate any concerns**. Explain that we are currently organising for an MAB, which is a different form of action than the actions we have taken previously and that we believe this form of action will provide us with greater leverage at the bargaining table because of the impact on awarding degrees and financial implications of this for our employers. For specific questions regarding the pay and pensions disputes, you may **refer them to the fliers or other UCU materials** for further details. If you don't know how to respond to particular questions or concerns, note down what they've said and take down their name and contact information. Let them know that you will get back to them – and then follow up as soon as possible!

**4) For conversations with non-members, gauge their level of familiarity with the union and the disputes.** Non-members will range from staff who have very little knowledge of trade unionism in general to staff who might have an active antipathy towards the union – and everything in between! While some members of staff may be more likely to be less knowledgeable about UCU (for example, because they are coming from working in a different sector or country, or because of their age), *please do not make assumptions about people's trade union backgrounds or knowledge base.* Instead, respond on the basis of what is arising in the conversation and *meet people where they are at* (i.e., if the person you are speaking with seems unclear on what a trade union is, you will need to explain that first.)

5) **“The Ask”**. This is, for most of us, the most uncomfortable part of having one on one conversations but it is the most important. Before you leave, be sure to **ask people if they will commit to participating in the MAB**. If they are a ‘yes’ or a ‘maybe’ and are not currently a member, please take down their name and contact information and ***follow up as soon as possible*** with a short email directing them to the link to join: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/join>.

6) **Answer any additional questions**, let them know about upcoming branch or departmental meetings or other union activities.

7) **Reaffirm** that our strength in bargaining is our numbers and that you were glad to have a chance to talk with them.

**IMPORTANT: If you don’t know the answer to a question, tell your co-worker that UCU will get back to them on this. Please then refer any questions to the branch ([ucu@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@sheffield.ac.uk)) who will coordinate follow up.**

**How do you handle objections or resistance from co-workers?**

**1) Acknowledge/Affirm**

Acknowledge the feeling that someone has expressed if they are unsure about joining the union or about the marking and assessment boycott.

**2) Answer**

- Answer the underlying concern or question that has led to the objection (for example: fear, disappointment in the union’s record to date, lack of information).

**3) Return**

- Ask a question that takes people back to the issues at hand; the need and the will to want to improve things through growing the union should outweigh the doubts that are raised through objections.

**List of dos and don’ts**

Dos	Don’ts
Repeat and reflect	Talk down to them
Restate without changing	Play “gotcha” on inaccurate statements
Active listening	
Empathize – body language+	Show distrust
Tell the truth	Only talk about the positive
Respect their common sense	Assume you know better
Discuss options & obstacles	Put words in their mouth
Be positive	Be only “anti-company”