Negotiating Better Facilities Time

This branch notes

1. The current facility time agreement between the University of Oxford and the UCU came into force on 1 January 2022. It may be amended by mutual agreement at any time.

2. Whilst the 2022 agreement has proved broadly serviceable, it impedes the union from fully carrying out some of its recognised functions as an organisation of workers for collective bargaining, representation, and consultation.

3. There are two areas in which the current agreement causes problems:

    (a) The agreement disadvantages College-only staff, other outsourced staff, and postgraduate students who participate in union activities. These groups of workers, which often overlap, have long been strongly represented in key union roles in Oxford UCU. These union officials play an important role in ensuring the proper and successful functioning of the university. However, this role is not acknowledged in the 2022 facilities time agreement, which makes no explicit provision for these categories of workers.

    (b) The second issue with the current agreement is its pro rata application to part-time workers. While the pro rata principle may at first seem like the most equitable mechanism for allocating facilities time to part-time workers, in practice it disadvantages staff on small fractional contracts. This is because the amount of facilities time currently available for each individual (no more than 20% of their contractual working hours) can result in allocations which are too small actually to be used.

        (i) For example, under the current system, a worker with a 0.2 FTE contract would be entitled to 0.04 FTE facilities time, or just 1.5 hours per week. This is neither sufficient, nor can it easily be integrated into a working diary in such a way that safeguards the time for its intended purpose.

This branch believes

4. The facility time agreement should be reviewed regularly and adjusted to ensure it fulfils its intended purpose of enabling Oxford UCU to represent workers effectively.

5. Any individual fulfilling a key union role (officer, caseworker, active rep) should be able to take paid facility time for the purposes of supporting them in their union duties and activities.

This branch resolves

6. To develop policies for amending the Oxford UCU facilities time agreement to make it more pragmatic, flexible, and inclusive.

7. To negotiate policies at upcoming bargaining meetings throughout the year, including the Michaelmas Term JCC meeting (November 3rd).