

Code of Conduct for online Forums and Email Discussion Lists June 2022

The OU branch of UCU is committed to providing a friendly, safe and welcoming environment in accordance with Rule 6.1 of the UCU Membership Rulebook. All members are expected to be respectful and considerate of others; avoid insults, 'snarkiness' (for example sarcasm) or derogatory comment; and maintain good manners. Failure to do so may result in temporary or permanent suspension of participation in the list or forum¹.

In addition to the points below, the factsheets on the national UCU web page at <https://www.ucu.org.uk/harassment> provide a useful guide to acceptable behaviour for our branch².

Union forums and email lists are analogous to union meetings. The content posted there should not be discussed or quoted except by agreement from the moderator and originator. Where an email list or forum derives from a meeting or committee, the chair or a designated moderator will have authority over the use of the list or forum, and their instructions should be followed.

Because the fact of trade union membership is sensitive personal data, it is not acceptable to identify other members without their permission in a non-union context, nor should you use knowledge of their membership for non-union purposes.

The branch does not tolerate harassment or abuse. Criticism should be constructive, and focus on issues, and must not be personal towards other individual members or staff of UCU.

Postings should always be courteous. Members are free to debate and disagree with each other's opinions but should not make personal attacks.

Complaints about the conduct of individual members should be taken through the proper channels under the UCU Rulebook rather than aired on lists or forums.

Any member who wishes to influence branch policy or priorities can put forward a motion for discussion at a branch meeting. If you feel the branch could be doing something better or differently, this can be raised at a branch meeting.

When posting, remember that colleagues may have disabilities, hardships and experiences of which you are not aware. Colleagues also come from widely differing cultures and backgrounds – this is particularly important to remember with humour, which can easily be misunderstood.

Please consider the workload of colleagues in posting, and the fact that others may not be online at the same time or with the same frequency. Brevity is appreciated and unless stated otherwise by the moderator (for instance in 'social' or 'political debate' forums) postings should focus on UCU-related matters.

Other tips:

- Try to assume good intentions, just as you would like others to assume that your own are good. It can be very hard to 'read' nuance online or in written posts.
- Sending an email when angry is often counter-productive. If things become heated it is advisable to take time away from the discussion before responding and to ask a trusted union colleague for feedback prior to sending.
- When disagreeing, be careful to address the argument, not attack the individual making it.

[1] The moderator of the list or forum can decide to suspend the posting rights of a member or members. There will be a right of appeal to a panel established by the branch executive committee

[2] The information and guidance in the UCU fact sheets does not change members' rights under branch rules.