



Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to set out the standards of behaviour expected from elected, appointed or nominated representatives (UFU Representatives) belonging to the Ulster Farmers' Union Groups, County Committees, Policy Committees, Board, Executive Committee and Council (Unions' Committees).

Mission

Members of the Ulster Farmers' Union (the Union), are expected to be committed to deliver the Union's mission to serve its members by promoting and supporting a vibrant and sustainable rural economy where agriculture is secure and pivotal to its future.

Objectives

- To defend the rights and promote the interests of its members.
- To seek to secure the economic sustainability and quality of life for farm families.
- To encourage environmentally sustainable, welfare friendly, market orientated farming practices.
- To improve the wider social infrastructures within the rural economy.

Members of the Unions' Committees, are expected to be committed to deliver the mission, objectives, Constitution and Rules of the Union.

1. Members' Behaviour

All UFU Representatives are expected to commit to the following behaviours:

- **Selflessness:** act with selflessness by prioritising the needs and interests of the members represented over personal gain and working towards the collective benefit of all members.
- **Integrity:** this will be the hallmark of all conduct within the Union, when dealing with fellow members, staff and nominated representatives at all levels. The Union is committed to fairness in all organisational dealings and interactions with external entities and individuals.
- **Objectivity:** act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias. Decisions are made by the Unions' Committees for the benefit of the membership and are bound by collective responsibility.
(50. UFU Constitution and Rules)
- **Accountability:** everything the Union does will be able to stand the test of scrutiny by our members, and the promotion and maintenance of confidence and trust. The Union will also be credible to the members of the public, the media, other stakeholders and the regulatory authorities.

- **Openness:** the Union will strive to promote an atmosphere of openness throughout the organisation in order to engender confidence among our members, staff, nominated representatives, members of the public and regulators. Information should not be withheld from the members unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty:** act with honesty, ensuring transparency and truthfulness in all interactions and communications, thereby fostering trust and integrity within the Unions' Committees and wider membership.
- **Professionalism:** always conduct yourself in a professional manner, both in person and online, when representing the Union. Communicate respectfully and constructively in all interactions with fellow members, staff, nominated representatives and external stakeholders.
- **Respect and inclusivity:** treat all individuals with whom you interact with dignity, respect, and kindness, regardless of their background, identity, or opinions. Avoid discrimination, harassment, or bullying based on race, age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability, or any other protected characteristic.

2. Conflicts of Interest

All UFU Representatives are expected to:

- As required by the Standing Orders, declare at the beginning of each meeting of the Unions' Committees any conflict of interest or situation that might be perceived by others as possibly interfering with the Union's mission and business.
- Record any conflicts of interests in the Register of Interests if a Board member. You must complete the forms promptly and notify the CEO or Internal Services Manager (as applicable) of any changes in a timely manner.
- Always act in the best interests of the organisation.
- Respect the decisions of the Unions' Committees.

3. Personal Gain

All UFU Representatives are expected to:

- Not have any form of personal gain from their role on the Unions' Committees nor permit others to do so as a result of my actions or negligence.
- Claim expenses only as appropriate to business needs, document expenses and seek reimbursement according to the appropriate UFU Expenses and Benefits Policy.

- Not accept donations, gifts or hospitality relating to their Union role without the guidance of the Union CEO or Internal Services Manager.
- Use the Union's financial and other resources responsibly, when authorised in accordance with procedure.

4. Meetings

All UFU Representatives are expected to:

- Respect the principles of good governance in all their actions and live up to the trust placed in them by the Union.
- Strive to attend meetings of the Unions' Committees that they are a member of.
- Abide by the procedures and practice of the Unions' Committees including the Unions' Standing Orders.
- Be prepared for meetings in order to contribute to the debate during meetings.
- Respect the authority of the Chairperson of the meeting and direct all comments through them.
- Promptly declare at the start of any meeting any personal interest in the matters to be discussed at the meeting which is or may be perceived as a conflict by yourself or others.
- Avoid personalised comments at meetings, keep comments focussed on policy and performance, and maintain a respectful attitude to the opinions of others and their right to speak without interruption.

- Avoid criticising Union staff directly or indirectly, any issues should be directed in writing to the Chief Executive.
- Listen actively and considerately to others' perspectives, even if they differ from your own.
- Members are encouraged to express their views succinctly and allow equal participation by all members. This practice not only respects the time of all participants but also fosters a collaborative environment where diverse perspectives can be heard.

5. Collective Responsibility

UFU Representatives must support collective decisions of the Unions' Committees and accept a majority vote.

(50. UFU Constitution and Rules)

6. Confidentiality & Data Protection

All UFU Representatives are expected to:

- Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information, including commercially sensitive information, personal information and any information received in confidence, and not to release or disclose such information outside Union members. This includes, but is not restricted to, minutes of meetings and any documents that have been issued.
- Acknowledge and honour responsibilities under Data Protection legislation in regard to the treatment of data.

7. Enhancing Governance

All UFU Representatives are expected to:

- Participate in appropriate induction, training and development activities for members of the Unions' Committees within three months of appointment.
- Acknowledge the responsibilities of each of the Unions' Committees. Any concerns about governance matters in the Union should be raised in confidence directly with the CEO or Internal Services Manager.

8. Protected Disclosure ('Whistleblowing')

All members are expected to acknowledge the Union's commitment to protected disclosure, which allows for the disclosure of information that in the reasonable belief of the person disclosing it tends to show serious wrongdoing (whistleblowing), so that the matter can be raised without fear of reprisal. The channel for such disclosures is to the CEO. If the matter relates to the CEO, it should be raised with the Executive Committee Chairperson.

9. Staff

All UFU Representatives are expected to:

- Strive for a positive and constructive working relationship with staff, which is necessary for the effectiveness of the Union, always respecting the appropriate boundaries between staff and voluntary members.
- Acknowledge that the CEO is responsible for the management of all staff matters. Any issues concerning staff should be raised directly and privately with the CEO or nominee.
- Recognise the Board's responsibility to have due regard to the interests of employees and to ensure the Union's compliance with all employment legislation.
- Recognise that all staff are required to remain non-aligned in the Union's election campaigns and not seek support from staff.

10. Social Networking Websites and Apps

All UFU Representatives are expected to refrain from:

- Posting social media communications (including, for example, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, TikTok) which could damage the Union's business or reputation, whether directly or indirectly.
- Using social media to defame, disparage, harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against the Union, its staff or any third party.
- Uploading or publishing recordings or videos of Union events or members without prior consent.
- Posting social media communications about sensitive business-related topics, such as anything that has taken place at the Unions' Committees, draft proposals or information belonging to any organisation belonging to, or in partnership with, the Union unless expressly authorised to do so.
- Including the Union's logos or other trademarks in any posting or in your profile on any social media platform without prior consent.
- Expressing opinions on the Union's behalf, unless expressly authorised to do so.

11. Breach of the Code of Conduct

A member who transgresses the rules of the Union shall be liable to suspension or expulsion by the organisation, but shall have the right of appeal to the Executive. Such suspended or expelled member shall have no claim on the funds of the Union.

(8. UFU Constitution and Rules)

12. Adoption

This Code of Conduct shall take effect upon adoption by a majority vote of qualifying members present and voting at the Union's Executive Committee.

*Approved by the Executive Committee on
23 September 2024.*