



Guide for Branch Education
Coordinators
the essentials

These notes should get you started in the
role before you attend your initial basic
training

UNI SON North West
1/1/2011

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Getting Started

UNISON issues a job description for the role of Branch Education Coordinator, in a document known as the Code of Good Branch Practice. Here's a summary;

Branch Education Coordinator Job Description in the UNISON Code of Good Branch Practice Education Co-ordinator

Tasks relating to the post of branch education coordinator:

1. Make sure all new stewards and safety representatives receive initial information and guidance about their duties eg. stewards handbook, rulebook, service conditions agreements, etc
2. Publicise the range of educational and training opportunities available to members and activists
3. Get untrained stewards, safety representatives and other branch officers onto appropriate training courses
4. Co-ordinate and support the work of learning representatives (work with the Branch Life Long Learning Coordinator)
5. Encourage branch members and activists to make use of the UNISON Open College courses, especially 'Return to Learn' and 'Women, Work and Society'
6. Maintain contact with the regional education officer/regional learning and organising committee
7. Establish a plan of training for activists and to produce an annual budget to meet its costs
8. Keep records of what training has been undertaken and by whom within the branch
9. Make sure that activists get paid time off for training where appropriate.

Key Documents

You'll need some key documents to get you started:

1. A list of all the activists in your branch on RMS in A-Z order of surname
2. A list of all the activists in your branch on RMS in order of RMS (replacement membership system) Activist Role Code
3. A List of RMS Activist Role Code numbers and what they mean

Most of the branches in the North West are 'live' on RMS. This means you should be able to get these lists locally.

Once you have these lists contact the Learning and Organising Services in the Regional Centre and get a copy of the

4. AMT (activist and member training system) Training History of the Branch

Then you need to systematically contact every activist in the branch to check

- which posts they hold,
- how long they have been in the post
- what Trade Union Education they have attended during the last 5 years

To do this you may need the help of others in the branch, especially Branch Learning Reps. In large branches, you will need help from all the senior stewards and Branch Officers.

As you make contact with activists you will need to record information to establish your training history records and up date the RMS records. To help you UNISON has a new guide –

5. [Developing and Supporting Workplace Representative](#) – go to our national web site www.unison.org.uk and put this title in the search box to order or down load a copy.

Money Matters

All the courses UNISON provides in its annual programme are listed at www.unisonnw.org.uk/courses . You will need to authorise each application and regularly report to the Branch Treasurer which of the branch activists have attended what courses – since the branch is charged a registration fee for each place - £20 for participant per course day. (The fee covers around half of the real costs of the course – participants will receive mid morning, lunch and mid afternoon food and refreshments)

This is why it is important your records are accurate in the Branch. You should encourage all activists to undertake at least the basic training for their role. As they undertake more duties in the branch, then follow on courses and refresher courses can be considered. There should be no question of the branch funds covering this training – it is a prime duty of a branch to ensure all of its members and activists are offered the opportunity to access UNISON education and branches should therefore, budget accordingly.

Branches are also responsible for the payment of travelling and other expenses to and from the course and overnight stays should the participant have practical travel difficulties. Also if a participant cannot attend the course because of dependant relative care issues Branches should look into how these could be alleviated.

Which courses should activists take first

Have a look at the website guidance in this area at www.unisonnw.org.uk/courses . On the left hand side, click the button to see advice about learning pathways.

UNISON is keen to have all reps receive basic training in their role as soon as possible upon their election and certainly within 6 months. Once a rep in the North West has completed one of our 5 day AWARD courses they will be given ERA certified steward status (Employment relations Act 1999)

For those activists who undertake representative work and handle cases in the Branch UNISON requires that they take appropriate refresher courses at least every 5 years. Once a rep or branch officer in the North West has completed one of our Refresher, CERTIFICATE or DIPLOMA courses they will be reregistered as an ERA certified Steward

You will be able to find out from your branch RMS (Replacement Membership System) records– who needs to complete basic training to achieve ERA certification status and who needs refresher training.

Organising Courses In the Branch: UNISON protocols

Most of UNISON's courses can be run locally. A full list appears on the regional web site www.unisonnw.org.uk/courses

You should not try to re invent the wheel. Use UNISON materials; there are national course materials available for almost every circumstance which can always be adapted for local use.

You should make a formal request to your Regional Organiser who will then liaise with the Regional Learning and Organising service in order to get a course off the ground. Usually the Branch arranges the venue and refreshments, sorts out the time off and makes sure participants know the dates and how to get there etc. The Region provides the appropriate UNISON materials and tutor.

You may have a Unionlearn centre (TUC Education) close by who can provide courses in the branch, even so please make a formal request via Regional Organiser first, before making firm arrangements with external providers.

Following these simple protocols will help us with

- Ordering, storage and despatch of UNISON materials,
- The development programme for tutors
- Our mission to ensure UNISON activists receive appropriate levels of training

A model course request form is set out below

UNISON North West : Branch Course Formal Request
Branch Name

Name of Branch Education Coordinator

I write to formally request the learning provision set out below:

Course Title or brief description

Number of potential participants and description of target audience

Suggestions for tutors

Suggestions for venue

Suggestions for dates or time of year

I will be able to supply names and membership numbers of participants, two weeks prior to the course. I want the region to issue joining instructions for participants.
YES/NO

I want materials to be despatched to the following address:

Return completed form to Helen Titherington the Regional Education Officer, Arena Point, Fax 0161 661 6710

Helpful Regional contacts

Regional Learning and Organising Services
Helen Titherington - Regional Education Officer, and
Kim Scott – Course Administrator, 0161 661 6777
k.scott@unison.co.uk

Chair of the Regional Learning and
Organising Committee
Paul Warburton, 0161 608 4119,
warburtp@manchesterfire.gov.uk

Training for Branch Education Coordinators takes place each
year and is at DIPLOMA level over three weeks

The first in May the second in October and the third in the
following January – please check the dates in the course
calendar at www.unisonnw.org.uk/courses