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**UNION LEARNING
REPRESENTATIVE
HANDBOOK**

www.learnwithunite.org

1 INTRODUCTION

Unite lifelong learning vision: our strategy for growth

Unite will increase the life chances of its members in the workplace and the community using lifelong learning.

- ▶ We will guarantee the high standard and quality of all our flexible learning opportunities.
- ▶ We will use lifelong learning to develop our members so that they will be able to reach their full potential within our organisation.
- ▶ We will bring flexible learning opportunities into the heart of communities.
- ▶ We will be the most progressive trade union organisation, able to create sustainable and innovative alternative education models.
- ▶ We will use lifelong learning to enhance ongoing employment opportunities to our members through our member retention strategy.
- ▶ We will measure the success of lifelong learning through our activities delivered within our strategy for growth.

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Congratulations on becoming a Union Learning Representative (ULR). You have taken on one of the key workplace roles within Unite, vital in supporting our members.

This handbook is a quick reference tool to be used in your day-to-day activities, more information and ongoing support is available from your Regional Learning Organiser.

Roles and responsibilities

A ULR's roles and responsibilities may include:

- ▶ working with other union reps raising Unite's profile through learning
- ▶ Increasing awareness of the benefits of learning
- ▶ providing advice and guidance on learning to fellow workers
- ▶ ensuring equality in learning
- ▶ identifying and promoting learning opportunities
- ▶ identifying and addressing barriers to learning
- ▶ conducting learning surveys to identify employees' needs and interests
- ▶ forwarding details of course and individual learning outcomes to your Learning Organiser
- ▶ compiling and submitting learning case studies
- ▶ supporting young workers in formal training such as Apprenticeships

**“The beautiful thing
about learning is that
nobody can take it
away from you”**
B.B. King, musician

- ▶ addressing meetings of employees on learning opportunities
- ▶ negotiating paid time off for employees to learn
- ▶ negotiating redundancy support training
- ▶ promoting the value of training and learning among local management
- ▶ promoting education for workplace reps, safety reps and members.

When you are elected as a ULR, your Regional Officer /Branch Secretary/ Convenor/Senior Rep (as appropriate) will inform your employer in writing and notify them you are requesting paid time off to attend training for your role.

New ULR checklist:

- ▶ Is there a learning committee and when does it meet?
- ▶ Is there is a learning agreement and is it fit for purpose?
- ▶ Are there effective communications in place?
- ▶ What other union committees are there and how can you work with them?

Your legal rights as a ULR

The Employment Act 2002 sets out the statutory rights of ULRs in organisations that recognise trade unions. ULRs have a number of formal functions that can be performed and for which paid time off from their normal duties should be given:

- ▶ analysing learning and training needs
- ▶ providing information and advice about learning
- ▶ arranging learning or training
- ▶ promoting the value of learning
- ▶ consulting the employer about such activities
- ▶ undergoing training for their ULR role.

Union members are also entitled to time off to use the services of ULRs, although there is no legal requirement on the employer to pay them for this.

Facilities for ULRs

In addition to time off, your employer should provide following as a minimum requirement to you as a ULR:

- ▶ arrangements for confidential consultation with the members you represent
- ▶ use of a desk to prepare paperwork
- ▶ access to secure facilities for storing correspondence
- ▶ access to a computer with the provision of an email account and access to the organisation's intranet and the internet
- ▶ access to internal and external telephones
- ▶ access to duplicating, printing and fax facilities
- ▶ a notice board on which to display learning information
- ▶ reasonable time off work for trade union members (and non-members) to access the

services of a ULR where it is not possible for practical reasons for meetings to take place outside normal working hours

- ▶ access to appropriate information such as policy documents and approved codes of practice, copies of relevant statistics.

Although how to become a ULR can vary, in general Unite supports the principle of the regular election of all reps, including ULRs. Where there is a variation from this practice, it should always be discussed with the local Regional Officer and Convenor.

2 OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Training and development

As a Unite ULR, you will receive high quality training to become proficient in:

- ▶ listening
- ▶ interviewing
- ▶ presenting and providing information
- ▶ problem solving
- ▶ record keeping
- ▶ maintaining confidentiality
- ▶ negotiating
- ▶ motivating people
- ▶ leading and organising.

Unite's Union Learning Reps: Stage 1 offers initial training to develop the basic knowledge and skills needed for the role.

Unite's Union Learning Reps: Stage 2 provides further core training as a ULR, developing a deeper knowledge and skills, such as working with management, learning providers and other organisations.

Ongoing development

Unite is committed to ensuring that ULRs, as with all our union reps, have the opportunity to develop in the role. This could be through taking formal qualifications in Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), LearnWithUnite IT courses or perhaps teaching qualifications. The union also aims to see ULRs develop and take on other roles within Unite, such as workplace rep or equality rep. Speak to your Union Learning Organiser who will be happy to give you more information and advice.

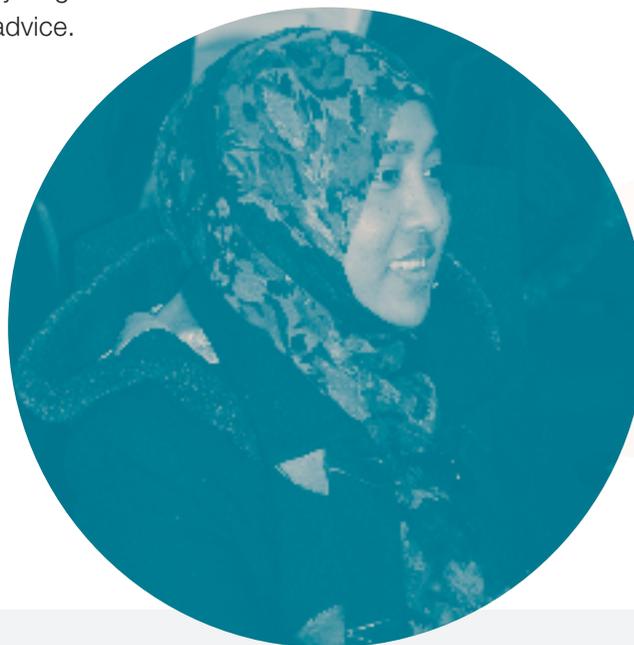
The relationship between the ULR and the member is central to the success of the learning process. You need to respect and value the member and put yourself in their shoes.

There are many things that will affect an individual's attitude to learning:

- ▶ their past experience of learning
- ▶ their perceptions of their own abilities
- ▶ whether they have the right information and are able to interpret it effectively
- ▶ financial incentives
- ▶ the time they have available; support from their employer.

Whether or not a member decides to make a commitment to learning will depend on:

- ▶ their level of interest and motivation
- ▶ the amount of free time they have available, other domestic commitments
- ▶ shift patterns
- ▶ financial commitments (requiring them to work additional hours, or hold down more than one job)
- ▶ geographical mobility (whether they can actually get to learning opportunities that take place outside of the workplace).



“My mother said I must always be intolerant of ignorance but understanding of illiteracy”
Maya Angelou, writer

Above all, many members do not commit themselves to learning because they have a low expectation of their abilities and skills. As a ULR, building confidence in members about the value and benefits of learning will be as important as providing the right information.

People’s additional needs

An Individual’s additional need is not always obvious. As a ULR you need to be aware that some people do have other needs, spot them as quickly as possible, and handle them sensitively and positively.

Examples are:

- ▶ physical disability
- ▶ hearing or sight impairment
- ▶ mental health issue
- ▶ learning disability (which may well be disguised and manifest itself in resistance to the idea of learning)
- ▶ poor written or communication skills
- ▶ English not being the first or main language.

Access to learning

Any structure for workplace/ community learning should provide ease of access for members in a wide variety of occupations. In particular, it should enable members to:

- ▶ enter at a level appropriate to their current state of learning
- ▶ learn at a pace suitable for them
- ▶ receive recognition for their efforts
- ▶ use a variety of routes and ladders for progression, where desired
- ▶ develop an enthusiasm for, and confidence in, learning.

Creating opportunities

With the increasing pace of technological change, learning plays an important role in providing a route out of poverty and closing the opportunity gap.

It also enables people to take an active part in society. Investment in knowledge and skills brings direct economic benefits both to the learner, employer and to society as a whole.

Affective inequality refers to the unequal access people have to care and support and the unequal distribution of burdens of care among people. This requires more recognition and equal distribution of the responsibility for care so that its influence on lifelong learning is as positive as possible.

Effective equality highlights the importance for learning of feeling valued, being appreciated and having a sense of belonging. It requires respect and recognition for the responsibilities of care that are borne by many in relation

to children, elderly people, those who are ill and those with disabilities. It also requires that relationships of trust and care be fostered between tutors, management, unions, union learning reps and employees throughout the process of learning.

People involved in workplace learning can:

- ▶ deliver awareness-raising and equality training in the workplace so that management and others are supportive and encouraging of those wishing to deal with unmet Functional Skills needs
- ▶ use relationships of trust between union officials and members to support and encourage those who may wish to learn but are fearful
- ▶ take the unequal burdens of care carried by many into consideration when organising provision
- ▶ organise support groups for learners and boost confidence by celebrating achievements

“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world”
Nelson Mandela, statesman

- ▶ provide support and training for ULRs and allow them the resources to meaningfully carry out their ‘caring’ role
- ▶ ensure that in turn there is a support structure for the ULR whose mediating role may sometimes be burdensome.

Cultural inequality refers to the unequal value and recognition given to different individuals and groups of people. In the context of learning, cultural inequality raises issues of recognition and respect for difference and different needs within the educational systems.

Cultural equality requires that learning accommodates the full range of needs of individuals and groups, irrespective of class, race, gender, physical and mental capacity, sexual orientation, family status or religious or belief in urban and rural environments.

The promotion of equality requires taking a respectful view of diverse

beliefs and cultures and ensuring that diverse learning needs are considered in all aspects of workplace provision.

People involved in workplace learning can:

- ▶ ensure respect for difference and diversity in learning styles and paces
- ▶ listen to the expressed needs of learners
- ▶ make provision for those with special resource needs e.g. large print text
- ▶ attempt to accommodate cultural differences in the content of learning materials
- ▶ celebrate diversity through skilled group facilitation.

Political Inequality refers to the unequal distribution of power, representation and ‘voice’ given to different individuals and groups. It requires a widening of participation in policy and decision-making structures and openness to partnership, dialogue and accountability.

People involved in workplace learning can:

- ▶ create quality workplace learning partnerships that ensure that all voices and viewpoints are equally represented
- ▶ consult widely and accessibly
- ▶ evaluate all aspects of the programmes and respond actively to feedback
- ▶ ensure that all aspects of delivery are respectful of adults and that hierarchical attitudes to learning are not imported into the workplace
- ▶ work to create learning content that is empowering of learners and promotes egalitarian goals in a democratic manner.

These inequalities are rarely present individually but are often intricately interwoven and complex in the way they impact on individuals, families, organisations and communities.

Equalities in learning

Recognising the diversity of adult needs and aspirations and the way these are influenced by factors such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, nationality, religion, language or disability, is one of the fundamental principles of our front-line advice and guidance activities.

ULRs need to be able to communicate effectively and be aware of:

- ▶ the negative impact of inequality, discrimination and stereotyping
- ▶ how these factors can reinforce previous negative experiences
- ▶ how these factors can prevent people from engaging in the advice & guidance process.

“If the purpose for learning is to score well in a test, we’ve lost sight of the real reason for learning”

Jennie Fulbright,
US Science Educator

Prejudices and stereotyping

ULRs will need to recognise their own prejudices and tendency to stereotype by ensuring that they:

- ▶ recognise the rights of every individual to fair and even-handed information and advice
- ▶ recognise the influences that cultural factors may have on choice and development
- ▶ offer realistic, relevant and appropriate opportunities and facilities
- ▶ avoid patronising, stereotyping or fitting people into pre-conceived boxes
- ▶ seek to provide a friendly and culturally diverse ethos and environment that immediately informs members that they are welcome and recognised.

Positive attitudes to diversity

ULRs should promote diversity and encourage positive attitudes towards it. We all need to make learning and training inclusive for everyone in the workplace, who might include:

- ▶ part-time workers, fixed-term contract workers, shift workers, agency workers, atypical and disadvantaged workers
- ▶ migrant workers
- ▶ workers with disabilities and/or learning difficulties
- ▶ workers of all ages – we’re never too old to learn: for example, ‘silver surfers’ can use the internet to develop their hobby interests, keep in touch with their families, etc.
- ▶ Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) workers
- ▶ women workers.

There may be different reasons why certain diverse groups and individuals find it hard to learn and it is for ULRs to try and meet the learning needs of these people.

Equality Act 2010

A new Equality Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Act simplifies, strengthens and harmonises the previous legislation to provide Britain with a new discrimination law that protects individuals from unfair treatment.

Equality & diversity training

Unite is founded upon principles of dignity and respect, with equality, justice and fairness at its heart. It is an important part of a ULR’s development to fully understand equality and diversity and to encourage equality and diversity training as part of their own progression and development.



3 DELIVERING OUR VISION

Our vision for learning with Unite is to provide the best possible match between potential learners and the learning opportunities available to them. You can read the vision at the front cover of this handbook.

We aim that learners:

- ▶ have the confidence, enterprise, knowledge, creativity and skills they need to take a full part in economic, social and civic life
- ▶ demand a high quality learning experience that learning providers deliver
- ▶ have their knowledge and skills recognised, used and developed to best effect
- ▶ are given the information, guidance and support they need to make effective learning decisions and transitions
- ▶ have the chance to learn, irrespective of their background or current personal circumstances.

As a Unite ULR it is essential that you can empathise and communicate easily with all the members you speak to. Discrimination, for whatever reason, and however unintended, is a disabling experience that undermines members' confidence, motivation and rights.

LearnWithUnite

Unite offers a range of help, support and qualifications to members, both workplace and community based, through a blended approach of guided and online learning. www.learnwithunite.org is Unite's very own virtual learning platform that is dedicated to supporting our members and activists, through the provision of quality online learning opportunities.

LearnWithUnite gives us a platform to cover a wide range of learning needs:

- ▶ It allows us to strike a balance between informal or accredited, job-related or wider learning.
- ▶ It allows us to centrally manage and devolve learning to regions and/or branches by giving them their own pages.
- ▶ It allows us to forge strong partnerships and alliances with other providers.

“Reading is not a duty, and has consequently no business to be made disagreeable”
Aneurin Bevan, Labour
Minister of Health 1945-51

This in turn gives us leverage to determine a bargaining strategy to press the employer for:

- ▶ more Apprenticeships, with better pay and conditions and higher quality training
- ▶ funding for learning centres
- ▶ action on equality, prioritising skills for those who have least e.g., the low-paid, Black Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) or women members
- ▶ stronger agreements that include raising employer investment in learning
- ▶ improved ULR facility time
- ▶ stronger joint bargaining, rather than just consultation, through a formalised training committee.

This is the starting point for all ULRs to guide members to. It is a key area for developing organising, which can be a valuable recruitment tool as the majority of courses are free to members. ULRs should also promote the platform for online learning with members, employers and providers and

**“I am always doing
that which I cannot do,
in order that I may
learn how to do it”**
Pablo Picasso, artist

encourage their learning committees to endorse it. ULRs should endeavour to give all reps and branch committee members the coaching, confidence and skills required to access, use and promote online learning. The platform also contains a resource bank to assist and update you and your other reps and is also a great networking tool.

However, if we are looking to develop online learning for strategic purposes, it is important we use this resource in a positive and constructive way and do not make it a barrier for members.

Some of the courses currently on offer include:

- ▶ Initial assessments (ESOL, ITQ)
- ▶ ESOL, Entry Levels 1 to 3
- ▶ Online basics (a taster for novice users)
- ▶ An Introduction to ICT (ITQ Level 1 Award) course
- ▶ An Introduction to ICT Part 2 (ITQ Level 2 Certificate) course
- ▶ The Level 3 Award in ITQ.

Alternative Education Model (AEM)

Alternative education, also known as non-traditional education or educational alternative, includes a number of approaches to teaching and learning distinct from those offered by mainstream or traditional education. Educational alternatives are rooted in a number of philosophies differing from those of mainstream education. Although some alternatives have political, scholarly or philosophical orientations, others were begun by informal associations of teachers and students dissatisfied with some aspects of mainstream education. Educational alternatives vary, but usually emphasize small class sizes, close relationships between students and teachers and a sense of community. Unite’s approach is known as the Alternative Education Model (AEM).

UMWEP

The United Migrant Workers Education Programme (UMWEP) has evolved to help Unite members, migrants and vulnerable workers improve their basic communication and ICT skills at work and in their communities. It exists to help people who struggle on a daily basis to settle down in a new society that has received them within the frame of a new language and a new culture with different traditions and ways of life.

UMWEP is a non-profit organisation. UMWEP implements the AEM, whose methodology and pedagogical concepts apply realistically to the true education needs of our learners.

UMWEP understands that education is for all ages and social class categories and is a universal human right, not a profitable business as it is seen and exploited today in the official, conventional stream of education. That is why the Programme is an alternative proposal for those

migrant and vulnerable workers excluded from formal education.

The Programme is based entirely on volunteer tutors who agree with the education concepts and are committed to give some of their free time to help other people.

Functional Skills

For the purposes of this handbook we have used the terminology Functional Skills, which reflects current usage in England. Functional Skills used to be known as Skills for Life.

Functional Skills is about developing skills in maths, English and ICT, but focuses on teaching learners how to apply these skills in everyday contexts and situations. For example, the government is putting more emphasis on functional maths, which focuses on problem-solving, and gives learners practical strategies for applying and transferring skills in everyday situations. Functional Skills provide

“Unintelligent people always look for a scapegoat”

Ernest Bevin,
TGWU General Secretary
and Cabinet Minister 1940–51

a single route to achievement from Entry Level to Level 2 for all learners.

Assessment

Assessment is increasingly delivered onscreen, although paper-based assessments are still available from awarding bodies. A further review of Functional Skills is due in early 2016 which may introduce changes.

Entry Level 1 is the first level of attainment with a full qualification on offer; followed by Entry Level 2; and Entry Level 3. Level 1 Functional Skills qualifications are generally regarded as equivalent to GCSE grades D-G, and Level 2 an equivalent attainment level to GCSE grades A*-C.

Qualification Standards

Each level of the skills incorporates and builds on previous levels; therefore for each skill you can view the individual standards as well as progression grids.

ESOL

Britain in the 21st century is becoming an increasingly diverse society, with migrants from the former Eastern Bloc countries as well as from more distant places such as Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq. Courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) can help migrants overcome obstacles to finding work and taking part in wider society.

How can ESOL help Unite?

Developing English language skills not only benefits the individuals concerned (making them more employable, for example) but will give added value to the union as the extra confidence of having a good grasp of English could potentially encourage individuals to take a more proactive role within the union. Many migrants, for whom English is not their first language, who become fluent in English are becoming trade union activists. Moreover, trade union activists with bi-lingual or multi-lingual skills are extremely well placed to

act as intermediaries when it comes to things like sorting out workplace grievances, for example, if a group of migrant workers are having difficulty putting their case to management.

From a strictly trade union perspective, such bi-lingual or multi-lingual activists are strongly placed to become effective organisers and recruiters in ethnically diversified workplaces. They can not only communicate but also empathise with migrant workers and stress to them the benefits of being members of a major union such as Unite.

IAG

As Unite ULRs spearhead Unite's Learning Organising Strategy in workplaces, they are expected to impart information, advice and guidance in the workplace in order to engage workers back into learning.

As a ULR, you will often come across the acronym IAG and will be involved in its delivery. Traditionally, IAG tended to

be called 'careers advice', which also included educationally related advice and guidance. A definition of these IAG elements can be offered as follows:

- ▶ Information: a printed hand-out or a reference to a website.
- ▶ Advice: This could take the form of a ULR offering a suggestion on how to use some printed information to best effect.
- ▶ Guidance: typically this is a skilled intervention by a qualified guidance practitioner. Guidance may take the form of an interview or group session led by a qualified person. An action plan may result from this process. ULRs are increasingly assuming IAG roles within workplaces on completion of relevant training.

ULRs can gain IAG qualifications as an opportunity to develop and gain recognition for their skills at a range of levels and in a variety of contexts as part of their Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

**“Education is not
the filling of a
pail, but the
lighting of a fire”**
WB Yeats, poet

Good information, advice and guidance is:

- ▶ putting the needs of the member at the centre of the process
- ▶ ensuring equal support and access to all members regardless of gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age or status of employment
- ▶ understanding the needs of diverse groups of people and how to work with them
- ▶ developing up-to-date information and knowledge of local learning provision, including key contact names and contact details
- ▶ building up a good knowledge of other specialist advice, guidance and assessment provision locally
- ▶ knowing about all in-house online learning opportunities available on LearnWithUnite platform
- ▶ knowing when to refer people on to external organisations or agencies
- ▶ giving learners the appropriate help and tools to make their own informed decisions, and not simply telling them what they should do.

Signposting and referrals

The terms ‘signposting’ and ‘referral’ are used inconsistently. However, signposting is used most often to describe situations in which members are made aware of the services of another adviser or provider at an early stage of the process - similar, in practice, to information giving. Referral tends to be used when clients are directed towards a different adviser or service to facilitate further progress, after an initial exploration of the needs as presented.

See information about the new IAG record pad on page 27.

Individual Learning Plan

An individual learning plan (ILP) should be kept for every learner as this sets out the learner’s plan to learn, a timetable for learning, ways of learning and resources required. ILPs are compiled, reviewed and developed in consultation with the learner by the tutor/teacher delivering the course.

An Individual Learning Plan will:

- ▶ record the learner’s contexts and goals, what they want to learn and how they want to learn it
- ▶ include a record of initial discussions about learning and of assessments carried out
- ▶ identify issues that may affect a learner’s access to provision and strategies for dealing with them
- ▶ set measurable goals so that the learner’s progress can be assessed
- ▶ provide a reminder for the learner of what the learning will involve
- ▶ encourage reflection on the effectiveness of learning
- ▶ be developed over several sessions with a learner
- ▶ focus on the individual’s learning goals.

As you support your learners and potential learners, targets are important and they need to be SMART:

- ▶ **SPECIFIC:** having a clear idea of what your aim is
- ▶ **MEASURABLE:** being able to check if progress has been made
- ▶ **ACHIEVABLE:** realistic and can be broken down into steps
- ▶ **RELEVANT:** to the person, their goals and the time they have available
- ▶ **TIME-BOUND:** identifying dates (short- or long-term), including steps and a plan to check progress.

Setting targets can help members to:

- ▶ develop problem-solving skills
- ▶ take ownership of planning their future
- ▶ be realistic about what they can achieve
- ▶ break goals down into manageable actions
- ▶ identify resources needed to take plans forward
- ▶ check on own progress and adjust plans if necessary.

4 PUTTING EVERYTHING INTO ACTION

In your ULR training you covered the importance of learning surveys and how to prepare and carry one out. Survey examples, which can be adapted as needed, are available from your Union Learning Organiser.

Learning surveys

How to survey

- 1 Map your workplace so that you know what questions to ask, and can plan how you will distribute your survey.
- 2 The basic information you will need is:
 - ▶ Names and contact details of people interested in courses.
 - ▶ What do people want to learn? What level?
 - ▶ When is an appropriate time to learn?
 - ▶ Can you get time off?
 - ▶ What are people's shift patterns?
 - ▶ Which time slots are best?
- 3 You can also ask other questions that will tell you more about your workplace or help you with union organising targets. These can be questions about age, gender, union membership and so on.
- 4 Ensure you let people know that the information given will be treated in confidence.

Ask your Union Learning Organiser what model survey templates are currently available.

Distributing your survey

Your survey should be distributed as widely as possible, with an effective way to collect the finished surveys. If you are able to, go around the workplace personally, talking to people, handing out surveys and then collecting them again.

Some other distribution methods include:

- ▶ holding an Open Day and inviting employees to fill in the survey on the day
- ▶ putting a survey on desks or work areas, with a box for people to put them in
- ▶ distributing the survey by email
- ▶ creating an online survey and sharing the link
- ▶ a combination of the above.

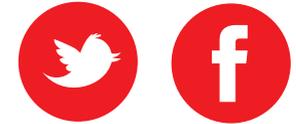
Think about your workplace, and the resources you have, including time off. What would be the most appropriate way for you to distribute your survey? Sometimes it helps to give people an incentive to fill in the survey. Ask your employer if they will contribute a gift voucher or book token, and hold a prize draw for a winning participant.

Review

Once you have the completed surveys, you will need to collate and evaluate the information gathered. Recorded results should be kept on file for a reasonable time, and make sure this and the learning surveys themselves are stored securely. You will need to consider next steps such as discussing with union colleagues, contacting learning providers and meeting with management. Keep your members informed.

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever”
Mahatma Gandhi

“Nine-tenths
of education is
encouragement”
Anatole France, writer



Social media

Social media is extensively used in today's society but care should be taken when using it. If you use the Unite logo on social media applications, such as Facebook or Twitter, anything posted will reflect on Unite.

Many workplaces will have their own IT usage policies and ULRs should ensure that they know if their company uses one and that they and their learners adhere to it at all times. ULRs should be aware that they need to comply not only to their own company's rules but Unite's too.

Extract from Unite's Privacy at Work policy

Email and internet are now in general use in most work places and indeed is encouraged by the government. Most employers now expect their workers to be familiar with electronic communication and to be able to use the internet for business purposes.

However the monitoring of web access and email content is also prevalent and there have been a number of cases where employees have been dismissed for inappropriate use of the systems. In April 2005, Unite lodged a complaint with the Information Commission on behalf of staff at the Association of Head Teachers concerning the unauthorised and possibly unlawful monitoring and interception of employee's emails.

As stated earlier, secret monitoring of email and internet use is unlikely to be justified by the employers, unless there are extreme circumstances. However, employers will want to protect themselves from legal liability if employees send defamatory or offensive emails using the company system. They will also want to limit internet use, not only to restrict time spent on non-work activities, but also so they are not liable for the harassment of other staff caused by the display and downloading of pornographic or offensive material.

The Data Protection Code advises employers who wish to monitor their employees' use of electronic communications, including telephone, fax, voicemail, internet access and email, should establish a policy on their use and communicate it to their staff. The policy should inform staff that their email and internet use will be monitored and ensure that they know what is considered acceptable use and what is not. In a claim where the employer's written policy allowed staff to make 'limited and reasonable' personal use of email, a number of employees successfully claimed unfair dismissal following their dismissals for abuse of the email system because it was unclear what 'limited and reasonable' meant and different managers applied the policy in different ways (*Lang v SPDataServe Ltd ET 103200*).

ACAS guidance on social media, defamation, data protection and privacy

Social media can be a valuable tool for organisations, but carries with it responsibilities. They include

determining who in the organisation can publicly say what, use information and access it. Also, employers have to give good reason for tracking employees' use of social media.

Key points from the ACAS guidance:

- ▶ Defamation: Employees posting damaging or libellous comments about a company or its products or publishing sensitive commercial data. Also, employers divulging protected personal data: for example, giving away details of salary, political or religious beliefs or disciplinary records.
- ▶ Managing the organisation's reputation: Employers may be keen for employees to promote the organisation's brand on social media, but not at the cost of making unwelcome posts.
- ▶ Reacting to negative comments: An employer's response to comments about the company on social networking sites should be proportionate to the perceived issue.

“Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of all adults of every age?”
Erich Fromm, critical theorist

- ▶ Monitoring employees’ use of social media: An employer must determine correctly whether its reasons for supervising staff use are justified under the data protection laws.
- ▶ Information about employees: Employers should be aware that an employee has the right to access details kept about them, such as sickness and disciplinary records, appraisal reviews and general personnel files.

ULR interview checklist

Introduction

Interviewing people is an integral part of the role of a ULR, for example when identifying individuals’ needs or conducting a learning survey.

Before the interview

- ▶ Where and when will the interview take place?
- ▶ How long you will need?
- ▶ What might you discuss?
- ▶ What information will you require?

During the interview

- ▶ Explain the reason for the interview.
- ▶ Stress the confidentiality of any information received.
- ▶ Be aware of your body language and that of the interviewee.
- ▶ Use eye contact and face the person in a relaxed manner.
- ▶ Give them your full attention and actively listen.
- ▶ Be objective and avoid making assumptions.

- ▶ Use appropriate questions and do not monopolise the conversation.
- ▶ Keep the discussion on track.

Clarifying and summarising

- ▶ Help to identify individual needs.
- ▶ Check and correct possible misunderstandings.
- ▶ Highlight key points and identify next steps.

Recording the interview

ULRs are encouraged to keep records for each learner interview but bear in mind the requirements for data protection. The results of interviews and surveys can be shared in various formats to learning committee, branch reps, but remember to respect confidentiality of members. A carbonated IAG record pad was introduced in mid 2015 for use by ULRs. Please contact your Union Learning Organiser or Regional Learning Manager for a supply.

Making presentations

As part of your ULR role you may need to make presentations.

Preparation

- ▶ Do as much research as possible before presenting proposals to management or your branch, ensuring figures or data are accurate and up to date.
- ▶ Style is not as important as ensuring you get your message across.
- ▶ PowerPoint, smart board flipchart, video or paper hand-outs can all be used.
- ▶ Practice and rehearse: make sure you do not run over time as this may prevent you getting the desired outcome.
- ▶ If using technology, ensure you have a back-up plan.
- ▶ Think of questions that may be asked and have responses ready.

Delivery

- ▶ Arrive in plenty of time.
- ▶ Speak in a friendly tone making eye contact with your audience.
- ▶ Keep to time limits.
- ▶ Encourage interaction.
- ▶ Do not be distracted by people texting or tweeting.

“Let us pick up our books and our pens. They are our most powerful weapons”

Malala Yousafa, feminist & Nobel Prize Winner

5 STRATEGY FOR GROWTH

Negotiating skills

If as a ULR you have responsibility to take part in negotiations on learning, you should plan and prepare thoroughly. Ideally you will be negotiating as part of a team of union representatives, and remember both sides are of equal status. Clarify what you can negotiate with other reps at work, your Learning Organiser and your Unite full-time officer.

Develop a negotiating strategy

- ▶ Know what members want.
- ▶ Draw up an agenda and be clear about your aims.
- ▶ Check and be clear on your facts and anticipate management's response.

Work as a team

- ▶ Listen carefully and ask questions.
- ▶ Do not be side-tracked.
- ▶ Seek agreement on principles before discussing details.
- ▶ Seek clarification to avoid misunderstanding.

Closing negotiations

- ▶ Have you raised all the issues that you wanted to discuss?
- ▶ Do you fully understand the proposals that management are making?
- ▶ Are you convinced that management fully understand your proposals?
- ▶ Get agreement in writing and be clear on implementation and timescales.
- ▶ Be ready to challenge and submit amendments to the minutes of meetings.

The way we talk to members, potential members and activists has an impact on their understanding of why Unite exists and how we work. It is important that we are clear about the message that we send out.

An organising union

- ▶ An organising union is member-led: everyone plays their part in ensuring the union is active in every workplace.
- ▶ Members pay a subscription to become actively involved: they understand the importance of learning and working together.
- ▶ Members are trained and encouraged to work collectively to campaign for improved opportunities for learning and other issues.
- ▶ The union is proactive: it gives members the power to take up, challenge and resolve issues themselves; non-members are recruited around these issues and this philosophy.

About Unite

Unite is a modern trade union for the 21st century, democratic and responsive to members' needs. Unite's structure is one in which members are encouraged to get involved and have their say.

“We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools”

Martin Luther King, Jr.,
civil rights activist

Unite is a member-led union, with 1.4 million members, who work in every area of private, public and not-for-profit work.

Unite covers Britain and Ireland but also has members as far away as Gibraltar and Germany and at any time will have members working in all parts of the world.

Unite is a union based on the need to organise workers to secure success at the bargaining table. We recognise that 100 per cent active membership gives us an opportunity to win for workers. Our Unite workplaces must be strong and active to be able to develop a voice for workers.

Organising is about:

- ▶ developing leaders
- ▶ taking action
- ▶ power
- ▶ thinking strategically.

The role of the ULR

Every Unite rep has a role to play in building the union locally. An essential part of this is communicating effectively with members and non-members alike. As a ULR, you will have opportunities to talk to your colleagues about their learning needs. You may talk to members who otherwise may not have very much contact with the union. This is a great opportunity to talk to them about their concerns at work, about the union and to get them to do something or (if they are not a member) to join the union.

Planning your communications

Before talking to members or potential members, plan your approach taking into consideration the following:

- ▶ How much time do you have?
- ▶ What impression do you want to give potential members of Unite?
- ▶ What you want to achieve with them and what it is practical to achieve.

- ▶ Do you want them to join the union, or do something like go to a meeting, distribute a leaflet or talk to their colleagues about something?
- ▶ Do you know who they are and where they're going to be working?
- ▶ What about follow-up? Who will do it and when?

Helpful hints about communications

- 1 When asking questions, it's best to use open questions (those that cannot be answered with 'yes' or 'no').

Open questions are useful when you need to:

- ▶ gather information
- ▶ build the conversation
- ▶ explore issues.

- 2 Write down some open questions you can ask before you meet with people.

- 3 Closed questions (those that can only be answered with 'yes' or 'no') should only be used when you need to:

- ▶ confirm information you have been given
- ▶ gain commitment to join the union or participate in an activity
- ▶ bring the conversation to a close.

- 4 Liaise with other branch officials: tell them what you are doing – even if they don't ask – and make sure you know what they are doing to avoid duplication.

Increasing our visibility

Visibility is a vital factor when organising workers. Visibility can take the form of marketing material at the workplace, in newspapers and magazines aimed at workers, as well as in the actual trade union presence in the workplace, along with campaigning efforts in general.

- ▶ Take photos and video footage of learning as it happens in the workplace and use them for branch newsletters and promotional videos as they will promote further learning in your workplace.
- ▶ Ensure everyone is fully aware of the union role in learning: make screensavers using the Unite logo or message, include Unite in log-ins, passwords, etc,
- ▶ Make sure LearnWithUnite is the brand name in your learning centre.
- ▶ Ensure that you have a supply of the latest edition of the ‘Learn with Unite’ case study booklets to use as a marketing and recruitment tool.

Unite’s learning agenda

ULRs and union officials provide support and advice to help members win on learning in the workplace.

The union cannot be separated from the workplace, as members and management understand that the workers are the union; the union is directly associated with learning and increasing skills of members.

The LearnWithUnite team works to create flexible, quality learning opportunities within the workplace and communities. We support members in their personal development, improving employment prospects and quality of life while enhancing the union’s strategy for growth.

We have a vast amount of experience and knowledge in being able to identify and create flexible learning opportunities for members and potential members, which enables them to embark on a learning journey of their choice.

What we do

As a team, we develop educational opportunities that support the diversity of our society, both in the workplace and the community.

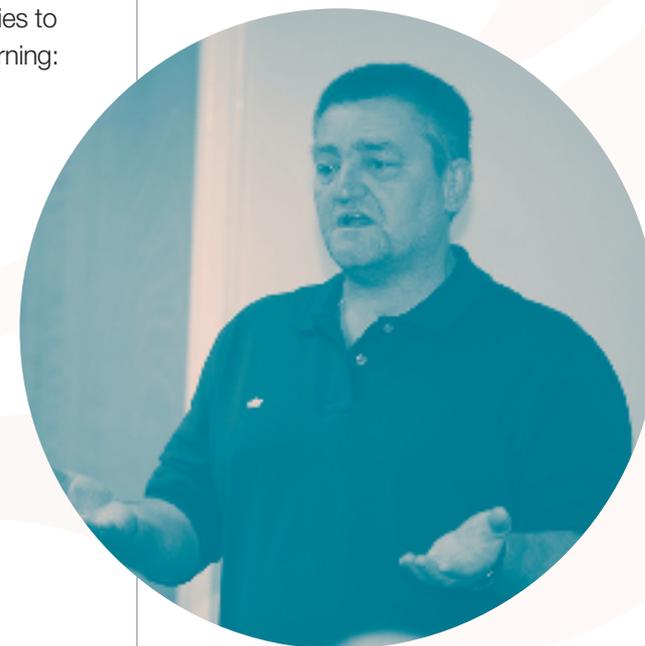
We ensure that learning is available, accessible and inclusive for all, allowing all who wish to join us the chance to grow and reach their full potential.

How we do it

We utilise a number of strategies to deliver our commitment to learning:

- ▶ recruiting and training ULRs to promote learning in the workplace

- ▶ collaborating with local education providers to ensure high quality learning, support and progression in English, maths and ICT to higher education
- ▶ building free community learning initiatives, using community members to facilitate learning programmes through Unite’s alternative education model.



6 RESOURCES

Online resources

Alison

Free online courses
www.alison.com

Apprenticeships

0800 015 0400
www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships

British Dyslexia Association

Support and resources for dyslexic learners
www.bdadyslexia.org.uk

Campaign for Learning

Runs Learning At Work Week
www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk

Equality & Diversity Forum

Network of national organisations committed to progressing equalities
www.edf.org.uk

Floodlight (Course Search)

Covers 40+ UK towns; cities and regions
www.floodlight.co.uk

Learn My Way

Free online digital skills
www.learnmyway.com

LearnWithUnite

Your union's own learning portal with a range of resources and courses including ESOL
www.learnwithunite.org

Move On

Campaign to improve adult literacy and numeracy
www.move-on.org.uk

National Careers Service

Provides IAG on learning, training and work opportunities. 0800 100 900
nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk

National Extension College

10% discount for union members on distance learning opportunities
0800 389 2839 www.nec.ac.uk

Quick Reads

Publishes annual collection of short novels for emergent adult readers
www.quickreads.org.uk

Reading Ahead

Useful reading initiative for workplaces
www.readingahead.org.uk

Sector Skills Councils & Bodies (Directory)

Independent, employer-led organisations that help shape the learning opportunities available to Unite members.
<http://fiss.org/sector-skills-council-body/directory-of-sscs/>

Unionlearn

Helps ULRs inform, advise and guide their learners
www.unionlearn.org.uk/supportinglearners

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7

10 STEPS TO SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACE LEARNING

The following checklist helps to ensure that a workplace organised for learning is effective and sustainable, and works with the full involvement of Unite, the employer and provider(s). The following steps are seen as building blocks to establish a sustainable learning culture and embed learning and training into collective bargaining in the workplace. Steps 1 to 4 need to be taken first before learning takes place to ensure sustainability.

1. Elect Union Learning Representatives (ULRs)

- ▶ Unite elects an agreed number of ULRs.
- ▶ Unite notifies the employer, the regional officer (RO) and the learning organiser / project worker of the names and locations of new ULRs.

2. Train ULRs through Unite or TUC

- ▶ Initial five-day Induction course within six months of ULR election.

3. Establish a learning committee

- ▶ Use the Unite Model Learning Agreement to facilitate discussion on the learning committee terms of reference especially roles and responsibilities; how often to meet, etc., as well as time off.
- ▶ Set up a workplace learning committee to include all ULRs; senior management (including training manager/HR); senior workplace rep (if not also a ULR); learning organiser; education providers.

4. Revive or negotiate a learning agreement

- ▶ Check with learning organiser if a learning agreement has already been signed either nationally, locally or other sites.
- ▶ Use the Unite model learning agreement as a basis for negotiation.
- ▶ Include time off for learners; get agreement before learning starts.
- ▶ Learning agreements should be negotiated through normal procedures and signed by the RIO or director of education.

5. Run a learning needs survey

- ▶ This is not a training needs analysis. It gives an idea of the sort of learning that employees want and their availability.
- ▶ The agreed survey to be organised and conducted by the ULRs.
- ▶ Collate results with your regional learning organiser.
- ▶ Education providers to be invited to the learning committee to discuss their offer.
- ▶ Information shared and possibilities discussed by the learning committee.

6. Keep members informed through leaflets, posters, etc.

- ▶ Use learning to recruit and develop Unite organisation at the workplace.
- ▶ ULR to report back to workplace union committees and branches on current learning, ensuring learning and training is embedded into the union structure and the workplace collective bargaining structures.

7. Facilitate ULR progression

- ▶ ULRs trained in Unite follow-on modules and updates, especially the ULR Stage 2, Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) and Functional Skills.
- ▶ Progress through using the www.learnwithunite.org online resource and inducting new learners.

8. Support learners

- ▶ ULRs to encourage learners and support those accessing learning opportunities organise promotional events, etc.
- ▶ ULRs to publicise and hold monthly surgeries for members to discuss and access learning.
- ▶ ULRs to record and collect

“Education is a human right with immense power to transform”

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General

information on learners, including Equality & Diversity statistics.

- ▶ ULRs to promote local, regional and national learning initiatives e.g. Learning at Work Week; World Book Day; Family Learning; Quick Reads; etc.

9. Set up a union learning centre

- ▶ Endeavour to set up a Unite learning centre in the workplace to offer e-learning and taught courses.
- ▶ ULRs to pilot initial courses and then support learners.

10. Keep the union informed

- ▶ ULRs to submit learner activities regularly to Unite for Union Learning Fund (ULF) purposes.
- ▶ ULRs to keep branch/workplace reps committee / RIO and learning organiser informed of learning activities.
- ▶ Attend regional ULR Forums, Unite networking events to keep updated on learning initiatives.
- ▶ Case studies to be developed and publicised through Unite.

YOUR UNION LEARNING ORGANISER:

Name

Email

Mobile

“I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few”

William Morris, artist

