

## CORE BRANCH RULES

### AS AGREED BY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN 2009

*Branches should draw up branch rules based on these core rules, relevant to their size and spread of membership, having regard to the explanations and options in the footnotes.*

#### 1 Branch Name

The branch shall be called “(.....)” Branch of UNISON and is referred throughout the rules as “the branch”

#### 2 Aims of the branch

- a) to support and pursue the Aims and Objectives contained in the UNISON Rule Book, and the Objectives agreed by UNISON's National Executive Committee annually, and in particular:
- b) to achieve the aims and targets set annually through the branch assessment.

#### 3 Membership

Eligibility for membership shall be in accordance with the Rules of the union

#### 4 Branch structure

- a) There will be an Annual General Meeting of the branch to confirm the election by ballot of branch officers and members of the branch committee, to receive the branch accounts and report on branch development from the branch committee. The AGM may comprise one meeting or a series of aggregate meetings based on sections or geographical areas in order to maximise the active participation of members.
- b) The AGM will determine the basis of representation in the branch and the number of stewards and other representatives to be elected in each work group or workplace.
- c) Other general meetings may be called by the branch committee or by 20 members of the branch or 5% of the membership, whichever is the greater.
- d) The quorum for any general meeting, including the annual meeting is x%<sup>1</sup> of the branch at a single meeting or through aggregate meetings.
- e) Sections will be established for each bargaining group covered by the branch to provide for the participation and representation of members in that section in accordance with rule 8 below<sup>2</sup>.
- f) The branch committee will comprise all branch officers (see rule 6 below), and stewards<sup>3</sup>, and will be responsible for the general organisation and development of the branch and for policy and decision making on matters affecting all members within the branch between general meetings.
- g) The core officers group<sup>4</sup> will be responsible for the day to day management of the branch in accordance with the decisions and authority delegated by the branch committee. Its membership and role is as described in rule 7 below.

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<sup>1</sup> See section 11.2.5.

<sup>2</sup> Relevant to larger, multi-employer branches and branches covering more than one service group

<sup>3</sup> Smaller branches may include all stewards; branches operating a sectional structure may choose to include only the convenor of each section.

<sup>4</sup> It is acknowledged that some branches already have an “Executive” or “Finance & General Purposes committee” which should comply with this rule

## 5 Branch officers

- a) the branch shall elect the following officers annually in accordance with rule 6c:
- Chairperson
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Education co-ordinator
  - Lifelong Learning co-ordinator
  - Equality officer(s)
  - Health and safety officer
  - Communications officer
  - International officer
  - Membership officer
  - Young members officer
  - Welfare officer
  - Labour link officer (elected by the members who pay the political levy only)
  - Retired members' secretary (elected by the retired members)
  - Others to be determined as necessary for the effective operation of the branch
- b) each section within the branch shall elect a convenor (senior steward) from amongst the stewards in that section in accordance with rule 6d.
- c) election of branch officers
- i. branch officers may be nominated by the branch committee or any two members, with the exception of the Labour Link officer who will be elected by the APF members only.
  - ii. nominations will be invited 12 weeks before the AGM and nomination forms will be made available through the branch web-site. All nominations must be received in writing at least 7 weeks before the AGM
  - iii. each nominee will be notified and given the right to withdraw not later than 6 weeks before the AGM.
  - iv. if there is more than one candidate, a vote will be held.
  - v. the vote will be conducted by postal ballot in accordance with the procedure and timescales contained in the Code of Good Branch Practice.<sup>5</sup>
  - vi. where no valid nomination has been received before the deadline, nominations may be called for and candidate elected at the AGM, or endorsed by the branch committee subject to ratification by the next general meeting.
- d) election of convenors
- i. the process for nomination and election shall be as in (c) save that the nomination may be by the section committee or any two members employed in that section, and only members employed in the relevant section may participate in the election.

## 6 Branch Committee

- a) Representation on the branch committee will be agreed by the AGM and will include:
- Branch officers
  - Representatives of self-organised groups
  - The convenors for each section (or all stewards where there is no sectional structure).

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<sup>5</sup> Section 11.4 of the Code advises that use of a ballot paper is recommended over "show of hands" and that branches should opt for a postal ballot for the election of its officers

- b) The branch committee shall administer branch business in accordance with UNISON rules and guidance.
- c) The quorum for the branch committee shall be 33% (one third) of the members of the committee.
- d) The branch committee shall ensure that sections within the branch are appropriately and equitably resourced to ensure the effective participation of members, recruitment and organisation, representation, and collective bargaining and campaigning on behalf of members in each section.
- e) The branch committee will establish arrangements for the individual representation of members.
- f) The branch committee shall meet *monthly/quarterly*<sup>6</sup>

## **7 Core Officers Group**<sup>7</sup>

- a) The Core Officers Group shall comprise the branch secretary, branch chair, branch treasurer, section convenors, the branch equalities officer (and others as appropriate)
- b) The Core Officers Group will meet *weekly*<sup>8</sup> to ensure the effective day to day management of the branch within the parameters of the decisions and guidance issued by the branch committee. The Core Officers Group may commit to no expenditure, policy decision or affiliation that has not been previously agreed by the branch committee.

## **8 Sections**

- a) Sections comprise all members within the relevant service group and/or bargaining group and will have autonomy within the branch in respect of collective bargaining with their employer(s) only, subject to the policies and any guidelines and procedures of the branch, region and national union<sup>9</sup>.
- b) Sections will be led by a convenor elected in accordance with rule 6d and who will be the senior accredited representative within the section, and a committee of all accredited representatives within the section.

## **9 Conduct of meetings**

- a) All meetings will be conducted in a fair and democratic manner.
- b) All meetings will be advertised widely as far in advance as possible (in the case of the AGM, all members will be notified in writing at least 12 weeks before the meeting (or first aggregate meeting)).
- c) The procedures to be used at the meeting will be explained clearly.
- d) The branches will maintain records of all meetings and other appropriate records to enable the branch to function.

## **10 Media communications**

Communications to the media on behalf of the branch shall be made only by officer(s) authorised by the committee.

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<sup>6</sup> The branch committee should hold a minimum of 4 meetings a year

<sup>7</sup> A Core Officers Group or executive will normally be required in larger branches

<sup>8</sup> The branch should decide on a frequency that reflects the purpose of the group and that decisions are not left solely to one or two senior branch officers

<sup>9</sup> The branch may wish to identify its sections here

## **11 Affiliations**

- a) Affiliations to relevant constituency Labour Parties will be decided by the APF membership.
- b) Affiliations to trade councils shall be determined by the AGM or branch committee.

## **12 Finance**

The branch shall keep a bank/building society account in the name of the branch and will maintain a financial record of all assets and transactions in accordance with UNISON guidelines

## **13 Donations**

Donations shall be agreed by the AGM or branch committee in accordance with the union's policies and objectives and subject to provisions of national rule.

## **14 Expenses**

Rates of expenses for members attending meetings or carrying out other activities on behalf of the branch shall be agreed by the AGM in accordance with the Scheme for Branch Expenses contained in the Branch Finances Handbook.

## **15 Honoraria**

Any honorarium paid to a branch officer will only be made in accordance with the Scheme for Honoraria Payments in Branches contained in the Branch Finances Handbook.

## **16 Branch staff**

- a) The branch secretary will be responsible for the employment, direction and supervision of any staff employed by the branch consistent with employment law and current good practice.
- b) In the event of any first stage hearings of staff disciplinary or grievance matters, the branch secretary will be joined by another senior branch officer other than the branch chair.
- c) Any appeal arising from a first stage grievance or disciplinary hearing will be heard by the branch chair and other senior branch officers not involved at the first stage hearing.
- d) The outcome of any disciplinary or grievance hearing will remain confidential and the outcome only will be reported to the branch committee on its conclusion.

## **17 Approval/alteration to branch rules**

- a) Branch rules must be agreed by two thirds of members present and voting at a quorate branch meeting.
- b) Branch rules must be approved in accordance with UNISON's procedures.
- c) Any changes to branch rules must be agreed and approved in the same way.