

# UNISON

## SCHEME FOR THE ACCREDITATION AND TRAINING OF UNISON STEWARDS/WORKPLACE REPS 2010

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This scheme amends and updates the scheme approved by the National Executive Council in February 2001.

The scheme aims to ensure that UNISON members experience the required standards of representation and that all UNISON stewards are offered appropriate training and development opportunities to maintain and develop their skills. The scheme makes provision for the ongoing ERA certification of stewards who have undertaken refresher or other appropriate training and development within a five year period and sets out the process if this is not fulfilled.

The scheme takes effect immediately. The time limit of 5 years for undertaking refresher training or its equivalent, as set out in the scheme, is effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 for all stewards currently ERA certificated and for all other stewards from the date of completing introductory training (as set out in this scheme).

### 2. THE LEGAL POSITION

The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 makes provision for trades unions to elect officials in workplaces to act as representatives of the union. The Act, in conjunction with the ACAS Code, requires the employer to give reasonable time off to these trade union officials to carry out duties which are concerned with industrial relations, and to undergo training in aspects of industrial relations. UNISON identifies officials accredited under the 1992 Act as stewards.

Additionally, the Employment Relations Act 1999, gives employees the right to be accompanied at grievance and disciplinary hearings by:

“an official of a trade union (within that meaning) whom the union has reasonably certified in writing as having experience of, or as having received training in, acting as a worker’s companion at disciplinary or grievance hearings” Employment Relations Act 1999 Sec 10 (3).

Trade union representatives are statutorily entitled to take a reasonable amount of paid time off to accompany a worker at a disciplinary or grievance hearing so long as they have been certified by their union as being capable of acting as a worker’s companion.

#### SCHEME OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the scheme are underpinned by UNISON’s commitment to supporting stewards/workplace representatives in their development as agreed by National Delegate Conference, 2009:

- UNISON values the contribution of every workplace representative. The union is committed to providing development opportunities to enable stewards/workplace representatives to fulfill the role effectively.
- This includes a named development contact who can guide stewards/workplace representatives towards training and development opportunities related to their role.
- UNISON asks stewards/workplace representatives to be pro-active in finding ways to put into practice the new skills and knowledge developed on training courses and in development opportunities such as shadowing and mentoring.

### Scheme Objectives

- To establish a procedure for supporting branches in the accreditation and training of stewards under TULR Act and to provide a system by which representatives can be certified by UNISON as being capable of acting as a worker's companion within the terms of the Employment Relations Act.
- To establish a process within which stewards are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and development and are supported in doing so by the branch and the region
- to ensure that all stewards are afforded the right to receive training to an agreed minimum standard, and that all are offered refresher training on a regular basis
- to ensure that accreditation and training is in accordance with our overall approach of encouraging and enabling members to come forward as stewards so that organization can expand and strengthen
- to meet the requirements of the Employment Relations Act (1999) by requiring newly elected stewards to attend basic training before certificating them under ERA.
- to ensure the ongoing training and development of reps by requiring all reps to undergo refresher training after a maximum period of 5 years unless alternative training recognized by the scheme has been undertaken in that time
- to meet the needs of our members and promote a proper standard of representation for members in grievance and disciplinary meetings.

## **2. MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE SCHEME**

- New Stewards/Workplace Reps
  - a. All will be elected in accordance with UNISON rules and recorded on RMS so that they can be issued with credentials, provided with a handbook and Representation Guide, and placed on standard mailing lists. These reps will be known as UNISON accredited representatives under TULRA.
  - b. Within 3 months of notification of election being sent to the region all will be invited to attend either the UNISON stewards' induction or the Unionlearn introductory stewards' course, or a suitable equivalent.
  - c. In order to gain ERA certification all newly elected UNISON stewards/workplace reps are required to attend either the UNISON stewards' induction course or the Unionlearn introductory stewards' course, or a suitable equivalent.

- d. All newly elected stewards/workplace reps will be provided with a named contact within their branch to support them in their development
  - e. All are accredited under ERA as being able to accompany members at grievance and disciplinary hearings with any employer once they have attended basic training.
- Existing Stewards and maintaining ERA Certification:
    - a. All will stand for annual election in accordance with UNISON rules and be recorded on RMS as being re-elected
    - b. All will be offered regular training and development opportunities
    - c. To ensure continued quality of representation and to maintain ERA certification, Stewards/Workplace reps are required to:
      - either undertake refresher/ERA re-accreditation training at least every 5 years
      - or
      - or have evidence of appropriate training and development which is recorded by the Region within the 5 year period.
    - d. Stewards/Workplace Reps who do not undertake refresher/ERA re-accreditation training and do not have evidence of appropriate training and development which is recorded by the Region, within the five year period, will no longer be ERA certificated. They will, however, continue to be recognised as stewards under the terms of The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
    - e. The five year period for all stewards/Workplace reps who are ERA certificated at the introduction of this scheme starts from 1st January 2010.
    - f. The five year period for all stewards elected since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 starts from the date of completion of Stewards induction training (as set out in this scheme)

### 3. MAINTENANCE OF THE SCHEME

The responsibility for implementing and maintaining this scheme lies with regions, although discussions will need to take place with branches through the Joint Regional/Branch Assessment process.

Branches are responsible for:

- keeping regions informed of newly elected and re-elected stewards.
- providing new stewards/ reps with a named contact
- encouraging all reps to participate in on-going training and development

The scheme will be reviewed annually by the Development and Organisation Committee to monitor progress and implementation.

#### 4. AGREED MINIMUM STANDARDS OF TRAINING

The agreed minimum standard for ERA certification under the scheme is basic steward's training which is:

- the UNISON Stewards' induction course 'The Organising Steward' or
- the Unionlearn basic stewards' course.

It is envisaged that most stewards will attend training courses organized at regional level. Branches will be able to organize their own courses, providing:

- tutors are approved trainers accredited either through the UNISON tutor training scheme or by Unionlearn;
- the materials are approved by regions as meeting the agreed standards
- attendance at training is reported to the region

The agreed minimum standard for the continuing ERA certification of existing stewards/workplace reps within a five year period is:

- the UNISON Reps' Refresher Course/ERA Re-accreditation course
- the Unionlearn 'Stepping Up' Stage 2 course

or

- evidence of appropriate on-going training and development related to representation during a 5 year period. For the purposes of this scheme appropriate on-going training and development will include training provided by UNISON or Unionlearn on the following:

- Employment Law training (at least 1 day)
- Advanced Dealing with Grievances and Disciplinary training
- Equality law training – national and regional courses
- Negotiating Skills training with representation element

or

- Evidence of relevant industrial relations and trades union studies qualifications gained through an academic institution. For example:

- The Northern College Access to HE Diploma in Labour Studies
- Ruskin College:
  - Certificate of Higher Education in Labour Relations and Law
  - BA (Hons) International Labour and Trade Union Studies
  - MA International Labour and Trade Union Studies
- Keele University Part-time Certificate in Industrial Relations
- TUC Diploma in Contemporary Trade Unionism
- TUC Diploma in Employment Law

Amended and agreed May 2010

UNISON Development and Organisation Committee