



Scotland's largest
and most effective
education trade union



EIS Branch Representatives

Why You Should Consider Becoming an EIS-ULA Branch Representative

Further & Higher Education Office

September 2015

Encouraging more EIS-ULA branch representatives

The last EIS-ULA survey identified that a number of members would consider becoming EIS representatives. This leaflet seeks to explain what branch representatives do, the benefits of having more branch representatives and the potential benefits to individual members that become branch representatives.

What does the EIS do?

According to the Scottish Government's Working Together Review¹, "*A trade union is a democratic voluntary membership organisation formed and developed to benefit its members by working collectively to pursue their legitimate interests in workplaces, employer organisations and in society*".

The Review also set out how trade unions "*deliver impact at individual, organisation /workplace, industry/sector and national level, and in so doing, contribute to the health of civil society in Scotland*".

The EIS supports members individually with their workplace issues including providing representation for members subject to grievance, redundancy, disciplinary and capability processes as well as pursuing discrimination, breach of contract, personal injury and other employment related claims on behalf of members. The EIS also support members suffering from workplace injuries (including stress) and with pension issues.

The EIS also supports members collectively by negotiating pay nationally² through New JNCHEs, and it negotiates and consults directly with employers where it is recognised by those employers³. The EIS engages with the Scottish Public Pensions Agency for those members on STSS pension schemes, and with a range of stakeholders such as Scottish Trade Union Centre (STUC), Scottish Government, Scottish Funding Council, NUS, Audit Scotland, Scottish parliamentary parties and Universities Scotland.

The EIS organises its Higher Education (HE) members within a self-governing association, the EIS-ULA. The EIS-ULA determines its own HE policies and these policies are binding on the whole EIS.

The Organising Agenda

Some EIS-ULA members have indicated an interest in potentially supporting the work of EIS Branches and the work of the Executive Committee. The EIS is keen for as many members as possible to support the work of branches in supporting members and the work of the EIS. All Trade Unions seek to have as many members as possible involved in the work of Branches and wider union business, this is sometimes called the 'organising agenda' which promotes the belief that the members are the union, and that successful unions are led by members and not full time staff.

¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00457659.pdf>

² Except SRUC, UHI Executive Office and RCS.

³ Edinburgh Napier University, University of the West of Scotland, Robert Gordon University, Queen Margaret University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot Watt University, University of Edinburgh (limited recognition), SRUC and the RCS. The EIS also participates in a consultation forum at the UHI since UHI Executive Office does not recognise any trade union.

The 'organising agenda' recognises that collective representation is critical to the resolution of workplace issues and that it is best done by members representing members, with the support of full time union staff – rather than members solely being supported by full time union officers.

Whilst the benefits of significant member participation are clear for members and the union, there are also several potential benefits to individuals that act as a Branch representative. This document seeks to outline the potential benefits to individuals if they step forward and become EIS representatives.

Why become an EIS Branch Representative?

The EIS offers in-house training and TUC training to EIS Branch Representatives, Health & Safety Reps, Learning Reps and Equality Reps. TUC Training is accredited and can develop new skills and knowledge for individuals.

Acting for the benefit of your colleagues as a whole

Branch Representatives are the regular interface between the EIS Branch and the University if the EIS is recognised at the University. The Branch Representatives and University will negotiate on contractual matters and policies, and consult each other on non-contractual issues. Branch representatives are supported by full time EIS staff.

Individuals who act as Branch Representatives potentially gain:

- a. a range of transferrable skills deriving from working with other trade unions and employer management to achieve EIS objectives or improve upon management objectives
- b. opportunities to make the workplace a fairer and better place
- c. experience of drafting and developing policies and agreements, with the compromises sometimes needed to get agreed outcomes
- d. negotiation skills
- e. work with a broader range of staff at your university, mainly from other areas
- f. work with a range of EIS representatives across the country from other universities
- g. engage with the university's decision making processes and decision makers
- h. access to institutional information not normally available to staff

By law, trade union representatives are allowed time off with pay for training and carrying out their duties – i.e. remission. This means that Branch Representatives' workload must be reduced by University to facilitate a branch role.

Branch representatives are employees who have an opportunity to improve the working lives of all staff.

Acting for the benefit of individual colleagues

Branch Representatives are often members' first point of contact for workplace queries and casework (such as disciplinaries, grievances and redundancies). In some cases Branch Representatives will decide to take on casework – if they feel confident and have received the appropriate training – or decide to refer the casework to full time EIS staff.

Individuals that act as Branch Representatives who carry out casework potentially gain:

- a. a range of transferrable skills arising from advocacy in defending and representing members in meetings and hearings
- b. the satisfaction of helping colleagues and improving their working lives
- c. the satisfaction of making the workplace a fairer place and enabling justice for members
- d. networking by meeting a range of colleagues and senior staff that you may not otherwise meet

Representing your colleagues at the EIS and at other fora

All EIS-ULA Branches have a right to send one or more Branch Representatives to the EIS-ULA Executive. The Executive drafts national policies and campaigns nationally on a range of issues with the Government, Scottish Funding Council, Parliament etc. The EIS also participated in UK national bargaining on pay and pay related matters (through New JNCHES). EIS-ULA Executive members also interface with the rest of the EIS and can play a full role within the EIS including EIS Council and EIS Annual Conference.

Individuals who act as Branch Representatives and carry out casework potentially gain:

- a. a range of transferrable skills deriving from developing policies and advocating a position by convincing peers
- b. networking opportunities by meeting a range of senior staff from other Trade Unions, Government, Scottish Funding Council, Parliament, and other Universities etc
- c. the ability to shape national policy on HE (via the EIS-ULA) and general education (through the EIS main body)

Other types of EIS representatives

EIS-ULA Branches also have Health & Safety Reps, Learning Reps and Equality Reps which require training before becoming accredited representatives. All of these involve specialist training provided through the EIS. These roles give representatives the ability to support members and improve their working lives and the work place.

Should you have any queries or a desire to explore a Branch Representatives role then please contact David Belsey (dbelsey@eis.org.uk) at the EIS Further & Higher Education Office or your Branch Secretary.

Appendix 1: Working Together (Scotland) Review

In February 2014 the Working Together Review Group in Scotland set out to identify examples of effective union, employer and Government relations in Scotland and to identify any benefits arising. The Review Group⁴ concluded that Scottish workplaces should be typified by ideals of fairness, dignity, creativity and purposeful industry, and recognises that trade unions have an absolutely legitimate role to fulfil in promoting these ideals within Scottish workplaces and Scottish civic society at large.

The Working Together Review also set out the framework below showing how trade unions deliver impact at individual, organisation/workplace, industry/sector and national level, and in so doing, contribute to the health of civil society in Scotland.

Individual	Workplace	Sector	National	Civic Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pay & benefits ○ Representation & support ○ Fair treatment ○ Education & training ○ Pensions ○ Job security ○ Holidays & paid leave ○ Personal development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Productivity ○ Innovation ○ Competitive-ness ○ Income inequality ○ Availability of training ○ Frequency/extent of training ○ Equal Opportunity Practices ○ Diversity practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sector strategies ○ Skills plans ○ Sectoral/industry leadership & networks ○ Leadership & modernisation initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provision of expert advice ○ Policy formation ○ Policy evaluation ○ Policy networks & relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equality/inclusion ○ Environmental outcomes ○ Civic participation & volunteering ○ Training for civic participation ○ Campaigning on common causes

⁴ <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00457659.pdf>