UNISON

Branch International Officer’s Course

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**COURSEBOOK**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The international work done by UNISON makes an invaluable contribution to the success of the union.

We recognise that our solidarity has no borders and cannot be confined soley to our work in this country.

We recognise too that many of the challenges we face in Britain – privatisation and commercialisation, trade union rights and poor health and safety, threats to our pensions – are also being faced in different parts of the world.

There is much therefore that we can learn from other unions and many experiences we can share with them. To work together strengthens our positions and helps bring victory that much closer.

**AIMS OF THE COURSE**

* Understand why international work is a trade union issue
* Be aware of UNISON’s priority themes, campaigns and countries
* Understand UNISON’s structures for carrying out international work
* Increase your confidence in carrying out your role as a Branch International Officer

COURSE PROGRAMME

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **ACTIVITY** | **TITLE** | **TIME** |
| 1 | Introductions  | 9.30 – 10.30  |
| 2 | What’s It Got To Do With Us? – Quiz 1. | 10.30 -11.15 |
|  | BREAK | 11.15 - 11.30 |
| 3 | Some International Issues | 11.30 - 1.00 |
|  | LUNCH | 10.00 - 2.00 |
| 4 | UNISON’s Structures for Doing International Work. | 2.00 – 3.00 |
| 5 | The Role of the Branch International Officer.  | 3.00 – 3.45 |
|  | BREAK | 3.45 – 4.00 |
| 6 | The UNISON International Development Fund  | 4.00 – 4.30 |
|  | **DAY TWO** |  |
| 7 | Turning the Issue Into A Campaign Getting The Branch on Board | 9.30 – 10.45 |
|  | BREAK | 10.45 – 11.00 |
| 8 | Leading a Discussion With Members  | 11 00 – 1.00 |
|  | LUNCH | 1.00 – 2.00 |
| 9 | The Skills of a Branch International Officer | 2.00 – 2.45 |
|  | BREAK | 2.45 – 3.00 |
| 10 | Action Plan and Course Evaluation | 3.00 – 3.45 |

**Working Together on UNISON Courses**

**Introduction**

UNISON is committed to the fullest possible participation of all its members in the activities of the trade union. On trade union education courses, so long as the applicant meets the advertised eligibility criteria for the course, no-one should be put off from participating because of the actions, attitudes or language of other course members. The following guidelines have been drawn up to help course members meet UNISON's commitment to the full participation of all its members in a practical and constructive way. You will see that underlying this guide is a commitment to the principle that everyone has equal rights to benefit from, to contribute to and enjoy the course.

We assume that course members will agree with these principles and hope the guidelines will assist in putting them into practice.

**Working Together**

A key feature of trade union education is the value it places upon the knowledge, experience and skills that each member brings with them to the course - both in terms of their trade union work and their everyday lives. It is important that everyone feels equal and able to make a contribution if they so wish. So:

 *Listen to what others have to say, and avoid being dismissive of their contribution.*

 *Wait until a speaker has finished and do not interrupt their train of thought.*

 *Aim to have reasoned discussion, not arguments.*

 *Any criticism should be constructive and help members to develop confidence, skills and knowledge.*

 *Make your own contribution as clear and concise as possible and do not dominate the discussion.*

 *Ensure that everyone who wishes to speak is given encouragement and the opportunity to do so.*

 *It is equally important that members on the course can speak openly about problems they or their members have experienced in the full knowledge that personal or sensitive information is restricted to the classroom.*

***Confidentiality must be respected.***

**Language**

Language is important and UNISON's policy is not to use language which offends or hurts people. This type of language should always be avoided as it causes distress. Often it is a reflection of stereotyped thinking about UNISON's membership and policies. Do not be surprised if you are challenged if you make broad sweeping generalisations about any group of UNISON members, e.g. that women working part-time only go out to work for pin money.

Language which contains discriminatory references and which is abusive or threatening in any way should not be used and nor should jokes or comments which perpetuate discrimination.

**Jargon**

Jargon is a barrier to good communication. The more we become involved in trade union work the more likely we are to use jargon. Take care to explain any jargon or initials you use which other members may not be familiar with so that everyone understands what you are talking about.

**Harassment**

To ensure the full participation of all course members, there must be no harassment of any kind. Harassment creates an unpleasant or intimidating atmosphere and should be challenged.

**Outside Course Hours - Tea/Coffee/Lunch Breaks**

What has been outlined as guidance for behaviour during course hours is equally applicable to the scheduled breaks during the course.

**Outside Course Hours (Residential Courses)**

The social side of courses - discussions in the bar for example - should be both enjoyable and valuable. It is important that this is true for everyone. This means on the one hand, making sure that everyone feels able to join in if they want to - just as in the class - on the other hand, not putting pressure on individuals to fall in with a group if they do not want to, e.g. drinking alcohol, going out or staying up late. If you stay up late yourself, be careful not to disturb others - everyone needs to be able to participate fully at the first session in the morning.

**Time Keeping**

The course has a tight timetable and members are responsible for their own time keeping. When participating in the course, you will often have a limited amount of time. Make sure you use it well and return to the main group in time for the report back.

**Mobile Telephones**

Using mobile telephones during the course or leaving them switched 'on' for incoming calls during the course is not acceptable. PLEASE SWITCH THEM OFF.

**Smoking**

In line with UK legislation and UNISON policy, smoking is not allowed during UNISON training courses. Participants who smoke will be able to do so in outside areas as designated by the venue during scheduled breaks.

**Conclusion**

These guidelines are intended for you to use during the course to counter problems as they arise, and to ensure that no-one feels excluded from the course as a result of language, actions or attitudes of other course members. They also seek to promote UNISON's policies on discrimination and equal opportunities in a positive way as far as the conduct of trade union education courses is concerned.

**ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTIONS**

**Aim:** To enable you to:

* Introduce yourself/get to know each other
* Understand each of our backgrounds
* Explore how international issues have had a historical effect on our lives

**Task**

The tutor will ask you to place yourselves in the room according to where you were born.

The tutor will ask you to place yourselves in the room according to where your parents were born and then again for your grandparents.

Question:

What were the forces that drove your family members to move?

**ACTIVITY 2: WHAT’S IT GOT TO DO WITH US? QUIZ 1.**

**Aim:** To clarify our thinking on the role of trade unions in international development

**Task**

1. In pairs, briefly discuss and respond to the questions in the table below
2. As a whole group, your tutor will go over each question and discuss responses with you
3. What questions or issues has this quiz raised with you?

**WHAT’S IT GOT TO DO WITH US?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Questions** | **Answer** | **Comments** |
| 1 | Trade unions are founded on the principles of solidarity in the workplace and beyond.Agree or disagree? |  |  |
| 2 | Trade unions should take action on international issues because of principles of justice not charity.Agree or disagree? |  |  |
| 3 | Public services in the UK are so different to public services in poor countries that it is difficult to share experiences.Agree or disagree? |  |  |
| 4 | We can defend trade unionists in other countries by taking action in the UK. Agree or disagree? |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Questions** | **Answer** | **Comments** |
| 5 | Providing decent work is not fundamental to tackling poverty. Agree or disagree? |  |  |
| 6 | Labour migration is an international, as well as domestic issue, for trade unions.Agree or disagree? |  |  |
| 7 | A public service trade union in the UK has little to contribute to campaigns on international development.Agree or disagree? |  |  |
| 8 | Ebola is a trade union issue.Agree or disagree? |  |  |
| 9 | Trade unions have a role to play in fighting privatisation in other countries.Agree or disagree? |  |  |
| 10 | International work should be left to trade union headquarters and the NEC.Trade union branches can do very little.Agree or disagree? |  |  |

**ACTIVITY 3: SOME INTERNATIONAL ISSUES**

**Aim:** To begin to build a picture of some key international issues which are of concern for the international trade union movement and for UNISON.

**Task**:

You tutor will divide you into small groups for this task.

Using the Resource Pack provided,choose two international issues that UNISON is currently involved in or has an interest in that you could promote in your branch. Discuss and prepare to report back on the following:

1. What are your two issues – brief description of the areas you are going to look at?
2. Why are they trade union issues?
3. What is UNISON doing on these particular issues?
4. What could you do to in your branch to raise awareness of the issues with your members and get them involved?

**Report back:**

Each group should prepare a brief report for their branch on a flip chart, and present that report as feedback.

**ACTIVITY 4: UNISONS Structures for Doing**

 **International Work- Quiz 2.**

**Aim**: To begin to look at UNISON’s structures for doing international work and some of the work the International Committee is involved in.

**Task**:

This is a quick activity to match questions and answers. Your tutor will give you answer cards to discuss and post up under the appropriate ‘question’ cards

The tutor will go through the answers and lead a discussion on UNISON’s structures for international work.

**ACTIVITY 5: Role of the Branch International**

 **Officer**

**Aim:** To understand some of the responsibilities of a Branch International Officer

**Task:**

In your small group, look through the ‘job description’ for a Branch International Officer overleaf (taken from the Code of Good Branch Practice)

Your group will be allocated some bullet points. For each allocated bullet point , draw up some ideas of how you could put it into action.

Which other branch officers might be able to help you and how?

**Report back.**

Prepare to report back your groups’ main points to the rest of the course.

**Branch International Officer**

**Job Description**

1. To co-ordinate the branch’s work on international issues
2. To ensure that branch members are informed of national policy on international matters
3. To receive and distribute relevant information
4. To encourage members to be aware of the importance of international solidarity issues within the context of the overall work of the union
5. To liaise where appropriate with regional international structures and to ensure that the views of the branch on international activities are reported appropriately
6. To liaise with other branch officers concerning publicity and education on international issues
7. To liaise with the solidarity organisations and campaigns that UNISON is affiliated to
8. To encourage members of the branch to take action and participate in international solidarity activities organised nationally or regionally
9. To ensure that information on branch activity is shared at regional and national level
10. To seek to develop an international perspective among members, stewards and branch officers

**ACTIVITY 6: The UNISON International Development Fund**

**Aim**: To explore in more detail some international issues which UNISON is involved in.

You tutor lead a short discussion on theUNISON International Development Fund

**Task 1**

Working in your small groups and using the Resource Pack, choose one project that UNISON International Development Fund is working on.

You have been asked to make a short presentation to your next branch meeting about a UIDF project and how your branch could get involved. Agree who will present the report for your group.

**Task 2**

 You expect to be challenged by a member at the branch meeting by a member who thinks the UIDF “is a waste of members money”. How might you respond and defend the value of the UIDF? Agree who will present the response for your group.

**ACTIVITY 7: Turning the Issue into a Campaign –**

 **Getting the Branch On Board**

**Resources:** Effective Campaigning – a UNISON Guide

**Aim:** To explore how you can get your branch involved in an international issue/campaign.

**Task**:

Choose an international issue to campaign on. It could be the same one as you used for the previous activity.

Using materials/resources provided on current campaigns or actions, and the UNISON Effective Campaigning Guide, how might you get your branch get involved in international activity around this issue?

* Consider your branch’s current affiliations to solidarity groups such as Justice for Colombia, Palestine Solidarity, War on Want, etc. or how you might get the branch to affiliate (eg using a current action).
* Are there other unions or local groups that have a presence in your workplace (or in the vicinity e.g. an Amnesty local group) that you could speak to about the activity?
* Who else might you involve to help with this? Another branch officer e.g. the health and safety officer for a safety at work issue? A local solidarity group connected to or involved in the issue?
* UNISON also supports actions generated by solidarity groups that are part of UNISON’s international policy, eg. Postcards or e-campaigns to end violence against women, campaign for workers’ and human rights, or campaign against privatisation of public services.

Start to plan, in a more methodical way, how you could get:

* the branch committee to adopt the issue/campaign
	1. What do you want them to do?
	2. What arguments will you use?
	3. Who do you need to convince?
	4. Who might be able to help you?
	5. When and where is the best time and place to raise the issue?
	6. What resources would you use?
* The membership to adopt the issue/campaign
	1. How will you get the message across?
	2. What events might you need to plan
	3. What resources would you need?

For each heading put your ideas on post-it notes (one idea per post it note)

**Report back.**

The tutor will prepare some flipcharts using the above headings. Place your post it notes on the relevant flipchart. Cluster the post it notes where they are similar.

The tutor will lead a discussion on the ideas raised.

**ACTIVITY 8: LEADING A DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS**

**Aim**: To practice discussing an international issue with members and activists

**BACKGROUND**:

Raising international issues with members and branch activists is an important role for the Branch International Officer. This keeps the issues alive and to the forefront of issues within the branch

**Task 1**:

The tutor will lead a discussion around the following issues:

* The benefits of leading a discussion with members instead of talking at them.
* The best methods of involving members in a discussion.
* Asking members to get involved or contribute to a campaign.

Be prepared to participate and contribute your ideas to the discussion.

**Task 2:**

In your small group choose a topic that you wish to lead a discussion on. It could be a specific international development issues raised in the course, e.g the international aspect of privatisation.

Think about the following issues:

1. Your introduction.
2. What question you will pose to the group in order to get discussion going?
3. Getting the members to do some kind of activity so they remember the discussion.
4. What you are going to ask the members to do as a result of the discussion?

**ACTIVITY 9: The Skills of a Branch International Officer.**

**Aim:** To look at some of the skills which a Branch International Officer may need to hone or develop.

**Task:**

In your group draw a figure or caricature representing a Branch International Officer. It can be an animal, fish, human, monster, space alien etc.

What kind of features does it have to represent the skills required? For example, if you think that listening skills are vital, draw large ears.

Everyone in the group should contribute to the drawing. When it’s finished place it on the wall and get ready to explain it to the main group.

**ACTIVITY 10: Action plan**

**Aims:**

 To help you to:

 \* consolidate some of the lessons of the course

 \* Identify what you need to do next

 \* develop a practical strategy for involving the branch in international issues

**Task:**

 In your group:

 Talk about 5 things for an action plan for when you get back to the branch.

 You should think about:

 \* Your needs

 \* Your members in the workplace

 \* Your role in the UNISON Branch

 **Complete the Action Plan form overleaf**

 Include in your plan:

1. what you intend to do;
2. what you hope to achieve;
3. what help you will need from members, other union reps, or the UNISON branch;
4. when you plan to do things.

**Report Back.** We will sample an action plan from each group.

**Branch international officer**

**Action Plan**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What I intend to do** | **What help will I need** | **When** |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |