



## Higher National Unit specification: general information

**Unit title:** Trade Union Organising and Representation: Trade Union Approach to Workplace Issues

**Unit code:** H2XH 34

**Superclass:** AJ

**Publication date:** November 2012

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 01

### Unit purpose

This Unit is for trade union workplace representatives who are new to the role or may not have undertaken this level of training in the subject to date.

It is designed to provide trade union representatives with knowledge and understanding of the trade union approach to dealing with issues and challenges faced by working people.

It is one of the specialist mandatory Units in the Higher National Certificate in Trade Union Organising and Representation and forms part of the Professional Development Award in Trade Union Organising in the Workplace at SCQF level 7.

On completion of the Unit the candidate should be able to

- 1 Explain the role and rights of the trade union workplace representative
- 2 Explain collective bargaining systems
- 3 Develop a plan that demonstrates the trade union approach to dealing with members' workplace issues

### Recommended prior knowledge and skills

Although entry is at the discretion of the centre, it is recommended that candidates possess good communication and interpersonal skills. In addition, candidates should be able to demonstrate the support of their nominating union.

## **General information (cont)**

### **Credit points and level**

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7\*)

*\*SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

### **Core Skills**

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this Unit.

### **Context for delivery**

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

This Unit is designed to provide trade union workplace representatives knowledge and understanding of the trade union approach to dealing with issues and challenges faced by working people.

It is one of the specialist mandatory units in the Higher National Certificate in Trade Union Organising and Representation and forms part of the Professional Development Award in Trade Union Organising in the Workplace.

It is recommended that it be delivered as part of a trade union's education programme.

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

**Unit title:** Trade Union Organising and Representation: Trade Union Approach to Workplace Issues

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The section of the Unit stating the Outcomes, Knowledge and/or Skills and Evidence Requirements are Mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

### Outcome 1

Explain the role and rights of the trade union workplace representative.

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Tasks associated with the role of a trade union workplace representative.
- ◆ Rights of a trade union workplace representative.
- ◆ Current relevant legislation and codes of practice.
- ◆ Trade union recognition, facilities and related agreements.
- ◆ Trade union roles, structures, rules and policies.

#### Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ describe tasks associated with the role of a trade union workplace representative
- ◆ explain the rights of the trade union workplace representative in relation to practice
- ◆ explain own and others' roles in relation to trade union structures
- ◆ explain how trade union structures can be used to influence policy

### Outcome 2

Explain collective bargaining systems

#### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Collective bargaining process.
- ◆ Current bargaining issues.
- ◆ Levels of management involved in collective bargaining.
- ◆ Influence of workplace representatives and members in collective bargaining at regional, industry wide and national levels.
- ◆ Trade union recognition agreements.

## Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

**Unit title:** Trade Union Organising and Representation: Trade Union Approach to Workplace Issues

### Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ explain the operation of the collective bargaining process in relation to a minimum of two current issues on which they bargain with employers
- ◆ outline the levels of management involved in the collective bargaining process in relation to the two issues identified previously
- ◆ describe the influence of workplace representatives and members in collective bargaining at regional, industry wide and national levels
- ◆ evaluate one current trade union recognition agreement

### Outcome 3

Develop a plan that demonstrates the trade union approach to dealing with members' workplace issues.

### Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Issues faced by members in the workplace.
- ◆ Key elements of an effectively organised workplace.
- ◆ Trade union organising model.
- ◆ Trade union approach to handling members' cases.

### Evidence Requirements

Candidates will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they can:

- ◆ Outline a minimum of three main issues currently facing members in the workplace
- ◆ Describe the key elements of an effectively organised workplace
- ◆ Produce a plan that demonstrates how to apply the trade union organising model to a minimum of one workplace issue
- ◆ Outline how to deal with a minimum of two issues raised by members in the workplace using the trade union approach.
- ◆ Reflect on best practice in handling members' cases

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes

**Unit title:** Trade Union Organising and Representation: Trade Union Approach to Workplace Issues

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The Support Notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

### Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

This Unit is intended to equip trade union workplace representatives with knowledge and understanding of the trade union approach to issues and challenges faced by working people. It seeks to combine skills development and knowledge acquisition relating to representatives' organising and regulatory functions with exploration of explanatory frameworks designed to create understanding of the position of workers and workers' organisations within national and global political contexts. On completion of this Unit candidates should have a clearer understanding of their role and functions in the workplace and their wider role within the trade union and beyond.

### Guidance on the delivery of this Unit

This Unit forms part of the PDA in Trade Union Organising in the Workplace at SCQF level 7

It is envisaged that it will be:

- ◆ delivered in conjunction with the other two units of the PDA in Trade Union Organising in the Workplace
- ◆ preceded/followed by further mandatory and optional units of the HNC in Trade Union Organising and Representation

Candidates will be practising trade union workplace representatives, in full or part-time employment, working in groups drawn either from a single workplace or sector or from a variety of workplaces and sectors. Courses incorporating this Unit are therefore best delivered in short blocks or via day release, attended by cohorts of between 10 and 20 participants. The tutor should be an experienced trade union representative with knowledge and understanding of trade union structures, policy and practice.

Participative, co-operative group work is highly recommended. Candidates will bring a range of valuable existing knowledge and experience, whether from trade union involvement, work, previous study or life in general and it is important to promote exchange of knowledge, experience and views in a mutually respectful, mutually supportive environment.

Guidelines for working together should be agreed from the outset. This discussion of how to work together could provide a useful introduction to the principles involved in the trade union approach.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

### **Unit title:** Trade Union Organising and Representation: Trade Union Approach to Workplace Issues

Candidates might further develop their understanding of trade union values, principles and policies by sharing examples from their own experience of members' efforts to secure trade union values such as fairness, justice and equality.

Outcome 1 is intended to ensure clarity about the role and rights of the trade union workplace representative. A good start would be to invite participants to work in small groups to discuss what they themselves see as the most important jobs involved, how they exercise their rights in practice, what skills they require and the composition and operation of the trade union team at their work. Small groups could then report back to the whole class for further discussion and identification of key aspects of the role.

Participants could broaden their understanding by describing to each other what they do in a typical week or month and comparing this to the way it is outlined in trade union handbooks and training materials.

Outcome 1 should include consideration of legislation and practice relevant to trade union representatives' rights. The tutor might provide a list of examples of the sorts of misunderstandings that can arise over paid time off and facilities and ask candidates to work in small groups to prepare responses with clear reference to the relevant ACAS Code of Practice.

Candidates should be encouraged to bring and review their trade union recognition, facilities and related agreements. Participants could compare agreements where course groups comprise representatives from more than one workplace or sector.

Outcome 2 might be preceded by group/class activities designed to ensure that participants know what is meant by collective bargaining; are clear about the difference between an employer policy and an agreement; have considered which policies and workplace agreements need to be reviewed; whether new policies and agreements should be introduced and know why negotiated agreements are essential in employment relations.

By the end of Outcome 2 candidates should be able to explain collective bargaining systems. Participants might therefore benefit from group activities designed to encourage exchange of information on the sorts of issues on which they currently bargain with the employer; the levels of management involved; the extent to which they take part in or influence bargaining at higher levels and how members' terms and conditions are determined as well as their thoughts on how representatives and members might contribute more effectively to the bargaining agenda.

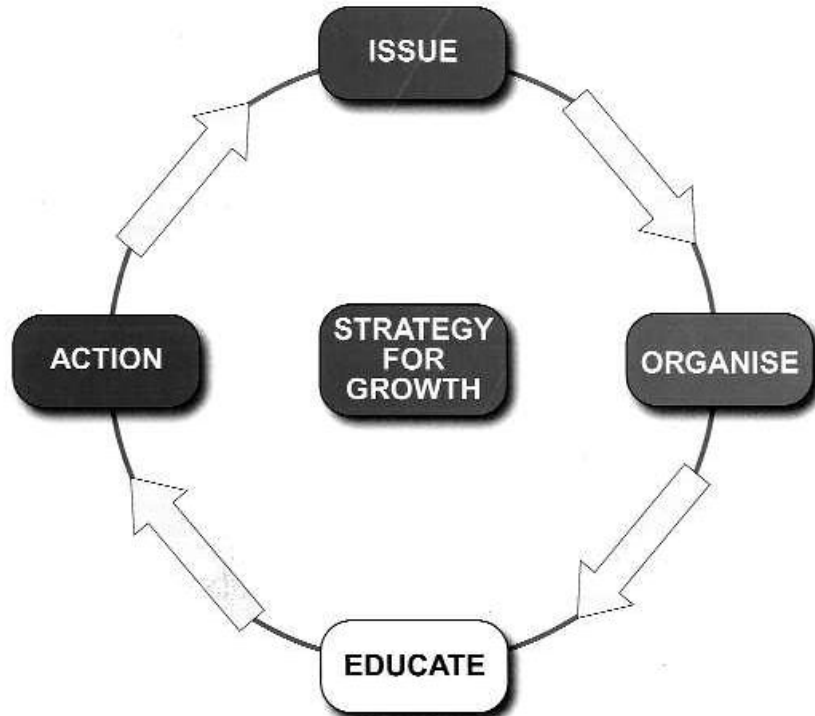
## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Trade Union Organising and Representation: Trade Union Approach to Workplace Issues

Points to consider when discussing recognition agreements with a view to their evaluation (the fourth evidence requirement) might include:

- ◆ Does the union/do the unions have the right to represent and negotiate?
- ◆ Does the organisation commit itself to encouraging employees to join the union?
- ◆ Does the agreement specify the grade or grades covered?
- ◆ Does the organisation offer the facility to deduct subscriptions from pay?
- ◆ Are management and union committed to negotiate on all matters or are some areas excluded?
- ◆ Is the employer committed to prior consultation and negotiation on the implementation of any changes in terms, conditions and working practices?
- ◆ Is the employer committed to providing adequate facilities for trade union representatives?

For Outcome 3, it is important that workplace representatives understand the nature and purpose of organising and the move from the servicing to the organising approach, where gains are made through active, engaged membership. Trade union organising theory might be explained as:



Participants could discuss their perceptions of their members' main concerns at work and exchange views on what comprises an effectively organised workplace (see Outcome 3).

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

### Unit title: Trade Union Organising and Representation: Trade Union Approach to Workplace Issues

This might also be a good point to invite comparison of the current operation of their workplace representative committees to any recommendations contained in trade union materials.

Candidates need to know to prioritise widely, deeply felt, winnable issues as a first step to developing a plan that demonstrates the trade union approach. They could discuss in groups the main issues facing people at work, bearing in mind to consider whether individual grievance or disciplinary cases might be the tip of an iceberg. The following headings might help participants to identify the main issues:

- ◆ Workplace Operations — eg how work is allocated and organised
- ◆ Workplace Procedures — eg discipline, grievance, equality
- ◆ Terms and Conditions — eg pay, hours
- ◆ Working Environment — eg health, safety and welfare
- ◆ Social — eg family friendly policies, work-life balance, social activities

The requirement under Outcome 3 to produce a plan that demonstrates how to apply the trade union organising model to a minimum of one workplace issue could be achieved by moving on from this to working out how they would plan a campaign designed to engage the workforce and achieve a positive outcome around one of these issues.

Participants will benefit greatly from working together in groups to share knowledge, experience and views on how best to use the trade union approach to handle specific cases in relation to terms and conditions. They could work together to tackle real examples or case studies provided by the tutor covering leave entitlement, rates of pay, location, hours of work, flexible working and so on.

Reflection on best practice in handling members' cases could be introduced by asking participants to discuss and provide responses to a list of frequently asked questions such as:

- ◆ Should representatives take up every problem that is brought to their attention by members?
- ◆ Should the representative always involve the member in discussing options?
- ◆ Is it always important to examine ways of trying to involve and organise members around grievance and disciplinary cases?
- ◆ Do members have the right to choose who represents them?
- ◆ Does the representative have to represent a member if he or she does not want to do so?
- ◆ Is a case always a private matter between the representative and the member?

...and so on. This could easily be followed by the production of a good practice checklist.



## **Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)**

**Unit title:** Trade Union Organising and Representation: Trade Union Approach to Workplace Issues

### **Guidance on the assessment of this Unit**

This Unit could be assessed holistically with evidence to cover all three Outcomes stored in a portfolio.

Assessment could comprise several separate tasks and it would be possible for a candidate to combine and submit these as one complete assignment. Evidence for assessment can be in any appropriate format as long as the minimum Evidence Requirements are met. For example, assessment may include case studies, group discussion, role play, presentations, written or oral reports and/or diagrammes.

### **Assessment Guidelines**

#### **Outcome 1**

Outcome 1 assessment could comprise responses to a series of short answer questions supported by a completion of a diagramme of trade union structures, illustrating the candidate's own role in relation to these structures.

#### **Outcome 2**

Outcome 2 assessment might comprise a series of short answer questions, accompanied by an evaluation in any appropriate format (eg written, oral or signed) of one current recognition agreement.

#### **Outcome 3**

Outcome 3 assessments could be a combination of short reports or answers to questions in any appropriate format, supported by a checklist for best practice.

### **Online and Distance Learning**

This Unit could be delivered by open learning; however it would require careful planning by the centre to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence.

## Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

**Unit title:** Trade Union Organising and Representation: Trade Union Approach to Workplace Issues

### Opportunities for developing Core Skills

The Core Skill of *Communication at SCQF level 6* will be developed by candidates through a range of activities (both written and oral) as well as class and group discussions.

The Core Skill of *Problem Solving at SCQF level 6* will be developed as the candidate will be dealing with various complex workplace issues and will also learn about the trade union approach to problem solving.

The Core Skill of *Working with Others at SCQF level 6* will be developed as the candidate will be involved in group discussions and group tasks, participate in union team building activities, theory and practice.

The Core Skill of *Information and Communication Technology at SCQF level 5* will be developed as the candidate will likely utilise computer search engines when carrying out research.

### Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements)

## History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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## General information for candidates

**Unit title:** Trade Union Organising and Representation: Trade Union Approach to Workplace Issues

This Unit is for you if you are new to the role of trade union workplace representative or wish to undertake further training in this subject. The Unit is designed to provide you with the knowledge and understanding of the trade union approach to dealing with the issues and challenges faced by working people.

When you have completed this Unit you will have a clear understanding of your own role and function in the workplace and also your wider role within the trade union and beyond.

You must be able to demonstrate the support of your nominating union to undertake the Unit. The Unit is a specialist mandatory Unit in the HNC in Trade Union Organising and Representation and forms part of the PDA in Trade Union Organising in the Workplace at SCQF level 7.

There are three Outcomes in this Unit.

In Outcome 1 you will learn about the tasks associated with your role as a trade union representative and also your rights to carry out that role. This will involve looking at current legislation and codes of practice, trade union recognition, facilities and related agreements and also other trade union roles, structures, rules and policies.

In Outcome 2 you will explore the collective bargaining process in relation to two current issues and will also be asked to evaluate one current trade union recognition agreement.

For Outcome 3 you will look at various issues currently facing members in the workplace and outline how to deal with them. You will also be asked to devise a plan specifically to demonstrate the application of the trade union organising model to one workplace issue.

Assessment for the Unit is varied, with a mix of your responses to questions and set assignments which can include diagrammes, checklists and evaluation reports.

There may be opportunities during the Unit for you to also develop your Core Skills in *Communication, Problem Solving, Information and Communication Technology* and *Working with Others*.