



Online learning with TUC Education

A course guide

unionlearn
with TUC Education

Welcome to online learning with TUC Education

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Unionlearn with TUC Education is at the forefront of developing innovative approaches to education and training. Its aim is to enable workplace representatives to take part in and benefit from a wide range of learning opportunities.

As a result TUC Education has developed a programme of online training courses for union reps.

Online learning offers a convenient and effective solution for union reps looking to develop their skills and knowledge. Over the past 12 months, demand for TUC Education’s online programme has increased rapidly, and online learning is increasingly being seen as a genuine alternative to classroom-based learning. TUC Education now offers a comprehensive and continually expanding range of high quality online courses.

Each online programme has been created using the same first-rate materials as their classroom based equivalents and is delivered in a friendly, encouraging way by expert tutors.

The online courses allow union reps to network with other reps and study for nationally recognised educational credits and awards that ultimately meet professional development requirements and enhance their effectiveness in the workplace and within their union.

If you are interested in any of the online programmes included in this booklet, visit the unionlearn online course directory at www.unionlearn.org.uk/online or contact Craig Hawkins, TUC Online Learning Officer by emailing chawkins@tuc.org.uk



How does online learning work?

All courses are delivered through a web-based learning environment called Moodle.

Group activities take place using an online discussion board, which learners can log into whenever is convenient for them. They receive support from tutors specially qualified in online teaching.

Online courses are especially suitable for union reps who need a convenient and more flexibly delivered course. To get the most from online learning you will need to be self-motivated, self-disciplined and organised.

Aiming for success

Our courses are designed to develop:

- improvements in the performance of union representatives at the workplace and in the union
- greater understanding of trade union policies and priorities
- enhanced study skills and personal confidence for all those who take part
- recognition of learning achievements through accreditation
- personal satisfaction and enrichment through learning.

Inclusive and welcoming

The TUC is committed to equal treatment regardless of sex, race, disability, sexuality or age.

The aims of the TUC programme include equal participation by all groups and delivering skills, knowledge and understanding to learners so reps can assist all of their members.

The purpose of the programme is to deliver a quality learning experience with a system of accreditation that points to future learning opportunities.

What IT skills will I need?

Applicants should note that **no advanced IT skills are required** for TUC Education's online courses. Learners require basic keyboard and mouse skills.



Getting ready for e-learning (GREL)

All successful applicants to a TUC Education online course are required to take a pre-course module before beginning their online option. This GREL module will help you understand the requirements and processes involved in online learning, familiarise you with the Moodle system and allow you to meet fellow learners.

For all of TUC Education's online courses, we would expect you to:

- study for at least three hours a week
- work with any groups you are asked to join
- access the web and your email at least three times a week
- complete coursework on time.

Accreditation

TUC Education accredits its online programme through the National Open College Network (NOCN) to provide clear national recognition of the quality of courses and the achievement of union reps. They are fully equivalent to their classroom-based counterparts.

Registration for accreditation is voluntary. There are no tests or examinations. You will build up a file which shows the work you have completed during the course, and Open College Network (OCN) credits are awarded for achieving the learning outcomes for that course. The OCN will also issue a certificate on completion.

Credits can be built up over a number of years and are transferable throughout the country.

They can be used to gain access to other courses in further and higher education. They also give unions and employers a clearer view of what reps have learned and are able to do after attending a TUC Education course. New pathways for union representatives are opening up all the time.

For further details contact your TUC Regional Education Officer (**see page 19**).

Can I get time off to learn?

Union reps who wish to attend TUC courses in working time should first ask their employer for time off with pay. The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977 give accredited union and safety reps a legal right to reasonable time off with pay to attend courses approved by the TUC or their union. Guidance towards establishing what constitutes reasonable time off can be found in the ACAS Code of Practice (www.acas.org.uk/publications/pdf/CP03.pdf).

“The support we had from the tutor and college from day one was excellent and it remained so until we completed the course.”

Can I get time off for online courses?

Online learning should not be seen as an alternative to paid release from work. The law says trade union reps are entitled to reasonable paid time off for education and training. This also applies to online courses, whether learning takes place away from work or in work, in your home, at a workstation or in a learning centre. Talk to your employer about what makes sense for you.

Reps who find it difficult to obtain paid time off to attend TUC courses should seek assistance from their senior union representative or full time union officer.

How much is this course?

All online courses are free for union reps from unions affiliated to the TUC.

Future developments

New online courses are being developed all the time. For the latest information, see www.unionlearn.org.uk/online

Web resources

Pensions Champions

This website has been developed for use by individuals and champions to find information about different aspects of pensions and track down the likely values of past and present pensions that have been paid into. A statement can be printed off which also includes helpful guidance on possible courses of action. The site forms the major resource for the three-day Pensions Champions at Work course and would be useful for other pensions or financial awareness courses.

www.pensionschampions.co.uk



Unionlearn

The unionlearn website offers reps support and guidance about the world of learning and the training opportunities available to them. It provides key materials, resources and publications, many of which are free. A library of case studies showcases reps' learning achievements, offering inspiration and encouragement to other reps. The course directory lists a wide range of specialist training courses for reps and officers. **www.unionlearn.org.uk**

Unionreps.org.uk

Being a rep can be a lonely job, with 40 per cent of unionised workplaces having only one person to cover the role. Help is at hand though, through the unionreps.org.uk online community. 10,000 reps from nearly all of the TUC's affiliated unions use the site's discussion boards to swap ideas and get support for their daily work as a rep. It's the place to make connections with reps from different workplaces, different regions of the country and different unions. **www.unionreps.org.uk**



Online learning: Taylor-made for Robbie

Robbie Taylor, a full-time Unison rep at the University of Cumbria, recently completed the TUC Health & Safety Stage 1 course online.

“Online learning with TUC Education has been a really good experience for me,” she says. “In the first instance, I could choose when to do the course and fit it in around my other commitments. It means I can make the best use of my time. When travelling to a face-to-face course the time it takes to get there is always an issue. With online learning you can participate in the course as soon as you switch on your PC.”

Robbie had previously completed two TUC courses and a number of Unison classroom-based courses, but a big attraction of the online approach to learning has been the added convenience and flexibility. “I don’t have to compromise my family or free time and often women have family responsibilities which prevent us doing face-to-face courses. I can fit online courses into my daily life without having to take time out from everything else.”

There has also been the added bonus of meeting other learners online. “The course I took part in had members from all walks of life and from all over the UK. You can meet others online when it is convenient for you to talk over issues and complete collaborative work. You never feel as though you are working in isolation.”



Rob Underdown/NorthWestPix

‘It has been a more constructive way of learning for me than many classroom-based courses’

Robbie’s overall experience of online learning has been positive. “The health and safety course didn’t feel like learning in isolation and the tutors pointed out further information and resources at every opportunity. All in all, it has been a more constructive way of learning for me than many classroom-based courses.”

Since completing the Health & Safety online course, Robbie has started TUC Education’s Union Learning Reps course online.

Countering the Far Right: Online Course

Britain's cultural and racial diversity is crucial for the development of the nation's economic and social well-being.

The trade union movement has a strong tradition of challenging discrimination and opposing racist groups that cause hostility within the workplace and create divisions in society.

Far right extremism seeks to undermine the work of trade unions. Trade unions and communities need to unite against racism in the workplace and in the community and tackle those organisations and individuals who seek to legitimise extremist views.

Who is the course for?

This short online course is for trade union reps and union officers who wish to equip themselves with the facts, knowledge and skills to challenge far right attitudes within their workplace and community.

How long is the course?

The course is delivered over 10 weeks and will take approximately 12 hours to complete.

What will the course help me to do?

The course aims to:

- develop your understanding of the far right
- give you the confidence to support trade union opposition to the far right
- highlight how the ideas and activities of the far right undermine trade union organisation and harm local communities
- improve your understanding of the legal framework covering disciplinary action by employers or unions against racists and fascists
- help you develop local campaigns
- signpost sources of relevant information, and other training opportunities.

How do I apply?

To apply, please print off the application form at

www.tuc.org.uk/extras/CTFRAppForm.pdf

Disability Champions@Work

The Disability Champions@Work project is for members of all TUC affiliated trade unions. Once identified, potential Champions will attend a training course to equip them with the knowledge, skills and tools to carry out their role.

Disability Champions are trade union representatives with an interest in disability issues. Champions come from a diverse range of backgrounds and a wide range of sectors. The common thread is a desire to see genuine equality for disabled people in the world of work.

During the training Champions will establish the role within their workplace by carrying out workplace activities involving their colleagues at work, other trade union reps and their management teams.

Who is the course for?

This course is for all union reps who wish to broaden their knowledge and skills and gain tools to carry out their role more effectively.

How long is the course?

This course will take approximately 30 hours, delivered over 10 weeks.

What will the course help me to do?

This course will help you to:

- negotiate reasonable adjustments
- raise awareness of disability issues
- conduct access audits of buildings, documents etc
- liaise with external organisations.

How do I apply?

To apply, please print off the application form at www.unionlearn.org.uk/disabilitychampionsonline

“The interaction between tutor, other course members and myself was outstanding and very friendly.”

Health & Safety Stage 1

Health and safety at work is a major issue for all employees. Workplaces that have trade union health and safety reps have a significantly lower rate of accidents.

If you are a newly appointed safety rep, this course is invaluable. It will provide a thorough grounding in health and safety issues and give new reps an opportunity to discuss issues around health and safety at work.

Who is the course for?

This is the core course for trade union health and safety reps. It is the first stage in the TUC health and safety training programme. It is designed to help you build the skills, knowledge and confidence you need to carry out your work as a safety rep.

How long is the course?

This is a 60-hour course delivered over six months.

What will the course help me to do?

The course will help you to:

- understand the role and functions of a trade union health and safety rep
- organise for health and safety
- prevent accidents and ill health
- learn key safety rep skills.

How do I apply?

If you are interested in this course, please complete the online form at:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/hands1online

“The course content was well organised and easy to understand. The quality of the materials was really good.”

Introduction to Pensions Online

Pensions are in crisis. The need for information and guidance on pensions has never been so important. Providing up-to-date knowledge and guidance on pensions is essential.

As union reps, you have a key role in helping workers understand the complexities of occupational pensions.

This practical and helpful course will enable you to develop your skills and gain the knowledge necessary to address pension issues in your workplace.

Introduction to Pensions Online will give you access to high quality, engaging materials, specialist tutoring and support, and allow you to network with other union reps online, from your workplace, learning centre or home.

The course will take account of recent changes to pensions legislation.

Who is the course for?

This short online course is for trade union reps who wish to gain a better understanding of the pensions to provide advice to their member's issues and of course, it will help you understand your own pension situation.

How long is the course?

The online course is designed to take 18 hours. The course is divided into four sections, each of which will take around four-and-a-half hours to complete.

What will the course help me to do?

This course is specifically designed to provide participants with a greater understanding of the complex issues surrounding occupational pensions.

What will the course help me to do?

This course will help you:

- understand sources of income and retirement
- compare and contrast pensions options
- teach pensions calculations
- understand your own scheme.

How do I apply?

If you are interested in this course, please complete the online form at www.unionlearn.org.uk/pensionsonline

Organise! A Voice in Every Workplace: An Online Course

Union organising is all about increasing the profile, strength and effectiveness of trade unions where it matters most – in the workplace!

This course looks at: how to get workers not just to join but to join in and play an important part in how the union works; ideas to get workers to work together to help themselves and each other; and how to make sure that the union is seen as relevant and at the heart of the workplace, addressing the cares and concerns of workers.

Who is this course for?

This short online course is for trade union reps who wish to gain a better understanding of the issues surrounding organising, learn innovative approaches to union organising, plan effective campaigns within workplace settings and reps who consider that effective organising will help to strengthen their workplace union.

How long is the course?

The online course is designed to take approximately 16 hours and is delivered over eight weeks.

What will the course help me to do?

This course will help reps:

- understand and review union organisation, recruitment and retention practices and identify improvements
- practice interviewing and recruitment skills
- become familiar with employment information and resources and how they can be used to advise and inform members
- develop communication and networking skills.

How do I apply?

If you are interested in this course, please complete the online form at www.unionlearn.org.uk/organiseonline

Tackling Racism: Online

Despite many years of equal opportunities policies and procedures, racism remains a fundamental problem in our society.

The TUC has always prioritised tackling racism in the workplace. The Tackling Racism: Online course has been designed to provide an opportunity for further understanding of equality and diversity issues in relation to race. It aims to provide a positive networking and learning experience and an opportunity to contribute to developing unions' interaction with lay members within the union and workforce.

The course shows positive contributions of diverse racial groups; raises awareness of how trade unions are helping to root out racism in the workplace; helps union reps to turn policy into action and gives inspiration to help challenge and integrate equality principles into day-to-day activities.

Who is this course for?

This course is for reps who wish to gain a better understanding of equality.

How long is the course?

This course takes 18 hours to complete over eight weeks.

What will the course help me to do?

The course will help you:

- identify how racism appears in the workplace and the different forms it can take
- explore different approaches and establish good practice in tackling racism and discrimination and promoting diversity in the workplace and union branch
- understand key points of the law
- improve interviewing and listening skills to improve case handling
- look at employer guidance to promote equality and fairness at work and ways to use and improve procedures and agreements
- find out useful sources of information.

How do I apply?

If you are interested in this course, please complete the online form at www.unionlearn.org.uk/TRonline

TUC Certificate in Occupational Health & Safety Online

This course will help health and safety reps become better reps by building health and safety organisation in the workplace; tackling welfare and environmental issues; deepening and extending the capacities of learners enabling them to access union health and safety posts or Higher Education opportunities and by developing personal/study skills, the ability to work collectively and generally improve the confidence of learners to study at a higher level.

Who is the course for?

The course is designed for experienced union safety reps.

Union safety representatives who wish to take this course should have:

- previously attended the TUC stage 1 and 2 Health and Safety Courses; or
- obtained eight 30-hour OCN* credits, with a minimum of four credits at Level 2 (24 10-hour OCN credits); or
- obtained a suitable equivalent to the two categories above through their own union's courses or from elsewhere.

How long is the course?

The course is delivered over 36 weeks spread over three terms.

What will the course help me to do?

This access course gives learners the opportunity to:

- question the development and function of health and safety law
- discover how to build trade union organisation for health and safety
- tackle some of the health, safety, welfare and environmental problems that workers currently face.

How do I apply?

To apply please complete the online application form at

www.unionlearn.org.uk/CertOHSonline

Union Learning Representatives Online

Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) are helping to give people the skills and knowledge to improve their lives at work and beyond. They are making a real difference in workplaces up and down the country, raising the profile of training and development by providing advice, encouragement and information to members about a range of learning opportunities.

There are currently over 18,000 ULRs in the UK. They have been key in building participation in lifelong learning. As well as helping individual members, ULRs have had a positive affect upon workplaces and organisations themselves.

Who is the course for?

This is the first stage ULR training course for all ULRs. This course has been recently revised and updated and looks at:

- the role of the ULR within the union
- the value of learning and skills at work
- identifying learning needs
- developing learning strategies at work
- contacts and information networks
- policies and programmes for learning and skills.

How long is the course?

The Union Learning Representative Course online is a 60-hour course, spread over 16 weeks.

What will the course help me to do?

This course will help you:

- understand the role and statutory rights of the ULR
- involve members in learning
- conduct a learning needs survey
- organise to improve learning opportunities
- work with employers towards a learning workplace.

How do I apply?

To apply for this course, please complete the online application form at www.unionlearn.org.uk/ULRonline

Union Reps Stage 1

You may be known as a shop steward, office representative, staff rep or union steward. However, your responsibilities are the same.

They include working together with members and other union reps; talking to members and dealing with their problems; recruiting members and getting them involved in the union; meeting management to discuss a range of issues at work and keeping members in touch with wider issues

Who is the course for?

This is the basic course for union reps. It introduces the concept and provides a thorough basis in the skills needed for carrying out the role.

How long is the course?

This is a 60-hour course delivered over six months.

What will the course help me to do?

This course will help you:

- understand the job of the union rep in the workplace and the wider union
- use and make agreements
- represent members in discussions with employers
- understand how grievances and disciplinaries are handled
- understand rights at work
- build confidence in your role and responsibilities as a union rep
- develop the skills you need to be an effective rep.

How do I apply?

If you are interested in this course, please complete the online form at:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/unionreps1online

“I would certainly recommend this type of course to my union and work colleagues.”

Work/Life Balance

There's more to life than work, yet the pressure of work for many intensifies each year and the numbers who work long hours is on the increase.

We believe people should have far more choice and control about the hours they work, and be able to fit work around their caring responsibilities and other interests. Flexible working practices benefit everyone: employers, employees and their families.

Achieving the right balance between work time and life time is now firmly on the collective bargaining agenda and unions have experience of a variety of flexible working agreements.

Who is the course for?

Although designed for union reps, the course can also be offered for joint union-management training, since it promotes the view that the most successful employers – whether private or public – involve staff and unions in decisions about change, consider their needs and aspirations and seek to win their commitment to new ways of working.

How long is the course?

The 30-hour courses will be run flexibly over 10 weeks

What will the course help me to do?

This course will help you to:

- understand the kind of changes that are happening to the organisation of working time
- think through a range of responses to these changes which benefit employees and employers
- promote partnership working by unions and management to address common problems
- work through a process for agreeing change and achieving work/life balance.

How do I apply?

To apply for the course, please complete the online application form:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/WLBonline



Further information

If you require any further information or have any queries, please contact:

Craig Hawkins, Online Learning Officer
unionlearn, Congress House
Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3LS
t: 020 7079 6947 f: 020 7079 6921
e: chawkins@tuc.org.uk

For further information on union rep training in your region, please contact your unionlearn regional education officer:

Southern and Eastern Region

Congress House, Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3LS

Rob Hancock rhancock@tuc.org.uk
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Learning & Careers
ADVICELINE 

Need advice on careers and learning?

The unionlearn advice line is a free, impartial, confidential service which helps people to develop new skills, improve their job prospects or change jobs. This service is for all unionlearn and union staff, TU Education tutors, union representatives and union members.

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