

# Recognition of informal and non-formal learning

## Guidelines and materials for workplace union representatives

# PIN



EQF Praxis and Information Network



Recognition of informal learning - Guidelines for workplace union representatives

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## Introduction

These guidelines have been produced to help workplace union representatives across the European Union. This version has been designed for union reps in the UK. Use this document to help the employees you represent in their education and qualifications, and as an aid when negotiating with employers.

## Guidelines for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning for workplace trade union representatives

A good level of education and qualification is the key to participation and good working conditions. However, access to education and qualification is denied to a large number of people. The “rich get richer” phenomenon applies, employees with a high level of education and training have much higher participation rates in further training measures than un- and semi-skilled workers. The recognition of informal learning offers an opportunity to remedy this situation as it can offer employees the chance of getting “proof” of the abilities they have accumulated in their daily work (and also outside of work, for example in personal activities and commitments).

To an extent, it can also be argued that informal learning has been recognised on the labour market. It is undisputed that the vast majority of employers would favour a skilled worker with broad practical experience over a skilled worker who has never seen a company from inside. But the question is how this recognition can be formalised and how employees can get an advantage of their work experience, i.e. competencies acquired in non-formal learning contexts.

Education, vocational or general, is a form of currency. It is in our best interest to help the colleagues, especially the un- and semiskilled, to get their competencies recognised. Despite of the increasing importance of this issue, in effect there are still very few offers in the majority of European countries that enable employees to have their competencies recognised which they acquired in informal settings. These guidelines are specifically targeted at in-company trade union representatives, works councils and shop stewards, who want to get active in the field. There is a good scope of action for works councils and shop stewards to support colleagues in the recognition process and to also establish models for the recognition of competencies resulting from informal and non-formal learning within the company.

These guidelines contain:



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Why a guideline for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning?

- an explanation terms and context of the issue of recognition informal and non-formal learning,
- an overview of the legal situation surrounding the issue, highlighting the possibilities that exist for recognition of non-formal and informal learning within the formal qualification system and at company level
- good practice examples
- the scope of action for in-company union representatives to get active in this field
- Checklists: A clear overview of what to consider when you get active
- Toolbox: Tools and materials that may be useful in the process

## ***Explanation of terms***

There is a myriad of definitions to be found on the terminology of lifelong learning – some of them differ widely. We decided to use the CEDEFOP definitions in these guidelines.

Source: CEDEFOP, European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, 2009

### **What is competence?**

Competence describes the totality of knowledge and skills that make an individual capable of acting situational and in a self-organised manner.

### **What is formal learning?**

Non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) are typically defined in comparison to formal learning. CEDEFOP defines formal learning as provided by “training institutions, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective”.

### **What is non-formal learning?**

“Non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically it does not lead to formal certification. However, it is structured, in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support. Non-formal learning is intentional from the



learner's point of view.”

Non-formal learning can lead to certificates which are not recognised in the formal VET system and / or do not lead to entitlements within the formal system (e.g. access to further training). Non-formal learning includes, among others, language certificates, IT certificates, vendor-based certificates, etc.

### **What is informal learning?**

CEDEFOP defines informal learning as “learning results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time and/or learning support). Typically, it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is non-intentional (or incidental/random)“

### **How does informal learning work?**

In many cases, different forms of learning intertwine. This means that often, for example in on-the-job-training courses, dual vocational education, but also in further training courses alongside work, some or all of the different forms of learning take place in parallel.

The major difference between informal and non-formal / formal learning is that it takes place in a non-targeted, normally unaware setting. The learner does not aim at developing competencies, he / she is not even aware of the learning process.

Hence, there are few learning outcomes (skills, knowledge, competencies) which have solely been acquired through one form of learning, on the contrary, professional competence typically develops, depends and widens through a combination of targeted learning as well as experience and repetition which both represent informal learning.

### **Validation and certification of competencies resulting from informal and non-formal learning**

Recognising the importance of learning outside the formal education system, the European Council has adopted common principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning in 2004. These were renewed in 2012 (see Further Reading).



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The term validation is used differently in the European Member States which often leads to confusion. For some, the term includes the identification as well as the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. CEDEFOP has compiled an extensive report on the definition, understanding and practice of validation in Europe (see Further Reading: CEDEFOP 2009).

To give just two examples: In France, the system of validation of learning from experience (validation des acquis de l'expérience, VAE) is legally defined and regulated. In this system, experiential learning of knowledge, skills, and competences may lead to the award of a full certificate and can be applied to 'all diplomas, titles and certificates included in the national register of vocational certifications.

In the UK, validation refers to the process of scrutinising a college or university award in order to ensure it is in keeping with the standards.

Procedures for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning are typically structured into at least four phases:

1. Identification of learning outcomes (existing informally and non-formally acquired learning outcomes are captured and documented)
2. Assessment of learning outcomes (assessment by experts in preparation of validation)
3. Validation of learning outcomes (the existing informally and non-formally acquired learning outcomes are examined and assessed through a validation body - competent body)
4. Certification of learning outcomes (Learning outcomes are certified through a certification body - competent body)

Recognition thus does not solely refer to recognition by means of issuing formal certificates but includes this possibility. Only the certification of such learning outcomes can lead to the assignment in a qualification framework.

Different countries have different procedures for validation and certification. It is important that workplace union representatives are aware of these procedures, including entitlements, costs, access, etc. These are listed in detail for your country in the chapter "National Situation".

## ***Why recognise informal learning? Opportunities and strengths?***



Most European countries still place a major emphasis on formal learning routes, competencies that are acquired outside the formal system, through non-formal and informal learning and hence are not “proven” by certificates, are not regarded as highly as competencies acquired in formal learning settings. At the very least, it is difficult for individuals to prove such competencies and hence receive some form of remuneration. This applies particularly to un and semi-skilled workers, those most threatened by precarious living standards, unemployment and low wages. The recognition of competencies resulting from informal and non-formal competencies is thus a very important issue for workers’ representation.

How can individuals prove what they’re able to do?

Informal and non-formal learning has always played an important role in vocational education but has seldom received the same level of acceptance as formal learning. Validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning is receiving increasing attention as a way of improving lifelong learning. More and more countries are emphasising the importance of valuing learning that takes place outside of formal systems – specifically at the workplace. What has been accepted for quite a long time by a wide variety of actors, namely that the workplace offers an ideal environment for learning, is now finding acceptance in attempting to treat competencies that were acquired in informal and non-formal settings more equally. The aim of this process is to enable individuals to make their competencies visible and prove them to employers.

What’s in it for employees?

Another reason to facilitate the recognition of informal and non-formal competencies is the issue of skills shortages. Making tacit competencies visible can help to locate the required competencies that already exist but have so far been invisible. This specifically applies to the company level.

What’s in it for the economy?

The recognition of competencies acquired in informal and non-formal settings should promote the acquisition of qualifications of general, vocational and university education.

### **Target groups:**

Who can benefit from the recognition of informally / non-formally acquired competencies?

The recognition of competencies acquired through informal / non-formal learning can generally be of benefit to individuals with professional experience. The following groups can benefit from it:

- **un- and semi-skilled workers** (aim: integration in the formal education system, securing employment, raising employability,



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*Who can benefit from the recognition of informal and non-formal learning?*

reducing the risk of unemployment, raising pay, lowering the risk of skills shortages))

- **migrants** (aim: enabling recognition of qualifications, increased mobility, securing employment, raising employability, reducing the risk of unemployment, raising pay, reducing the risk of skills shortages)
- **experienced workers** (securing employment, making experiential learning visible, recognition of lifelong learning)
- **individuals** willing to be mobile within the education system (permeability, better access to higher education, enabling individual career paths, reducing the risk of skills shortages)
- **skilled workers** (aim: transnational mobility, permeability, recognition of lifelong learning, reducing the risk of skills shortages)

Competencies resulting from informal learning are increasingly appreciated. Informal learning is regarded as playing a major role in the development of competencies (e.g. through experience, deepening and widening competencies). Competencies resulting from informal learning are valued highly because they contribute to the ability to react to changing requirements and thus play an important part in lifelong learning. At the same time, they take part in problem-solving, the development of strategies and innovative developments (see Further Reading: Blings, Spöttl 2011). Dreyfus already argued that subject-related knowledge, so knowledge typically acquired in formal or non-formal learning contexts is more important for newcomers and beginners whereas the competent, the experts in their domain fall back on reflected experiences in their work. This brings us to an important issue and a good opportunity for action for in-company representatives, namely the issue of shifting informal learning processes from the unconscious to the conscious. Possibilities for you to facilitate this are listed in the section "Scope for action".

What sets informal learning apart?

### ***Why keep a critical eye? Challenges, risks and weaknesses?***

Some argue that the trend to placing greater emphasis on the recognition of competencies resulting from informal learning contexts might endanger deeply engrained formal learning and training traditions and their worth.

Challenges...

To this date, the vast majority of European member states lack sufficient procedures for the recognition of informal competencies. As long as the recognition process does not lead to formally accepted

What remains to be done?



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certificates, and as long as proves of non-formal learning are not considered in such processes, solutions offered for this issue will remain largely window-dressing.

The challenges with regard to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning still remain manifold. At the methodological level, research still remains to be undertaken as to sound assessment methods. At political-institutional level, there remains a lot of work to be done towards better and fairer recognition. There are still a number of open questions in this area. They include issues such as whether and what difference between competencies / learning outcomes resulting from different learning settings, this has to date not been answered satisfactorily.

## ***Our demands***

One of the main concerns to trade unions in the UK is the lack of statutory rights for bargaining with employers in relation to training and learning. Therefore in spite of the introduction of statutory rights given to Union Learning representatives in the Employment Act of 2002, the effectiveness of these representatives rests largely on the strength of the trade union at the workplace. The Labour government did not grant the unions statutory rights for bargaining with employers in relation to training and learning. This leaves many workers in the UK without any representation regarding training. Much success has been gained in the field of lifelong learning where there is good union organisation. However the recognition of NFIL by employers depends solely on the employer.

The government is currently piloting major changes to the skills funding regime in England. At present the vast majority of the government subsidy for workforce training (including apprenticeships) is distributed by the Skills Funding Agency and National Apprenticeship Service to colleges and training providers rather than direct to employers.

The current pilot is testing out the impact of changing the routing of skills funding by offering employers in England the opportunity to bid for direct access to up to £250 million of public investment over the next two years to design and deliver their own training solutions. The pilot is jointly overseen by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Department for Education. More detail about the pilots is available on the UKCES website at:

[www.ukces.org.uk/ourwork/employer-ownership](http://www.ukces.org.uk/ourwork/employer-ownership).

Recognising informal and non-formal learning – the trade unions' point of view



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It remains to be seen whether these changes will allow trade unions to influence the accreditation and recognition of these 'training solutions'. The danger is that employer A may not recognise the acquired skills developed by a worker at company B. The TUC has made a strong case for a need to look at the 'social partnership' system of governing skills funding in other European countries. As far as validation of NFIL is concerned, quality and transferability are the main concerns of the UK trade unions. The demands are, that workers be granted time off with pay to train, this is particularly important for less skilled workers who tend to work the longest hours, and that training and learning should also be added to the list of issues that trade unions have statutory rights to bargain for.

## ***Legal situation – possibilities for recognition***

### **The situation in Europe**

The situation in Europe with regard to the recognition of informal and non-formal learning remains differentiated. Many countries still lack good systems of recognition and strongly focus on the formal sector whereas others have good approaches in place.

Different methods of recognition in Europe can act as good practice examples but they are not necessarily transferable from country to country, as recognition approaches are embedded in the national VET systems which differ from country to country. This is the reason why we focus on the national situation at hand in this guide (see next chapter) but still want to give a few good practice examples from various European countries in order to give an idea of what different methods exist out there.

### **National situation**

#### **Validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning in the UK.**

Arrangements for recognising non-formal learning are linked to the outcome-orientation of national vocational qualifications (NVQs and SVQs). Any learner who can provide evidence which meet the demands of the evidence requirements for a qualification can be awarded credit. However, the burden of evidence and the practicalities of assessment of non-formal/informal learning are considerable. Examples of good practice do exist, but problems of cost and complexity are widely reported. The importance of non-formal and/or informal learning is, however, clearly acknowledged in employers'



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increasing use in selection of accounts of experience, rather than formal qualifications, as evidenced in QCA research on trends in the use of qualifications. Accreditation of prior learning (APL) assists students to gain vocational, academic or continuous professional development recognition or credits for prior learning and experience. APL was strongly promoted in the early 1990s, and became established as a non-traditional entry route to further and higher education, though often not to the most prestigious courses. Typically, a portfolio evidencing the learning is produced, indicating the level and areas of expertise, then the level and content of the learning that will be assessed. APL is most likely to apply to a mature applicant. Since 2003, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) (now the Skills Funding Agency SFA) has begun to take a strategic interest in the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. Pilots have been conducted, for example, to develop ways in which the informal learning at youth centres can be recognised, thus setting socially excluded young people on a pathway towards achieving qualifications. The Welsh and English credit and qualifications frameworks seek to cover non-formal and informal learning. A target in Scotland is to develop and agree a set of guidelines on accreditation of prior and experiential learning (APEL) which would then allow credit rating and levelling of learning in terms of core, generic skills rather than subject-specific learning. In 2004 the Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) commissioned a project on recognising prior learning to ensure that the guidelines complement other European developments relating to recognition of prior learning. SCQF has also been working with community learning interests to develop ways of recognising learning in informal settings. There are some 30 regional accreditation networks (Open College Networks) which provide accessible community based assessment of learning at levels that are broadly related to the NVQ levels 1 to 3. This allows community groups to accredit their chosen area of lifelong learning against a nationally recognised framework.

### **Company level**

The industrial relations situation in the UK is somewhat different to the rest of Europe, with very few companies having works councils. The main worker representation is conducted by workplace representatives, most commonly known as shop stewards. Since 1999 some of these representatives have taken on a more specialist role regarding education and training and are known as Union Learning Representatives (ULRs). In companies where there is trade union organisation there is the possibility for these ULRs to raise the issue of training with the company's management. This is strengthened where there are learning agreements in place between the trade union and



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the company. These are unlikely to be sector agreements and may not even cover plants in another location in the UK. However there appears to be very little discussion on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Most employers in the UK look at what level of National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) has been achieved and may place more importance on these than further or higher education qualifications, because they give an indication of work experience rather than just an academic qualification.

There is very little legal support for shop stewards in the UK if the company management do not want to commit to training programmes that would result in the NFIL acquired skills being recognised. The ULRs, however, have statutory recognition (Employment Act 2002) and their role involves:

- Promoting the value of learning
- Supporting learners
- Arranging learning/training
- Supporting workplace learning centres to embed learning in the workplace
- Analysing learning or training needs
- Providing information and advice about learning or training
- Consulting the employer about carrying out such activities

Their statutory rights are:

- A reasonable amount of time off for training and carrying out their duties as set out above

#### **Employment Act 2002 Section 43: Union Learning Representatives**

97. Union learning representatives (ULRs) are a new type of lay union representative, whose main function is to advise union members about their training, educational and developmental needs. There are currently around 3,000 ULRs in existence. Their advice is usually provided direct to union members at their place of work, sometimes through face-to-face meetings with individuals.

98. Under section 168 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (the "1992 Act"), officials of an independent trade union which is recognised by their employer for collective bargaining purposes are permitted reasonable time off during working hours to carry out certain trade union duties or to undergo training relevant to carrying out their trade union duties. An employer who permits officials to take such time off must pay them for the time off taken in accordance with section 169 of the 1992 Act. The definition of an "independent union" is provided in section 5 of the 1992 Act.

99. Section 170 of the 1992 Act provides for employees to take reasonable time off during working hours to take part in the activities of their union. This right applies only where the employees belong to an independent union which is recognised by their employer and they form part of the bargaining unit for which the union is recognised. Employers are not required to pay their employees when they permit them to take this time off.



Much of the above would be dealt with by a company based agreement.  
In the appendix there is a model learning agreement used by Unite;

## Good practice examples

### Case Study 1

#### **The learning projects at Horstmann Group in Bristol are a model for SMEs throughout the country.**

Five years ago, the leading domestic heating controls designer/manufacturer Horstmann Group wanted to start developing a **learning culture** at the Bristol company but the NVQ courses it had offered failed to reach many employees who would have benefited most.

That's when learning reps from Unite the union at the company decided to apply for grants from the regional TUC's Learning Works for All Fund to kick-start the Engage project (and later, Engage–Moving On).

“Management was open to the idea and they were on board when we were awarded funding,” says ULR Barrie Knight. The company signed a learning agreement and gave learners paid time off to take courses. Fifteen laptops were bought along with an overhead projector, printers, and digital cameras, which were used to equip a dedicated learning room at the company, and courses taught by local provider Norton Radstock College.

“The results from Engage and Engage – Moving On were excellent with employees engaged from all disciplines across the business,” says Managing Director Les Woolner. “Particularly pleasing has been the involvement of many people who were reluctant to join the first initiative.”

While IT courses proved attractive at first (and still do), the projects have also run successful numeracy and literacy courses and courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Best practice A

Best practice B

### Case Study 2 – Metroline

When you employ migrant workers, you can improve communications by supporting workplace learning and backing union learning reps – which is exactly what London bus company Metroline has done.

Union learning rep Joanna Szmit is a vital link between the workplace learning partnership and her co-workers at the company's Perivale garage as well as the dozens of Polish speakers employed at the firm's 11 sites across the capital. Joanna (universally known as Asia, pronounced Asha) originally took on the ULR role because she wanted



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to help Polish workers avoid the problems she faced when she arrived in the UK in 2004. “I remember when I came here and didn’t speak English: just going to the shops was very difficult and I don’t want others to go through that,” she says. Unite the union Learning Coordinator Tom O’Callaghan says Asia acts as a crucial conduit between the Metroline-Unite learning partnership and the staff. “She goes out and speaks to people and gives them the confidence to come and do courses,” he says.

The young Polish single mother is typical of the new cohort of younger people, women and minority ethnic workers across the country who are volunteering to become union learning reps – so much so that she was chosen as the face of the nation’s ULRs when the TUC reached its target of training 22,000 learning reps a year ahead of schedule.

Metroline Head of Training and Recruitment Neil Colston agrees that ULRs play a vital role for the company, which employs 3,800 people in the capital. “ULRs bring education into the workplace: that stigma that used to attach to learning has now gone, and in the case of courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), it’s enhancing the skills staff have already got.” In the ten years since it was launched to meet the changing needs of the company’s staff, the learning partnership has established a network of learning centres and a learning bus, management and union have reached a learning agreement, and the company has signed the Government’s Skills Pledge. Working together over all that time has produced a range of concrete business benefits – not least an improvement in industrial relations at the company. “In the past, union and management were at loggerheads but the partnership has eased that away,” Tom says.

Other companies would do well to get on board with learning, Tom and Neil agree, “If they don’t do it, they are missing a huge opportunity,” they say.

These case studies, although not demonstrating examples of validation, do show how initiatives have supported individuals to gain skills, particularly migrant workers. Although this does not show a direct link to remuneration it certainly helps vulnerable workers, such as migrant workers, to progress in the companies they work for. They also demonstrate how workers can be encouraged to get their skills formally recognised through NVQs.



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## ***Scope of action - Recognition of informal competencies as a field of action for workers' representatives***

There are major advantages for individuals and for companies! As employees' representatives, we should first focus on some of the advantages for the individuals:

Good appraisal processes offer formative assessment that enables individuals to uncover competencies which they were hitherto unaware of the workplace is a great environment for learning.

Why get active?

There are basically two fields of action for works councils and shop stewards:

1. To inform, encourage and support colleagues to get their competencies recognised within the formal system by developing union learning representatives to promote the importance of skills recognition.
2. To establish models of recognition of competencies resulting from informal and non-formal learning that are transferable and of a high quality and map across to qualifications in the formal system.

In the following chapters, we have described the scope of action in this field. It is important to remember that the ultimate aim should always be recognition within the formal system, as it results in the greatest advantages for the individual but it should also be borne in mind that establishing models of documenting and assessing competencies resulting from informal and non-formal learning within your company can also lead to important advantages for the colleagues in question. Depending on the situation in your company, this could lead to promotion, better pay, better identification of training needs and opportunities and / or better career opportunities (within and outside the company) for the colleagues in question.

For this purpose, we have describe a 3-step-model for how to get active in this field, starting with information, documentation of competencies and assessment of competencies.

### **Getting started – how to approach this issue at company level**

As described above, there are not only advantages for employees but also for companies. Here are some examples that can be used to persuade company management of the advantages of beginning to recognise informal and non-formal learning at company level:

- using validation procedures can help identify and better allocate competencies in the business process



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- assessing existing and required competencies can uncover opportunities for improvement of processes and innovation
- validating competencies resulting from informal and non-formal learning can help identify skills gaps and tailor in-company training around those

How to approach this at company level

A model process for validation in companies:

<b>Build commitment</b>		<b>The works council becomes aware of the opportunities and understands what could be done and how. The commitment to a skills and competence documentation level is shared across decision-making levels.</b>
Assessment of required competencies	of	All (expected) functions and workplaces in the company are described, competencies required to complete these functions are defined
Information candidates	of	The involvement of candidates requires information about the process, the objectives, the opportunities as well as the difficulties, critical situations they might face
Portfolio completion		The candidates complete the portfolio, reporting all educational, training and work experience and inserting evidences of documented or non-documented competencies acquired. This can be done by using self-assessment.
Assessment		An assessment group (ideally consisting of representatives of HR and employees' representatives) can start to evaluate the profile. It is also possible to involve external assessors.
Personal development plan (PDP)	plan	Results of assessment are discussed with the candidates and become the basis of a personal development plan that takes into account the candidate's competencies and the needs of the candidate and the company
Vocational training		Tailor-made training is defined based on the PDP
Validation of competencies	of	The competencies are validated by the company, for example in the form of a personal certificate. The validation finds consideration in the planning of the workplace, future training and development and pay.

Based on CEDEFOP, 2009



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## **Information: Informing individuals of possibilities – the first step towards recognition**

Before an individual makes the decision to seek recognition of informal and non-formal learning, he / she needs to know what the added value will be, what to expect of the process, what costs are to be encountered, etc. Informing colleagues who are interested in the issue of getting their competencies validated is the first step. Only through thorough and accurate information can we enable access to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Supporting colleagues to get their competencies recognised

### Enabling access:

1. Informing about possibilities
  - ◆ this includes information about timelines and possible costs (and in how far those can be reimbursed)
  - ◆ this includes clear information about the requirements of the validation process
  - ◆ this includes information about possibilities to participate in training before the validation process

*Information on possibilities of recognition is the first step!*

Even before making the decision to seek validation of their competencies, individuals should know what is the added value, what could be the implications for them, what they expect, what possibilities there are, etc. In order to support employees in your company, providing them with information on possibilities, what they entail, their advantages and disadvantages should be the first step.

### Two-step information and guidance:

1. Initial information provided by the works council / employees representation
2. Referral to counselling and guidance bodies

Initial information can be conducted by employees' representation if you feel you know enough about the issue. However, if more information is needed, it is good for you to be able to refer your colleagues to counselling and guidance bodies. Here's a list of organisations that may provide the services you are looking for.

In the Checklist section you will also find a checklist for what information should be available to your colleagues.



## Documentation of competencies

The documentation of competencies resulting from informal and non-formal learning is the second step towards recognition. As described above, this is also an important part of many procedures for the recognition of competencies within formal systems. However, it can also be a useful approach when you want to establish company-internal procedures for recognising informal and non-formal learning.

There are different ways of documenting non-formal and informal learning processes, more often than not, a portfolio approach is used. This approach can also be used for assessment purposes (see next chapter).

The portfolio approach is a multi-faceted process. It combines a variety of means of documentation of learning processes. It typically includes some form of self-assessment where the learner assesses his learning process and outcomes himself by use of different forms of documentation aid (e.g. CV-based or job profile-oriented procedures). The self-assessment is complemented by other means of documentation of learning processes. Proofs of non-formal learning (certificates, confirmation of participation, etc.) can also be included in the portfolio. If the portfolio is also used for formative purposes (i.e. ongoing learning processes), it can include documentation materials such as diary sheets, personal development plans, etc. These can also be used for the purpose of assessment.

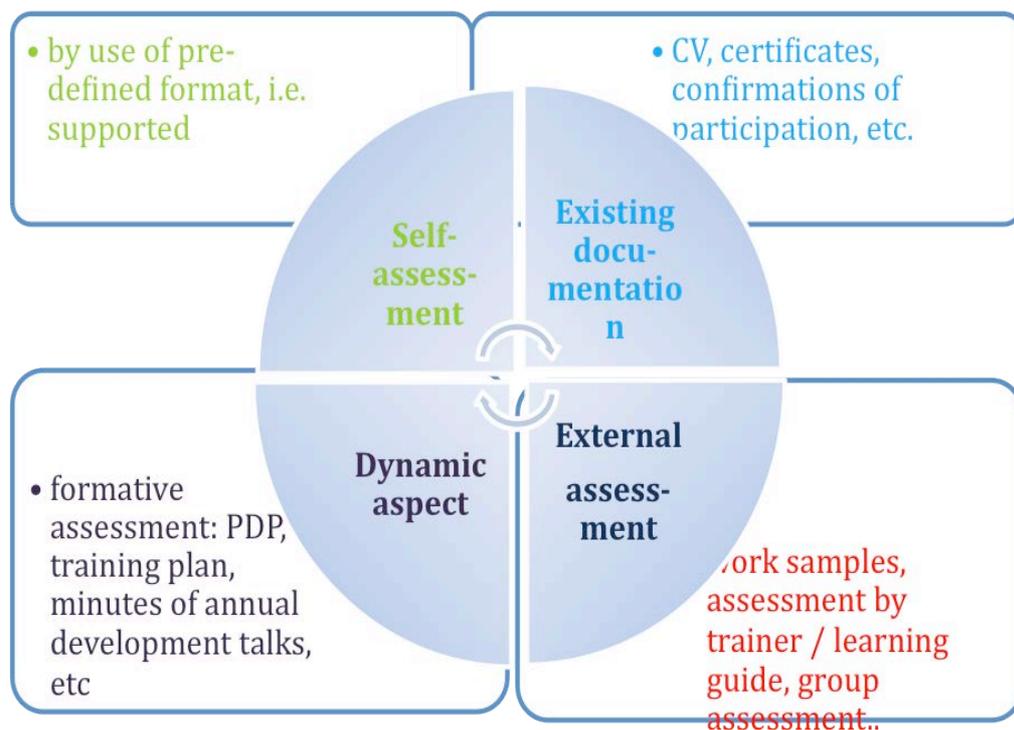
Making  
competencies  
visible

The process of documenting learning outcomes, particularly if done by means of a portfolio development, can be very helpful for learners. The process of collecting proofs of competence and conducting self-assessment enables a reflection of learning processes which is particularly important for informal learning processes as the learner is typically not aware of the fact that he / she is learning. The process of documenting learning processes and outcomes thus becomes part of the learning process itself.

For this purpose alone, it can be helpful to introduce a company-internal model for documenting competencies of employees. The documentation can then be used to identify further training needs, as a basis for recognition within the formal system (if applicable in your country), as part of personnel development, also in the framework of promotions, company-internal career development, pay raises or for the purpose of proving learning outcomes to potential new employers.



Here is a model example of how documentation of competencies could look like in your company:



There are different approaches to and different kinds of portfolio, but they typically involve the following elements:

- A clear reflection of learning outcomes to be documented for purposes of recognition
- They focus upon the learner's learning processes and outcomes
- They contain samples of work that stretch over an entire marking period, rather than single points in time.
- They contain works that represent a variety of different assessment tools.
- They contain a variety of work samples and evaluations of that work by the student, peers, and teachers, possible even parents' reactions.

Some tools for documenting competencies are included in the toolbox.

### Assessment of competencies

Identifying and validating non-formal and informal learning should be a voluntary measure for each individual. However, in order to ensure



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that the validation and recognition of informal learning is accessible and fair to all, some principles need to be ensured. There should be a sufficient level of information for all individuals to understand the benefits and challenges of validation and recognition, to understand potential costs and efforts involved in the process thereof. Furthermore, individuals need support in assessing their own competencies and the competencies required to achieve a certain qualification through recognition of informal learning.

Assessment of informal and non-formal learning is often based on a portfolio approach (see documentation of competencies) which often involve some form of self-assessment. Self-assessment is a good starting point for this. It enables individuals to reflect upon their learning processes and outcomes, their abilities and potential gaps in their competencies which can be filled by further training measures. Self-assessment can (and should!) be a guided process. In this, the guide helps the individual uncover their competence. Informal learning is characterised by the unconsciousness of learning processes, hence, individuals are typically unaware of the competencies that result from these processes.

The benefits of  
self-assessment

Although self-assessment is often part of the validation of informal and non-formal learning processes, different kinds of external assessment methods play a greater role in the process. There is a multitude of tools to assess the outcomes of learning (irrespective of the nature of the learning process). The assessment tools or methods should match the nature of the learning outcomes to be assessed. Theoretical learning outcomes can best be captured by use of different methods than practical skills, for example.

#### Examples of in-company competence assessment:

Some assessment methods are more appropriate than others, and, especially in the case of assessment of competencies resulting from informal and non-formal learning, it is important to be able to understand the principles, the advantages and the disadvantages of assessment methods. In order to be able to judge and select good assessment methods, you should know the principles of different methods, their advantages and disadvantages. In the Checklists, you will find an overview.



## Checklists for in-company recognition of informal and non-formal learning

These checklists aims at helping you ask the relevant questions when it comes to implementing procedures for the recognition of informal and non-formal competencies in your company.

	<b>Principles for good validation</b>
	Validation must be voluntary
	The privacy of individuals should be respected, this includes issues of data protection
	Equal access and fair treatment should be guaranteed
	All stakeholders should be involved in the process (in-company: management, HR, employees' representation, employee) – there should be balanced participation
	There should be information (guidance and counselling)
	There should be good quality assurance mechanisms (see checklist quality assurance)
	Ethical principles are respected and data is protected
	The process, procedure and criteria should be fair and transparent
	The process of validation should be impartial and avoid conflicts of interest
	Is there a good cost-benefit ratio?
	Are the assessors / advisors well qualified?
	Are the results of the validation transferable to the formal system? Is this desired by the learner? There is a clear link between the desired learning outcomes of a given qualification and the assessment methods
	Are the assessors / advisors well qualified?
	<b>Informing interested colleagues</b>
	Timelines for validation
	What are the costs? Are there funds to cover costs?
	What is the procedure? How does the validation work?
	If applicable, which forms of proof / documentation of competencies are accepted? By whom are they prepared?
	What is to be expected during assessment? What are the



	standards to be assessed? Detailed information of competencies to be validated.
	What assessment methods will be used?
	Are there training possibilities to fill in gaps in competencies?
	What are the costs, timelines of such training offers? Are the (company-internal) funds to cover the costs?
	Is there an appeals procedure if the assessment is not passed?
	What are the benefits of recognition? What can the colleague expect to achieve through it? Promotion? Higher pay?
	Are there possibilities to train further after recognition? Which paths could be interesting for the colleague?

	<b>Principles of good assessment</b>
	<u>Validity:</u> The assessment method must assess what is intended to be assessed.
	<u>Reliability:</u> The extent to which the assessment method results in the same outcomes if the examinee is assessed under the same conditions.
	<u>Fairness:</u> The assessment must be free from bias
	<u>Cognitive range:</u> The form of assessment enables the assessor to judge the depth and breadth of the examinees learning

	<b>Assessment methods</b>
1. Debate (offers the individuals an opportunity to demonstrate depth of knowledge and communicative skills)	<u>Advantages:</u> Good to assess knowledge; discursive, open, ability to demonstrate communicative and social competence <u>Disadvantages:</u> Not appropriate for assessing skills,
2. Declarative method (based on an individual's own identification and recording of their competencies, normally signed by a third party)	<u>Advantages:</u> Helps individuals to reflect upon their competence, enables critical reflection, can include work samples <u>Disadvantages:</u> On its own, this form of assessment does not provide a neutral and independent statement about



	competencies, this is the reason it is often combined with other methods
3. Interview (with examiners, often following some other form of assessment)	<p><u>Advantages:</u> Interviews are particularly helpful in areas where judgment is important. They are a good tool to complement impressions from other forms of assessment.</p> <p><u>Disadvantages:</u> An interview on its own cannot well establish the quality of work (especially skills). Some criticise that this method can produce a high level of stress in the examinee.</p>
4. Observation (observation of an individual in the process of work, assessment of a particular setting)	<p><u>Advantages:</u> There is an opportunity to observe real practice. Especially for “informal learners”, this form of assessment produces very little stress as it occurs in an everyday setting.</p> <p><u>Disadvantages:</u> Depending on the context, it can be complicated, time-consuming and expensive.</p>
5. Portfolio method (portfolios use a mix of methods in consecutive stages which are documented)	<p><u>Advantages:</u> Portfolios allow for a comprehensive impression of an individual’s competencies. They allow the individual to actively take part in the assessment and are very flexible in terms of what form of assessment is used.</p> <p><u>Disadvantages:</u> Disadvantages can occur when individuals aren’t supported in the preparation of the portfolio. The process should be mediated by a tutor.</p>
6. Presentation (The examinee gives a presentation in front of an examination board.)	<p><u>Advantages:</u> Good to assess analytical and communicative competencies. Like interviews, they are a good tool to complement impressions from other forms of assessment, especially real work orders and projects.</p> <p><u>Disadvantages:</u> Similar to interviews, this form of</p>



	assessment is said to produce a high level of stress in individuals.
7. Real work orders / projects (This form of assessment is based on a real work order / project. The examinee typically prepares the order / completes the project in his work time and presentation is used in front of the examination board)	<u>Advantages:</u> High level of relevance as real work situations are the object of assessment. The examinee has the opportunity to invest time and effort in the order / project and document the processes to present them to the examination board. <u>Disadvantages:</u> Depends very much on the cooperation of the company.
8. Simulation (The examinee performs in a simulation of a typical work situation)	<u>Advantages:</u> Close to real life. Allows for assessing complex interacting skills. <u>Disadvantages:</u> Complicated and costly to arrange.
9. Tests and examinations (Candidate responds orally or in writing to set questions)	<u>Advantages:</u> Good possibility to assess theoretical knowledge. This form of assessment is often used to assess formal learning as it is cheap and allows for many examinees to be tested at once. <u>Disadvantages:</u> Is not appropriate to assess skills and professional competence. It can favour examinees with strong written skills. It causes stress in a lot of examinees.

The guidelines are useful for workplace reps but we may need to look at making them a little less lengthy to make it a good working document. At the moment it provides a very good briefing paper for trainers. We could perhaps look at a shorter briefing to be used by reps.



# TOOLBOX

## Examples for portfolio assessment

Portfolio assessment is a multi-faceted process characterised by the following qualities:

- It is continuous and ongoing, providing both formative (i.e., ongoing) and summative (i.e., culminating) opportunities for monitoring and documenting a learner's progress toward achieving essential outcomes.
- It is multidimensional, i.e., it reflects a variety of proofs and processes of learning
- It enables assessment by different actors, including self-assessment, external or group assessment and thereby allows for learning in the process of documenting learning outcomes

There are different approaches to and different kinds of portfolio, but they typically involve the following elements:

- A clear reflection of learning outcomes to be documented for purposes of recognition
- They focus upon students' performance-based learning experiences as well as their acquisition of key knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- They contain samples of work that stretch over an entire marking period, rather than single points in time.
- They contain works that represent a variety of different assessment tools.
- They contain a variety of work samples and evaluations of that work by the student, peers, and teachers, possible even parents' reactions.

## Guideline for self-assessment

We have included to models of guidelines for self-assessment. One is a generic CV-based tool which can be used in all sectors and for all work places. The benefit of this model is that it can be applied in all working environments and also includes competencies which do not directly relate to the workplace.

The other model is based on concrete learning outcomes. It can be based on either job profiles (in-company profiles which summarise the competence requirements for a specific workplace) or occupational



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profiles (official documents that summarise the competence requirements for either an entire qualification or an additional profile (e.g. further training profiles, specialised profiles, etc.). The benefit of using this model is that concrete competencies can be assessed which directly relate to a workplace or a qualification. It is thus possible to also use this as a basis for identifying training requirements in order to achieve a qualification through the means of recognising informal learning.

It can be useful to use both models, beginning with the CV-based self-assessment and completing the assessment with profile-based one.



1 – Professional biography

## Professional biography

Name:

Date and place of birth:

School leaving certificate:

Qualification:

Further training:

Current job title:

Currently employed as:

Employed since:                      full-time  / part-time

Main areas of responsibility:

Description of tasks:

Previous employment:

Worked as (*specific job title*) at (*company*) from (*Month/Year*) till (*Month/Year*)

Tasks and responsibilities in this job (possibly core tasks):

*Main features of the work process:*

*Workplace-related factual knowledge:*

*Workplace-related IT knowledge:*

*Workplace-related business knowledge:*

Knowledge of safety regulations at the workplace:

Knowledge of environmental / sustainability-related aspects at the workplace:



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Native language:

Other languages:

*Beyond this I know / I'm able to*

*My strengths are*

*I want to develop in the area of*



## 2 – Profile-based self-assessment

### Step 1

Take your Job profile or the relevant occupational profile. Copy out a list of competences / abilities (i.e. learning outcomes) it contains. If the profile does not contain competences / abilities you can create a list of the tasks and responsibilities listed.

### Step 2

Look at each learning outcome / task and responsibility and think about how well this relates to your role. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I doing this now?
- Could I be doing this?
- Is this important in my daily work?
- Do I really understand what this means and involves?

### Step 3

For each learning outcome / task, indicate the level that best describes your abilities in this area. See table below. The ratings are as follows:

1. Not applicable – This learning outcome / task does not apply in my job
2. Not competent – I am not competent in any element of this learning outcome / task and require training in this field.
3. Competent under supervision – I am competent in the majority of elements of this learning outcome / task but require some assistance or supervision.
4. Competent – I am competent in all the elements of the learning outcome / task and can apply / complete them independently.
5. Competent to supervise others – I am able to supervise others applying this learning outcome or performing this task.
6. Competent to train others – I am able to train others in developing this learning outcome or in performing this task.

### Step 4

Reflect this with someone else at work (trainer, supervisor, manager). Develop a personal development plan, if possible together with them.





**Personal development plan**

<b>My personal development plan</b>				
<b>Name:</b>				
<b>Aims</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Solutions</b>	<b>Duration and deadlines</b>
-> what do I want to achieve	-> what I will do in order to achieve my development aims	-> what could hinder me achieving my goals	-> how I can overcome the obstacles	-> my detailed timeline
1.				
2.				
3.				



## Further Reading

More info about the PIN project:

⇒ [www.egf-pin.eu](http://www.egf-pin.eu)

Principles of validation of non-formal and informal learning:

⇒ European Guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, CEDEFOP, 2009

Different approaches in Europe:

⇒ Validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe – A snapshot, CEDEFOP, 2007

Practical approaches to lifting informal learning to the non-formal level in companies through learning guidance:

- ⇒ Manual for SOLOS Learning Guides, Dr. Karin Bockelmann, 2011
- ⇒ Bacon, N. and Hoque, K. (2009), The impact of union learning representatives: A survey of ULRs and their employers. Research paper 9 Unionlearn, Nottingham University Business School
- ⇒ Cassell, C. Lee, B. (2007), "Re-vitalising learning and development?: Exploring the role of the trade union learning representative", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 36 Iss: 5 pp. 781 – 799
- ⇒ Clough B (2010) UNION LEARNING REPRESENTATIVES: STATE AGENTS OR SOCIAL PARTNERS? *Labour and Industry* 21:2 December (2010) pp. 24–41
- ⇒ Forrester, Keith P. (2001), "Modernised learning: an emerging lifelong agenda by British trade unions?", *Journal of Workplace Learning*, Vol. 13 Iss: 7 pp. 318 - 326
- ⇒ Mark Stuart, Hugh Cook, Jo Cutter and Jonathan Winterton (2010) Evaluation of the Union Learning Fund and unionlearn, Centre for Employment Relations Innovation and Change at Leeds University Business School
- ⇒ McLiroy J and Croucher R, (2009), *Skills and Training, A strategic role for trade unions or the limits of neoliberalism?* In Daniels G and McLiroy J eds *Trade Unions in a Neoliberal World*, Routledge, London
- ⇒ Rainbird, H. and Stuart, M. (2011), The state and the union learning agenda in Britain, *Work Employment Society*, 2011 25: 202
- ⇒ Stroud D and Fairbrother P (2008), *Workplace learning: a trade union failure to service needs*, *Journal of Workplace Learning* Vol.20 No 1, 2008
- ⇒ Wallis E, Stuart M and Greenwood I (2005) '*Learners of the workplace unite!*': an empirical examination of the UK trade union learning representative initiative *Work Employment Society* 2005 19: 283



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## APPENDIX 1



# Learning Agreement *(insert name of employer)*

&

UNITE the Union



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# 1. Partners to the Agreement

## (Insert employer name) & Unite the Union

All partners recognise the benefits of lifelong learning and development and that it is essential to the successful future of the organisation and individuals who work there. Therefore, all parties are committed to working in partnership to promote and support lifelong learning across (Insert employer name) and ensure equal access to learning opportunities for all employees.

# 2. Scope of the Agreement

All partners acknowledge that personal and career development complements job-specific training. Often these forms of training and development overlap and enhance each other. All partners aim to encourage and support employees to engage in a broad range of learning opportunities, to both develop their own individual potential, and to help contribute to the success of the organisation.

All parties are committed to making learning as accessible as possible for all employees and, where practicable, to establish on-site learning centres to facilitate this. In addition, the opportunities available through internal, external, local and national organisations should be maximised and harnessed.

It is agreed that all learning, except that which is necessary / mandatory to individuals' job role or function, should be undertaken on a voluntary basis.

This policy is applicable to all employees of the Company regardless of their sex, race, disability, employment status or Union membership.

All parties will undertake to ensure that this agreement will not be used as an alternative to collective bargaining, and agree to maintain and use existing negotiating procedures and arrangements other than those specified in this agreement.

The partners agree that all individual grievances arising from any educational or learning initiative shall be subject to any existing grievance procedures.

# 3. Aims

**This agreement aims to:-**

- Build a successful and effective learning and development partnership



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- Make learning and development opportunities accessible and affordable to all employees, including the establishment of on-site learning centres
- Encourage employees within the company to access learning and development, and establish a learning culture within the workplace
- Maximise the use of current Government and Union learning initiatives
- Work with organisations such as Unionlearn, Providers and Sector Skills Councils to ensure that the learning partnership is a success
- Contribute to improving the performance of (Insert employer name) through the enhanced skills of its people.
- Actively encourage and support employees to gain the skills and qualifications that will support their future employability to meet the needs of (insert Employer name)
- To work with learning organisations and providers to ensure that the partnership is a success and that learning opportunities are available to all employees
- Actively encourage and support employees to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, and work towards their first Level 2 qualification in an area that is relevant to (insert Employer name)

## 4. Working in Partnership

The partners agree to work together to:-

- Establish a Joint Union/Employer Learning Committee
- Recognise and support the network of Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) in carrying out their duties
- Promote and support learning initiatives and ensure equal access to learning opportunities
- Provide access to a range of learning, including skills for life, and encourage all employees to participate
- Work with local Providers to make learning accessible and affordable.

## 5. Learning Committee

The Partners agree to establish a joint Learning Committee to develop the site's learning strategy and to oversee the introduction and monitor the progress of the learning initiative in line with this policy. The terms of reference, including the constitution, roles / responsibilities and meeting arrangements are contained in **Appendix 1**.

## 6. Training and Guidance on the Agreement



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Training and guidance on this policy will be given to all management and staff, the arrangements for which will be agreed by the Learning Committee. Unite will determine the training for ULRs.

## 7. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Agreement

The Learning Committee will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the agreement and its strategies against its aims and objectives. It will also seek to identify and share examples of good practice on a regular basis.

## 8. Roles and Responsibilities

### a. (insert employer name)

- (insert employer name) agree to demonstrate a commitment to learning and development and the policy
- To provide reasonable paid time off for ULRs to enable them to carry out their duties effectively and to undertake training for their role (see Appendix 3), in line with *Section 43 of the Employment Act 2002 and the ACAS Code of Practice (Time Off for Trade Union Duties & Activities) 2010*
- To provide reasonable paid time off for ULRs to develop other skills enabling them to advise members on a broad range of learning and to update their knowledge on new initiatives.

Other responsibilities include:-

- Supporting the ULRs in the workplace so that they can carry out their role
- Providing facilities for a Learning Centre onsite, where practicable
- Providing paid time off to for all vocational / job related training for employees
- Ensuring that learning and development forms part of each individual's development review
- Contributing to the employee's personal development – through granting time off and/or a contribution to the course fees

### b. Union Learning Representatives (ULRs)

- to demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning and the agreement
- to receive and communicate information about lifelong learning activity and initiatives to employees on a regular basis
- to undertake the necessary training to gain accreditation as a ULR
- to keep up-to-date on lifelong learning initiatives
- to support and encourage employees to undertake lifelong learning



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- to represent employees views to managers about lifelong learning initiatives and activities
- *(to work together with other ULRs onsite from the recognized trade union to promote and support learning)(If more than Unite on site)*
- (See **Appendix 3**)

### c. The Employees

Employees agree to:-

- Contribute to their personal learning by committing reasonable time of their own, to study (this excludes company orientated training / learning). (See section 13)
- Contribute to the cost of personal learning, where access to subsidies is limited
  - Abide by the learning centre protocols and policies where applicable (**appendix 2**)

### d. Unite the Union agrees:

- To demonstrate a commitment to Lifelong Learning and the policy
- To provide the relevant accredited training for the development of ULRs
- To support, advise and guide the network of ULRs within the organisation
- To provide nominated representatives to attend Learning Committee meetings.

## 9. Election Process and Rules for Union Learning Representatives

The following criteria must be satisfied in order to be recognised as a bona fide ULR by all parties to the agreement.

- ULRs will be elected in accordance with Unite union rules and *(insert employer name)* will be informed in writing of the successful candidate/s
- ULRs will receive training in the initial module to carry out their duties within six months of their election in accordance with the legislation and ACAS Code of Practice. This period can be extended to take into account of any unforeseen circumstances agreed by both parties.
- The numbers of ULRs should be proportionate to the numbers of employees and representative of shifts and departments and in line with local agreements.

## 10. ULR Co-ordinator



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A ULR Co-ordinator will be elected by all ULRs at a designated meeting. Designated time off to carry out their duties will be agreed between (insert employer name) and the trade union. (See **Appendix 4** for the role of the Co-ordinator).

## 11. Facilities for ULRs

In addition to paid time off, the company will provide the following facilities for ULRs to carry out their roles, duties and functions:

- Access to an office in order to conduct interviews to ensure privacy and confidentiality
- The use of a telephone, notice board, stationery, fax, printer and photocopier
- Access to a private PC (for confidentiality reasons) with e-mail, linked to the intranet and internet
- Access to lockable filing cabinets to keep private and confidential information regarding individual learning needs
- Time and facilities to hold ULR meetings on a regular basis and to conduct learning needs analysis
- Paid time off to attend all relevant additional training and updates as necessary.

## 12. Individuals' Access to ULRs

(insert employer name) will permit individuals reasonable paid time off during working hours for the purposes of consulting with their ULR, undertaking learning needs analysis and participating in promotional events.

## 13. Time off for Learning

All job specific learning will be carried out in work time. Employees accessing Skills for Life courses and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) will be given paid time off for their assessment and to attend courses up to and including a minimum level 2.

Matched time off for IT courses or other courses which indirectly contribute to the individual's job or the organisation will also be given.

Changes and flexibility of shift patterns will be considered for employees wishing access to courses that fall inside their working hours.



## 14. Learning Centre Usage

The primary function of the Learning Centre should be to address learning and development needs of individuals as identified through mechanisms such as Learning Needs Analysis. Any company usage for job specific training will be done in agreement with the Learning Committee and arranged around the Centres' priorities.

## 15. The Procedure for Resolving Disputes

Any disputes or grievances arising from this initiative which cannot be resolved via the Learning Committee should be addressed via by the usual collective bargaining agreed procedures.

## 16. Equal Opportunities, Equal Access

The partners recognise the importance of equal opportunities and equal access to enhance skill levels in order to meet the employees learning and development needs, as well as the business objectives of the employer.

The Partners will ensure that training and development will be provided to all employees and staff. ULRs, Union Officials and the company agree to actively encourage employees to fully participate in learning initiatives including skills for life training, but recognise that participation is voluntary.

## 17. Confidentiality

All individual learning records associated with skills for life will be totally confidential to the Providers and ULRs. Statistical information will be stored and made available to the Learning Committees for analysis and planning.

All employees will have the opportunity to take a 'skills for life assessment' as part of their induction process. Confidential guidance will be provided by the ULR and, if appropriate, a learning plan will be created.

Individual assessment / diagnostic results should not be used for any other purposes other than to address learning needs, e.g. in disciplinary or redundancy situations and should not adversely effect the employment status of any employee.

## 18. Commitment to Lifelong Learning

Unite and (insert employer name) are totally committed to affording all employees the opportunities to undertake learning and development



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activities in order to develop and maintain a learning culture across (insert employer name)

By signing this agreement, we agree to work in partnership to maximise learning opportunities for employees and staff, agreeing to the principles and aims outlined in this partnership agreement. We aim to deliver by way of Partnership learning opportunities for all employees within (insert employer name)

This agreement is non exhaustive and can be modified only by mutual agreement by all parties.

**SIGNED**

**On behalf of**

(insert employer name)

**Unite the Union**

.....

.....

**Position**

**Position**

.....

.....

**Date**.....

**Date**.....



# Appendix 1

## Site Learning Committee

### Terms of Reference

#### Role of the Site Learning Committee

The overall aim of the group will be to promote, initiate, support and monitor lifelong learning activities across the site. It will work to make learning opportunities as accessible and affordable as possible to all employees, enabling them to increase skills and maximise their own potential.

#### Membership of the Site Learning Committee

The Learning Committee will comprise of a minimum of *(insert agreed numbers)* Union Learning Representatives (ULRs), a senior Union Representative, a senior Operations Manager, representative(s) from the Human Resources and Training functions, a Union Regional Learning Organiser and a nominated person from the partner Provider. The Committee will also reserve the right to co-opt representatives from other outside agencies e.g. Unionlearn, to assist as and when necessary.

#### Meeting Arrangements

The Learning Committee will meet monthly unless otherwise agreed. The group will be chaired by the operations manager and the ULR Co-ordinator will take responsibility for collating items and compiling the agenda. Action points from the meeting will be recorded by a nominated member of the group.

#### Responsibilities of the Site Learning Committee

- Identify learning needs and aspirations of employees on site in line with the ULR Learning Needs Analysis
- Develop, and promote a range of on site learning initiatives, to encourage individuals back into learning, including a designated learning centre on site
- Monitor and evaluate activities, feedback and effectiveness of the initiative in accordance with agreed criteria
- Work together with Providers and other outside bodies to maximise potential for learning opportunities
- Identify funding both internal and external, to assist with learning activity and explore options for making learning both affordable and sustainable
- Support the network of ULRs in their role as advocates and organisers of learning
- Explore new initiatives both within and outside of the company which will support the learning process
- Ensure effective communication with the existing trade union's and company's structures regarding the aims, objectives and progress of the lifelong learning initiative



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## Appendix 2

### The Learning Centre

The primary function of a Learning Centre should be to address learning and development needs of individuals as identified through mechanisms such as Learning Needs Analysis. Any company usage for job specific training will be done in agreement with the learning committee on site and arranged around the Centres' priorities.



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## Appendix 3

### Role of the Union Learning Representative (ULR)

A summary of the key activities of a ULR, as detailed by ACAS, include:

- Identifying and analysing learning or training needs
- Providing information and advice about learning or training matters
- Arranging learning or training for members/employees
- Consulting the employer about providing learning
- Promoting the value of learning or training
- Preparing for carrying out any of the above activities

*Section 43 of the Employment Act 2002 and the ACAS Code of Practice (Time Off for Trade Union Duties & Activities) 2010* created rights for ULRs in workplaces with union recognition to take paid time off during working hours to undertake their duties/activities and to access relevant training in order to do so.

Further duties also include

- Working with employers to develop a learning culture and to support existing training/ learning initiatives & developments
- Providing accurate information and giving support to members including signposting them to other forms of advice and guidance
- Developing awareness and knowledge of learning opportunities both inside and outside the workplace
- Liaising with learning providers and colleges to arrange learning
- Developing awareness of Government policies and priorities and finding out about skills needs of local/sector market
- Identifying funding sources to make learning affordable
- Liaising with Industrial Officers / Regional Learning Organisers of Unite regarding learning
- Working with employers to identify and address learning and training needs including in redundancy situations
- Gathering, recording and organising data / information
- Reporting on and monitoring the quality and quantity of provision
- Attending Learning Committee meetings, ULR meetings, conferences, seminars, briefing events, to ensure they are up to date with the latest developments in learning.
- Working with the company or organise promotional materials and events within the workplace



## Appendix 4

### Guidance on the Union Learning Rep Co-ordinator

#### Role:

The position of the ULR Co-ordinator is elected by the Union Learning Reps (ULRs) in accordance with their structures and rules, supported by management and the Union (s) (*if more than Unite*) on site. The overall role is to help generate and co-ordinate both ULR and learner activity across the workforce and support all lifelong learning initiatives on site.

#### Key Tasks & Responsibilities

- Provide a central point of contact for the learners, the ULRs, Unite and (*insert employer name*)
- Liaise with learning centre co-ordinator (where applicable) and providers to organise learning and agree site arrangements for courses
- Co-ordinate the activity of the ULRs and facilitate the ULR meetings.
- Liaise and communicate regularly with senior Union Reps / Convenors on site to ensure the union is fully aware of all issues relating to lifelong learning
- Keep the network of ULRs informed of new initiatives, help identify their training needs and discuss with the designated Regional Learning Organiser on how to address these needs.
- To convene and facilitate the local ULR meetings and prepare agendas and reports for the Learning Committee in accordance with the terms of reference
- Organise and support promotional activities in conjunction with the ULRs, the management, the provider (*and other union on site*), in order to increase centre usage and expand learning activities
- To receive and disseminate information from the union and on a regular basis
- Keep up to date with union learning initiatives and work with Regional Learning Organisers, Unionlearn and Providers to identify funding opportunities, appropriate courses and available resources to be utilised for the benefit of the site learning initiative.
- Provide the relevant union with information and data regarding learning activity at the site, in line with the Data Protection Act
- To attend Union ULR forums, events and meetings designed to assist and support ULRs and help inform

