



Scotland's largest
and most effective
education trade union



EIS-FELA

Branch Organising



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Introduction

This Organising handbook provides a suggested framework for EIS-FELA Branches to work, grow and develop. It provides guidance for EIS-FELA reps who want to take steps to reaffirm, revitalise and rebuild their Branch. It contains a range of approaches to help EIS-FELA reps to build Branch strength and increase the effectiveness of EIS-FELA and the participation in union activity by members.

EIS-FELA draws its strength not just from the number of members it has, but also from the number of reps and activists. When a Branch is well organised it is in a position to have a real impact on the workplace through recruiting new members and campaigning on issues that members care about.

All Trade Unions seek to have as many members as possible involved in the work of Branches and wider union business, this is sometimes called the 'organising agenda' which promotes the belief that the members are the union, and that successful unions are led by members and not full time staff.

This Organising Handbook seeks to provide advice and guidance to EIS-FELA activists on how to rebuild Branches or strengthen established Branches.

This is not something that can be done by a member of a Branch on their own. For further support or advice outside of this Organising Handbook please contact:

David Belsey, National Officer at **dbelsey@eis.org.uk**

Louise O'Hara, EIS Organiser at **lohara@eis.org.uk**

Your Branch's Area Officer – who may be found at:
http://www.eis.org.uk/Contacts/Area_Offices.htm

Section 1: Rebuilding an EIS-FELA Branch

A checklist for action

For whatever reason, not all Branches are able to function properly at all times. Activists in Branches like this can feel overwhelmed in trying to work out where to start. This simple checklist gives you some suggestions for starting to rebuild your Branch.

- Distribute a newsletter explaining the need for an active Branch and asking for volunteers to help
- Hold a small meeting with volunteers to plan EIS activity in the College
- Ensure that new activists are encouraged to go on EIS Reps training
- Start a local activist communication network
- Begin one-to-one contact in all departments
- Use one-to-one contact to identify potential activists and issues for campaigning
- Develop a member survey to test issues
- Use workplace map and activist network to distribute and collect surveys on issues – use every opportunity to recruit as you do so
- Announce the outcome of the survey in a newsletter and invite people to meeting to discuss issues

Section 2: Communications

Communication is key for trade unions.

Within Branches, there must be efficient communications between the members and the Branch's officials/the Branch Committee. This may take the form of informal contact, Branch meetings, departmental or campus meetings and feedback from Branch surveys.

There must also be an efficient means in which the Branch officials report back to members on on-going business. The reporting back should include regular newsletters, emails and branch meetings.

It is important that members learn of EIS successes, since they are not going to learn them from the employer. Many effective branches have improved aspects of their workplace without their members' knowledge, which is unfortunate. Trade Union membership is voluntary and members need to feel their branch is helping them if they are to continue in membership.

Newsletters and emails are useful for keeping members informed of what the EIS is doing in their College, as is a Branch website for members to be able to visit.

Social Media

Social media provides us with a great opportunity to communicate with our membership. While there is a number of social media outlets that can be used the main one that is used by Trade Unions is Twitter. It is important to remember that on a public platform such as Twitter it is important to be cautious when posting. For more guidance on appropriate use of Social Media you should contact the EIS Communications Department.

All branches should try to set up a Twitter account that can be used to promote campaigns that the branch is running, relevant news stories, encourage recruitment and other EIS-FELA related activities.

Apps such as What's App or Viber offer a 'group chat' service which could be a simple but effective way of creating informal Reps networks that reps could communicate with each other through.

If your College uses Office 365 it can be a useful tool for communicating with your Branch Committee and/or members. Archives can be used to store regularly asked for information such as Terms and Conditions; Group emails can be created to distribute information to the EIS-FELA membership and the Calendar function can be used to log dates of upcoming EIS-FELA meetings.

Section 3: Recruitment

Without new members, the Branch will wither. There are several reasons why staff join unions, and, in many ways, a successful Branch draws members to it. Branches' core activities aim to improve members working lives by campaigning, representing and advising members.

Whilst the EIS national presence and national campaigns will encourage new members to join, recruitment should be an all year round activity for the Branch. There should however be a balance in Branches' activities, the primary purpose of the Branch is not to recruit new members.

There are several ways in which a Branch may support its recruitment work. High profile recruitment events, low profile staff contact, and by virtue of the Branch's or EIS' reputation.

High Profile Recruitment Events:

(i) Information stalls

You can raise the visibility of the union and initiate conversations with potential members by holding information stalls at various times during the year near main entrances, dining areas or busy thoroughfares. You may want to do this in collaboration with other recognised unions. Arrange a rota for staffing the stalls during the lunchtime session. Ask passers-by whether they are union members and invite non-members to join.

(ii) Recruitment mailings

Send a mailing to all non-members inviting them to join the EIS and enclosing a membership application form. You can generate a list of non-members by comparing your list of members to a list of all eligible staff. Send a copy of the letter to departmental representatives along with a list of non-members in their department who have been sent the mailing and a request for them to follow up.

You can refine this strategy by putting together a mailing directed at a particular staff group, e.g. hourly-paid teaching staff, part-timers or contract research staff. A targeted mailing will be most effective if it highlights specific issues or services or is part of a larger campaign to address an issue of particular relevance to these staff.

If your recruitment mailing is part of a larger campaign then keep it separate from other communications to which you want a response, e.g. surveys or petitions, to avoid the suggestion of an ulterior motive, which could reduce your response rate. However,

always include contact information on surveys and petitions so that if people are interested in more information they know how to reach you.

(iii) Recruitment weeks

Run a 'join the union' week, maybe with the other campus trade unions. Over the course of the week put the spotlight on the EIS, by for example:

- Put up posters in every department.
- Send out a recruitment letter to every non-member.
- Hold information stalls outside dining areas, common rooms or library entrance.
- Send members a letter asking them to recruit a friend and enclose a membership application form.

(iv) Workplace visits

An effective way to recruit new members is for colleagues to talk to them about their experiences with the Branch/Union. It is helpful to set time aside specifically for this purpose. You may prefer to contact individual members of staff in advance by email or phone to arrange an appointment.

(v) Recruit a colleague campaign

Dedicate an issue of the newsletter to your recruitment campaign to make sure that your members are aware that you are engaged in a recruitment effort and that they understand why it is important for EIS membership to grow. Explain the campaign and its goals. Set out your timetable of events and invite members to volunteer, e.g. to staff a publicity table. Send out publicity materials with the newsletter and ask members to display them. Attach an application form and a direct debit mandate to each newsletter.

Logistics: Timeline & Resources for Recruitment Campaigns

Once you have decided on the recruitment campaign then:

- Decide a timetable for the events you are going to organise
- Create a list of the resources you will need in terms of money, materials, and person hours
- Order any national posters or leaflets you need from the membership department
- Who will create your local recruitment materials? What will they cost?
- How long will it take to create and assemble the materials you need?
- How many volunteers do you need to recruit to assist you? Who will recruit them? Who can help you? Which jobs need to be done by committee members and what can departmental representatives, members and retired members do? How can you go beyond the 'usual suspects' and recruit new volunteers?
- Make sure that your departmental representatives have all the materials that they need to recruit new members
- Provide departmental representatives with lists of the members and non-members in their departments and always let them know about new staff in their departments
- Agree a timetable for committee or sub-committee meetings to monitor progress

Recruitment of new and existing staff:

A checklist

In every Institution in which the EIS is recognised, each new employee should get some information about the EIS from the Institution. Often, for new recruits a greater effort will be needed to explain what the EIS is than is required for existing staff, this will be especially necessary for new staff from outwith Scotland. To help recruit effectively you should:

- Ask new staff to join- the single most common reason for people not being a member of a trade union is because they have never been asked to join.
- Produce a local recruitment letter
- Identify non-EIS members of staff from staff lists
- Send a local recruitment letter and EIS application form to all new members of staff each month. Your local letter should highlight relevant local information or local reasons to join.
- Provide departmental representatives with lists of new staff
- Divide up lists of new staff to ensure that a departmental representative or committee member contacts each new member of staff in person
- Send out a follow-up letter or e-mail to all new members of staff
- Have a calendar of all staff induction meetings
- Attend all staff induction meetings
- The conversations around EIS membership with existing staff need to be carried out by experienced Branch reps since the staff may ask deeper questions or be reluctant to join any union. This type of conversation is not going to be a hard-sell
- Send out a follow-up e-mail to all non-member members of staff
- Have a link to the EIS website www.eis.org.uk/join on all communications

Section 4: Campaigning

The EIS is a member led trade union. This means that serving lecturers make the decisions in the EIS-FELA.

EIS-FELA has an annual conference to determine policy for the following year. All branches should encourage members to attend National events like the AGM and others. EIS-FELA has an Executive Committee of elected members to carry out Conference policy and to deal operationally with other matters such as pay bargaining, and with other bodies. National campaigning priorities are decided by members via the Annual Conference campaigns are then planned and executed by the Executive Committee.

Branches should identify potential local issues to Campaign on. This can be decided by talking to other EIS-FELA members, circulating a survey or conducting a members meeting. From this you should pick an issue to campaign on based on whether it is:

- Widely Felt- is it an issue that impacts on a large number of the members?
- Deeply Felt- is it an issue that members feel deeply enough about to take some kind of action?
- Winnable- is it a campaign that can be won?
- Visible- if the campaign is won will it be seen by other members and other non-members as a benefit of being a member of and part of an EIS-FELA campaign?

How to Plan a Local Campaign at Your Branch

Local campaigns are important to engage members and for members to see that the EIS can collectively help them at their workplace.

Campaigns must be clear in purpose, and should come from the membership or identified for a common concern. Examples from EIS-FELA include; redundancies, workplace restructuring, working at different campuses, car park charges, stress & overwork, bullying culture etc.

How to run a campaign:

- 1.** Identify the campaign issue, and the resolution sought
- 2.** Engage the members about the campaign to show the Institution that it has a great deal of support. This may be done by Branch meetings, posters, emails etc
- 3.** Survey members (using survey monkey or other application) – which provides the Institution with evidence of member dissatisfaction
- 4.** Hold meetings with the Executive management team. Campaigns are rarely resolved in single meetings, incremental progress is perfectly acceptable
- 5.** Report back to members – adjust the campaign’s aims if necessary. Use the Branches’ website to report back on developments. Ensure that members in all campuses realise that their colleagues have common concerns
- 6.** Seek a meeting with Board/Court/ Governing Body
- 7.** If there is no progress, go external and contact local MSPs and local news outlets
- 8.** Consider lobbying Board/Court/ Governing Body meetings, providing flyers for students etc
- 9.** If there is no progress, lodge a collective grievance or dispute
- 10.** Engage the support EIS HQ including Area and National Officers as appropriate

Section 5: Branch Health Check Exercise

This exercise will help you to assess the strength of your branch so that you can plan your priorities for organisation. Mark each item with '✓' if your branch already does this, '?' if you're not sure and 'X' if it's an item to work on.

The Functioning Branch

- Has a full complement of Branch Officer bearers – Branch Secretary, Convener, Membership Secretary and H&S/Learning Reps/Equality Reps
- Office Bearers communicate with each other effectively and represent the views of the Branch and SGA at JNC meetings, no matter which individual official attends
- Has an accurate local membership database updated bi-annually, and updating the membership density information. This information should be requested from the EIS membership department.
- Has an accurate list of new and temporary staff. This information should be requested from the College HR department.
- Holds regular Branch and Campus meetings
- Receives monthly lists of newly employed staff from the college
- Has information about the EIS being the recognised union sent out by the college/university with induction materials
- Sends out information and joining packs to new staff soon after they take up employment
- Has an effective means in which members may contact a nominated branch official for advice or referral to Area/National Officer
- Has an effective means of keeping members informed about local and national issues
- Has an effective means of the office bearers being informed of the members views, such as meetings and survey monkey
- Has an effective and dynamic relationship with Area/National Officers and EIS Organisers supporting the Branch
- Branch Office Bearers have sufficient facility time (remission from duties)

Strengthening the Functioning Branch:

Set out up to three areas from the above for the Branch work on, with a time line and resources/support needed from Area Officers, Organisers, EIS HQ etc. One area should be a campaign at the Institution.

1	Area: Plan:
2	Area Plan:
3	Area: Plan:

If the Branch meets all or almost all of the criteria identified for the Functioning Branch then continue to the section below:

The Organising Branch

In addition to the functioning Branch, an Organising Branch:

- Has a committee of 5 or more which meets periodically and before each JNC, with additional members to the Office Bearers – ideally with campus representatives if in a multi-campus institution
- Has a local representative for all departments/areas/campuses
- Receives annual lists of all eligible staff for membership
- Calculates overall membership density and membership densities for different staff groups
- Develops a recruitment plan and evaluates it periodically
- Campaigns actively around workplace issues and negotiations
- Has a plan to increase the number of committee members and departmental reps

- Makes presentations at all induction meetings and training events for new staff
- Provides lists of members and non-members to departmental representatives
- Has a means for departmental representatives to communicate with each other

Strengthening the Healthy Branch:

Set out up to three areas from the above for the Branch work on, with a time line and resources/support needed from Area Officers, Organisers, EIS HQ etc. One area should be a campaign at the Institution.

1	Area Plan:
2	Area Plan:
3	Area Plan:

10 Reasons to join EIS-FELA

1. A Long History within Scottish Tertiary Education

The EIS is the sole recognised union for Further Education lecturers in Scotland's colleges. All teaching staff within colleges are eligible to join.

2. Largest Trade Union for Lecturers and Teachers in Scotland

The EIS is the largest and most effective lecturer/teacher trade union representing over 80% of Scotland's teachers and lecturers.

3. A Scottish Union with a Separate Further Education Executive Committee

The EIS makes all its decisions here in Scotland. Further and Higher Education are both devolved matters, and the EIS has separate self-governing associations for FE and HE, the EIS-FELA and the EIS-ULA respectively. The EIS is the only trade union in tertiary education that makes all decisions here in Scotland.

4. Negotiating and Improving Pay & Conditions

The EIS is part of Scottish national bargaining for FE, and has a successful record of local negotiations in colleges.

5. Supporting Your Career Development

As a professional organisation the EIS is committed to promoting opportunities for quality professional development for ALL lecturers and teachers throughout their careers. The EIS is the only Scottish teaching union with Learning Representatives to support members' CPD.

6. Supporting and Helping Individual Members

We provide guidance and support for individual members when they ask for it, such as returning to work after illness, workplace stress, redundancies, disciplinarys and grievances. Representation is provided by local officials and full-time officials – drawing on legal advice as appropriate.

7. Taking Action

In the last resort, the EIS in FE and in HE has demonstrated its willingness to take industrial action in support of members and their terms of conditions- in both national disputes and in local disputes.

8. A Large Network of Experienced Lay Officials

The EIS has a large network of experienced elected officials in Branches and on the FELA Executive Committees that are well supported by the

EIS. They provide advice and representation for members in Branches, and access to full-time union officials.

9. Leading on the Key Issues in Education

As the oldest education union in the world, the EIS has a commitment in its charter to promote sound learning. The EIS regularly meets with the students, Education Scotland, SQA, GTCS etc. to work on ensuring that colleges and universities deliver sound education.

10. EIS Financial Services and Insurance Services

EIS Financial Services provide independent financial advice, a comprehensive range of insurance and other financial planning products exclusively to EIS members.

The EIS also provides four insurance policies to all members covering: Personal Effects, Malicious Damage to Motor Vehicles, Third Party Insurance and Personal Accident Insurance.