



Scotland's largest
and most effective
education trade union



EIS-FELA

Branch Organising

- Rebuilding a Branch



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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.

Section 1: National Support

The EIS has a wide range of full-time officials and elected members that can provide you with support and advice as you try to rebuild your branch. This can sometimes seem like an impossible task but there are a number of people within the EIS to support your work.

David Belsey, **National Officer** for Further & Higher Education; dbelsey@eis.org.uk

EIS-FELA has an Organiser who is responsible for providing support in recruiting new members and developing College Branches. For extra support and assistance with applying the points in this handbook in your College Branch contact Louise O'Hara, **EIS Organiser** lohara@eis.org.uk

Area Officers also support FELA Branches and assist with casework. You should contact the relevant Area Officer for advice or assistance on any casework. You can find information on which Area Officer has responsibility for your College Branch at http://www.eis.org.uk/Contacts/Area_Offices.htm

Section 2: Rebuilding an EIS-FELA Branch

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 and workplaces
- 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 3: Communications

Communication is key for trade unions.

Within Branches, it is important to have 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.

It is also important to have 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 essential 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.

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; bcooper@eis.org.uk

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 4: Recruitment

The first step to having a strong EIS-FELA Branch within a College is to have a strong membership.

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 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 EIS' reputation.

The EIS Organiser can help with developing ideas to encourage recruitment within your College.

Recruitment of new and existing staff:

- 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

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 learning for 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, disciplinaries 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.