Birkbeck, University of London

Workplace Learning Agreement

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1. Partners

Birkbeck, University of London
UNISON
Unite
University and College Union (UCU)

2. Principles

2.1. In participating in the agreement, the partners will adhere to the following principles:

2.1.1. Lifelong learning benefits the individual, workplace and society.

2.1.2. Employers have a duty to encourage and enable all employees to learn and develop. Work-specific learning continues to be identified and organised through the PDR process and through ordinary line management structures. The Study Assistance Scheme will continue as it is, and is separate from this agreement.

2.1.3. Trade unions have a duty to encourage and enable their members to learn and develop.

2.1.4. Equality of opportunities and appropriate access, within resource constraints, to enhance skill levels in order to meet both the business objectives of the employer, as well as the individual learning and development needs of the employees.

2.1.5. Although participation by employees will be on a voluntary basis, the Unions agree to actively encourage their members to fully participate in learning initiatives and opportunities.

2.2. It is recognised that having a clear workplace learning agreement will encourage:

2.2.1. Dialogue between unions and employer over learning matters.

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2.2.2. A sharing of resources and expertise in the arena of learning.

2.2.3. Employees to feel confident in the learning opportunities they can access.

2.2.4. Union learning representatives to work in partnership with the employer.

3. **Who the agreement covers**

3.1. This agreement covers all full and part-time (including hourly paid) employees of the College. The Learning Partnership Group (See point 4) will also consider supporting learning for contract staff where it is deemed to be advantageous to both the staff and the College, though we recognise that the prime responsibility for supporting learning for such staff remains with their own employers.

3.2. All partners 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.

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

3.4. This agreement recognises the statutory rights of union learning representatives, see appendix one.

3.5. The partners will allow the union learning representatives to use workplace/union facilities to support their role where possible. Access will be facilitated to use a PC at the workplace, and the usual facilities to be allowed, in line with other elected union representatives.

3.6. The partners will raise awareness of, and provide information on, learning opportunities to members of the workforce.

4. **The establishment of a joint union/employer Learning Partnership Group**

4.1. The partners agree to establish a joint union/employer Learning Partnership Group (LPG), which will complement existing learning and development processes and activities from internal providers, e.g. Learning & Organisational Development and the Centre for Transformative Practice in Learning and Teaching. It will have the purpose of helping to identify learning needs, propose, guide and communicate learning activities, and review access and participation.

4.2. The main responsibilities of the group will include helping to:

   - Make recommendations about learning priorities;
   - Effectively communicate learning opportunities provided by the College and unionlearn inter alia;
   - Facilitate access to learning, particularly for under-represented groups;
   - Identify those groups and individuals who might benefit from the particular learning initiatives especially to those employees who have not accessed other learning support;
   - Ensure that adequate facility time is provided for learning representatives;

Adapted from the University of Leeds Learning Agreement
o Ensure that workplace union learning representatives are supported to take suitable training enabling them to offer support, advice and guidance to their members and to promote a learning culture in the workplace;

o Provide opportunities for staff to gain qualifications or access other learning opportunities when provision is not provided at Birkbeck (level 3 and below).

4.3. The partners agree that any learning needs analysis is undertaken with the full cooperation of all partners, and that any such analysis will be solely for learning and educational purposes. The analysis will not be used in relation to other issues such as pay, review, redundancy and/or disciplinary procedures etc.

4.4. The partners commit to ensuring that learning programmes for individuals are regularly reviewed.

4.5. The LPG will comprise of 3 employer representatives and 3 union representatives (one from each of the recognised trade unions) and the employer will place at least one senior member of its management team on the LPG, and a member of the Learning and Organisational Development Team, so that the group is then able to take effective decisions.

4.6. The partners will aim to ensure that there is representation across employee groups on the LPG, and that members of the LPG are provided with all relevant information concerning the learning provision and their duties/responsibilities as members of the group.

4.7. The partners will have the responsibility of disseminating information on matters relating to learning in the workplace and will ensure that all employees and managers are made aware of learning opportunities available and the work of the LPG.

4.8. The LPG normally will meet twice a year, or as required, to carry out the tasks as identified by this partnership agreement.

4.9. The first meeting of the LPG will be chaired by College Senior Management. From then on the post of chairperson will rotate between the union and the employer. Whoever chairs will be responsible for providing secretarial support.

4.10. The partners will ensure that staff are made aware of the learning agreement and the College will support managers in facilitating reasonable time off for learning opportunities.

4.11. This learning agreement will be in place for 2 years (from the date specified below) and will be reviewed annually.
The role of the Union Learning Representative

Union Learning Representatives (ULRs) will work with colleagues, fellow union members, line managers and Human Resources department to ensure that there are training and development opportunities available in the workplace that meet the needs of all staff.

ULRs should focus on issues that are important for colleagues at Birkbeck however the following is a general job description for members who volunteer to become ULRs:

- Identifying training and development needs.
- Discussing with colleagues potential training and development options.
- Sourcing personal and professional development opportunities.
- Working in partnership with line managers and Human Resources department to ensure that colleagues have the personal and professional development opportunities they require.
- Undertake preparation and research to enable colleagues to make the right choices about their training and development needs.
- Participate in relevant training and keep appraised of current issues in sector training and development issues, using resources provided by the relevant Trade Union, the TUC or by Birkbeck.
- Promote the value of continuing professional development that focuses on the needs of all staff, with a specific emphasis on training and development opportunities outside of the Study Assistance Scheme or training necessary for employees to do their day to day jobs.
- To ensure training and development opportunities meet the needs of all staff.