

Financial Skills Partnership Union Toolkit

1. Introduction

The Financial Skills Partnership (FSP) is a strategic, impartial, employer-led organisation which aims to enhance professionalism, attract and develop talent for finance, accountancy and financial services across the nations and regions of the UK. Union involvement is fundamental to our work, and these are some of the areas in which we have a close collaboration with the unions.

Professionalism

The complexities of the qualifications landscape has been likened to an 'Alphabet Soup'. In our role as Solutions Facilitator we aim to provide a more simplified skills structure and to provide guidance for union members on accreditation of excellence, training on meeting new regulation and Training & Competence good practice guidance.

Liaise with policy makers

As a Funding Navigator, we recognise the importance of access to funding, particularly for Apprenticeships. We provide guidance on what funding is available, and if we find a lack of funding we lobby on behalf of our partners, including trade unions, to find solutions. Unions tell us what their members need and we can reflect this in our representations.

An example of this role saw us successfully lobby Skills Development Scotland on the need for Apprenticeship funding for those aged 20+ after this was withdrawn in April 2008. As a result, 560 Modern Apprenticeship places were made available by the Scottish Government and Jennie Cornwall, Qualifications Centre Manager at Standard Life commented: "The FSP have played a vital role in supporting businesses to be able to offer training and qualifications in financial services to our staff. This should not only allow staff to further develop their competence and strengths, but should also translate into increased customer confidence in their abilities."

We are an impartial Sector Advocate and we talk to people across our industry to understand their key talent issues – and what needs to be done to solve them. Our expertise in recruitment services, education liaison, qualifications and professional competencies makes us ideally placed to develop unique platforms for organisations, and deliver solutions to fill skills gaps.

Attract the right talent

As a Talent Researcher we help all sections of the unions' membership to understand their options in joining the industry and how to progress within it. Equality and diversity is a key area of our work, including our successful Through the Glass Ceiling Programme, and our unionlearn Quality Award reflects our engagement with the unions in the design and development of our **Directions** online careers multi-media guide.

Liz Field, Chief Executive of the FSP says: "We have developed a clear strategy, which we can achieve through a strong spirit of collaboration; this includes close joint working with the Unions working in our industry. Union representatives are active members of our careers panels and sit on our main Board. I look forward to continuing our strong collaboration with the Unions."

John Earls, Research Section Head of Unite the Union and an FSP Board Director adds: "I look forward to exploring with the FSP how trade unions can work with it to help deliver the skills needs of the sector and those who work in it. Unions, and union learning representatives, have a terrific record in the promotion and delivery of learning and skills."

2. The Partnership

A survey of Unite members in the finance sector found that where employers engage positively with the Union, members are more likely to report that their job made full use of their skills and that their job enabled them to learn new skills and develop their abilities.

We recognise the important role that the unions play in shaping the training and skills agenda and our collaboration includes quarterly meetings with Union representatives focusing on key, topical issues such as equality and diversity strategies, labour market intelligence and the benefits of investing in skills to aid economic recovery. We engage with the Unions on all our key projects – such as updating our **Directions** careers information service, developing Professional Competencies and carrying out research.

Unions can engage with us through our regular meetings with representatives of the finance sector unions, which take place at Congress House; these enable information to be shared, questions to be asked and to ensure that progress is being made against set objectives. If you would like to find out more about the FSP and the Unions meetings please contact Ann Joss at unionlearn on ajoss@tuc.org.uk.

To quote one employer: ***“Two heads are better than one when it comes to supporting people development. Learning is a journey supported by a strong partnership.”*** We value our strong partnership with the Unions and we look forward to further, close collaboration with them. When it comes to skills, the TUC and Sector Skills Councils have a shared agenda – encouraging employers to supply the right training, at the right time, so that the sector has a fully competent workforce, all members of which are able to realise their full potential.

3. Women and Work

The Financial Skills Partnership is committed to equality and diversity. One example of how we worked with unions on equality and diversity is the Women and Work initiative. A multi-sector programme under which Sector Skills Councils gained funding to run projects to help address the gender imbalance in their sector, the FSP delivered its “Through the Glass Ceiling” programme for two years. A group of senior women from across finance, accountancy and financial services participated in a series of five monthly training sessions using cutting edge techniques designed to help women acquire the ability to move up the career ladder. Each training topic was followed by an individual coaching session to help the delegates put theory into practice. The feedback from delegates has been excellent, with comments such as ***“Never done anything that made such a big impact on the way I think and act”***.

4. Apprenticeships

We develop Apprenticeship frameworks for the finance, accountancy and financial services sectors in the UK and we promote these and all Apprenticeship frameworks to employers. We promote frameworks beyond the minimum requirements of the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England and Wales (SASE/W) and are an issuing authority for our sector.

How we work with the unions

We value the unions’ input into apprenticeship initiatives. We are also happy to provide the Unions with information when they want input from our provider network on questionnaires or other work that they are doing. We’re pleased that the unions have become more involved in the Apprenticeship and look forward to discussing further involvement of union representatives in the workplace.

Visit apprenticeships: www.directions.org.uk/fsp/apprenticeships/

5. Professional competencies

We have developed Professional Competencies (National Occupational Standards) in a wide range of occupational areas including Accountancy and Finance, Credit Management, Providing Financial Advice & Financial Planning, Risk Management for the Financial Sector and Providing Advice on Securities & Derivatives. The Professional Competencies describe what a person needs to do, know and understand in their job to carry out their role in a consistent and competent way and they have a variety of uses including providing a 'check list' for drawing up person specifications and job descriptions, helping to inform the development of training programmes and providing guidance for career paths and career changers.

How we work with the unions

We consult on our draft Professional Competencies with both large organisations and SMEs across the UK, and we welcome the help of the unions in publicising these consultations to their members, ensuring a wide reach. Our Professional Competencies detail 'A day in the life of' the roles covered and so it's essential that their content is informed by practitioners regularly carrying out the tasks described.

Visit professional competencies: www.directions.org.uk/fsp/developing-your-talent/competency-standards/

6. Directions

Directions is our acclaimed, online careers multi-media guide, providing specialist information on careers in finance, accountancy and financial services. Directions includes expert advice on searching for jobs, a guide to qualifications, the latest labour market intelligence and an extensive resources library.

How we work with the unions

It's important that we work closely with Union members to ensure that **Directions** provides the most accurate and relevant information to individuals wanting to enter or progress their career in finance, accountancy and financial services. We have always been proactive in consulting with the unions during the development and updating of **Directions** and this has been recognised with our unionlearn Quality Award.

Tom Wilson, Director of unionlearn, said: "By working together with the Sector Skills Councils, trades unions and union learning representatives can ensure that the focus of the skills agenda includes employees as well as employers, in employment-led programmes."

Visit Directions careers hub: www.directions.org.uk/careers/

Visit Directions getting in hub: www.directions.org.uk/getting-in/

7. Qualifications

Qualifications are important for gaining employment within the finance, accountancy and financial services sectors, and for moving forward within them. Relevant qualifications include Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), competence qualifications and other vocational qualifications. A wide range of professional qualifications also appear on the Appropriate Examination List (the FSA) and the FSP's Qualification List.

How we work with the unions

We work closely with the unions to ensure that qualifications meet the needs of their members – both organisations and individuals. We also need to ensure that the right qualifications are eligible for public funding and we consult with the unions on this. Where we receive feedback that qualifications don't

meet the needs of unions' members, we report back to the relevant awarding bodies so that the comments can be taken into account during future qualification reviews. We can also direct union members towards our Professional Competencies (National Occupational Standards) which can be used as a demonstrable means for measuring competence in a wide range of job roles.

Visit qualifications: www.directions.org.uk/fsp/qualifications/

Visit qualifications list: www.directions.org.uk/fsp/getting-qualified/

8. Research

We undertake a continuous programme of research to provide our industry, stakeholders and partners with useful information on skills needs throughout the UK. Our Skills Assessment reports aim to highlight the current and future skills priorities within financial services and accountancy, and the finance function within organisations operating in the private, public and not-for-profit sector across the nations of the UK. We aim to consult with the unions on all our research work and this is particularly important as the findings of our surveys can help us influence government and funding agencies in the areas of skills and training. These are areas which we recognise as being important to the unions and their members.

Visit publications: www.directions.org.uk/footer/about-us-copy/publications/

9. Learning with the Unions

The Union Learning Fund was set up by government in 1998 to support union-led projects promoting learning at the workplace. The main initiatives supported are the development of union learning representatives (ULRs) and union learning centres, and the promotion of lifelong learning. In the early days the main emphasis was on basic skills, but this has expanded to encompass Continuing Professional Development and higher level learning.

Unions are also encouraged to work closely with the relevant Sector Skills Councils such as the FSP to help secure the commitment of employers to training their workers.

The types of support available from unions, unionlearn and ULRs include:

- Confidential information and advice on learning opportunities, including a dedicated advice line.
- Support whilst learning.
- Access to union or unionlearn-managed learning centres.
- Discounts for union members from the Open University and National Extension College.
- Advice and support on exercising the right to request time to train.

Unions aim to engage in formal collective bargaining with employers on all aspects of training, and to establish formal learning agreements which set out the basis of the organisation's learning agenda.

How we can support union learning projects

- Stands and / or materials for Learning at Work Day, Union conferences etc.
- Assisting in conference workshops.
- Providing publicity through the FSP newsletters.

Union learning fund: www.unionlearningfund.org.uk

Dedicated advice line: www.unionlearn.org.uk/theme/index.cfm?theme=advice

Access to union or unionlearn-managed learning centres: www.unet.org.uk

Right to time off to train: www.unionlearn.org.uk/initiatives/index.cfm?mins=175

Learning Agreements: www.unionlearn.org.uk/agreements/index.cfm

Learning at work day: www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/WorkplaceLearning/lawday/map/map.asp

10. Finance sector unions

- Accord (Lloyds Banking Group): www.accord-myunion.org
- Advance Union (Santander group including Bradford and Bingley): www.advance-union.org
- Britannia Staff Union (Cooperative Financial Services): www.britanniasu.org.uk
- Communication Workers Union (Alliance and Leicester): www.cwu.org
- Derbyshire Group Staff Union (Derbyshire Building Society): Tel. 01332 844763
- FDA (senior managers and professionals in public service): www.fda.org.uk
- Nationwide Group Staff Union (Nationwide Building Society Group): www.ngsu.org.uk
- Public and Commercial Services Union (Capita, Teacher's Pensions Scheme): www.pcs.org.uk
- Surge (formerly Skipton Staff Association): www.skiptonunion.org.uk
- Union of Finance Staff: www.ufsdirect.org
- Unite the Union: http://www.uniteunion.org/sectors/finance__legal.aspx
- Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (CIS): www.usdaw.org.uk
- Yorkshire Independent Staff Association: Tel. 01274 472453

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