



NIPSA Constitution

Section 4: Branches

SECTION 4: BRANCHES

- 4.1** The membership of the union shall be organised into branches at the direction of the General Council. A list of branches, the number allocated to each branch, the ordinary and associate membership of each branch and such other details as the General Council consider appropriate shall be circulated annually to members. No member may belong to more than one branch at one time.
- 4.2** Branches shall wherever possible be organised on the basis of a number of members sharing the same employer in a single place of work or located within reasonable proximity to one another or on the basis of the same or related occupations.
- 4.3** The following matters shall be dealt with at general meetings of the branch:-
- (a) Nomination of Officers for the Group where applicable.
 - (b) Nomination of Executive Committee for the Group.
 - (c) Nomination of Standing Orders Committee for the Group.
 - (d) Nomination of Officers for the General Council.
 - (e) Nomination of General Council.
 - (f) Nomination for Standing Orders Committee for the General Conference.
 - (g) Selection of delegates to Annual Delegate Conferences.
 - (h) Submission of motions to Annual Delegate Conferences.
 - (i) Conference Agenda.
 - (j) Affiliation of branch to local councils of trade unions.
 - (k) Disciplinary action against members.
 - (l) Removal of branch committee members.
- 4.4** Where it is not practicable to hold a branch meeting the branch committee together with branch representatives appointed in accordance with these rules shall constitute a special branch meeting at which the matters listed in rule 4.3 above shall be dealt with.
- 4.5** The responsible body in each branch shall be the

branch committee. In general the branch committee shall constitute the link between individual members, the Group Executive Committee and the General Council. In particular they shall be responsible for:-

- (a) the day to day management of branch affairs including representation on matters of sole concern to the members of the branch and the distribution of all circulars and literature issued by NIPSA;
- (b) recruitment within the branch;
- (c) collection of subscriptions from branch members and remittance of subscriptions to the General Secretary, where appropriate;
- (d) calling and organising branch meetings as prescribed in these rules;
- (e) rendering such returns of information as the General Council may from time to time require; and
- (f) rendering an account to the General Secretary not later than 3 months after the end of each financial year for any money which the branch receives from NIPSA funds.

4.6 A branch committee shall consist of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, a Secretary, a Women's Officer, a Treasurer and/or Organiser, Learning Representative/s, an Equality Officer and a Safety Representative, together with at least one member for each 30 members in the branch. In a small branch the duties of an Organiser may be coupled with those of Vice-Chairperson. The duties of the Branch Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Women's Officer, Organiser or Treasurer, Learning Representative, Equality Officer and Safety Representative are set out in Annex A to these rules. At a branch committee meeting a majority of those entitled to attend shall form a quorum.

4.7 A branch committee shall hold office for one year and shall retire at the annual general meeting, which shall be held in October of each year, subject to the powers, set out elsewhere in these rules, of a general meeting of branch members to remove a member from the branch committee.

4.8 The selection of a branch committee shall be carried out as follows:-

- (a) At the Annual General Meeting in October.
- (b) Nominations will be made at the Annual General Meeting. Voting will be in accordance with the wishes of the members present.

- (c) The names of the new branch committee shall be announced and the first meeting fixed for a date before 15 November.

4.9 At its first meeting the branch committee shall:-

- (a) arrange regular meetings, which normally will be at monthly intervals; and
- (b) deal with any current business.

4.10 Not later than 31 December the Branch Secretary shall send to the General Secretary the names of the elected officers of the branch.

4.11 The Branch Committee shall have power to fill vacancies on the Committee during the year by co-option from amongst the membership of the branch.

4.12 Necessary expenditure incurred in branch business which it is desired to recover shall be certified by the Chairperson of the Branch Committee and submitted to the General Secretary for reimbursement.

4.13 A branch may invite any member or official to attend a branch meeting but, on specific individual issues, the General Council, or one of its Executive bodies, may provide a list of relevant persons for a branch to select from.

4.14 Each branch shall be governed in accordance with the Model Branch Rules set out in the Annex B to these rules, save that branches may make amendments to their rules subject to the following conditions:-

- (a) any motion to amend the rules of the branch must be supported by not less than two-thirds of the votes cast at a General Meeting, in order to be carried; and
- (b) all such amendments shall be subject to the approval of the General Council, or of a body delegated by it and shall not be valid or binding until so approved. shall be decided in accordance with Standing Orders.

ANNEX A: DUTIES OF BRANCH OFFICERS

1. The Branch Chairperson shall preside at branch and committee meetings. In his or her absence the Vice-Chairperson, if present, shall deputise, otherwise a Chairperson shall be elected.
2. The Branch Vice-Chairperson will assist the Chairperson and will deputise for him or her in his or her absence. In smaller branches s/he may also carry out the duties of Organiser as described in paragraph 6 below.
3. The Branch Secretary shall be responsible for the action prescribed in rule 4.10 of the NIPSA constitution. S/he shall keep the General Secretary informed of any changes which may take place during the year in the composition of the Branch Committee. The Branch Secretary shall convene meetings of the branch or of the Branch Committee in accordance with the branch rules and shall keep minutes of all such meetings. S/he shall be responsible for correspondence and any records of returns required from time to time by the General Secretary or the General Council.
4. The responsibility of the Branch Women's Officer will relate to those matters of special interest to female members of the branch. Among his or her duties will be:-
 - (a) to ensure that women's issues are raised, discussed and acted on by the branch and that issues such as health, childcare and special leave are given proper priority in local negotiations;
 - (b) to provide the initial contact for female members on all women's issues, including health problems, and especially for those who feel that they are victims of sexual harassment;
 - (c) to consider issues under negotiation which have either specific or general implications for women and to give and obtain advice to the branch in the light of discussions with female members;
 - (d) to assist and to encourage the branch to feed ideas, suggestions, comments and criticisms through to the NIPSA Equal Opportunities Committee;
 - (e) to ensure that women in the branch know about and make use of the educational provision available to women trade unionists, including NIPSA Women's Issues/Health Courses open to all members and ICTU Courses of a similar nature;
 - (f) to monitor with women members developments, such as the introduction of new technology and changes in work arrangements and to ensure that the branch is aware of their implications for women;
 - (g) to promote women's participation in all aspects of NIPSA activities;
 - (h) to encourage the Branch Committee to arrange regular all member meetings on women's issues; and
 - (i) to assist in the recruitment of women to NIPSA.
5. The Branch Treasurer shall arrange for the collection of subscriptions from those members whose subscriptions are not deducted from salary and shall see that they are remitted to the General Secretary. S/he shall keep and furnish to the General Secretary records of subscriptions collected and such other records as may be required.
6. The Branch Organiser shall be responsible for membership matters and the circulation of union literature within the branch. Among his or her duties will be:-
 - (a) to keep the General Secretary informed of details of all individual membership changes arising from recruitment, transfer, resignation or retirement;
 - (b) to maintain a register of members of the branch;
 - (c) to organise contact with potential members making use of recruitment material from the head office of the union;
 - (d) to organise membership recruitment campaigns making use of the union's publicity materials;
 - (e) to maintain a branch circulation list for the distribution of the union's circulars and other literature to members of the branch; and
 - (f) to make arrangements for the appointment of Branch Safety Representatives and Branch Union Learning Representatives.
7. The Branch Organiser shall arrange that a Branch Representative is appointed in each room or office

within the Branch. In rooms with large numbers of staff there should be a Branch Representative to each 30 members (or nearest convenient number). Offices where few staff are employed should be grouped in units of 30 (or nearest convenient number). A Branch Representative shall interview new members of staff joining the room or rooms under his or her purview and if they are not members it shall be his or her duty to encourage their recruitment into the union.

8. The Branch Organiser shall arrange for Branch Safety Representatives to be appointed in accordance with the provisions of Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1979. The Branch Safety Representative shall have the following functions:-

- (a) to investigate potential hazards and dangerous occurrences at the workplace and to examine the causes of accidents at the workplace;
- (b) to investigate complaints by any member s/he represents relating to that member's health, safety or welfare at work;
- (c) to make representations to the employer on matters arising out of sub-paragraphs (a) and (b);
- (d) to make representations to the employer on general matters affecting the health, safety or welfare at work of members at the workplace;
- (e) to carry out inspections in accordance with the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations;
- (f) to represent members s/he was appointed to represent in consultations at the workplace with inspectors of any enforcing authority;
- (g) to receive information from inspectors in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978; and
- (h) to attend meetings of safety committees established under the Safety Representative and Safety Committee Regulations in his or her capacity as a Safety Representative in connection with any of the above functions.

9. The Branch Organiser shall arrange for Branch Union Learning Representatives to be appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The Branch Learning Representative shall have the following functions:

- (a) to promote the value of learning and training and improve learning opportunities within the workplace;
- (b) to analyse members' learning or training needs;
- (c) to provide information and advice about learning or training matters;
- (d) to arrange learning or training for members; and
- (e) to make representations to the employer on matters arising out of the preceding paragraphs;

10. The Branch Equality Officer shall promote and engage in equality work that will bring real benefits to NIPSA members. The role of an Equality Officer will be to:

- (a) promote equality to help ensure a fair, non-discriminatory workplace in which all members are treated with dignity and respect at all times;
- (b) raise awareness and keep members informed on equality matters;
- (c) offer advice and support to members on equality related personal matters;
- (d) advise and support other Branch Officers on equality matters;
- (e) play a leading role in raising awareness of members to the need for a zero tolerance approach to bullying and harassment within the workplace;
- (f) work to ensure that policies and practices within a workplace are equality proofed in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- (g) carry out branch equality surveys;
- (h) to ensure that the branch is kept informed of the work of the NIPSA Equal Opportunities Committee; and
- (i) to assist and to encourage the branch to feed ideas, suggestions, comments and criticisms through to the NIPSA Equal Opportunities Committee;

11. It shall be the aim of branches to spread the work and responsibility of branch management as widely as possible. Ordinarily one person should not, provided the branch is sufficiently large, hold more than one position or fulfil more than one function within the branch, eg one person should not act as Branch Secretary and Treasurer/Organiser at the same time.

ANNEX B: MODEL BRANCH RULES

1. The objects of the Branch shall be:-
 - (a) To protect and promote the interests of its members.
 - (b) To ensure the regular collection and remittance of subscriptions.
 - (c) To assist in the recruitment and maintenance of membership.
 - (d) To co-ordinate the views of its members, and to take appropriate action on matters of Branch interest.
 - (e) To support and implement decisions of the General, Group and Departmental/Section Conferences where appropriate.
 - (f) To protect and promote the effectiveness of the service or services in which members are employed.
 - (g) To provide the General Council, Group Executive Committee, Panels and Department/Section Committee(s) with such returns of information as they may require.
 - (h) To arrange the distribution or sale of all circulars and literature issued by the union.
 - (i) Generally to assist the General Council in compliance with the rules of the union.
2. Notice giving the time, date and place of general meetings of the branch should be circulated with the agenda for the meeting normally 7 days prior to the date of the meeting.
3. At a general meeting and branch committee meetings the agenda should be framed with the following order of business:-
 - (a) Minutes of previous meetings.
 - (b) Matters arising therefrom (other than those itemised on agenda).
 - (c) Officers' Reports.
 - (d) Other matters requiring separate consideration.
 - (e) Other business.
4. The Annual General Meeting shall receive the Branch Annual Report, the Branch Financial Report and it shall elect the Branch Officers and the Branch Committee in accordance with rules 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8.
5. Routine decisions at all branch meetings may be taken at the call of the Chairperson for a vote thereon without a formal resolution having been proposed. In such cases the Chairperson shall be deemed the proposer.
6. At general branch meetings and branch committee meetings no motion shall be spoken to except by the mover until it has been seconded.
7. Voting at general branch meetings and branch committee meetings shall be by show of hands, except when a ballot of the meeting is demanded by a majority of those present and entitled to vote, but any vote may be taken by ballot of those present at the discretion of the Chairperson, or at the request of a majority of members present provided that such request is made before the question is put.
8. A debate at any branch meeting shall be closed if:-
 - (a) A motion "that the vote now be taken" is carried. If such a motion is moved and seconded it shall be put to the vote without discussion. Such motion shall not be moved or seconded by a member who has previously spoken in the debate. If such a motion is carried the mover of the motion under debate shall, before the motion is put, exercise any right of reply that s/he may have, but no other speeches shall be allowed.
 - (b) A motion "that the meeting proceed to next business": is carried. If such a motion is moved and seconded it shall be put to the vote without discussion. Such a motion shall not be moved or seconded by a member who has previously spoken in the debate. If such a motion is carried, the meeting shall proceed forthwith to the next item of business.
9. On matters not dealt with in these rules, the Chairperson's ruling shall apply unless his or her ruling is challenged and rejected by a two-thirds majority of those present.

- 10.** The Chairperson or his or her Deputy on the Branch Committee shall have a casting vote in addition to his or her ordinary vote.
 - 11.** The branch committee shall conduct the business of the branch in conformity with the policy of the union and in accordance with the instructions of the branch General Meetings.
 - 12.** The branch committee shall deal with all business remitted to the branch by the union and shall take such action in connection therewith as may be required.
- 13.** The Branch shall be governed by the rules of the union and of the Group in so far as their provisions are applicable in addition to these rules. If these rules and those of the union are incompatible, the latter shall prevail.
 - 14.** The Branch shall not be dissolved except with the consent of the General Council. Upon dissolution any monies remaining in the hands of the branch, together with all documents, vouchers and records, shall be handed over to the union.

