



Learner Handbook

May 2024

To be read in conjunction with the relevant programme information sheet

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Welcome!

You are welcome as a new learner, or indeed as a returning learner, to SIPTU's college. We look forward to working with you and hope you have both an enjoyable experience and a successful outcome.

This Learner Handbook sets out some initial information about the college and you should also consult the relevant programme information sheet as each programme is organised, assessed and accredited differently. Your pre-application brochure, your induction session and your conversations with tutors, will provide additional details for you as you progress through your course.

We value your evaluation feedback at the end of your course and informally through your tutors at any time.

Best wishes for a successful course.

Eira Gallagher

HEAD OF COLLEGE



Liberty Hall,

Eden Quay,

Dublin 1

E-mail – college@siptu.ie

We also have classrooms at several other locations around the country including: SIPTU offices in Waterford, Cork, Galway, Mullingar; FORSA offices in Limerick and Sligo.

About SIPTU's College

SIPTU's college is Ireland's only trade union college and has responsibility for the training, education and upskilling of SIPTU's activists and staff. Trade union education in its broadest sense refers to a) the 'tools' required to be an effective union activist and b) awareness of the current social, political and economic 'issues' that form the background. So, training union representatives is core but SIPTU also aims to provide a second chance at education for union members while focusing on courses and programmes useful for social activism as much as for work.

The college is now in a growth phase aiming to expand on current offerings and develop new programmes. It currently offers a broad range of training options for union activists and some of these are QQI accredited, meaning your award is recognised outside of SIPTU, both nationally and internationally. All of the modules in our *Advanced Activist* programme are QQI accredited to Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications but you may opt to attend these and any other SIPTU courses without submitting for certification. The college also manages the ICTU/SIPTU *Trade Union Studies Certificate* programme, a QQI Level 6 programme at the National College of Ireland. Check the separate programme information sheets for information and see the figure below.

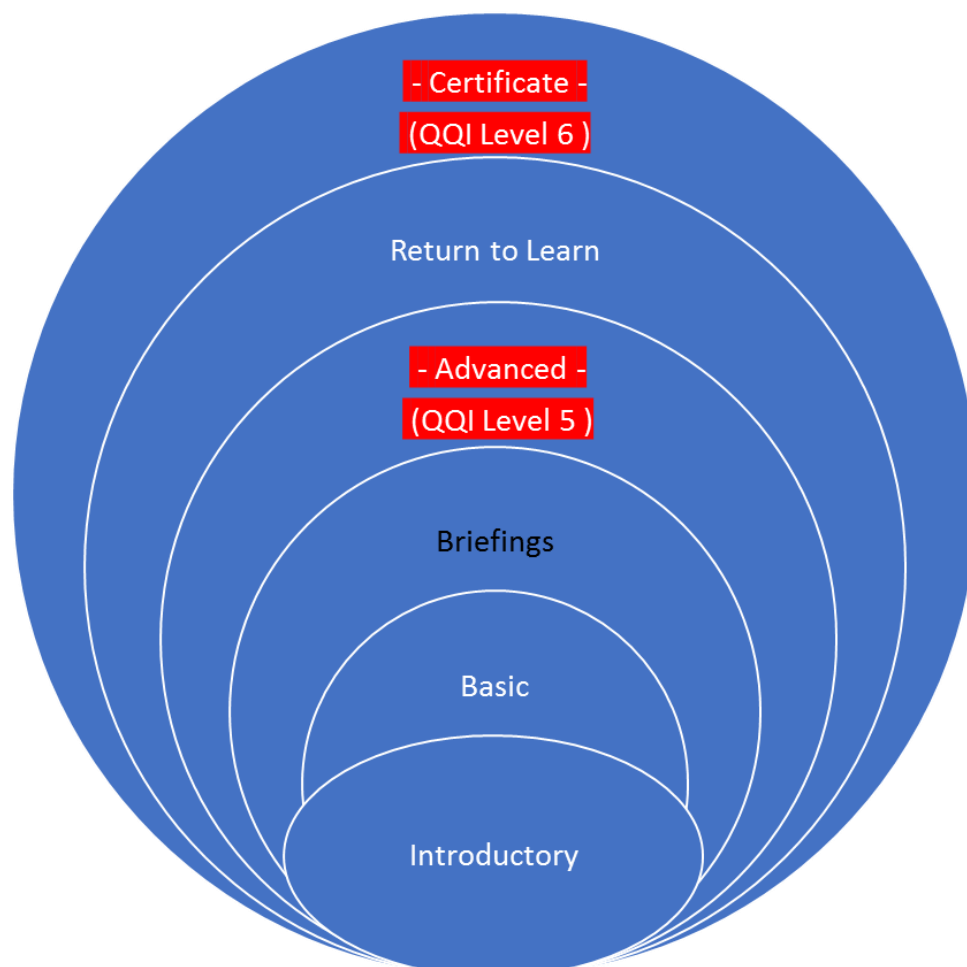


Figure 1 –SIPTU's programmes

Fairness and Equity

It is both policy and practice in SIPTU to ensure fair treatment and equality of opportunity for all members in matters of education and training regardless of ethnic/national background, gender orientation, family status, ability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, age or social background. We value and celebrate individual difference and work hard to ensure that every individual is treated equally.

Mutual support and respect

We strive to provide all learners and teaching staff with an environment which is mutually supportive and free from discrimination or harassment. Classroom activities and material are free from discriminatory language and images.

Privacy, personal data and use of communications media

SIPTU adheres to legislation around the use and recording of the personal data of learners. Data management procedures are appropriately quality assured by QQI. Learners and teaching staff are advised not to use mobile phones or other media technology inappropriately to record any aspect of course activities or to share such recordings or images inappropriately.

Admission and progression

Entry to SIPTU's college courses is normally through your SIPTU Organiser. Entry requirements will be clearly advertised in course recruitment literature and on relevant SIPTU websites. No fees are charged for SIPTU courses for SIPTU members.

Induction

At the college, it is our policy to ensure that learners feel well supported from the outset of their studies and throughout their attendance at the college. An important part in achieving this is our induction process. From your first interaction within the college you will be provided with a respectful and supportive environment to ensure that you have a positive learning experience. You will be well-equipped with all knowledge that you need to have to ensure a successful start in your studies.

Learner Induction Procedure:

Our procedures for Learner Induction are as follows:

- On notification of acceptance to a course (via email), you will be provided with a copy of the learner handbook and any relevant documentation for a course.
- You will be provided with a timetable for the module/course that you are attending.
- All relevant support details will be outlined to you in an induction email and also in your induction lesson as outlined below. If you are completing our Level 6 *Trade Union Studies*, please find a [link](#) to NCI Student support services which all learners on this Level 6 Programme will have access to.
- The first lesson of a module attended by you will include an induction component.
- Some examples of what this lesson will consist of are: introduction to SIPTU's college, housekeeping (fire exits, evacuation procedures, phone policy, web etiquette if relevant etc) your expectations, the college expectations from learners and supports available for learners.
- You will also be provided with access to the siptuLEARN site and will be provided along with online support for the use of this site.

- Specific induction for any eLearning platforms as relevant
- At the outset we outline the mutually respectful environment that we strive to achieve in our classrooms by setting any ground rules that may be relevant in a module, particularly around class discussions etc.
- In our classrooms, we encourage a supportive learning environment. We emphasise ‘ice-breaker’/introduction exercises and group work, in this way, you will be encouraged to interact with each other and in general develop long lasting collegial support.
- Normally modules will include a component on essay planning, citing and referencing, in particular in Level 6 Trade Union Studies, learners must attend a mandatory *Return to Learn* module which deals with these topics and other features of returning to learn after a period of time. Where relevant, our pre-recorded essay planning [video](#) is available to you and this will be highlighted in the induction lesson. At any stage, you can seek assistance with essay writing etc.
- Individual mentoring and other supports are also available to you and these will all be outlined to learners within the induction process.
- It is policy for tutors and staff to make themselves available to you and in particular when difficulties arise, tutors will outline their preferred mode of contact and their availability in the induction lesson. You will be provided with contact details for all relevant tutors on their module/programme.
- Learning outcomes of any particular module will be outlined in the session.
- Assessment overview, feedback, reasonable accommodation, compassionate consideration and appeal processes will be outlined to you within the induction lesson and will be referred to throughout the module.
- You will also be briefed on the procedure for submitting assignments and this will be outlined again later in the module also.

Tutorial support

A learner-centered and supportive teaching and learning approach is used on all SIPTU courses. If you are experiencing difficulties meeting course requirements, please ask for additional tutor support and advice.

Health and safety

All teaching venues are expected to meet high health and safety standards. You will be informed about local arrangements at your course venue, including arrangements for access, first aid, fire escapes, safe use of technologies/machinery, etc.

Illegal substances or alcohol will not be permitted in training venues. Smoking and vaping will be confined to designated outdoor areas only.

What learners can expect from us

As a learner, you can expect SIPTU to provide the highest quality learning experience possible for you, to respect your personal data, to support you in achieving the required learning outcomes for your course, to assess your learning fairly, to take note of your appraisal and evaluations, and to offer sound advice on your future learning development. We have an on-line resource available to all learners – www.siptulearn.ie – and our tutors offer individual support where needed. Quiet study space is available by arrangement and you may also use our Book Exchange.

What we expect from you

SIPTU has a set of reasonable expectations from learners on its courses. We expect learners to inform themselves about their course requirements well in advance, to make a genuine effort to achieve the learning outcomes required, to participate fully in any group tasks, to perform to their optimum in assessment tasks, to adhere to health and safety requirements, to respect the rights of colleagues, to maintain confidentiality where required, and to give us honest evaluation afterwards. As a trade union college, all learners will be members of a trade union and will demonstrate their support for the union movement in their day-to-day activities and in their studies.

Learner Services

The college will also ensure that you are informed of and aware of supports available and where to request any further supports- promoted via the induction, siptuLEARN site and the learner handbook.

In summary, the following are available to learners at SIPTU's college:

- Head of College
- Mentor Tutors
- Learning Support Services
- NCI Supports (Level 6)
- Jump Start and Return to Learn
- Union Organiser- facilitating implementation of skills learned
- Administrative Office
- IT Support
- Numerous feedback opportunities

Our programmes

In addition to Basic English and ongoing briefing seminars, we have two main programmes, *Advanced Activist* training and the *Trade Union Studies* Certificate programme. See below the list of modules in each. Learners will normally have availed of our *Introductory* and *Basic* courses first before moving on to the *Advanced* programme and then the *Certificate* programme. Please be aware that our level 5 programme is currently under review and will be changing in 2024. This information is accurate as of May 2023.

Programme Name	Modules
Advanced Activist – QQI Level 5	Offered over 3 days or 8 nights
	Union Organising Skills
	Trade Union Representation
	Negotiation Skills
	Communications

	Employment Law
	Health & Safety Representation (offered in two parts each of 3 days duration)
	Teamworking

The **Trade Union Studies** Certificate programme offered in partnership with the National College of Ireland. This is a modular programme leading to a Special Purpose Award at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications. It is designed to be completed by attaining 60 credits over 2 academic years, but participants can take modules at their own pace within a 5-year period. If you are a union member in good standing of any ICTU-affiliated union; you have completed your union's shop steward training and you are ready to study in a trade union environment, then this course is for you.

The modules

There are 5 core or compulsory modules from which you accumulate 45 credits:

- Return to Learn (5 credits)
- Trade Unions and Collective Bargaining (10 credits)
- Law and the Worker (10 credits)
- Workers in the Economy (10 credits)
- Management of Labour (10 credits)

The remaining 15 credits can be attained by a combination of any 3 of the following:

- Diversity and social inequality (5 credits)
- Labour History (5 credits)
- Modern labour issues (5 credits)
- Organising health & safety at work (5 credits)
- Representing workers (5 credits)
- Work in Irish society (5 credits)

Each of our programmes has a separate information sheet which you should consult at the appropriate time. Some individual modules also have an information sheet

and both will be made available to you as needed. For more details see our website, www.siptucollege.ie

Technology to Support Learning

The college does not offer whole programmes in an online format but there are some blended learning opportunities validated for some of our programmes. Course materials are available on the siptuLEARN site; you can submit assignments electronically; some classes may be held online; you can access our various forms remotely. If there are blended learning opportunities on your programme, it will be explained to you at the start of the module/programme and full support given. Some learners may also have difficulties in the use of technology and where possible we can facilitate smaller assistance basic classes for those who need help with Microsoft Word, email and the use of the internet for research purposes. Please see the Technology to Support Learning chapter in our Quality Assurance section on www.siptucollege.ie

Written assignments/Projects

If you are intending to seek certification, your programme will involve assignments, some written. If you are required to submit a written assignment or a report, the presentation format and style will be explained to you in advance.

A few modules will require you to do a written examination and if you have any challenges with written examinations you should bring this to the attention of tutors in good time so that reasonable accommodation can be made for you.

Oral presentation individually or as part of a group

Some modules are examined by presentations or oral interviews, either individually or as a member of a group. In both circumstances the precise requirements and marking criteria will be explained to you in advance.

Skills demonstration or observed practical test

Some modules may require you to perform a specific task in examination conditions. In such cases you will know the requirements and assessment criteria in advance.

Group projects

If you are expected to participate in group-based learning projects and to submit a group report for assessment, the procedures and expectations will be explained clearly to you. In some cases, you may be expected to submit both a group report and an individual report for assessment.

Open-book examinations

Some examination arrangements require you to use books where it would be unreasonable to expect you to remember complex information, such as in law. If your course has an open book examination your tutor will explain precisely what is expected and permitted.

Learner record/diary/journal/portfolio/dossier

You may be required to keep a record or file of your learning activities during placement or work-based assignment which can be used as 'evidence' for assessment

purposes. If a record or file is required your tutors will explain the format and expected content.

Submitting assessment tasks

You will be fully informed regarding dates, times and venues of assessment activities, and regarding deadlines and procedures for submitting written assignments. Some programmes require you to submit assignments electronically and you will be shown how to do this.

If penalties for late submissions apply, this process will be explained to you. Late submissions, however, must be agreed with your tutor in advance.

You should ensure that all your submissions have the required identification information. Those completing Level 6 Trade Union Studies should also ensure that a copy of the NCI cover sheet has been completed and submitted, this is available on the Return to Learn module assessment section on siptuLEARN (<https://siptulearn.ie/sfwd-lessons/assessment-at-siptu-college/>) or can be requested from your tutor.

You should get a receipt for submissions where this is provided and required.

You must keep copies of your own submissions.

Assessments

Calculation of assessment results

Assessment results are calculated according to approved assessment criteria and marking schemes for the modules on your course. Your module tutors will explain how marks are calculated and grades awarded.

Assessment feedback

Feedback is provided with results at the end of each module. If you require other feedback so that you can improve in the future, you may request this from your module tutor/s.

Appeal of results

If you are surprised by a low assessment result your tutor should firstly give you informal assessment feedback and an explanation of the result in the first instance. If you are still dissatisfied, you may request a meeting with the Head of College, to discuss the grounds for an appeal and determine if you wish to lodge a formal appeal. Appeals to SIPTU's college may be made using the Learner Appeals Form SC 10. The form should be completed in block capitals and submitted to the Head of College by the learner no later than 10 working days following receipt of results. You will be made aware of the appeals process in your induction and it is also outlined here in the Learner Handbook.

Stage 1 The first stage of the formal appeal procedure involves the checking of the assessment process and the assessment results by a 'blind' second marker to ensure compliance with assessment policy and marking criteria (this second marker cannot be anyone involved in the original result decision). The learner will be informed of the outcome within 2 weeks. If the learner is not happy with the outcome of stage 1, the learner may within 2 weeks appeal to stage 2.

Stage 2 On receipt of an appeal from stage 1 of the appeals procedure, the contested assignment and associated documents will be referred to the Appeals Board for a determination. The learner will be informed of the decision of the Appeals Board within 4 weeks of the Appeals Board having been convened. This is the final stage of the Appeals Process, and, on the completion of the appeals process, the final result will be inputted in the normal fashion and submitted to QQI and for issuing of an updated certificate.

Repeat assessments

Where a learner is unsuccessful on a first attempt in an assessment activity, the college will endeavor to provide the learner with a repeat assessment opportunity depending on the nature of the activity and the practical issues involved. The college cannot guarantee that re-sit opportunities will be provided for those who fail to attend or submit any work on the due date.

Plagiarism policy

You should clearly understand that plagiarism is deliberately representing the work or ideas of others as your own work. If you are using the ideas or work of others from books, journal articles, TV programmes, internet sources, class notes, etc. you should acknowledge and reference them correctly.

To avoid plagiarism, you will be required to complete a standard declaration that your written work for assessment is your own work, or that it is an appropriate element of a group project.

If plagiarism is suspected, you may be requested to explain the circumstance.

If the case of plagiarism is a serious one, you may lose marks, or be obliged to repeat the assessment activity appropriately.

If two or more learners submit identical work where individual work is required, all may be required to repeat the assignment.

Cases of plagiarism will be recorded on the learner record for examiners.

Reasonable accommodation

In the context of assessment, reasonable accommodation refers to adapting an assessment activity or examination conditions to cater for the needs of learners whose personal situation means that the assessment would otherwise be deemed as unfair, such as a learner injuring his/her writing hand and requiring a scribe for a written examination. It could, in individual circumstances, require enlarged script, an assistant for a practical task, sign language, rest periods, adaptive technologies/software, or extra time. Any such accommodation should be requested in good time to make appropriate arrangements. You can approach your tutor or mentor tutor to discuss the possibilities regarding your requirements.

Compassionate consideration

SIPTU understands that learners can experience a major life event in the weeks immediately before an assessment date, such as a physical injury, trauma, or a family bereavement. In such a case the learner should discuss the possible

implications for assessment with the tutor and, if necessary, apply for additional submission time or for a deferral of assessment.

Course/class cancellation policy and protection of enrolled learners

If you have been offered a course place and if a situation arises where your course needs to be cancelled prior to starting, or during delivery, SIPTU will make every effort to enable you to take the course, or complete the course, at the most convenient future time possible. Rarely, individual classes may be postponed to another date due to severe weather, tutor absence or other unavoidable circumstance. The college will make every effort to ensure that the new date is convenient to all.

Representation

All Learners may contact college staff with an enquiry or for assistance. We encourage classes to elect representatives and those of you registered on the Trade Union Studies programme may also be represented by the Students' Union at NCI.

Social Aspects

SIPTU classes are held at trade union offices where possible. Meals are usually served before class or at lunch times, and learners are encouraged to gather in advance of classes and meet classmates, but also to engage with tutors and visitors and the staff of all unions who also use the premises.

Complaints

It is SIPTU's college policy that complaints should be resolved informally and amicably in the first instance. Complaints can be raised at any stage informally with any member of staff, the member of staff will discuss the issue and attempt to resolve it directly with the learner. Where this is not possible or fails, then the formal complaints procedure outlined below must be followed.

Learner Complaints Procedure		
Stages	Responsible	Action
Stage 1	Subject of Complaint	Attempt at informal resolution with subject of complaint. If the matter is not resolved in this manner then the complainant proceeds to Stage 2

Stage 2	Head of College	Formal written complaint to the Head of College (not the subject of the complaint) within one week of the incident or within one week of meeting with the subject of the complaint. The Head of College will investigate and attempt to bring the matter to an amicable conclusion within two weeks of receiving the written complaint. If this does not succeed or is not possible, then Stage 3 applies.
Stage 3	Appeals Board	<p>At Stage 3, the complaint will be heard by the Appeals Board. They will issue a formal written decision within two weeks of having considered the appeal.</p> <p>The Appeals Board will not consist of the subject of the complaint, or any tutor involved in an earlier stage of the procedure.</p>
<p>Where the Head of College is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should be made in writing to the General Secretary. The General Secretary will appoint an appropriate person within the organisation to deal with the complaint under this procedure.</p>		
<p>Both the complainant and the subject of the complaint may be accompanied by a representative or friend during the formal procedures.</p>		

How to find out more about SIPTU's College

- Talk to your SIPTU Organiser and remember that they must nominate you to the Introductory, Basic and Advanced courses.
- Check out our schedule on the college website – www.siptucollege.ie

- Explore the **siptuLEARN** site – you will become a registered user once you start some of our courses.
- E-mail college@siptu.ie and ask to be added to the e-mailing list
- Visit our stand at Divisional and Biennial Delegate Conferences
- Take a look at our newsletters; programme brochures and module information sheets
- Follow us on Facebook



If your SIPTU course leads to a QQI award, you will have been asked for personal data and you might have some questions in this regard. The following FAQ from QQI should help to explain why such data is requested and returned. Please also refer to the SIPTU data protection policy.

Q: Why did I have to give my PPSN, name and date of birth in order to receive an award made my QQI?

A: QQI uses your PPSN as a unique identifier. It allows all your achievements to be kept within one record on the QQI certification system. Your name is recorded because it is printed on your certificate. Your date of birth is used for statistical purposes. It can also help to trace your records on the certification system, especially if you were certified by any of QQI's legacy bodies (HETAC, FETAC, NCVA, NCEA). PPSNs were not used prior to 2005.

Q: What other data about me does the training provider give to QQI?

A: In order to process your award and to issue a certificate to you, QQI needs information about the course you are on, the award you hope to achieve and the results/grades you have achieved.

Q: Does QQI use the contact details I gave to the education and training provider, to contact me?

A: The contact details that you submitted are only used by your education and training provider. As QQI only deals with learners via their education and training provider, they do not contact learners directly.

Q: How long does QQI hold information about my award?

A: As an awarding body, QQI has a national responsibility to keep all records indefinitely. Many award holders contact QQI for verification of their qualifications, for a variety of reasons e.g.

- commencing new employment
- newly introduced regulations that require specific qualifications e.g. Childcare
- proof of qualification to access a college programme
- qualification evaluation for residency in other countries.

As QQI holds records for its legacy awarding bodies HETAC, FETAC, NCVA and NCEA, this service can be provided to a wide range of award holders, dating back to the 1970s.

Q: How are my records stored?

A: When you complete a course, your education and training provider submits your data to QQI, using our secure certification system. Historical records are held on another of QQI's secure databases or, on paper files.

Q: Why did my training provider ask me for proof that I am not required to pay for my certificate?

A: QQI charges for each certificate it issues. Some learners are entitled to an exemption from that fee. Your training provider will require proof that this is the case. You will subsequently be recorded as "Fees Exempt" on QQI's Secure Certification System.