



Third Level Grant Support Scheme for Union Representatives 2026/27

1. Scheme Purpose

The purpose of the third-level grant support scheme is to financially assist union representatives to participate in certified educational courses up to third - level (degree), that assists them to better carry out the role of union representative. While the course content does not have to be exclusively related to industrial relations or trade union matters, the primary or substantive purpose of the course - and not just the incidental material - must assist in achieving the grants scheme objective.

It is expected that the qualifications and skills etc. achieved through the scheme supported courses will be of benefit to the member in their work, union and role. However, courses designed primarily or substantially to provide or enhance qualifications to assist in the member's normal, or proposed alternative, professional development or career are not covered by this scheme.

Master's degrees and other post graduate qualifications are not normally covered by this scheme, however; it may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

2. Scheme Requirements

The scheme terms and conditions are set out below.

- All applications must be on the approved application form which must be fully completed. All supporting documentation required must be attached with your application.
- The application must have the support of the applicant's own Fórsa branch. An authorised Branch Officer must sign the form before submission to Fórsa Head Office. Applications received without such recommendation will not be considered.
- Applications which are not fully completed or are received after the closing date for receipt of applications, (5.30pm on Thursday 10 September 2026), will not be considered, irrespective of the reason.
- The applicant must be a current paid-up member of Fórsa in good standing.

- 3.** The member seeking financial support must provide details of their role, as a current union representative¹ (e.g. workplace representative for two years in (named) employment/branch, member of branch committee since last AGM). The union's NEC Membership Services Committee may award a higher percentage grant to a member with a proven role as union activist. However, this cannot exceed a maximum

¹ In this context, a union representative role includes performing any role on behalf of their union colleagues within the union at workplace, branch, professional committee or other level.

percentage (to be determined by the Membership Services Committee) of the amount granted to other members without such a proven role.

- The course content must assist in meeting the objectives above **and applicants must set out why/how the course content could assist them to better carry out their role of union representative.**
- Details of the course and verification of the course fees from the college/institute concerned must be attached with the application.
- Applicants must also make prior application to their employer for funding for the course **(evidence of that application, and the employer's response, is required and must be attached).**
- An application form must be completed and submitted in respect of each academic year of the course. An application approved for one year of a course does not guarantee that an application for a subsequent year will attract the same or any level of union financial support.
- Applications will *not be* considered for repeat years.

4. Grant Approvals, Calculations and Payment

All applications are considered by the Membership Services Committee. The Committee will then make a recommendation based on the scheme criteria above to the union's National Executive Committee.

Grants to successful applicants are based on the **gross cost** to them of the course fees subject to a maximum cost of €3,000 per annum. Allowable course costs **do not** include books or other materials needed for the course, exam fees or membership fees of professional bodies etc. The allowable costs per member are apportioned on a pro rata basis, subject to the exercise of discretion by the Membership Services Committee to award a higher percentage grant to members with a proven role as union representative.

Any amount payable by the employer, or from any other source to a member will be deducted from the amount otherwise applicable to him/her. The resulting amounts are then apportioned amongst the successful applicants pro rata to the total budget available for the year.

Grant payments are made at the end of the academic year, or at the end of the course, if it is of less than 1 year's duration, subject to receipt of:

- Written verification from the college/institute that the member has successfully attended the course and/or sat examinations.
- Written confirmation from the employer of the amount (including nil), of any contribution made by the employer towards the cost of the course fees.

Applicants may, in respect of certain courses, be entitled to tax relief on the net amount of the course fees paid by them.