

Scottish Joint Industry Board Handbook 2026 - 2028

Section M

Guidelines for the Appointment
of and Tenure of Office by Shop
Stewards and Senior Shop Stewards



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M1. Introduction

- M1.1 The rules covering the appointment of Shop Stewards and Safety Representatives and their responsibilities are set down in the Rules of the Union. These agreed guidelines are intended to assist in the application of those rules as they apply in the Electrical Contracting Industry in Scotland. It is recognised that, by the nature of the contracting industry with small numbers of Operatives working in a great number of scattered locations and frequently moving from job to job, arrangements for the appointment of Shop Stewards and Senior Shop Stewards cannot be as simple as in an engineering works where all the Operatives work permanently in the same place.
- M1.2 Union Rule 18.1 reads:
- (a) At each workplace, the members employed at that workplace shall elect from amongst themselves, at least every three years, one or more of the following representatives:
 - (i) 18.1.1 Shop Stewards/Workplace Representatives
 - (ii) 18.1.2 Safety Representatives
 - (iii) 18.1.3 Learning Representatives
 - (iv) 18.1.4 Equality Representatives
 - (v) 18.1.5 Environment Representatives.

The election shall take place between 1 January and 31 March in each third year and elected candidates shall take office for three years.

Note: The three-year period referred to within this guidance should be aligned where possible to the three-year electoral period timetable as set out within the Union's Constitutional Structures.

- M1.3 Where an election takes place during a current three-year electoral period, the elected Shop Steward/Workplace Representative etc, will normally remain in position until the next electoral period commences.



M2. Appointment of Senior Shop Stewards

- M2.1 In establishments where there are Shop Stewards in several departments, a Senior Shop Steward may be appointed.
- M2.2 An establishment where there are Shop Stewards in several departments may be defined as a large organisation working on a number of sites (that is to say that the establishment is the firm and the departments are the sites on which it is working). In such organisations, Senior Shop Stewards may be appointed.



M3. Qualifications

- M3.1 It is desirable that Operatives appointed as Shop Stewards should have been continuously employed with their present employer as Journeymen for the previous two years but, if this is not possible, that they should have at least two years' experience of working as Journeymen in the Electrical Contracting Industry.
- M3.2 The above guidance does not apply in the case of Apprentices who may wish to become involved in the Unite Young Members structures.
- M3.3 Senior Shop Stewards should preferably have been continuously employed with their present employer for at least three years prior to being appointed. If this is not possible, they should have had at least three years' recent continuous employment in the industry. It is recognised as important that Operatives holding such an appointment should be familiar in some detail with the operations of the Electrical Contracting Industry and the policies and procedures of their own organisation.
- M3.4 Shop Stewards/Senior Shop Stewards should attend the Union's training courses, which are designed to ensure that they are familiar with:
- (a) Union rules and policies;
 - (b) The National Working Rules;
 - (c) Agreements on wages and employment conditions in the Electrical Contracting Industry in Scotland; and
 - (d) The procedures for dealing with any grievances that may arise among the workforce.



M4. Elections

- M4.1 Union Rule 18.2 reads:
- The election of workplace representatives shall, where practicable, have a gender and ethnic balance at least reflecting the proportion of black, Asian and ethnic minority and female members which they represent.

- M4.2 The Union members employed in an organisation may nominate candidates for the position of Senior Shop Steward. The election of the Senior Shop Steward shall be decided by means of a vote in which all are eligible. Union members employed by the organisation shall be entitled to participate. The employer concerned should not be involved in the administrative arrangements for such elections, which should be the responsibility of the Union. Elections for Shop Stewards and Senior Shop Stewards should comply with the current Union Rules for the election of Workplace Representatives, as set out in Rule 18.1 and 18.2



M5. Senior Shop Stewards' Duties and Responsibilities

- M5.1 Senior Shop Stewards should represent to the management the views of the Union members in the organisation as a whole. They should advise Shop Stewards in the firm on the correct procedures to follow. They should take up with the employer matters referred to them that a Shop Steward has been unable to resolve, or matters which affect more than one site or branch.



M6. Procedures and Communication

- M6.1 Senior Shop Stewards should be consulted by their employer with regard to developments in the industry. It is envisaged that they would be informed about developments and negotiations which affect the organisation as a whole or the industry in general.
- M6.2 It is not envisaged that Senior Shop Stewards would be involved in handling individual grievances or dealing with matters of local interest appropriately dealt with at site level. This might, however, be necessary in such cases as small sites where there is not already an elected Steward.
- M6.3 In the event that a matter is sufficiently serious to require the arrangement of a Regional Disputes Committee (i.e. Stage 3 of the Procedure for Handling and Resolving Individual and Collective Grievances – Section G, Appendix G8), the Senior Shop Steward must be advised. If it were agreed by all the parties concerned that a matter of principle or company or industry policy were involved, it might be appropriate for the Senior Shop Steward to be invited to attend such a meeting.

- M6.4 Because of the widespread nature of the industry, employers will provide reasonable facilities for Senior Shop Stewards to contact site/branch Stewards in writing or by telephone as required, for them to carry out their function of representing the interests of all the Union members in the organisation. It is recognised that for Senior Shop Stewards to visit individual sites or for meetings of site Stewards to be arranged is not always practical in the Electrical Contracting Industry. However, in circumstances where a matter affecting the majority of the Operatives in the organisation is at issue, employers may give permission to a Senior Shop Steward to visit particular or selected sites. Arrangements for such a visit will only be made on receipt of a written request from a Regional Officer of the Union.
- M6.5 It is preferable that an Operative appointed as a Senior Shop Steward should be employed from the employer's head office, main shop or branch in Scotland and, as far as is reasonably practicable, shall be employed on jobs near to that main centre to facilitate contact between the Senior Shop Steward and the management of the organisation.
- M6.6 Senior Shop Stewards are understood to be entitled to instruct Shop Stewards on the action to be taken in any given situation, within the confines of the Union Rules, and whilst observing the practices and procedures of the SJIB National Working Rules.
- M6.7 The procedures to be followed by Shop Stewards and Senior Shop Stewards are contained in the Union Rules, the Rules of the SJIB and any arrangements agreed with the employers which supplement the application of those rules.
- M6.8 It should be noted that neither the Union, nor the SJIB, shall condone any local arrangements which contradict the Union Rulebook or SJIB National Working Rules. In exceptional circumstances, whereby the Union Rulebook is at variance with the National Working Rules, any proposed local arrangement should be referred to the SJIB National Board for ratification prior to introduction.



M7. Training

- M7.1 It is recognised that, under Section 168 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, the Union may specify the training arrangements, with paid time off work, relevant to a union official's particular duties, which themselves attract paid time off.

The Scottish Joint Industry Board (SJIB) was founded in 1969 by SELECT and Unite the Union.

Its principal objectives are to regulate relations between employers and employees, provide benefits for people engaged in the industry in Scotland, stimulate and further the progress of the industry and regulate and control employment, the level of skill and proficiency, health and safety competence, wages and welfare benefits.

The main functions are the maintenance of the National Working Rules, the registration and licensing of apprentices, grading and registration of employees, the resolution of disputes and the provision of welfare benefits.



Scottish Joint Industry Board
for the Electrical Contracting Industry
The Walled Garden, Bush Estate,
Midlothian, EH26 0SB
Telephone: 0131 445 9216
Email: generalenquiries@sjib.org.uk
www.sjib.org.uk

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