

Application Pack for the Post of Co-op Member



Included in this pack:

- Background to Unicorn
- Job Specification
- Person Specification
- Unicorn's Statement of Purpose
- A 'Day in the Life' of three Unicorn members

Please complete our application form by hand or electronically and email to recruitment@unicorn-grocery.coop or post to Personnel Dept, Unicorn Grocery, 89 Albany Road, Chorlton, M21 0BN



Background to Unicorn

Unicorn is based on a strong set of principles (our Principles of Purpose), which underpin the way we run our business. We have created a place we would like to shop in ourselves, selling affordable, wholesome, regional, organic and fair-trade products. Through the way we do business, we strive to make trade less exploitative of people, animals and the environment.

As a worker co-operative, Unicorn is owned and managed by its members - the workforce. There is no 'boss' or management team - we work with a flat management structure and all members (currently numbering around 70) are 'managers' of the business, taking on equal responsibility for equal pay. Co-op membership involves working at all levels of the business, and includes significant amounts of shop floor work (serving, cleaning, re-stocking) as well as joining one or more specialist teams with responsibility for areas such as warehouse, buying, finance, or human resources.

Worker co-operatives are distinct from conventional businesses in that it is the workers (co-op members) that control and run the business, not only on a day to day basis but also in steering its overall strategy and direction. Decisions are made by members collectively and all co-op members are expected to contribute to decisions made both at team level and at members meetings. Members meetings guide the direction of the business as a whole, for example discussing issues such as pay, responsibilities, and long term planning.

Our Principles of Purpose set out clearly what we stand for - the challenge is to run a business that can turn ideas into reality. Since our opening in 1996 we have achieved much by conventional standards, and seek others who can help us achieve more.

There is a probationary period of seven months from the start of employment. Successful completion of this probationary period leads to full membership of the co-operative.

Co-operative Member Job Description

Location: Unicorn Grocery, Chorlton, Manchester

Job Title: Probationary Member

Rate of pay: £12.00 per hour

Special Conditions:

Working both days every other weekend.

Some early morning starts & late evening finishes.

Working every Thursday morning to attend training or forum.

Attendance at Members' Meetings which may be outside rota'd hours.

Working Hours: Employment is full time or part time (40 plus hours a fortnight). Hours are based on a 2-week rota.

Job Summary: To participate as a co-op member in the management and development of the business and to have shared responsibility for current business plans and the successful functioning of specialist teams.



Tasks/Requirements of the job:

1. To communicate openly and honestly and be supportive and respectful to colleagues.
2. To make active contributions to collective management functions and processes including; General Meetings, Forums, workshops, working groups, and team meetings.
3. To work co-operatively in at least one specific team and take on responsibility for the success and development of the team and the co-operative as a whole.
4. To share responsibility as a managing director and owner of the business.
5. To multi-task, i.e. switch quickly from one type of task to another, as indicated on your rota or be transferred at short notice to help with the smooth running of the business.
6. To work at a fast pace in the most effective and efficient manner in order to contribute to the success of the business.
7. To demonstrate worker self- management as well as team work.
8. To undertake the core tasks upon which the operation of Unicorn depends; till operation, production (packing of dried foodstuffs), cleaning, and dealing with the public. Please note that some of the core tasks involve heavy and repetitive lifting and handling.
9. To provide excellent customer service.
10. To seek and undertake training and personal development in order to be a more effective member and collective manager.
11. To abide by and promote the co-operative principles and values as well as Unicorn's policies.
12. To develop, promote and adhere to best practice and to agreed systems and procedures.
13. Any other duties that are reasonable

Person Specification

At Unicorn Grocery all members are general shop workers but everyone also specialises in at least one area. These areas are fresh fruit and veg sales, deli counter, warehouse, chilled foods sales, commodity packing & labelling, finance, HR, education & marketing, buying, operational planning, secretariat and IT. In all areas of the shop the below criteria need to be fulfilled.

The Person Specification is an important part of our selection process as it is the basis for short listing for interview and appointing successful applicants. Please read and consider the Specification below carefully before filling in the application form. In your application you should try to show how you feel you meet the criteria listed below, ideally with examples; remember that you can draw from any part of your life, not just your work experience.



Personal Skills/Abilities

1. The ability to work as part of a team in a cooperative and sensitive manner.
2. The ability to complete tasks to an agreed timescale with an organised and positive attitude to work & the ability to effectively manage and prioritise a workload when working under pressure.
3. The ability to show attention to detail in all aspects of work.

4. Needs to be able to work with numbers to the extent of cash handling, checking deliveries and mixing and bagging up quantities of dry foods correctly. Needs have at least basic computer skills, be able to use email, and have the ability to interpret sales and finance reports.
5. The ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of people both verbally and by creating and following written communication. Need to be able to give clear information in response to customers and telephone enquiries.
6. The ability to show initiative, versatility and flexibility in all aspects of work.
7. Show understanding of, and commitment to, Unicorn's Principles of Purpose.
8. The ability to manage and be managed while sharing responsibilities for all areas of the business.
9. The ability to efficiently carry out core and specialist tasks which can include heavy and repetitive lifting of boxes and sacks of foodstuff in the warehouse and reaching, bending and lifting stock to replenish shelves on the shop floor.



We are committed to five Principles of Purpose

Secure Employment

We aim to provide secure employment for our members. We seek above all to provide a livelihood for ourselves with some control over our working environment. We accept the responsibilities and rewards of this challenge.

Equal Opportunity

We believe that all should have an equal opportunity to undertake paid work. Ignorance and prejudice should not be an obstacle to this. The ability to carry out a minimum of 20 hours useful work per week entitles a worker to apply for membership. The respect and income derived from a job are important to many people in our society which is one which values paid work highly.

Wholesome Healthy Consumption

We aim to trade in wholesome foodstuffs and household goods of non-animal origin. We focus on foods that have undergone minimal processing. Specific product guidelines include the avoidance of animal derivatives and where feasible, refined sugar and high levels of added salt. We strive to sell products of organic standard and maximum nutritional value whenever we can find or generate a market. Provision of educational materials help in this aim.

Fair and Sustainable Trade

We aim to trade in a manner which supports a sustainable world environment and economy. We trade preferentially in products which follow the "Fair Trade" ethos and alert our customers to the problems of cash crop agriculture. We are concerned that much of world trade is to the disadvantage of poorer nations with a consequence for people's health and lives. We operate a fund from which to support projects addressing and challenging this imbalance. 4% of our wage costs are contributed to this fund. We trade in products which produce minimum impact on the environment and we make decisions about our packaging with this also in mind.

Solidarity in Co-operation

We aim to support like minded ventures, co-operatives or otherwise. We acknowledge both competition and co-operation as fundamental to human nature. We seek to encourage co-operation by operating a fund to support projects which share our vision of community and society in the United Kingdom. 1% of our wage costs are contributed to this fund. We promote co-operative structures and spirit through all our trading, social and educational activities.

'A Day in the Life'

Everyone's days are different at Unicorn, but the one thing they have in common is variety. A co-op member may go from compiling the week's fresh bread order to discussing financial forecasts to serving customers on the till in the space of an afternoon. It's a place for people who want to use their heads and their hands, often at the same time! To give a flavour of what working here is like, two members and a probationary member describe typical days at work.

A Day in the Life of Debbie, Co-op Member

Today starts at 8am with me making the fresh wraps on the deli counter, I do a Mexican-style one today, full of beans, peppers and fresh coriander. These get bagged up and displayed in the chilled cabinet. Straight after that I'm into a meeting of team reps where we discuss lots of day to day co-op business. Today one of the things we're working out is how to go about doing essential maintenance work to the car park without disrupting deliveries and customer parking more than we can help. We also talk about sales patterns and staffing for the next quarter. After this meeting, we disseminate the information back to our teams, and record feedback from them to take back to the next one.

Lunch comes next, and I have a hot soup and some salad from the deli (the 25% staff discount comes in handy here). Afterwards, I'm on the other side of the deli counter, serving customers for a couple of hours, before heading into the packing room. Here I'm, working alongside about 6 other members and casual staff, packing down the bulk sacks of dried foods such as grains, spices and pulses into the small sizes that customers buy. It's all done by hand so it's quite physical and can be tiring, but there's always someone to chat to (as long as you can manage to talk at the same time as packing!)

After a quick cuppa in the rest room I head back downstairs for my final part of the day, serving on the till. It's something I really enjoy because it's the main chance you get to chat to customers. At 5.30 I finish but first do my shopping and then end up chatting to colleagues until 6, when I get on my bike and head home.

A Day in the Life of Ben,

Probationary Co-op Member

A typical day for this probationary member at Unicorn is busy, with a good variety of tasks. I usually spend time working in at least two teams, learning on the job. So one day I might spend a couple of hours with the veg team, a couple more on the till and then the rest of the day in production (packing the bulk dried goods into the Unicorn-branded bags you see on the shelves). The next day I might spend some time handling deliveries in the store, helping out on the deli and then doing a picking list (restocking the shelves). There are also some meetings to attend and most weeks have an hour or so of 'back office' training. Probationers get a weekly rota so you know in advance what you'll be doing and the training is well structured. There is a lot to learn at Unicorn and some of the work can be a bit daunting at the beginning, but there are plenty of knowledgeable people about who help you find your feet.

A Day in the Life of Britta, Co-op Member

We all meet every morning before we open the shop and someone reads out the diary, it includes all deliveries that are due, people who are off, changes to people's rotas and any important messages. Today after the diary I am in the packing room for a couple of hours. Look on the packed goods page of our website and you can see me packing away happily. There is a bell in the packing room which calls people if we need another till, so a few times during my packing slot, I will go on the till.

After a short break at 11, I am checking the post and emails; this is part of my role as a member of the Secretariat team. I have now got 2 hours of admin in my HR role, where I will look at rotas and cover people's holidays. At 12.55 the phone from downstairs rings, they need someone to help out on the deli for a few minutes, the fresh bread has arrived a bit early. I usually don't work on the deli but during my probationary training, I learnt how to work in any part of the shop, including the deli counter. Interruptions to the usual structure of my day are normal, I hardly ever end up doing what it says on the rota as we constantly have to adapt to the priorities of the day, but the good thing is that other people will do the same and be flexible when you need it!

At 1.30 I have lunch - today I didn't bring my own, so I've bought myself a hot soup from the deli with fresh bread. After lunch I spend a couple of hours catching up on reviews, again as part of my HR role.

Between 4 & 6pm I'm picking – one of my favourite jobs at Unicorn. Every evening five of us have one of five different lists of items we need to restock the shelves with. I am concentrating on the tins of beans, the jams and the juices today. I like looking at the nice full shelf after I have finished, usually doesn't last very long though... Today I finished my list a bit earlier, so I am just going into the store and help crushing cardboard with our bailer. At 6pm it's home time for me & I'm looking forward to tomorrow when I work from 10 -7.30 and I know that the day will be completely different from today.