Connect & Discover

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

DOCUMENT CONTROL AND VERSION HISTORY

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Revision History

Revision History				
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1. **INTRODUCTION**
    Athlone Institute of Technology recognises that staff are a vital and valued asset and encourages and enables everyone to develop their potential. Support for professional development will encompass staff at all levels and in all categories of the Institute.

    The Professional Development Committee, a sub-committee of Academic Council, will advise on and help coordinate professional development. The Professional Development Committee will prioritise and oversee the allocation of training resources and ensure that equality and transparency prevail.

2. **SCOPE**
    These guidelines have been developed to ensure that documented, controlled and auditable procedures exist within Athlone Institute of Technology to ensure fair and equitable implementation of the Institute's professional development policy. The following principles underline this policy:
    - **Staff members who have one year's continuous service in AIT are eligible to apply for funding.**
    - **Staff members will not receive funding for more than one course at a time. Staff will not normally be eligible for funding if financial assistance has previously been provided by the Institute for a qualification at the same level.**
    - **Staff will not be funded for another course within a 5 year period of completion of the previous course unless particular circumstances are determined which would be of benefit to the Institute.**
    - **Applications for group training and or Institute training initiatives are actively encouraged by the committee. These may be presented by the human resources department, a department/functional area or any of the sub-committees of Academic Council, as appropriate.**

3. **PROGRAMME SUPPORT**
    Through the Professional Development Committee, the Institute will give consideration to applications for financial assistance in pursuing professional development activity as follows:

    (a) **Programmes available in AIT**
    Applicants must choose programmes within AIT over same / similar programmes in other 3rd level providers unless there are extenuating circumstances. These cases will be reviewed on an individual basis.

(b) Professional Development Programmes

These are approved programmes of study, which are normally studied on a part time basis. They relate to the staff member's current or planned position in AIT or to the strategic mission of the Institute and are part of her/his continuing professional development. The following are the guidelines for maximum periods of study; however, reimbursement may vary particularly if the university/college granting the award normally recognises a shorter or longer period of study as being appropriate.

Primary Degree	Level 7/8	4 years Full Fees
Masters Degree	Level 9	2 years Full Fees 1 year Write up Fees
PhD	Level 10	4 years Full Fees 1 year Write up Fees

*In our efforts to receive Technological University status priority funding will be focused on those taking up PhD.

Those undertaking PhD's should do so in their discipline area where appropriate, but are equally encouraged to study growth areas or those which would be mutually beneficial for both the applicant and Institute.

(c) Personal Interest/Non-Accredited Courses – In-House Courses only

Personal Interest/Non-Accredited courses provided by the Institute, may be partly funded, up to 50% by Professional Development.

Direct application to the Department of Lifelong Learning. Authorization for 50% from immediate manager and then given to DOLL.

Department of lifelong Learning will bill Professional Development by week 6 of term.

(d) Institute Training Initiatives/Group Training

These **are** generally initiatives relating to ongoing organisational requirements (e.g. induction, health and safety training) or to developments within the Institute or higher education, to facilitate the Institute meeting its strategic mission. The requirements for this training may also be identified within individual departmental/functional area developments.

Training requirements provision may be grouped to ensure value-for-money within the constraints of the staff development budget.

(e) Seminars and Conferences

Seminars and conferences should be approved and funded by the faculty/functional area.

Professional Development Committee

4.   APPLICATIONS

1.   Retrospective applications for funding will not be considered

Applications for financial assistance should be submitted <u>before</u> a programme of study begins. This includes applications for Institute training initiatives and group training.

2.   Applicants must use the appropriate form available from the HR section on the Institute intranet.

3.   Applications should be submitted to the HR Department two weeks prior to the scheduled meetings to facilitate inclusion at the next available Professional Development Committee meeting.

4.   Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their application by the HR Department within 3 working days following the Professional Development Committee meeting.

5.   The Professional Development Committee will apply the following criteria as appropriate:
   a) the value of the course to the Institute
   b) the value of the course to the career development of the individual
   c) the potential of the person to benefit from the course
   d) the appropriateness/relevance of the course
   e) the cost effectiveness of the proposal
   f) previous support and funding
   g) length of service with the Institute

5.   FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

5.1   Fees in Respect of Registration, Tuition and Examination Fees
AIT Professional Development Committee will grant financial assistance to cover the cost of approved fees in respect of registration, tuition and examination fees. Assistance will be limited to the normal registration period and any other associated fees will not be reimbursed by AIT.

The Institute agrees to pay fees approved by the Professional Development Committee in advance of commencing the course.

In the event the individual does not complete or pass the approved course the employee fully agrees to reimburse the Institute with all fees' paid. This will either be in the form of a lump sum or a salary deduction, where appropriate. Reimbursement of late fees or repeat fees will not be given.

A staff member, who has previously received funding approval for a course which they subsequently defer commencing, is required to resubmit their application if they decide to undertake the course on an alternative start date.

5.2   Traveling and Subsistence Expenses

Travel and subsistence Expenses are not payable

6.   RESPONSIBILITY OF THE APPLICANT

On application for approval, and prior to any expenditure being incurred or registration procedures undertaken, the applicant must sign an undertaking acknowledging that a refund of financial assistance received will be required as a consequence if either any or all of the following occur:

- Unsatisfactory attendance and/or lack of engagement on the programme or if the course is not completed.
- The failure to provide annually, a satisfactory progress report from the provider of the course. This will usually take the form of certified exam results.
- The applicant leaving the service of Institute either before the completion of the course of study or within two years of the date of completion of the course *(pro rata* refund will be reimbursed to the institute).

7.   STUDY/EXAM LEAVE POLICY

- Study leave will be granted to a maximum of three days per year for professional courses up to 240 credits.
- Study leave for modular courses will also be granted on a pro rata basis.
- Where a non-academic staff member attends courses within AIT, they may be granted a maximum of three hours a week time off to attend classes. This is at the approval and discretion of their line manager.
- Leave to attend an exam will be given on the submission of the relevant examination timetable. A half days leave will be granted to staff members sitting an exam in Athlone Institute and a days leave for those exams which take place outside of Athlone Institute *(this is to take in requisite travel time)*

- The Institute will consider where possible providing a staff member with some time off for the final completion/writing up of their PhD. A staff member who wishes to avail of this should receive approval from his or her faculty or functional area. Resource constraints must also be taken into consideration.

- Applications must be accompanied by examination or evidence of requirement to submit assignments or thesis or similar course work and should receive the approval of the appropriate Manager/ Head of Department.

- Staff members must seek approval and agree a schedule of examination and study leave with the line manager at the commencement of each year/semester of their course or study programme. This is essential so as to ensure the least disruption as possible to delivery of services.

- Line managers should have a reporting/follow up system with staff who have completed professional programmes in order to share best practice.

8. EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES
(i.e. applications for courses taking place between the Professional Development meetings)
Identification of staff development needs must be a carefully planned ongoing activity between the staff member and their departmental/functional head. In certain exceptional circumstances courses requiring immediate approval may happen between meetings or during the Summer period when the committee is out of session.

Applications costing less than €1,000 may be approved by the HR Manager and these must be noted to the subsequent meeting of the professional development committee.

9. **APPEAL**
In the event a staff member wishes to appeal the rejection of their application for funding the following procedure will apply:
- The Employee is required to submit a written request for re-consideration back to the Professional Development Committee.
- If still unsatisfied with the outcome they may further appeal the decision, in writing, to the Institute's Academic Council.

10. **REVIEW**
This policy is subject to review by the Professional Development Committee if deemed necessary, or at least every two years.