



LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

PURPOSE

At UoNSU, we believe that a culture of growth and continuous learning is fundamental to our success as a Union. We see the creation of a learning culture as a way to engage staff, giving them both opportunity and accountability to learn and grow. This supports our strategic objectives, the changing environment we operate in, as well as the personal, professional and career development of our staff.

This policy explains our approach to learning and development. We intend that there should be a transparent framework for staff learning and development supported by a number of clear principles and processes. This approach links with our Values - Empowering, Inclusive and Collaborative – both in design and practice.

POLICY

CONTEXT

This policy is based on our Learning and Development (L&D) Strategy. When we think about L&D at UoNSU, what we have in mind is building a culture based around the following principles:

- Managers and leaders create a supportive work environment that fosters a 'growth' mindset amongst staff.
- We develop a culture of continuous learning where people regularly and openly reflect on what they've done, and what more they can still need to do to develop.
- Staff see where they are on their 'journey' at the Union and how they can move forward in their careers, even if this means seeking promotion elsewhere.
- There is no 'one size fits all' approach – we recognise that people are individuals and their L&D journey will be unique to them.
- Everyone is clear how they can access L&D and understands how decisions are made in relation to L&D.
- We take a strategic approach to workforce planning, talent development, succession and staff retention.
- We are creative about different ways of delivering L&D.

You can expect to see this in action around you and for it to be a central part of your focus from the time you're recruited until the time you leave us. This is important because L&D underpins everything we do to support students at UoNSU. We also recognise that it makes for a happier, more engaged and fulfilled staff team. We believe that supporting your learning, your development and your career are part of the contract we make with you when you come to work at UoNSU.

L&D APPROACH

The sections below outline different aspects of the L&D strategy and create the practical framework for L&D at our Union.

The Three Strands

Our L&D approach is based on three strands:

Strand A – Developing and embedding a learning culture. This is about developing an open culture which builds on people's strengths, as well as addressing any skills gaps.

Strand B – Development of organisation-wide skills and capabilities. This is about developing a range of skills and capabilities across the organisation, needed to achieve our strategic priorities.

Strand C – Development of personal skills and capabilities across the staff team. This is about developing individual staff members so they can work effectively and make their best possible contribution.

Note that no one strand is more important than another and emphasising all three together will help us to achieve our strategic aims.

Methods and Activities

L&D methods and activities can generally be thought of as formal or informal.

- Formal activities generally need to be funded in some way. They include accredited training programmes, formal study, external conferences and events, in-house or NUS courses, online learning courses, sessions run by external trainers and book/journal subscriptions.
- Informal activities just require time and planning. They include things like work shadowing, work projects, coaching from your line manager or colleague, action learning groups, reading, participating in or running a discussion group, visits to other Unions.

All of these activities, and potentially others not mentioned, have their place in an effective, holistic approach to L&D. It's important to stress that formal or funded activities are not seen as superior to informal methods. All are part of a rich, creative and engaging approach to learning.

It's important to stress that you can shape your own learning journey and we will encourage you in that. There is no 'one size fits all' or standard approach at UoNSU. We are open to discuss what you feel will work best for you and you should feel free to talk to your line manager about this. We only ask in return that you fully commit to the chosen activities, and that you apply and share the learning from them.

Secondments and Volunteering may also be considered as development activities. See the separate [Secondment Policy](#).

Responsibilities

Our 'Commitment to Learning' standard sets out the expectations and responsibilities of staff at all levels, both in implementing L&D and creating the desired learning culture. This is shown in Appendix 1.

What you can expect at each stage of your career with UoNSU is set out in our 'Supporting the Learning Lifecycle' diagram. This is shown in Appendix 2.

The effective implementation of L&D is primarily the responsibility of the L&D team and they will report regularly to the CEO about it. As part of their remit, they will produce a programme of learning activities that will be published across the Union. This will be updated regularly to reflect current Union needs and strategic priorities. However, it's important to highlight that, as a member of staff, you are responsible for:

- Considering and identifying your own personal L&D needs
- Taking full part in your end of year reviews and continuous feedback meetings
- Attending learning activities
- Reflecting afterwards and evaluating these learning activities
- Putting your learning into practice

ACCESSING L&D

Responsibility for identifying L&D needs is shared between you, your line manager and the People and Development team. This can happen at a number of points including:

- Induction led by the HR department
- During the End of Year reviews and Continuous Feedback meetings with your line manager, including during the probationary period. This is intended to support the achievement of key operational requirements as well as your learning objectives and personal development needs. This includes needs that you identify yourself or would like support for.
- From the Organisational L&D Plan which supports strategic or Union-wide L&D needs.

All staff can request L&D and we will be guided by our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy](#) throughout. We see L&D as a real investment in our people and, although our aim will always be to support L&D requests wherever possible, there may be times when we can't accommodate everything, particularly where it requires funding. In such cases we will need to prioritise according to Union need.

The process which we will use to identify and decide on L&D needs is shown in the 'Staff Development Process' map in Appendix 3. In making your request, you should particularly consider which of the strands, A, B or C, the learning activity falls under and what the benefits will be. L&D request forms are available from the HR Manager.

It's important to note that, although we will actively encourage you to raise any learning and development need or ideas in your performance review meetings, your line manager must approve any formal requests before they go to the People and Development team for consideration. However, if you and your line manager agree about an informal learning activity, you can just get on and do it.

It's our intention to be open and transparent in implementing this process. If we decline an application for formal L&D, we will tell you the reasons why it hasn't been supported, and let you know if and when your application could be considered again in future. We will also look into alternatives or different approaches to meet the same need, if possible.

Funding and Study Leave

If you are undertaking a formal course or recognised training programme, we will allow you reasonable time off work for attending the training and preparing for and sitting any exams. You should talk to your line manager to arrange this.

We recognise that the circumstances and types of study vary. So, rather than being prescriptive on the exact amount of leave available, each case should be assessed individually by line managers taking the following factors into consideration. The HR Manager can provide guidance as necessary for consistency:

- Whether the study is intended to improve the staff members' capability or effectiveness in their role or the overall performance of the Union.
- Whether exams are part of the study.
- Whether it's for personal or career development, or personal interest.

You could also consider temporary flexible working arrangements using the Statutory Procedure for Flexible Working set out in our Flexible Working Policy to manage this time, as appropriate.

UoNSU will fund any training activity which is a requirement for the role including any 'out of pocket' expenses associated with attending the course or activity. In circumstances where the activity is for personal development or interest, or is less directly relevant to the role or Union needs, we may agree to share the cost with you. Again, there no clear rule which will cover every situation, so you should talk to your line manager about what can be accommodated before you make the arrangements.

As a charity and a membership organisation, we need to use our resources carefully and make sure we get the maximum benefit from them. Therefore, if we pay for you to attend a course of study or qualification, and you leave the Union within a certain timeframe, we may ask you to repay the money. If the activity costs £500 or more and you leave within six months of the training, we will ask you to repay the full amount. If you leave within 12 months, we will ask you to pay half of the cost. This will be recovered from your final salary if necessary.

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