



STAFF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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Responsible division	Director: Learning & Development
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POLICY ON STAFF LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Against the background of the dream to be an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for engaged scholarship, social responsiveness and an ethic of care, the council of the North-West University (NWU) has adopted this policy on 20 June 2019.

1 Interpretation and application

1.1 This policy must be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the:

- 1.1.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
- 1.1.2 Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997
- 1.1.3 Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995
- 1.1.4 Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998
- 1.1.5 Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 75 of 1997
- 1.1.6 Skills Development Act, 97 of 1998
- 1.1.7 Skills Development Levies Act, 9 of 1999
- 1.1.8 Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (2010-2030)
- 1.1.9 National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III)

1.2 This policy must be interpreted and implemented in conformity with all other relevant policies, guidelines and rules of the university, and specifically the Recruitment and Selection Policy, the Integrated Policy on Teaching-Learning, the Performance Management Policy, the Remuneration Policy and the Conditions of Employment Guidelines.

2 Definitions

In this policy and related documents –

- “**a discretionary grant**” means a grant paid to applicants at the discretion of a SETA, for skills development programmes linked to scarce and critical skills within a specific sector;
- “**a mandatory grant**” means a grant payment to all levy paying organisations in terms of section 3(1) of the Skills Development Levies Act, 1999 upon submission of the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) and the Annual Training Report (ATR);
- “**formal external studies**” means all qualifications, and other education and training interventions with 120 or more full credits, studied through UNISA;
- “**formal study assistance**” means approved study assistance by university Management for staff to attend or enrol for all qualifications, and other education and training interventions with 120 or more full credits, as a result of scarce skills required by the University;
- “**pivotal training**” means all professional, vocational, technical and academic learning programmes that result in qualifications or part qualification on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

3 Policy Statement

- 3.1 The NWU is committed to providing employees the opportunity to undergo appropriate skills development and formal training to meet the responsibilities of their employment effectively.
- 3.2 Development is also intended to facilitate career development where it supports the university's strategic goals and the internal success model of the NWU Strategy, which emphasises the need to "build staff flexibility, improve capability, and to develop leadership potential through the development of academic and support staff with an open mind-set (nationally and internationally), critical in thinking, respectful and mindful of the right to freedom of expression, commitment to and respect for the full scope of diversity, scholarship, commitment to students, active citizenry, good work-ethic and high performance individuals".

4 Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- 4.1 provide mechanisms for employees to develop skills and knowledge, and to gain qualifications and expertise in order to contribute to the development of the university as well as their own professional and career development;
- 4.2 comply with the requirements of the Skills Development Act, 1998 in order to facilitate the compilation of the workplace skills and employment equity plans;
- 4.3 provide opportunities for the promotion of equality through targeted, accredited, critical, and appropriate staff development and training;
- 4.4 support external studies for staff who intend to improve their formal qualifications at institutions other than the NWU, and
- 4.5 promote consistency and integration of all staff learning and development practices.

5 Scope of Application

- 5.1 This policy applies to all permanent and fixed-term employees.
- 5.2 Short-term contract employees (less than 12 months' contract) and employees on probation must be afforded an opportunity to attend in-house training identified by their line managers as important training that will enhance their performance or employability.

6 Rules

- 6.1 Staff learning, training and development must be aligned with the university's performance management systems and must include the following:
 - (a) job-related skills development programmes;
 - (b) formal qualifications funded through the study rebate benefit at NWU;
 - (c) formal external studies.
- 6.2 All training and development measures must be informed by a skills audit as envisaged in the Skills Development Act, 1998 and aligned to each person's and the university's identified skills needs as captured in a Skills Development Plan aligned to the university's strategy.
- 6.3 The education, training and development of employees is a Key Performance Area (KPA) and responsibility of line managers, who are expected to discuss training and development needs with

each of the employees under their management at least annually as part of the performance appraisal and planning process.

- 6.4 The university may grant financial assistance to employees to attend skills programmes which are occupationally based, accredited, or critical and must be approved by their direct managers and be in line with personal development plans (PDPs).
- 6.5 Learning and development provision must be evaluated and reviewed to ensure that it is adequate, relevant, and effective, provides value for money and supports employment equity objectives.
- 6.6 Equality and non-discrimination, including gender and disability mainstreaming, and diversity awareness and value education, must be integrated in all training activities.
- 6.7 Staff development programmes must be competency-based, i.e. focused on the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as appropriate for an employee occupying a specific position.
- 6.8 Where Funds acquired through mandatory grants may fund both informal and formal (PIVOTAL training but not full qualifications), Learning and Development interventions, and Discretionary grants may fund both informal interventions and formal qualifications through NWU or other specified learning institutions in South Africa
- 6.9 All learning & development initiatives and relevant proof (including invoices, attendance registers and certificates) must be recorded by all line managers and reported to People & Culture for purposes of compiling the annual training report.
- 6.10 The People & Culture Department must strive to attain and maintain accreditation standards as required by the SETA.
- 6.11 All external learning & development interventions applied for through the Skills Development funds must be applied for at least three weeks before the intervention is to take place and interventions that have not been approved in time may not be funded.
- 6.12 A beneficiary of any formal study assistance from the university must remain in the employ of NWU for a period of twelve months after the qualification has been obtained, and in the event of the recipient leaving the employ of the university before the expiry of this period, a pro-rata portion of the funding provided by the university must be recovered from the employee.
- 6.13 Every line manager is responsible to identify skills development needs of employees and to take steps to address such needs.

7 Skills Development Fund Programmes

- 7.1 The NWU skills development fund must be used to improve the skills of employees by supporting and promoting education and training in the workplace as stipulated in the Skills Development Levies Act, 1998.
- 7.2 The following training interventions are recognised for funding;
 - a) in-house training such as orientation, on-the-job (workplace based) workshops and presentations provided by the University to all employees free of charge;
 - b) in-house or external registered or accredited training with accredited service providers on various modules such as, Communication, Conflict Management, and Project Management;
 - c) job related seminars, conferences, congresses, symposia and workshops within South Africa where employees are attending for knowledge acquisition and not where employees must present a paper or an article;
 - d) professional, vocational, technical and academic bridging programmes offered to learners to achieve an occupational qualification, and
 - e) work integrated learning such as internships and learnerships for the purpose of providing employment opportunities to the unemployed.

8 Financing of Learning Programmes

- 8.1 The university must in accordance with its particular training needs and subject to normal budgetary procedures make provision for the financing of training and education of employees as stipulated in the Skills Development Act, 1998.
- 8.2 In order to provide all employees the opportunity of skills development, a maximum amount per employee per annum, reviewed annually by People & Culture and other stakeholders responsible for budgets, must be made available.
- 8.3 Indirect training costs such as travel and accommodation may be financed subject to the availability of funds.
- 8.4 Study towards full qualifications such as degrees and diplomas is not to be funded from the skills development fund (mandatory grant funds).

9 Conditions for funding of formal studies

The funding of external formal studies of an employee is provided primarily for studies through UNISA, subject to the following conditions:

- 9.1 the availability of funds;
- 9.2 where the employee fails to pass a subject or course in a particular year, funding for the repetition of the same subject or course must not be provided;
- 9.3 continued funding is subject to satisfactory progress by the employee towards completion of the qualification;
- 9.4 applicants are required to disclose whether their studies are also funded by another source;
- 9.5 where the employee has access to adequate funds from other sources, funding by the NWU may be made only under exceptional circumstances as motivated and supported by the line manager;
- 9.6 a successful applicant is obliged to immediately report any additional funding obtained subsequently in order to determine whether any of the university's contribution should be repaid;
- 9.7 in exceptional circumstances applications for the funding of qualifications offered by a higher education institution but not by the NWU or UNISA may be considered on the merits of the application, and
- 9.8 awards for the funding of the tuition fees of other higher education institutions, are subject to the following limitations:
 - (a) for undergraduate studies (Including honours) - **maximum assistance of 70%**;
 - (b) for masters studies - **maximum assistance of 60%**;
 - (c) for doctoral studies - **maximum assistance of 100%**.

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