



STAFF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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STAFF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Preamble

Against the background of our vision to discover new frontiers and opportunities that benefit society, thereby advancing our relevance and impact, the Council of the North-West University (“NWU”, “university”) adopted this policy on 19 November 2025.

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, as amended
 - 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); and
 - 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 accordance with 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 employees 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 with the opportunity to undergo appropriate skills development and formal training in order fulfil their employment responsibilities effectively.
- 3.2 Development is also intended to facilitate career development, provided that 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 develop leadership potential by developing an open mindset among academic and support staff (nationally and internationally), encouraging critical thinking and respect for freedom of expression and diversity, and fostering a commitment to active citizenship, a strong work ethic, and high performance".

4 Policy objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- 4.1 provide mechanisms for employees to develop their skills and knowledge, gain qualifications and expertise, and 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 Plan and the Employment Equity Plan;
- 4.3 provide opportunities for the promotion of equality through the targeted, accredited, critical and appropriate development and training of employees;
- 4.4 under exceptional circumstances, support external studies for employees who intend to improve their formal qualifications at institutions other than NWU and Unisa;
- 4.5 promote consistency and integration of all learning and development practices relating to employees.

5 Scope of application

- 5.1 This policy applies to all permanent and fixed-term employees with benefits.
- 5.2 Short-term contract employees (those with contracts of less than 12 months) 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 Learning, training and the development of employees 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 the identified skills needs of individuals and the University, as captured in a Skills Development Plan aligned to the University's strategy.
- 6.3 Identification of training needs is the responsibility of line managers and individual employees and must be carried out annually between November and January. The results must then be submitted to the Skills Development Department in preparation for the compilation of the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) for the following year.
- 6.4 Line managers must discuss training and development needs with each employee under their management at least annually, as part of the performance appraisal and planning process.

- 6.5 When determining training needs, reference should be made to employees' job descriptions, performance management agreement or review reports, career development needs and personal development plans (PDPs).
- 6.6 Priorities for the training and development of employees, as identified through the training needs analysis process, must be discussed initially at the Employment Equity Skills and Development Forum (EESDF), leading to an agreed annual WSP for the institution.
- 6.7 The University may grant financial assistance to employees to attend occupationally based, accredited or critical skills programmes, provided they are approved by their direct managers and are in line with their PDPs.
- 6.8 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.
- 6.9 Equality and non-discrimination, including gender and disability mainstreaming and diversity awareness and values education, must be integrated into all training activities.
- 6.10 Development programmes for employees must be competency-based, i.e. focused on developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values appropriate to a specific position.
- 6.11 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 and Unisa and under exceptional circumstances, other specified learning institutions in South Africa
- 6.12 All learning and development initiatives and relevant proof (including invoices, attendance registers and certificates) must be recorded by all line managers and reported to the People & Culture department for the compilation of the Annual Training Report (ATR).
- 6.13 The People & Culture Department must strive to attain and maintain the accreditation standards as required by the SETA.
- 6.14 All external learning and development interventions applied for through the Skills Development funds must be submitted before the applicable closing dates.
- 6.15 A beneficiary of any formal study assistance from the University must remain in the employment of NWU for a period of twelve months after obtaining their qualification, and if the recipient leaves the University's employment before this period expires, a pro rata portion of the funding provided by the University must be recovered from the employee.

7 Skills Development Fund Programmes

- 7.1 The NWU Skills Development Fund must be used to improve employees' skills 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 as Skills Development Fund programmes;
 - a) in-house training, such as orientation, on-the-job (workplace- based) workshops, and presentations provided by the University to all employees;
 - 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 where employees attend to acquire knowledge;
 - 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, which provide employment opportunities for 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 the training and education of employees, as stipulated in the Skills Development Act, 1998.
- 8.2 In order to provide all employees with the opportunity to develop their skills, a maximum amount per employee per annum must be made available. This amount is reviewed annually by People & Culture and other stakeholders responsible for budgets.
- 8.3 The Skills Development budget may be distributed across the following occupational groups, according to weighting factors to be calculated annually by the Employment Equity and Skills Development Forum (EESDF), and be allocated per faculty and division for –
 - (a) senior officials and managers
 - (b) professionals
 - (c) technicians and assistant professionals
 - (d) clerical and administrative workers
 - (e) service workers
 - (f) skilled workers
 - (g) plant or machine operators and assemblers
 - (h) general workers
 - (i) persons from the designated groups (women and persons living with disabilities).
- 8.4 Indirect training costs, such as travel and accommodation, may be financed subject to the availability of funds.
- 8.5 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

Employees on permanent or fixed-term contracts have the opportunity to pursue their formal qualifications at NWU or other higher education institutions. Preference must be given to employees studying through UNISA. Employees who wish to study at institutions other than UNISA must submit a letter confirming that the desired qualification is unavailable at NWU or UNISA, subject to the following conditions:

- 9.1 the availability of funds;
- 9.2 an employee may not be funded for enrolment at two or more institutions simultaneously
- 9.3 an employee whose studies are funded by the University must sign a Financial Study Assistance Work Back Agreement form;
- 9.4 where an employee fails a subject or course in a particular year, funding to repeat the same course will not be provided, and
- 9.5 continued funding is also subject to the submission of a satisfactory progress report by the employee towards completion of the qualification.
- 9.6 the progress of an employee whose studies are funded by the University must be monitored by their line manager, who must provide a motivation for continuation of the studies annually;
- 9.7 applicants must disclose whether their studies are also funded by another source;

- 9.8 where the employee has access to adequate funds from other sources, funding by the NWU may only be granted under exceptional circumstances, as motivated and supported by the line manager;
- 9.9 a successful applicant must immediately report any additional funding obtained subsequently, in order to determine whether any of the University's contribution should be repaid;
- 9.10 financial study assistance may cover tuition fees only, excluding registration fees, textbooks, and any associated costs;
- 9.11 in exceptional circumstances, applications for funding for qualifications offered by a higher education institution, but not by the NWU or UNISA, may be considered on their merits, and
- 9.12 employees appointed at the University during the year while studying at other institutions will receive prorated study rebates of 100%.

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