Policy on Continuous Professional Development

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1. **Introduction**

1.1. *The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*¹ states that “It is not sufficient for academics to be experts in their disciplinary area; they also need to know how best to teach that discipline. They need to have an understanding of learning theories, and to know how to apply these theories to their practice. They need to appreciate what teaching and learning approaches work best for different students in different situations.” The strategy goes on to recommend that “All higher education institutions must ensure that all teaching staff are both qualified and competent in teaching and learning, and should support ongoing development and improvement of their skills.”

1.2. Also according to *The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* “The nature of the learning community and the modes of teaching and learning will also change significantly over the coming years. These changes will be supported through innovative approaches to research-led teaching and learning, programme design, student assessment and a quality assurance system – all of which will reflect a new emphasis on nurturing creative and innovative minds.”

1.3. The strategy goes on to suggest that “Research..... informs the curriculum for undergraduates – the exposure of all students to the passion and insights of research-active academic staff can be a special force for personal development and creativity.”

1.4. One of the recommendations from the European Commission report on *Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Europe’s Higher Education Institutions*² is that “Public authorities responsible for higher education should ensure the existence of a sustainable, well-funded framework to support higher education institutions’ efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning.” A further recommendation is that “All staff teaching in higher education institutions in 2020 should have received certified pedagogical training. Continuous professional education as teachers should become a requirement for teachers in the higher education sector”.

1.5. The Learning and Teaching pillar of the Institute’s Strategic Plan Revision 2013 – 2016 sets out its plan to “Ensure that Staff are effectively supported in making their contribution to learning and teaching”

1.6. *Trends 2015: Learning and Teaching in European Universities*³ suggests that “staff development is pivotal to ensure that they are committed to changes being introduced” by institutions.

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1.7. GMIT values all staff and recognises that their expertise, skills and personal commitment underpin the continuing success of the Institute and the accomplishment of strategic goals. It further recognises that the development of a broad range of skills and interests brings both organisational and individual benefits.

1.8. GMIT is committed to supporting the continuous professional development of all of its staff with a view to providing the best possible learning environments for its students.

2. The Centre for Educational Development

2.1. The Centre for Educational Development (CED) recognises the importance of continuing professional development and its role in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning within the institute. The CED is committed to supporting staff in making their contribution to learning and teaching and to the Institute generally.

2.2. The Staff Development Office, as part of the CED, accepts applications for financial support for formal academic qualifications (upskilling) from staff and acts as a central focus for the co-ordination, planning and provision of centrally provided staff development programmes and workshops.

3. Staff Development Budget

3.1. Staff Development is resourced by an annual budget. The budgetary allocation will be dependent on available funding and plans may have to be prioritised in the context of the amount of funding available.

3.2. An annual staff development budget is allocated to each academic unit and will be used to cover the cost of the following:
   - Attendance of staff at conferences and seminars for the purposes of relevant continuous professional development
   - Specialised training and development activities specific to local Schools or Departments

3.3. Each academic unit will report annually to the CED on how their staff development budget has been spent.

3.4. Presentation of papers at academic conferences will qualify for consideration as this is deemed important for academic development while also contributing to the prestige of the Institute

3.5. An annual budget is allocated to the CED to support, inter alia, staff undertaking formal academic qualifications, centrally provided short courses and workshops, the annual “Staff Development Week” and other staff development initiatives

3.6. Staff continuing with programmes already approved for funding will be given priority when the annual CED budget is being allocated.
4. **Eligibility**

4.1. Applicants must have successfully completed one year’s service before making an application.

4.2. Staff members on unpaid leave of absence are not eligible to make an application.

4.3. Staff members in casual or part-time employment are eligible to apply but their contracted hours of work must, at a minimum, be not less than 20% of a full-time equivalent (FTE) workload.

4.4. Staff members are eligible to apply for support for the period of, but not exceeding the period of, their contract of employment.

5. **Fee Support for Staff Pursuing Formal Qualifications Outside of GMIT**

5.1. Fee support will be provided for external programmes only in the event that an equivalent programme is not provided by GMIT.

5.2. Given that the achievement of the criteria for designation as a Technological University is a priority for the Institute, priority will be given to staff applying for funding to pursue qualifications that will contribute to meeting this objective.

5.3. **New Applications**

5.3.1. Applications for funding for the pursuit of formal academic qualifications will be invited twice each academic year subject to the availability of funds. Closing dates for the submission of such applications will be given. However, applications received after the closing dates each year may be evaluated and approved subject to the availability of funds.

5.3.2. All requests for funding must be submitted using the application form for Formal Academic Qualifications (see appendix 1). Application forms must be approved and signed by the relevant Head of Department and Head of Academic Unit/Function and submitted to the Centre for Educational Development. Forms that have not been signed will be returned to the applicant.

5.3.3. When reviewing applications, Heads of Department and Heads of Academic and Functional units should reflect upon the benefits to their Unit and the Institute generally, and should only approve applications that are likely to contribute to the achievement of the strategic or operational goals of the Institute and/or the Unit.

5.3.4. Applications will be considered by the Staff Development Evaluation Committee against criteria agreed by Executive Board.

5.3.5. The criteria against which applications for funding are evaluated are set out in Appendix 2. Different criteria may apply to different categories of staff. These criteria will be reviewed annually by the Executive Board.
5.4. **Staff continuing with programmes approved for funding**

5.4.1. Approval of funding will be required on an annual basis for staff members continuing programmes of study both internally and externally. Prior to the granting of such approval, evidence of successful completion of the relevant examinations or, in the case of those pursuing a research programme, a progress report, must be submitted to the CED.

5.4.2. Staff approved for funding may be asked to give a short presentation of their research to date.

5.5. **Staff Development Evaluation Committee**

5.5.1. Membership of the Staff Development Evaluation Committee will be as follows:

- President’s Nominee (Chair)
- Assistant Registrar
- Finance Manager
- Human Resources Manager
- One Head of Academic Unit
- One Head of an Academic Department

5.5.2. On receipt of applications, the Evaluation Panel will determine a top line distribution of the funds between academic and other staff applications. A minimum of 20% of the budget will be reserved for the funding of applications from staff other than academic staff, provided there are sufficient suitable applications to draw down that amount.

5.5.3. In reviewing the applications, the Evaluation Committee will evaluate and rank applications against the criteria and priorities set out in Appendix 2.

5.5.4. The Evaluation Committee will determine the amount of fees to be supported (See section 7 below).

5.5.5. The Staff Development Officer will notify applicants of the outcome of their application and will process payments in accordance with section 8 below.

6. **Fee Support for Staff Pursuing GMIT Provided Programmes**

6.1. Applications to pursue GMIT provided programmes will not require approval by the Staff Development Evaluation Committee.

6.2. Such applications will be approved subject to the agreement and the sign off of the relevant Head of Department and Head of Academic Unit/Function.

6.3. Admittance to GMIT programmes will be in accordance with the Institute’s Academic Code of Practice No. 4 Access, Transfer and Progression⁴

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⁴ Academic Code of Practice No. 4 Access, Transfer and Progression available at:
http://www.gmit.ie/directorate/academic-codes-practice
7. **Conditions of Fees Support**

7.1. The amount of fee support to be granted will be determined by the Staff Development Evaluation Committee. This determination will be in the context of the current financial situation, budgetary constraints and the number of applications.

7.2. Over the course of their employment, individual staff members will normally receive support for one programme of study.

7.3. The Institute aims to support staff taking programmes of study leading to an accredited outcome from Level 6 or above of the National Qualifications Framework (NFQ). This includes programmes accredited by professional bodies and qualifications from Educational Institutions up to and including doctoral level.

7.4. Applications from staff seeking funding to pursue qualifications at an NFQ level already achieved will not normally be approved except where the attainment of the proposed qualifications will contribute to, inter alia:
   - Improved delivery of existing programme(s).
   - The development of new programme(s)
   - Improved delivery of services
   - Increased operational efficiencies
   - Addressing specific strategic objectives of the Institute or it’s academic/functional units

7.5. For Staff undertaking a part-time PhD, funding will be provided only in respect of the first six years of registration on the PhD programme.

7.6. The cost of repeating a programme of study or examinations will not be funded.

7.7. Fees will not be accrued for staff members who have been approved for funding and who subsequently decide to defer their studies. In such circumstances the staff member must resubmit their application when they are ready to commence/recommence their studies. There is no guarantee of funding being approved in these circumstances.

7.8. Staff members will be responsible for the payment of any levies or other costs, such as travel and subsistence, associated with their programme of study.

7.9. The Institute reserves the right to suspend fee support without notice in the event of a budgetary force majeure situation that impacts on the overall budgetary allocation.
8. **Payment of Fees**

8.1. Fees will be paid upfront upon receipt of an invoice from the relevant academic institution.

8.2. Fees for second and subsequent years will only be paid upon submission of evidence of satisfactory progress (a copy of examination results or a progress report—see 5.3.1 above).

8.3. Staff are required to submit a certified statement that fee support for the same programme is not being provided by any other employer or source, or if so, documentary evidence of the amount of support being received from alternative sources.

9. **Request for Appeal**

9.1. Applicants have the right to appeal the decision of the Staff Development Evaluation Committee. The Appeals Committee has the authority to uphold, reduce or revoke the original decision. Membership of the Appeals Committee will be as follows:
   - Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar
   - Two members of senior management, nominated by the President, who are not members of the Evaluation Committee.

9.2. To avoid a potential conflict of interest, the Appeals Committee cannot include members of the academic or functional unit of the applicant.

9.3. An appeal must be made in writing to the CED within ten days of notification of a decision on an application for funding.

9.4. Staff members who have applied for, and have been refused, relief from normal duties under the *Scheme for Thesis Write up at PhD Level* (see Appendix 3) may appeal such a decision to the Appeals Committee.

9.5. The decision of the Appeals Committee is final and will be notified to the applicant in writing. Any decision of the Appeals Committee will be reviewed on procedural grounds only.

10. **Repayment of Funding**

10.1. Where a staff member in receipt of fees support leaves the employment of the Institute during the course of their study, he/she will be liable to repay any fees paid on his/her behalf on a pro rata basis.
11. Post Qualification

11.1. On completion of a supported programme of study, and upon receipt of a formal qualification, staff members must update the record of their academic qualification held by the Institute. They must also submit original copies of their qualification to HR where a copy will be taken and the original returned.

11.2. All staff who have been supported will be expected to make a significant contribution to developments in their own area of work and may be called upon to assist in projects or other work related activity commensurate with the qualification for which they have been supported.

12. Funding for Professional and Other Non-Accredited Courses outside of GMIT

12.1. Funding for short courses and workshops (Professional, accredited and Non-Accredited) outside of GMIT will be funded from staff development budgets allocated to academic and functional units.

12.2. Such programmes will be funded at the discretion of the Head of Unit and in pursuit of the strategic or operational goals of the Institute and/or unit.

13. Provision of Short Courses and Workshops within GMIT

13.1. The Staff Development Office will provide a number of workshops and accredited modules each academic year.

13.2. A portion of the Staff Development Budget will be allocated to this activity and workshops will be provided in accordance with Institute priorities.

13.3. A number of accredited modules in the area of pedagogy will be provided each academic year. These Level 9 modules will allow staff to accumulate credits on a pathway to the LIN postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning or the proposed new GMIT MA in Teaching and Learning (once approved). Should interest in such modules be greater than places available, priority will be given to academic staff engaged in teaching.

13.4. Should places be available then staff who do not meet the normal eligibility criteria may be offered a place.
14. Staff Development Week

14.1. A number of days each year will be reserved for Staff Development activity and the relevant dates will be included in the Institute’s Operations Calendar.

14.2. A programme of workshops will be provided in accordance with Institute priorities and the interests of staff.

14.3. Where possible, staff should be left free to attend to attend the workshops being delivered.

14.4. Staff will be asked to evaluate and provide feedback on each workshop they attend to inform future activity in this area.

15. Non-Financial/Other Supports for Staff engaged in CPD

15.1. Where attendance at an educational or training programme or workshop requires a staff member to be released from their work, this will be at the discretion of their Head of Department and staff will normally be expected to make up any time given for such activities. Arrangements must be made by Heads of Department to cover any arising deficit from within their existing resources.

15.2. Study and Exam leave may be granted in accordance with Institute policy.

15.3. Eligible staff pursuing Level 10 qualifications may apply for relief from normal duties in order to write up and complete a thesis. Such leave will be granted in accordance with the Scheme for Thesis Write up at PhD Level (see Appendix 3)

15.4. Where possible, and in accordance with the Institute's Timetable Policy, Heads of Department will support staff engaged in research, upskilling and other CPD activity when creating class timetables.

References


Dublin Institute of Technology policy on Fee Support for Staff pursuing Advanced Qualifications Outside of DIT, available at: http://dit.ie/media/humanresources/documents/policiesprocedures/fee%20support%20for%20staff%20pursuing%20advanced%20qualifications%20outside%20of%20dit%20hrp030.pdf

Appendix 1

SAMPLE APPLICATION FORM

FORMAL ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

APPLICANT DETAILS

Name: ________________________________________ Job Title: ________________________

School/Dept/Function: __________________________ Ext No: __________________

Current Qualifications:
__________________________________________________________________________________

QUALIFICATION DETAILS

Title of Proposed Programme:
__________________________________________________________________________________

Providing Institution: ___________________________ NFQ Level: __________________________

Academic Year (e.g. 2012/13): __________________ Duration of Programme: __________________

Current Year of Study (e.g. 1st year): ______ Mode of Study: (Full-time/Part-time): __________

Cost of Current Year: __________________________ Estimated Total Cost (all years): __________

Specific details of how the programme aligns to the Institute’s strategic plan: (Please use another sheet if necessary)
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

Specific details of how the programme will benefit the School/Dept/Function: (Please use another sheet if necessary)
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

Specific details of how the programme will benefit you: (Please use another sheet if necessary)
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
Is the course of study a requirement for progression purposes (lecturing staff only):  
Yes ☐  No ☐

Please tick to confirm that you have attached a course brochure/course outline (mandatory) ☐

Does the course of study require attendance during normal hours of employment?  
Yes ☐  No ☐

If yes, please give details: ____________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

I have included a certified statement that fees for this programme are not being paid on my behalf by any other source  (See section 8.3 of CPD policy) ☐

APPLICANT

I certify that I am undertaking this stage of the programme for the first time. I accept the conditions outlined in the GMIT Policy on Fee Support.

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT/CENTRAL SERVICES MANAGER (CSM)

The programme is in line with Institute/Departmental plans  
Yes ☐  No ☐

Head of Department/CSM comments in relation to proposal: __________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

HEAD OF SCHOOL/FUNCTION

Approved:  
Yes ☐  No ☐
Appendix 2

Criteria for the Evaluation of Applications for Support for Pursuit of Formal Qualifications

Criteria
Application will be reviewed by the Staff Development Evaluation Committee against the following criteria:

- Alignment to Institute’s Strategic Plan (30%)
- Benefit to School/Department/Function (30%)
- Benefit to individual (30%)
- Cost (10%)

Priorities (Academic Staff)
Priority will be given to:

1. Staff pursuing qualifications that are a requirement for further progression
2. Staff upskilling to Level 10
3. Staff pursuing Level 9 qualifications in Pedagogy
4. Staff pursuing qualifications required for new programme development or to fill a skills gap required for the delivery of new/existing modules

Priorities (Other Staff)
Priority will be given to:

1. Staff pursuing qualifications to upskill to the next level on the NFQ in disciplines that are relevant to their functional area.
2. Staff pursuing professional or other courses, including short courses, that contribute to their professional development and which will contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals of their functional area.
Appendix 3

Scheme for Thesis Write up at PhD Level

Introduction:

GMIT operates a scheme to encourage staff to undertake post-graduate studies to PhD level. This will allow relief from normal duties for 50% of one semester in order to write up and complete a thesis. It is recognised that this can be a time when undivided attention is required in order to complete a body of work in a timely fashion.

The principle of this scheme is to facilitate staff in completing their PhD qualification whilst not interfering with the smooth running of departments.

The following points explain the workings and conditions of the scheme.

Who is Eligible?

- All staff of the Institute are eligible
- The staff member must be a registered student on a PhD programme.
- The staff member may already be funded under the GMIT Staff Development programme but this is not a requirement to avail of this scheme.
- In exceptional cases where a staff member has “lapsed” in their studies, a statement from the supervisor, verifying that completion of the thesis is attainable during the allotted time, will be required.

What programmes are eligible?

- The scheme only applies to PhD programmes by research.
- It does not apply to Masters level or any other post-graduate awards.
- The scheme does not apply to other research activities (e.g. preparation of journal articles, books etc.)

What does the scheme allow?

- The Institute will allow the staff member 50% of one semester free from normal duties and work, in order to complete the writing up of the thesis.
- A clear plan should be presented to the Head of Department, so that there is a reasonable expectation that the semester will benefit the staff member in completing the thesis.
- The scheme is only to be used for the write-up phase. It is not to be used for earlier stages of the PhD project.

What is expected?

- The staff member is expected to use the time to the full for the purpose of thesis write-up.
- The staff member is not expected to attend the Institute on a daily basis, or to attend meetings/committees. However, they are free to do so if desirable.
- The staff member is still available for routine enquiries from the Institute which might arise from time-to-time.
Workings of the Scheme

- The scheme will be implemented at departmental level and there will not be a central application process.
- The staff member should alert the Head of Department one semester in advance (approximately 3 to 4 months) so that teaching arrangements can be put in place with minimum disruption to the schedule.
- The Head of Department should be satisfied that the request is attainable and, if so, make provision. If required, the Institute will allow for recruitment for the specific purpose of replacing the staff member. This will be allowed only if all other staff, who can deliver the hours, have been fully timetabled.
- In some cases, the Head of Department may not be able to meet such requests. An example will be where requests are submitted by a number of staff in the Department for the same period. In such cases, request(s) may not be granted or it may be possible to defer the period to another semester.