GMIT
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA NA GAILLIMHE-MAIGH EO
GALWAY-MAYO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Policy on Continuing Professional Development

Version 2.0

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1. Introduction

1.1. Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (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.

1.2. "No professional completes their initial training equipped to practise competently for the rest of their life"[1]. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the process through which individuals undertake lifelong learning in order to enhance skills and knowledge that will lead to improved performance in the workplace[2]. It affords professionals an opportunity to commit to learning as an integral part of their work.

1.3. GMIT recognises the importance of continuing professional development and its role in enhancing the quality of the student experience within the institute. GMIT is committed to supporting all staff in making their contribution to learning and teaching, the student experience and to the Institute generally. 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.

1.4. *The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*[3] 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".

1.5. 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."

1.6. 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

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[1] Roscoe, J. (2002) "Continuing professional development in higher education". Human Resource Development International. 5:1, pp3-9.

[2] Murphy, C., Cross, C. & McGuire, D. (2005): "Investigating Motivational Aspects of Continuing Professional Development Amongst Nursing Staff in the Irish Health Service", Presented at the 6th Conference UFHRD/AHRD Conference, Leeds Metropolitan University, 25-27th May 2005.

[3] *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 - Report of the Strategy Group*, Department of Education and Skills, 2011, available at:
http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf

creativity."

1.7.   One of the recommendations from the European Commission report on *Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Europe's Higher Education Institutions*[4] 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".

1.8.   The Learning and Teaching pillar of the Institute's Strategic Plan Revision 2013 – 2016[5] sets out its plan to "Ensure that Staff are effectively supported in making their contribution to learning and teaching".

1.9.   *Trends 2015: Learning and Teaching in European Universities*[6] suggests that "staff development is pivotal to ensure that they are committed to changes being introduced" by institutions. As GMIT continues to change and evolve, it is essential that staff are equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills.

1.10. Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025[7] recognises that the changing demand for skills means that 'increasing people's lifelong learning activity, especially those in the workforce, is a vital element of Ireland's future skills development and can have a positive impact on productivity and innovation at firm level and nationally', and that 'employers have a clear role and responsibility in respect of their own employees' in this regard. It goes on to state that 'Each person needs, to the best of their particular capabilities, to engage in continuous skills development. This may be formal or less formal, within an educational environment or within the workplace.'

1.11. A professional approach needs to be developed to all tasks that support core activities of learning, research and teaching, therefore the term CPD is just as applicable to support staff[8]. This policy applies to all categories of staff in GMIT, namely, academic, professional, management and support staff.

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[4] *Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Europe's Higher Education Institutions* - Report to the European Commission (June 2013) *available at:*
http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/reports/modernisation_en.pdf
[5] GMIT, (2013) *Strategic Plan Revision 2013 – 2016*, Available at:
https://www.gmit.ie/sites/default/files/public/directorate-communications/docs/strategic-plan-revision-2013-16.pdf
[6] Sursock, A. (2015) *Trends 2015: Learning and Teaching in European Universities*. EUA Publications. Available at http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/EUA_Trends_2015_web
[7] Department of Education and Skills (2016) *National Skills Strategy 2025*. Stationery Office: Dublin.
[8] Partington, P & Stainton, C. (2003) Managing Staff Development. Buckingham: Open University Press.

2. The Staff Development Office

2.1. The Staff Development Office, 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.
- Each academic unit will report annually to the Staff Development Office on how their staff development budget has been spent.
- 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.

3.3. An annual budget is allocated to the Staff Development Office to support, inter alia, staff undertaking accredited academic qualifications, the costs associated with the MA in Teaching & Learning, centrally provided short courses and workshops, the annual "Staff Development Week" and other staff development initiatives.

3.4. Staff continuing with programmes already approved for funding will be given priority when the annual Staff Development Office budget is being allocated.

4. Eligibility

4.1. Applicants must have successfully completed one year's service before commencing an approved programme of study.

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 for support for the period of, but not exceeding the period of, their contract of employment.

4.5.   Applications for retrospective funding will not normally be considered.

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/Function and submitted to the Staff Development Office. Forms that have not been signed will be returned to the applicant.

5.3.3   When reviewing applications, Heads of Department and Heads of 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 or signed form from the programme coordinator/supervisor, must be submitted to the Staff Development Office. If this isn't received or contact made with the Staff Development Office within a reasonable timeframe it will be assumed that the staff member is not continuing their studies. If they subsequently wish to continue their studies, they will be required to reapply for consideration.

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
- Human Resources Manager or Nominee
- One Central Services Manager
- One Head of Academic Unit
- One Head of an Academic Department

The quorum for meetings shall be 50% of the membership plus one. For the purposes of a quorum a member may contribute in electronic formats to the deliberations of the committee.

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 professional, management and support 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 Applications 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. Staff must meet the minimum entry requirements for programmes in accordance with the Institute's Academic Code of Practice No. 4 Access, Transfer and Progression[9]

7. Conditions of Fee Support

7.1. The amount of fee support to be granted will be determined by the Staff Development Applications 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 at each particular qualification level. If funding allows, applications will be considered, normally for a programme on a higher level of the NFQ.

7.3. The Institute aims to support staff taking programmes of study leading to an accredited outcome, normally from Level 6 or above on 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 programe(s)
- The development of new programme(s)
- Improved delivery of services
- Increased operational efficiencies
- Staff re-skilling in line with Institute requirements
- Addressing specific strategic objectives of the Institute or its academic/functional units

7.5. Funding will normally be provided in respect of the first six years of registration on a doctoral programme.

7.6. The cost of repeating a programme of study or examinations will not normally be funded. Where there are particular circumstances requiring an individual to repeat these may be communicated to the Head of Department/Function who may make a recommendation to the Evaluation Committee in respect of payment of fees.

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 re-submit 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 or software, 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.

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[9] Academic Code of Practice No. 4 Access, Transfer and Progression available at:
http://www.gmit.ie/directorate/academic-codes-practice

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 Applications 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:

9.1.1. Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar

9.1.2. 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 Staff Development Office 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 Doctoral 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 fee support leaves the employment of the Institute within a year of completing their studies, he/she will normally be liable to repay any fees paid on his/her behalf for the final year of study. Payment should be made within six months of leaving GMIT's employment.

11. Post Qualification

11.1. On completion of a supported programme of study, an 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. Research outputs should be submitted to GMIT's research repository.

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. It is also expected that staff who have been funded for Master and Doctorate qualifications will deliver a presentation for staff on the findings of their dissertation/thesis.

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. Should places be available then staff who do not meet the normal eligibility criteria may be offered a place.

14. MA in Teaching and Learning

14.1. 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 GMIT MA in Teaching and Learning. Should interest in such modules be greater than places available, priority will be given to academic staff engaged in teaching.

14.2. Research students, subject to availability of places, will be permitted to take the Research Cycle: Foundation and Research Cycle: Applied modules free of charge.

14.3. All staff will be encouraged to complete some or all of the MA in Teaching and Learning.

15. New Staff

15.1. Induction for new staff will be provided at least once annually, normally in October.

15.2. New lecturing staff will be encouraged to complete the GMIT Certificate in Teaching and Learning (Level 9, 30 ECTS).

16. Staff Development Week

16.1. 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.

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

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

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

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

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

17.2. Study and Exam Leave may be granted in accordance with Institute policy (available on HR Sharepoint).

17.3. 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 Doctoral Level (see Appendix 3).

17.4. 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

National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 - Report of the Strategy Group, Department of Education and Skills, 2011, available at:
http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf

Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Europe's Higher Education Institutions - Report to the European Commission (June 2013) available at*:*
http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/reports/modernisation_en.pdf

Sursock, A. (2015) *Trends 2015: Learning and Teaching in European Universities*. EUA Publications. Available at
http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/EUA_Trends_2015_web

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%20-%20HRP030.pdf

National University of Ireland Galway Further Education Policy (FEP) available at:
http://www.nuigalway.ie/staff-development/documents/fep_scheme_final.pdf

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APPLICATION FORM

FORMAL ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION

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APPLICANT DETAILS

Name:_____Job Title:_____

School/Dept/Function:_____ Ext No: _____

Current Qualifications:

Previous Qualifications funded by GMIT:

_____

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:

_____   _____

_____   _____

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.

I confirm that the fees for this programme are not being paid, on my behalf, by any other source.

If I leave the employment of GMIT prior to completing a qualification for which I am being funded, I accept that I will be liable to reimburse GMIT for the fees paid on my behalf on a pro-rata basis.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Note: All follow-up communication will be by email.

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT/FUNCTION

Approved: Yes ☐   No ☐

Appendix 2

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

Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by the Staff Development Applications 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 qualifications that are a requirement for further progression (e.g. library staff).
3. Staff pursuing professional or other courses, that contribute to their professional development and which will contribute to the achievement of the strategic goals of their functional area.

Scheme for Thesis Write up at Doctorate Level

Introduction:

GMIT operates a scheme to encourage staff to undertake post-graduate studies to Doctorate 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 Doctorate 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 Doctorate 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 **Doctorate 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 Doctorate 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.