



DOC. REF:	ABC Learning & Development Policy R2-0 07.doc	
PROJECT:	Learning & development	
AUTHOR:	S.WILSON	R2-0
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# LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY



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**LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**  
**FOR ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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## **POLICY STATEMENT**

As a public service provider of high quality, professional services, Antrim Borough Council recognises the importance of a planned and systematic approach to learning and development for all employees.

Council also recognises the value of becoming a 'Learning Organisation'. This will ensure that learning is self-driven and that all learning and development undertaken is relevant to an individuals learning in the context of their role within the Council, as well as being relevant to the Council's aims identified in the Corporate plan. The ultimate goal is to enhance the competence and professionalism of Council staff, thereby increasing the level of service Council can provide.

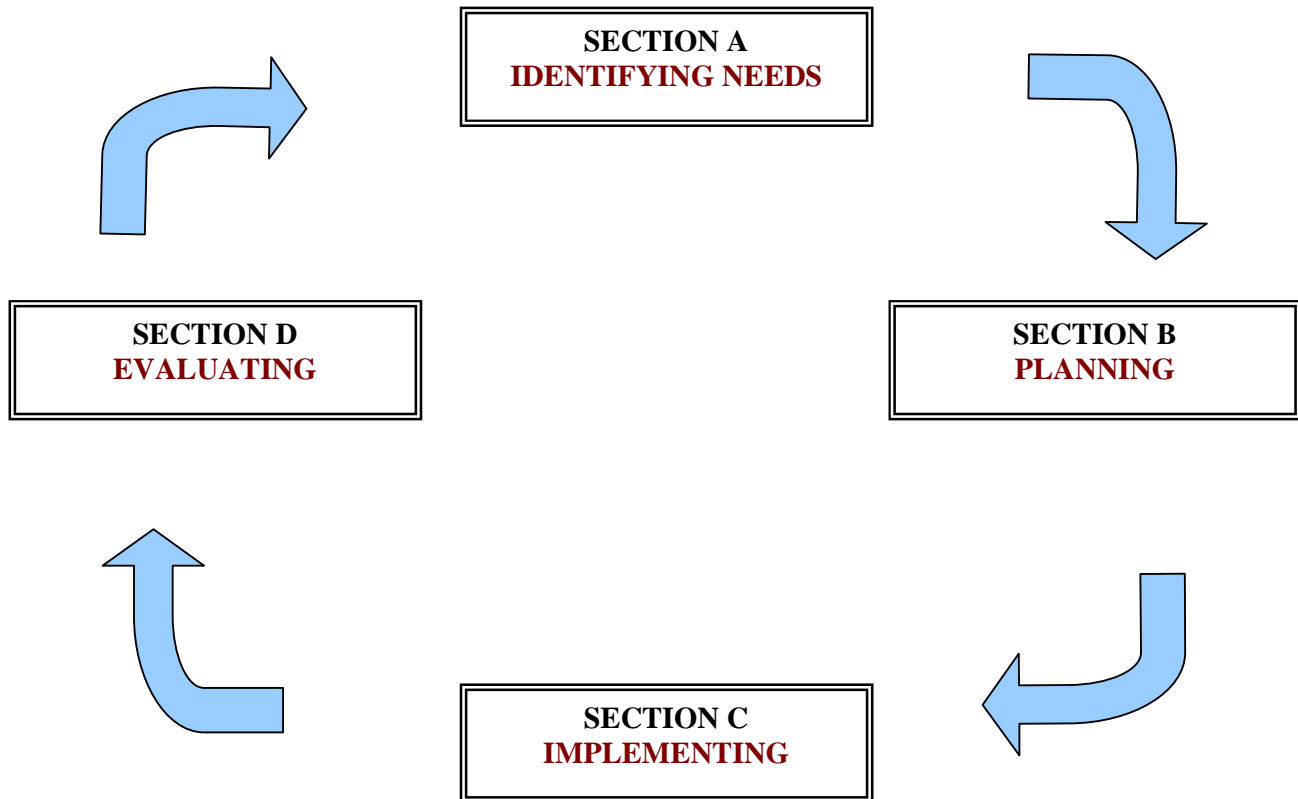
The overall objective of Council's policy is to ensure that staff are well equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes required to deliver the objectives laid down in the corporate plan and to achieve the resultant section objectives and targets.

Council staff should be aware that, in order to increase the efficiency of their personal contribution to the achievement of agreed service objectives and priorities, training, learning and development will be an integral part of the process. The 'learning organisation culture', embraces the benefits of, and encourages the uptake of learning and development opportunities for all. In Council, the development of its staff is one of the most important business supporting activities. Council has therefore deemed it essential to support the business goals through effective learning and development.

As a diverse organisation, and an equal opportunities employer, this learning and development policy and associated procedure applies to all employees of Antrim Borough Council.

## CORPORATE LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

### OVERVIEW

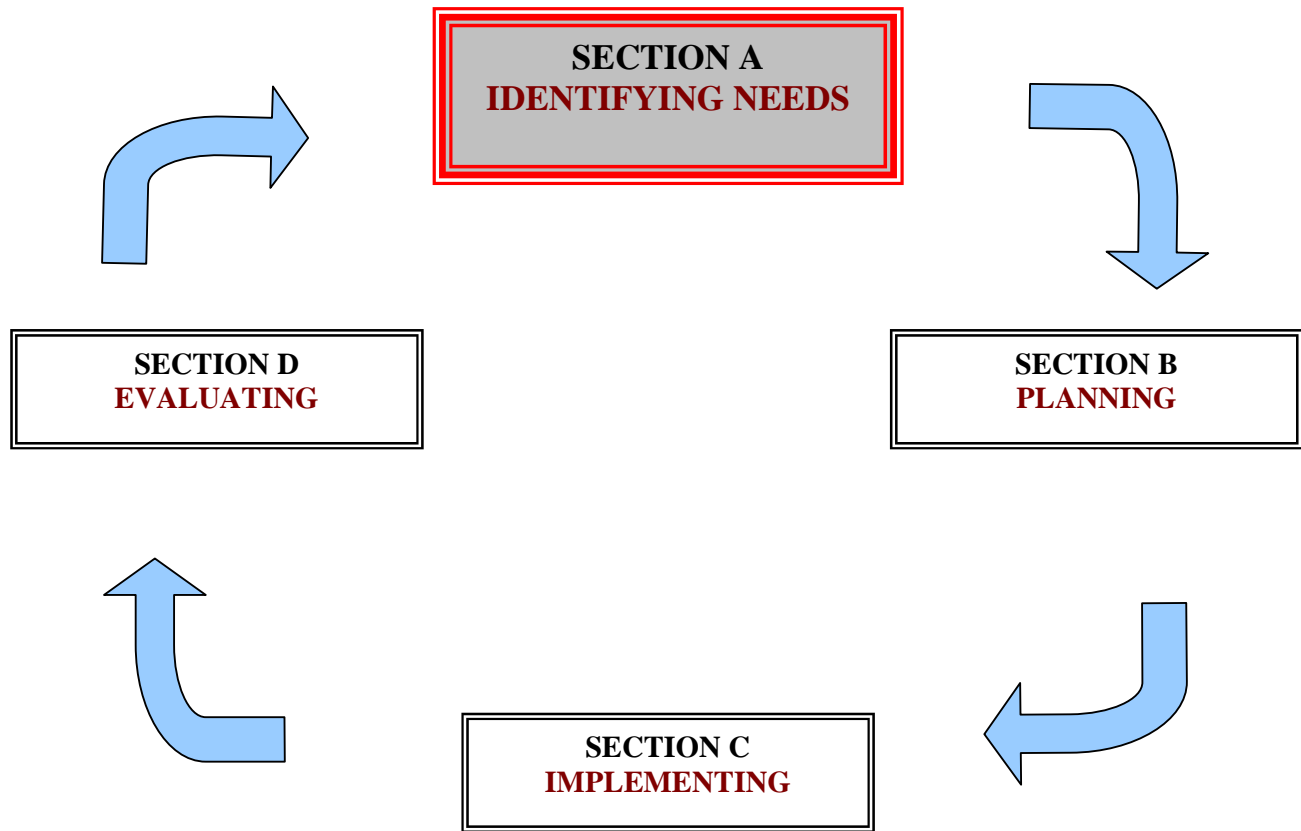


Council have identified a 4 stage 'Learning and Development Cycle' which will align Council's objectives, with individual and team objectives and learning and development needs within the organisation.

The four stages of the cycle, as shown above are:

- A. Identifying Corporate learning and development needs
- B. Planning learning and development (and any relevant learning events / courses)
- C. Implementing learning and development needs, (including costing, authorisation levels etc)
- D. Evaluating learning and development, and any relevant training and work based learning which may have occurred through the process.

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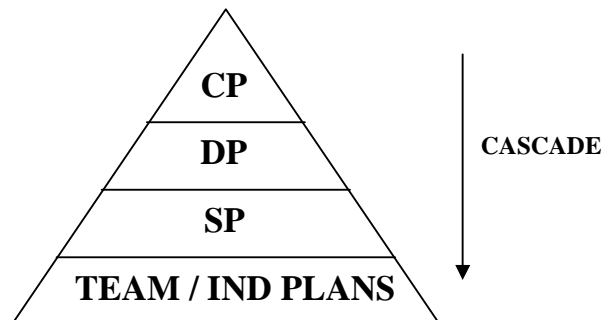


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## A. IDENTIFYING NEEDS

Council will identify individual and corporate learning and development needs in four main ways;

1. Corporate Plan
2. Department Plans
3. Section Plans
4. Team / Individual Plans



### 1. Corporate Plan (4 Years)

The Corporate plan specifies the Corporate Themes, Outcomes and associated values that Council will work towards over a 4-year period. In order to implement the Corporate Plan, Learning and Development is essential for all staff.

Corporate learning and development needs therefore need to be identified. This aspect of learning and development will be managed and driven by the Chief Executive Management Team (CXMT), Senior Management Group (SMG) and the People Development Manager and will be in line with specific Corporate objectives.

Corporate learning and development needs can be met in various ways, including, 'learning on the job', job rotation, secondments, project working and focus groups in addition to off the job training sessions and learning events. Managers will therefore be involved in identifying how to meet the needs laid out in the corporate plan with respect to learning and development by ensuring that staff work on projects in line with corporate needs and that learning and development is being achieved in the work context.

Corporate learning and development will also be achieved through off the job learning events and seminars. This aspect will be co-ordinated by the People development Manager who will identify learning needs across the Council. Examples of this type of corporate learning include disability awareness, dignity and respect at work and customer service training.

### 2. Department Plans (Every year)

Learning and development needs will also be identified through 'Department Planning'. Department planning involves taking the corporate plan and identifying specific objectives & targets for the Department.

Unlike the Corporate learning and development described in point 1 above, more specific learning and development needs will be identified for each department. Corporate themes and outcomes will be analysed and priorities for departments will be identified annually. Learning and development required to deliver these priorities will then be identified.



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### 3. Section Plans (Every year)

Once the corporate plan and the department objectives and plans have been set out, individual sections will look at developing their own annual plans and objectives. This enables each Section to establish what their overall targets and performance outcomes are, to align these with what the learning & development needs are, and to establish the areas that employees within the section will need to develop in order to meet the needs of the section.

### 4. Team / Personal Development Plans / (Every year)

The final stage in identification of Learning & development needs is the creation of Personal / Team Development Plans (PDP's). This links with Council's Performance Management System and is a fundamental concept within this. PDP's will be monitored and managed through the performance management system on an annual basis.

At this stage the Plans and objectives that have been developed in the earlier stages of the process cascade down and feed into PDP's in order that managers and their staff can discuss individual learning and development needs.

At this point the individual, having looked at the objectives for their section for the coming year, will be able to identify their own strengths, areas of development and competencies in relation to the work that they will have to undertake and will be able to discuss with their managers how they think they will need to be developed, in order to meet the targets and objectives for their role.

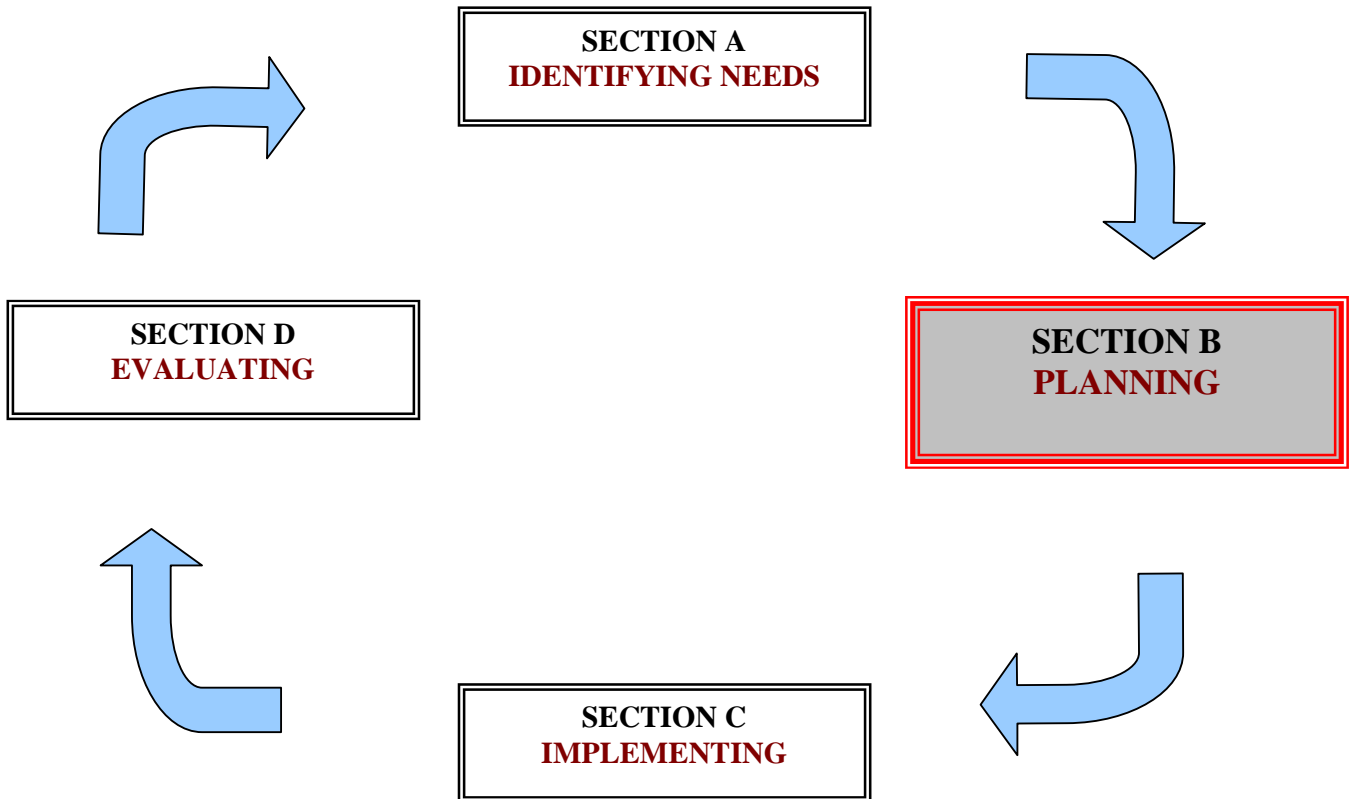
This stage of the process will identify personal and professional development needs of staff who feel they require development in particular areas and will therefore enable agreement to be reached in relation to:

- the type of learning for this development, e.g. on the job / off the job
- other members of the organisation section who may have skills in this area that the individual may be able to work with to gain some knowledge from (mentoring)
- possible work groups / sub groups which the person may be able to join which will develop their learning
- Projects that the individual may be able to get involved with, which will encourage them to move outside their "normal comfort zones" to take on new roles and challenges, therefore developing them on-the-job.

These needs will be agreed with managers and staff and will be recorded on Personal Development Plans (PDP) which are part of Council's Performance Management System. The forms will be copied to the HR Section and overall Council and individual needs will be analysed so that solutions can be identified.

**The attainment of skills and knowledge should not necessarily focus primarily on the pursuit of formal qualifications but may be achieved through attendance at learning events, project working, job coaching, secondments, job rotation, job enrichment etc.**

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## **B. PLANNING**

There are a number of Planning aspects within this element of the learning and development cycle as follows:

1. Performance Management System
2. Summary of PDP's
3. Budgeting & Estimates
4. Ongoing reviews of PDP's
5. Learning by Doing
6. Corporate programme of Learning and development (Quarterly)

### **1. Performance Management Process**

The Council's performance management system is directly linked with the learning and development cycle and underpins the identification of learning and development needs and how these are progressed within Council.

Through the performance management system, personal or team development plans are created for all staff, in line with the objectives for their sections. Through these, the learning and development needs will be identified and learning events, group working, project activities etc will be planned for staff.

It is essential therefore that this aspect (PDP's) of the performance management system is completed effectively by all managers.

### **2. Summary of PDP's**

Once the Individual and Team PDP's have been completed, these will be returned to the HR section. Learning and development needs highlighted within these PDP's will be collated to enable the People Development Manager to analyse needs on a corporate, section and individual level within Council. This will also allow common needs and solutions to be identified.

### **3. Budgeting / Estimates**

The summary of PDP's (above) will be compiled into matrices for sections and their staff and will be used by the HR section to compile a more accurate costing for learning and development in the Council. Budgets will be identified for each section and these figures will be fed into the estimates process to ensure that sufficient funding is made to meet the essential learning needs.

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#### **4. Ongoing review of PDP's**

As part of Council's performance management system, individual and team PDP's will be revisited after 6 months and 1 year (as per the system requirements). Individuals, teams and their managers will review PDP's, and objectives, and monitor how the individual has been developing and performing in line with their objectives. Where applicable, this will then determine further development needs. Therefore this is a continual improvement tool and the individual and manager will be able to review learning and development that has been achieved over the last 6 months.

#### **5. Learning by Doing**

This further enhances Council's aim to become a learning organisation with a culture that encourages employees to manage their own learning and development themselves. Council hope to achieve this by encouraging the following;

- Empowering individuals
- Expecting Mistakes
- Embracing Change
- Bringing ideas from other organisations (encouraging innovation)
- Supporting team members to develop themselves
- Celebrating success
- Encouraging evaluation of development, as well as learning and training

#### **6. Continual Professional Development**

As part of its commitment to Continual Professional Development (CPD), Council recognises the need for staff to take responsibility for developing themselves professionally, in line with their role and their long-term career development. Council will aim to provide time on-the-job for reflective learning and development. Council recommend that all staff spend up to two hours per month, (during work) on personal / professional development. By using the resource centre due to open in 2007, Council hopes to facilitate learning away from the normal work environment and this should mean that uninterrupted development & learning will be more likely

Council also encourages staff (who do not already do so as part of their CPD) to keep a learning and development log, wherein they will be able to chart their achievements, developments and learning events etc attended. This will facilitate a review of what has been achieved and will assist with identification of future learning needs.



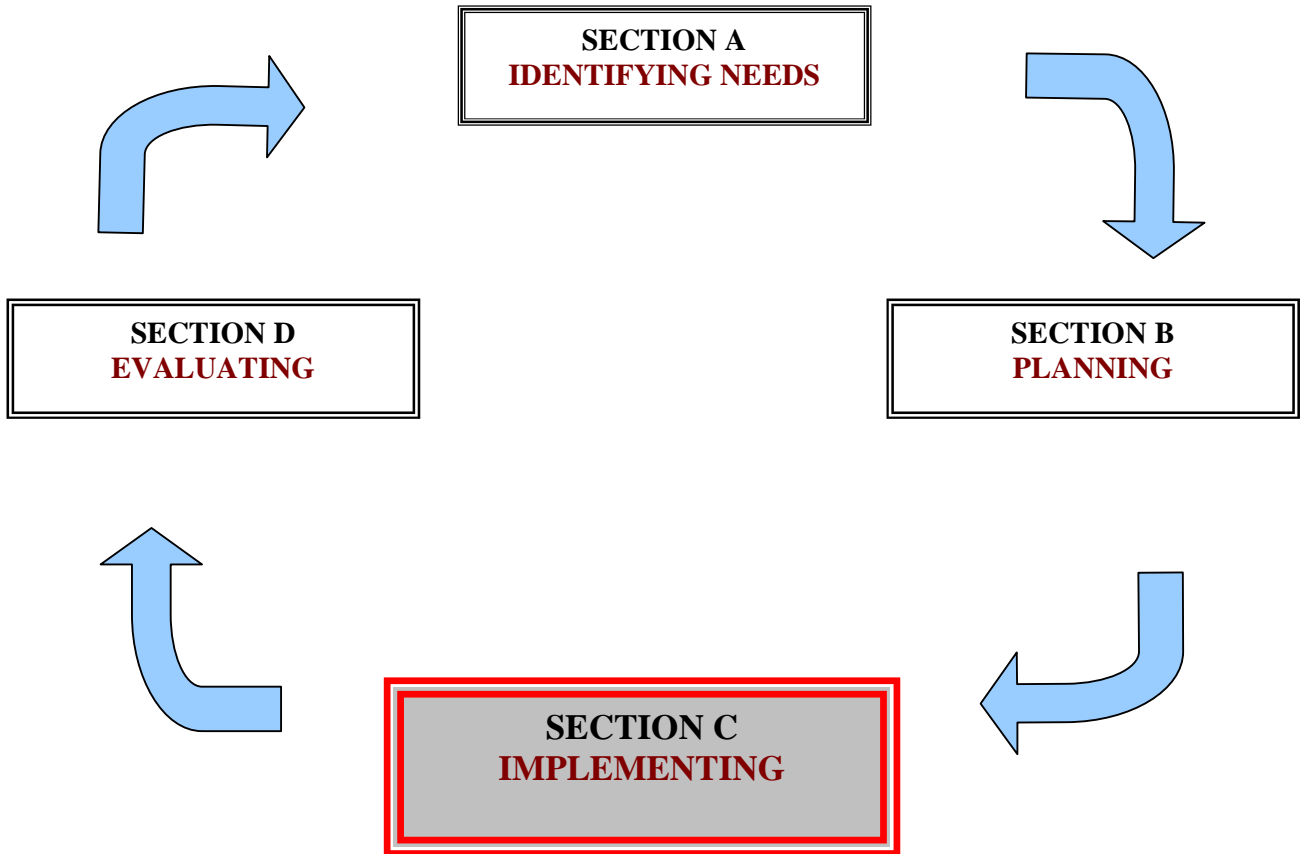
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## 7. Corporate Programme of Learning & Development

Once every 4 months, the HR section will distribute a Corporate learning and development (Learning Week) schedule. This will be compiled by the People development Manager in line with the corporate department and section needs that have been identified, in line with PDP's and also in line with Legislation affecting the Council in terms of mandatory training.

The corporate learning and development schedule will enable managers to have an overview of what learning events are forthcoming, who will be required to attend, the duration of the sessions and ultimately the purpose of the learning events / seminars.

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## **C. IMPLEMENTING LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT(THE PROCEDURES)**

Antrim Borough Council value its staff and aim to continue its investment in the wellbeing and development of staff across Council. Council acknowledges that staff are its most important asset, and to this end will provide relevant opportunities for development of staff by investing time and resources, ensuring that Staff are able to develop effectively within their roles, and by providing development which will assist staff with their own career development.

The updated policy changed in order to reflect the centralised Learning & development Budget. With a central budget the policy has been designed to ensure that there is a fair application of the budget, with equal opportunities for all those who are interested in their own development. Council will continue to address learning and development needs that are highlighted by staff through their PDP's and will always seek to find the most cost effective solution for providing the best forms of learning and development

There are a number of stages involved in the implementation of the learning and development cycle. These are:

1. Booking the event & Notification
2. Request Forms
3. Authorisation Level
4. Verifying Learning and development Budgets
5. External learning event requests
6. Time off / Attendance
7. Cancellation / Acceptance of Learning Events
8. Travel Expenses
9. Reimbursement

### **1. Booking the learning event**

AS far as possible, the HR section will book all learning events / seminars which have been authorised in accordance with section B of the policy (unless it is easier or more practicable for the individual to book the event themselves).

To ensure that the learning events are in line with the individuals PDP's, and ultimately Council objectives, the requests for attendance at learning events and seminars must be authorised by the People Development Manager prior to attendance on any courses. This ensures all training is documented, controlled, and can subsequently be evaluated accordingly.

Learning or development needs that have been identified in PDP's will only be progressed if there is sufficient budget or if it is essential to meet a legislative requirement. Alternatively development needs may be addressed in other ways e.g. project working or through mentoring from someone else in Council who already has the skills required.

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## 2. Learning Event / Academic Request Forms

For specific learning and development seminars or learning events, staff need to complete a relevant request form. These forms are attached at the end of this document. (Academic Courses Appendix C, Learning Events Form Appendix A)

The request forms must be signed and authorised (by the relevant manager) and forwarded to the People Development Manager for consideration. Forms must also be returned for booking and recording purposes to ensure this aspect is controlled and monitored effectively.

There are varying authorisation levels according to the monetary value of learning event / seminar costs. The following table outlines these authorisation levels and who is required to approve general learning events / seminars (levels exclude academic requests which are handled under a separate procedure, please see appendix C).

## 3. Authorisation Levels

The following authorisation levels apply to all requests for learning and development (using the relevant request forms as outlined above):

Course value	Authorisation level
<b>&lt;£199</b>	Request must be approved by the Line Manager and the relevant Assistant Director and must be countersigned by the People Development Manager before any booking can be confirmed.
<b>&gt;£200</b> or where learning and development is requested following failure to attend a previously arranged compulsory session.	Request must be approved by the Line Manager, Assistant Director & Director of the Department and must be countersigned by the People Development Manager before any booking can be confirmed.

Final approval of learning requests will normally rest with the People Development Manager. The exception to this is academic requests where Council approval will be required.

## 4. Verifying Learning and development Budgets

HR will manage Council's Learning and Development Budget. Estimates will be based on requests on staff PDP's. Once PDP's have been finalised, and learning & development matrices drawn up, plans will be developed that are relevant to Council needs.

Learning events / seminars requested which do not directly contribute to achieving Council objectives will not normally be considered, except in exceptional circumstances. In these cases the Director will need to justify approving the training & costs associated. The event will only be booked if budget is available (and based on Criteria as laid out in 5).



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## 5. External Learning Event Request (Assessment of Needs Criteria)

The following criteria will be used to ensure all external development meets the needs of Council.

When a learning request is received by HR, the request will be analysed in relation to the following criteria:

CRITERIA	EVALUATION
1. Was the development need highlighted on the individuals PDP?	In general, if a learning request is made, this need must have been identified during the PDP process. There may be some exceptions to this, where there is a Council need for someone to attend a session unexpectedly.
2. Is attendance at the event a Council requirement (e.g. do Council need the member of staff to attend the session to fulfil Council's obligations)?	Where there is a direct need for a member of staff to attend a session due to requirements placed upon Council, these requests will be prioritised.
3. Is the cost of the session prohibitive?	Council will seek to secure best value from Learning Events / Seminars and where the costs are prohibitive, Council may recommend a different approach to fulfil the development need.
4. Has the individual already participated in external learning events during the current financial year?	If the individual requesting the learning event has already attended 2 or more external run sessions (i.e. that have led to external costs) during the current financial year, it is less likely that budget will be approved for further sessions unless criteria 2 applies.
5. Is there Budget available for the Learning Event?	Learning event requests will only be approved where there is budget available to meet the request. Once the allocated budgets have been utilised no other learning events can be approved.
6. Has the individual cancelled or failed to meet any other scheduled training during the current financial year (either compulsory sessions or optional)?	If the individual requesting the learning event has cancelled / failed to attend compulsory training, further requests will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances with the approval of the relevant Director.



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## 6. Time off and attendance at Learning events

Employees may receive paid time off to attend training/courses approved by Council. If the course takes place during working hours, a maximum of 16 days or 32 half days (pro rata for those contracted to work less than 37 hours) will be granted in any one academic year. Daytime study beyond the stated maximum must be taken as annual leave or completed in employees own time.

Employees attending evening classes will be given paid travelling time up to their normal recognised finishing time, only where it can be shown that it would not be possible to reach the class by the due start time if finishing work at his/her normal finishing time.

Employees are granted release only for those hours of duty when attendance is required at the course. Employees will therefore, have to work part of their normal working hours/shift. Employees should confirm these arrangements with their Line Manager.

## 7. Cancellation or Acceptance of Learning Events / Sessions

Council will determine whether Corporate Learning & Development sessions are 'compulsory' (normally legislative requirements), 'optional' or 'by request' (i.e. in line with PDP's). When staff are allocated a place on these sessions, the sessions must be either accepted or rejected when invitations are first circulated. Where management are allocating their own staff to a specific session, they are responsible for notifying their staff of which session they are due to attend, to accept or decline on their behalf and to ensure their attendance.

Where an employee cancels without sufficient notice, or does not attend compulsory sessions they have been allocated, without having sought Approval to cancel their attendance with their Assistant Director, this may affect future requests to attend other external or optional sessions. If an employee fails to advise HR that they will not be attending a training session and has not sought the Approval of their Assistant Director, an investigation may be carried out under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

If for any reason staff are aware that they will be unable to attend an allocated learning event / seminar they must get approval from their Assistant Director and the Assistant Director will advise HR (by email) as far as possible, at least 48 hours before hand. This is to provide the opportunity to re-allocate staff to the sessions. If staff fail to attend learning events / seminars and have not cancelled in advance and Council incur the relevant charge, it is unlikely the individual will have any further external learning events / requests authorised during that financial year.

Due to the financial implications for Council, employees should give priority to learning events and seminars booked and should not request changes without good reason. Changes will therefore need to be verified by a line manager prior to making new arrangements.



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## 8. Travel Expenses

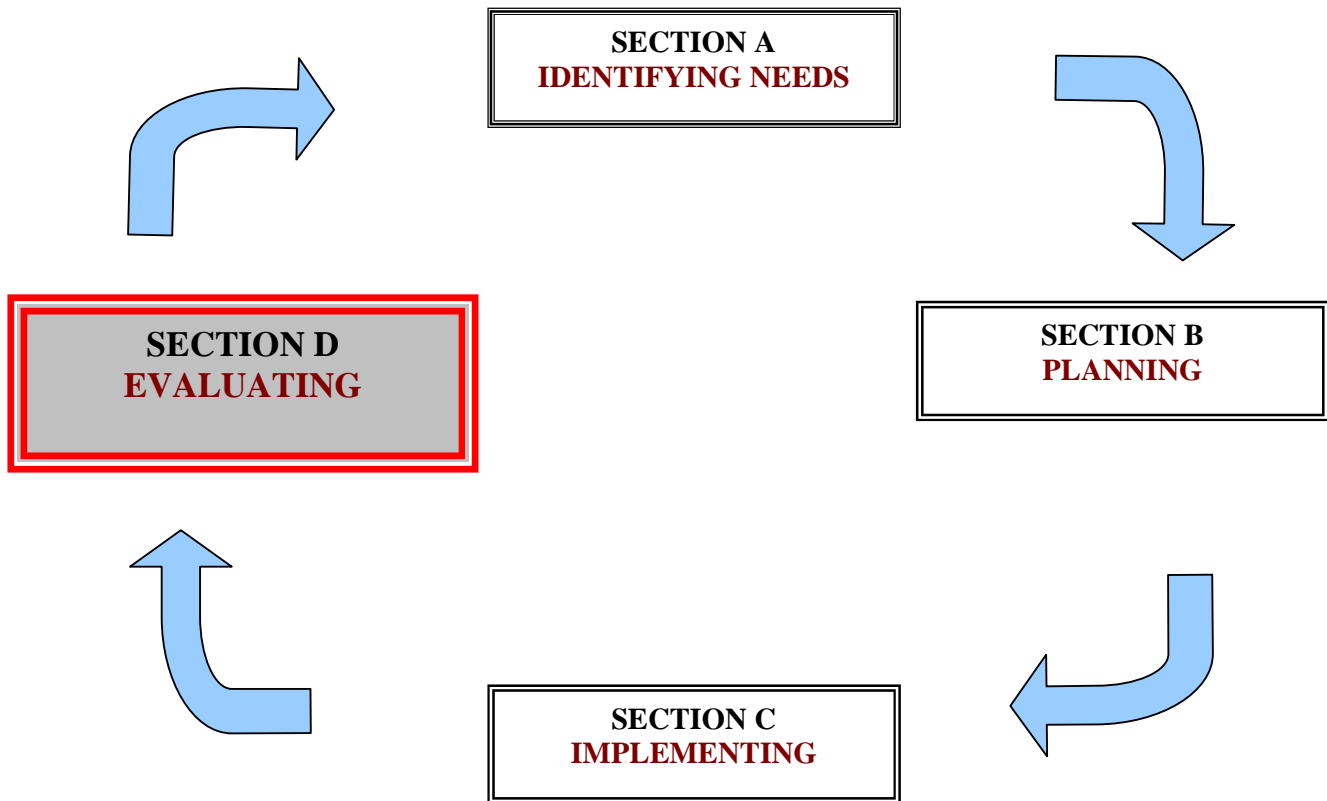
Travel expenses for work related learning events & seminars will be reimbursed at the rates determined by Council and in accordance with the Council's scheme for reimbursement of mileage and travel.

**Travel or subsistence expenses are not payable for those requesting to undertake part-time / study academic courses, or attending day release or evening courses.**

## 9. Reimbursement

The Human Resources Section will ensure that invoices are passed to the Finance Section for the payment of courses and learning events if applicable. If the employee has organised academic study or professional development courses, the individual will pay for the course in the first instance and will be reimbursed appropriately using reimbursement form (Appendix D), and upon proof of relevant receipts or invoices.

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## **D. LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION**

There are a number of important issues to consider when thinking about the Evaluation of learning and development and the learning outcomes that are expected. These are:

1. Objectives of Learning and development
2. Thinking before doing
3. Reaction Level Evaluation
4. Reflection Level Evaluation
5. Work based Learning
6. Recording of work based

### **1. Objectives of Learning and development**

For Council's learning and development policy to be effective, one of the key processes in the system is the 'evaluation' of the learning or development that has taken place. Effective evaluation is part of an accountable, professional and ethical public service and it is fundamental to good practice and good management. Effective evaluation will allow Council to measure whether it has achieved its learning outcomes during a given period of time.

The objectives for evaluating learning and development are;

- To assess if intended learning and development objectives (and council objectives) have been met
- Continuous improvement of learning and development
- To assess whether resources are being used wisely and effectively
- To assess the value for money (from council perspective) of learning and development
- To assess whether the learning and development strategy and function is providing any 'Added Value' for the organisation.

Effective evaluation will assist Council to ensure quality, justify investment in learning and development, make decisions, ensure appropriateness of training and its alignment with Council needs and finally to continually identify strengths and weaknesses.

### **2. Thinking before doing**

Before attending externally provided learning events and seminars, staff will be required to complete section 1 of the council "*evaluation form*". This will ensure that staff have thought about the reasons for attending the event and the aims and outcomes or objectives that they hope the training will meet for them. This initial thought process will ensure that employees have taken the time to consider the relevance of the training and to link this with their job



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role and duties. It will also provide the aims for them to revisit after the training to see were the aims achieved and has the job performance improve as a result.

### 3. Reaction Level Evaluation

All learning events and seminars will be subject to “reaction level” evaluation. Council will provide evaluation forms for external and internal learning events. These evaluations will be used to judge employees perceptions of the overall impact of the learning event that they have just attended. Where applicable this will be section 3 of the “*Learning Event / Seminar Request & Evaluation Form*” This will provide the People Development Manager with information on the service provider and the session effectiveness which will in turn allow for future sessions to be modified or updated accordingly to ensure maximum effectiveness of the training in line with Corporate objectives.

### 4. Reflection Evaluation

Three months after a learning event / seminar has been attended, staff and their line managers will revisit the “*Learning Event / Seminar Request & Evaluation Form*” to complete section 4. The purpose of this will be for the manager and the member of staff to look back on the event and what they learned from this and to establish whether this helped them with their role and duties and whether this impacted on the service provision of the section. This evaluation will also be completed by the manager, who will evaluate whether the staff’s performance was improved as a result of attendance at the event or seminar.

This will allow the HR section to monitor whether particular courses or events are meeting Council needs and to assess whether the spend on learning & learning events is value for money for Council, in terms of increased performance in service delivery and meeting council objectives.

### 5. Work Based Learning Evaluation

It is important to be clear that learning events and seminars are not the only way that staff will develop through the course of their employment with Council.

Council encourages active work based learning which is a continual process and which all staff experience, whether it is structured learning or not. The performance management system will allow for the monitoring of staff development through the areas that they identified in their PDP’s.

It will become apparent through the performance management system that objectives and targets for development can be achieved through work based learning and development rather than courses or events and in many cases when staff are encouraged to develop themselves in the context of their job role this learning is much more effective. Council want to encourage this continual process of learning and development on the job thereby enabling staff to diversify their skills and competencies, while carrying out their work. If learning and



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development is approached in is likely to be much more effective as staff can directly relate the learning to their work context.

## 6. Return on Investment

Return on Investment is used to express how the investment in learning and development has contributed to overall Council performance. To calculate ROI, Council will identify the financial benefits drawn from learning program. This will then be subtracted from that the total investment made to develop, produce, and deliver that program.

$$\frac{(\text{total benefit} - \text{total costs})}{\text{total costs}} = \text{___} \quad \times 100 = \text{ROI}$$

**Total benefits** include money saved by Council and anything that adds directly or indirectly to the bottom line.

**Total costs** will include the development costs, consultant costs, salary costs, overheads physical materials, etc.

Council will analyse major learning and development programmes, to ensure that Council is achieving on investment.

## 7. Recording of Learning Events & Seminars

All external and internal training will be officially recorded by Council. This is to assist with the evaluation of the training provided, to ensure individuals training records are being updated and to ensure that training identified through Council's PDP process is being carried out as required.

HR will therefore require information on all training booked and attended and will record this information on the system. Anyone not attending training courses that have been booked must pass this information on to HR as soon as they are aware that they cannot attend, this will allow for cancellations or nominating someone else to attend sessions.



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**LEARNING EVENT / SEMINAR REQUEST & EVALUATION FORM**

**1. BOOKING REQUEST** *(To be completed by employee when requesting learning event)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Job title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Section: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Event title: \_\_\_\_\_ Provider: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Duration: \_\_\_\_\_ Cost: \_\_\_\_\_

**Request Justification / Objectives of Training:** (Summarise how this links to your PDP, and or benefits the Council)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

(What is your main objective of this learning event?)

**\*\* PLEASE FORWARD THIS REQUEST TO YOUR LINE MANAGER \*\***

**2. APPROVAL** *(To be completed by relevant Managers. All approval to be signed off and complete before the course is booked)*

Finance Approval: (Line Manager)	Can the course costs be covered by existing section budgets?	Yes / No
Line Manager:	How do you feel this course relates to the individuals PDP and or how will this benefit Council?	Directly / Indirectly
Line Manager Signature:		Date:
Assistant Director Signature: (Event <£399)		Date:
Director Signature (Event >£399):		Date:

***\*Managers to Return A COPY of this form to the HR section, & return original to the employee, prior to the event\****

**Request authorised by the Human Resources Department: Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**3. IMMEDIATE EVALUATION** *(Original retained form to be completed by employee immediately after course & returned to HR)*

<u>Area Assessed</u>	<u>Employee Comments</u> Please add some additional comments into this section	Unaccept	Very	Average	Good	Excellent
		able	Poor			
<b>Overall Impact</b>						
<b>Content</b>						
<b>Knowledge of the Trainer</b>						
<b>Relevance to individual objectives</b>						

**4. INTERMEDIATE EVALUATION** *(To be completed by Line Manager and attendee 3Months after attending & returned to HR)*

EMPLOYEE/TRAINEE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
**HAS THIS TRAINING COURSE ASSISTED YOU TO MEET OBJECTIVES IN YOUR PDP OR IDENTIFIED IN SECTION 1** YES / NO Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

LINE MANAGER: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
**HAS THIS TRAINING ASSISTED EMPLOYEE TO MEET SECTION OBJECTIVES?**  
 YES / NO Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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AUTHOR:	S.WILSON	R2-0
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## APPENDIX B

### 1. Summary Overview for Applying for Academic Courses

- 1) Where an employee identifies a gap in his/her skills and/or knowledge, or has any other appropriate reason for submission of an application, the employee should **complete** a **“Training Request Form PT Study.doc** (Appendix B)
- 2) This form must be completed by all intending students, whether or not time off to attend classes is required.
- 3) The employee should check the details of the course and that they will be accepted as a student with the college.
- 4) All the forms required to be completed to apply for assistance and to reclaim fees are available from the Human Resources Department.
- 5) If required to register with a Professional Institute to be eligible to sit the examinations, the employee should ensure, well in advance, that they will be accepted as a member of that Institute and seek to establish if they will be granted any exemptions.
- 6) Completed forms should be to the Line Manager for approval in accordance with the procedure. This procedure also applies to requests for academic study.
- 7) Once the form is completed by the Line Manager it will be passed to the Director for review. After the form has been reviewed by the Director it will be to Human Resources.
- 8) Human Resources will advise the Line manager and Individual requesting the training of the outcome.
- 9) To ensure that all training courses are given due consideration, staff requesting training should allow Council as much time as possible, and at least one month, to process the Training Request Forms. **The Council will not normally consider any applications received after the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday in August.**
- 10) The employee **must check that approval has been granted before he/she enrolls** for (or in the case of those who join Council after the start of the academic year, continue) a course; one copy of the relevant form will be returned to your Director.

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## 2. FULL PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING FOR ACADEMIC COURSES

### 2.1 Academic qualifications / study requests

The Council will consider requests from employees for academic study leading to a relevant recognised qualification.

In granting assistance with a course of study it should be understood that the Council makes no guarantee of promotion as a result of obtaining the qualification.

Academic qualifications / study requests can be defined as any course of study that is taken over a period of time that will provide the candidate with a recognised qualification at the end of the course.

### 2.2 Prioritisation of requests

The Council will consider supporting requests for training and academic courses/professional development in accordance with the table below. These headings do not cover all situations but should be relevant to most. They are listed in descending priority to enable employees to identify where their course fits in terms of priority weighting.

Each employee will be entitled to request a level of support for one relevant course of academic study per year, subject to demand, available resource and based on priority factors, (levels 1 – 3). Any subsequent requests will be subject to demand, available resource and priority levels 4 - 6. These stipulations do not apply to recurrent short term seminars, conferences etc.

Assistance will not be considered for more than one course of study per year. Subsequently assistance will only be considered for courses seen as a natural progression.

PRIORITY LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
1	Courses intended to add directly to ability to perform duties of the current post. This would include meeting existing skill requirements or improving performance of relevant skills beyond the minimum required and which is beneficial to the service. These may also have been a desirable requirement for the post.
2	Courses that would only add in a small way, or would only add indirectly, to ability to perform the duties of the current post. It would not be classed as a desirable criteria for the job role but may add some value to the individual's contribution to the service.
3	Courses that are primarily for an personal development. These courses would not be directly / indirectly linked to the individual's role This includes Masters courses.
4	This would normally be assigned a Priority Level 1. However the applicant has already completed another academic course in the previous 2 years.
5	This would normally be assigned a Priority Level 2. However the applicant has already completed another academic course in the previous 2 years.
6	This would normally be a assigned a Priority Level 3. However the applicant has already completed another academic course in the previous 2 years.
7	Employee has previously been on an academic study course / programme and did not complete the course and not attempted to complete / pass exams etc. If priority level 7 is assigned, it is very unlikely the employee will obtain approval for Council support.



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Requests for training and courses within this context can only be supported by the Council within the limitations of resources and where the employee has identified the course in advance through their PDP (if applicable) or by a written request in the previous financial year (if a PDP has not been in place). Where applications for support exceed budgeted expenditure they will be assessed on the basis of priority as outlined above.

Applications for Academic Study should be submitted on the form **Appendix B** attached at the end of this document.

It should be noted that preference will be given to night classes and Distance Learning courses, which require very little or no time away from the workplace.

In the case of academic qualifications, higher priority will normally be given to applications for a primary degree than for a higher qualification (Masters, PhD etc), subject to consideration of the specific circumstances. Masters courses and PhD courses will normally only be funded by the Council to a 50% level (£1000 maximum), unless there are exceptional circumstances related to the individuals role in the Council to justify a higher level of funding than this.

Where the Council approves a request for employees to undertake training/ academic study, the following contribution will be made:

- Books/equipment
- Payment of course fees
- Payment of residential costs and examination fees.

Assistance is granted for the duration of the course as stated on the original application subject to the applicants continued employment and annual review of academic performance and attendance.

If an employee has requested a course with a duration longer than one year, and this is identified at the outset when being authorised by the Director and by Council, there may be no need to reapply again in full for subsequent years. The employee must advise the People Development Manager in writing and completing pages 26 & 27 of the policy document prior to enrolment whether they are continuing through to the next year on a rolling basis.

On completion of each year of a course undertaken, an individual must provide the HR section with evidence of any results / exams taken and their outcomes.

### **2.3 Time off to attend Academic courses**

If the course has been deemed a requirement by an individuals Director and approved as such by Council, the individual will be granted time off to attend the course during working hours as applicable.

If the course has been passed by Council but has not merited the weighting of being a requirement to the individual's role, the time absent from work to attend the course may need to be made up again by the employee in their own time. This will be agreed by the Director and Line Manager prior to the course starting with the individual.



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Employees attending evening classes will be given paid travelling time up to their normal recognised finishing time only where it can be shown that it would not be possible to reach the class by the due start time if finishing work at his/her normal finishing time.

Employees are granted release only for those hours of duty when attendance is required at the course. They will therefore, have to work part of their normal working hours/shift. Employees should confirm these arrangements with their Line Manager.

Paid time off is not granted for employees to take a refreshment break prior to attending their course.

On occasions, work may have to take priority over day release. Time off will be allowed to attend periods of residential study (up to a maximum of 5 days in any one academic year), if this is a requirement of your course. These days will be deducted from the 32 – ½ day maximum.

Please see Appendix A for a flowchart on how to apply for an academic course.

Applications for academic training courses must be submitted to HR by the last Friday in July, each academic year.

#### **2.4 Academic Course Study Leave/Exam Leave**

On production of examination confirmation, employees will receive the applicable time off to undertake the examination(s), up to the maximum of one half day per examination plus one full day study leave for each examination up to a maximum of 5 days per academic year. Study / examination leave / financial assistance, will not normally be granted for re-sit examinations

#### **2.5 Academic Course Financial Contribution**

**All students must pay their own fees in the first instance** and then submit a claim form to the Human Resources Department. Do not get the college/institute to invoice the Council.

The contribution towards the cost of academic study, examination fees/residential fees and books is up to a maximum of £1000 annually (excluding any additional fees payable for late enrolment or payment by instalments). However, the Council will have discretion to provide for a higher level of funding if the course is of particular value to the Council and the employees current role, and financial resources permit.

Open University students should apply first to their Education and Library Board for assistance. Where Open University summer schools are held only in Great Britain, a contribution toward travelling allowances may be payable, subject to the above maximum. Those not eligible for Education and Library Board assistance may be recompensed with a claim for a second class boat or rail fare or discounted air fare.

It should be noted that only £120 towards the cost of textbooks necessary for your course is payable per year in addition to the £1,000 maximum contribution to fees. Employees should check with the Human Resources Department before purchasing any books.



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Failure to do so may result in Council not paying for the publication in question. Employees will be asked to return these books to the Council for its resource centre on completion of the course. claims for second-hand books will be paid provided they are accompanied by receipts

## 2.6 Clawback of Fees

Where the Council has funded academic study, except where required as part of the employee's contract of employment, the staff member will be required to repay the funding in whole or in part if he/she leaves the Council's employment within a period of two years from the successful completion of the course. If the employee leaves the Council's employment before this, he/she will be required to reimburse the total costs paid on the following basis:

If an employee leaves the Council's employment before the completion of academic study the employee will be required to reimburse all the costs paid. This will be done by invoice to the individual or if applicable deduction from final salary.

Within one year of course completion:	75% refund
Within 13-18 Months:	50% refund
Within 19-24 Months:	25% refund

If an employee fails an examination a re-sit will normally be at the employee's own expense.

## 2.7 Withdrawal from course/lack of progress

In the event that an employee withdraws from a course, if unsatisfactory progress is made, or the employee does not sit examinations, Council may conduct an investigatory interview with the employee concerned and may, depending on circumstances, recoup expenses paid; e.g. if third year of degree course Council can recoup expenses for the third year.



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**APPENDIX C**

**ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL ACADEMIC COURSE REQUEST FORM**

**\*\* N.B WHEN PRINTING THIS FORM YOU ONLY NEED TO PRINT PAGES 26 – 30\*\***

**SECTION 1**

To be completed by the Line Manager/Employee as appropriate.

**Employee Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COURSE DETAILS**

This course has been identified by the /Employee\* (\*Delete as appropriate)

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Venue/College:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total duration of Course:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Stage to be studied this year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Cost:** \_\_\_\_\_

(NB: Where possible attach all information available regarding the course)

**PRIORITY**

Please indicate which priority level ***you would assign*** to this request:

Priority Level 1

Priority Level 4

Priority Level 7

Priority Level 2

Priority Level 5

Priority Level 3

Priority Level 6



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**PATTERN OF STUDY**

1 Day per Week

1 Evening per Week

Correspondence

½ Day per Week

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 (not normally permitted to leave before 1.00pm)

Please indicate approximate Days \ Times of study

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Will the total number of ½ or full days required fall within the permissible number allocated by policy? (e.g. 16 Full Days or 32 ½ Days)

Yes ( ) No ( ) Please explain:

---

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE REQUIRED**

Tuition Fees

Examination Fees

Books

Residential

Institute Fees (only if employee has been requested to complete course by Council)

(Please provide detailed costings of all costs associated with this part-time study option - including all of the above.)

I understand the rules relating to the granting of assistance and clawback.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please continue overleaf*

**ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL TRAINING REQUEST FORM (COND)**

**LINE MANAGER/EMPLOYEE OBJECTIVES**



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What do you hope to achieve from this course?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

How will the course help you to carry out your duties more effectively?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Employee)                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Line Manager)                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

(To be completed by Line Manager)

**I recommend/I do not recommend\* this course**

**Reasons for recommending/not recommending course:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_                      Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
                     (Line Manager)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please continue overleaf

***ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL TRAINING REQUEST FORM (COND)***

**(To be completed by Director)**



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**I recommend/do not recommend\* the course as necessary training**

\*Delete as necessary

**Reasons for recommending/not recommending the course:**

---



---



---



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Can costs of the course be covered by existing budgets? Yes/No

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVAL**

Chief Executive Yes/No\*\* \_\_\_\_\_

Strategy and Resources Committee Yes/No\*\* \_\_\_\_\_

The above course was recommended/not recommended\*\*

Reasons:

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**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(Chief Executive)**

*Please continue overleaf*

**ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL TRAINING REQUEST FORM (COND)**

**For Office Use only:**



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Training Request Form received: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Training to be approved Chief Executive/Strategy and Resources Committee\*

Training approved/not approved: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Training course booked: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Line Manager/Department Manager advised: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Employee advised: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Finance advised: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Training recorded: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

**APPENDIX D**

**ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL RE-IMBURSEMENT FORM**

**\*\*PLEASE PRINT PAGE 31 ONLY FOR THIS FORM\*\***



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**CLAIM FOR PAYMENT OF FEES/BOOK ALLOWANCE FOR PART-TIME STUDY COURSES  
(TO BE SUBMITTED IN DUPLICATE WITH RECEIPT[S]).**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ POST HELD: \_\_\_\_\_

DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_ SECTION: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL DURATION OF COURSE: \_\_\_\_\_

STAGE/PART OF COURSE: \_\_\_\_\_

COURSE TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

COLLEGE: \_\_\_\_\_

I ENCLOSE RECEIPTS FOR THE FOLLOWING AMOUNTS:

TUITION: £

EXAMINATION: £

EXEMPTION: £

RESIDENTIAL £

INSTITUTE: (only applicable where required to Undertake study at Council's request) £

BOOKS: (To a maximum of £100) £

I UNDERSTAND THE RULES RELATING TO PAYMENTS IN RESPECT OF PART-TIME STUDY AND UNDERTAKE TO REFUND TO ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL ALL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE RECEIVED BY ME SHOULD I FAIL TO MEET THE CONDITIONS OF CLAIM.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

CHECKED BY THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

PAYMENT OF THESE FEES IS AUTHORISED.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES