Durham SU Learning and Development Policy

Policy Name:	Durham SU Learning and Development Policy		
Approval Date:	4 March 2020	To Be Reviewed:	Every 3 years
Approved By:	People and Culture Committee		
Noted / Endorsed:	Senior Leadership Team		
Related Policies:	a)		

Review History			
Date	Name	Signature	Comments
November 2019	Atkinson HR Consulting		
MM YYYY			
MM YYYY			

Disciplinary Policy and Procedure Statement:

Durham SU recognises that people are key to delivering our Strategic Plan. Our vision is to make sure that **students have the power and opportunity to transform their time at Durham**. But it is only possible for us to achieve this if our staff and volunteers are able to thrive and be at their best when they work for the SU.

We promote continuing professional development (CPD) and provide access to learning and development for colleagues at all levels across the organisation in order to be able to undertake their responsibilities effectively, enabling them to be responsive and adaptive in an ever changing environment.

About this policy

Durham SU invests significantly in the development of its people and wants to ensure that learning and development helps colleagues to perform well whilst having an impact on the strategy and performance of the organisation. It's therefore important that we assess learning needs well, invest in learning, provide the right development opportunities and evaluate them effectively. This policy sets out our approach in each of these areas to enable learning and development to have a significant impact across the organisation.

Who this policy applies to:

This policy applies to all Durham SU employees.

It does not directly apply to volunteers. Whilst many of the principles may be relevant there are separate processes that cover the learning and development approach to volunteers.

1. Reasons for Learning and Development

1.1. The main reason (and priority) for learning and development is the need to ensure people have the right knowledge, skills and competencies to meet current and future business needs as identified in our strategy. Development needs might relate to an individual, a group of staff or the whole organisation.

1.2. For individuals, our Be At Your Best review process requires managers and their teams to discuss development needed to meet role objectives or behavioural expectations.

1.3. Development can also be driven by an individual's desire to advance their own knowledge, skills and career. We are committed to developing talent for the future and supporting this where possible and affordable.

2. Assessing Development Needs

2.1. Individual development needs may be identified by you or your manager and can arise at any time. A key part of our performance management process involves discussing what development and support is needed for you to meet your objectives and the expectations of your role. Development needs may arise when:

- There are changes to your job content, processes or tasks;
- You are new to a role or responsibility;
- There is a desire or need to improve performance.

2.2. Your development needs are recorded as part of your 'Be At Your Best' Plan *(Appendix A)*, with a description of how and when they will be supported, and the outcomes expected. The plan is updated every year in line with the Be At Your Best review cycle and reviewed during 1-2-1s.

2.3. The Senior Leadership Team will periodically conduct an organisation-wide learning needs analysis to assess requirements based on the strategy, operational plans, appraisals and job descriptions. This will inform an annual learning and development plan that sets out our overall priorities, and the development activities focused on addressing those needs.

3. Learning and Development Activity

3.1. Learning and development is often associated with formal training, but in reality, there are a variety of development activities that can support your learning. These include but are not limited to:

- Training courses;
- Educational programmes / qualifications;
- Reading (books, sector magazines etc);
- Online learning;
- Visiting other organisations;
- TED talks;
- Conferences (attending and/or presenting);
- Shadowing colleagues;
- Coaching;
- Mentoring;
- Involvement or leadership of a project;
- Volunteering;
- Action learning;
- Research projects.

3.2.   The most appropriate method(s) depend on the individual and the situation. You may take part in several activities to meet one development need.

3.3.   When agreeing the development approach there needs to be a balance between:

- Individual preferences about methods that best suit the learner;
- Practical considerations about how quickly development is needed, costs, operational restraints etc;
- Our need for development to be cost effective, timely and relevant to the organisation's strategic goals.

4.   Funding

4.1.   An annual figure is set for learning and development, which is agreed by the Board.

4.2.   A central budget is allocated and managed by Resources that is intended for centralised development programmes and activities (i.e. leadership development, compliance training, induction etc.) and applications for individual learning that exceed £250.

4.3.   Each Directorate also holds a budget which is used for low cost learning activities that are specific to the team and/or individual or individual learning requests that are less than £250.

4.4.   For development activities that cost in excess of £250 and provide a formal qualification or certification, we may agree to fund all or part of the full cost of the learning. We may also require colleagues to enter into a learning agreement *(Appendix B).*
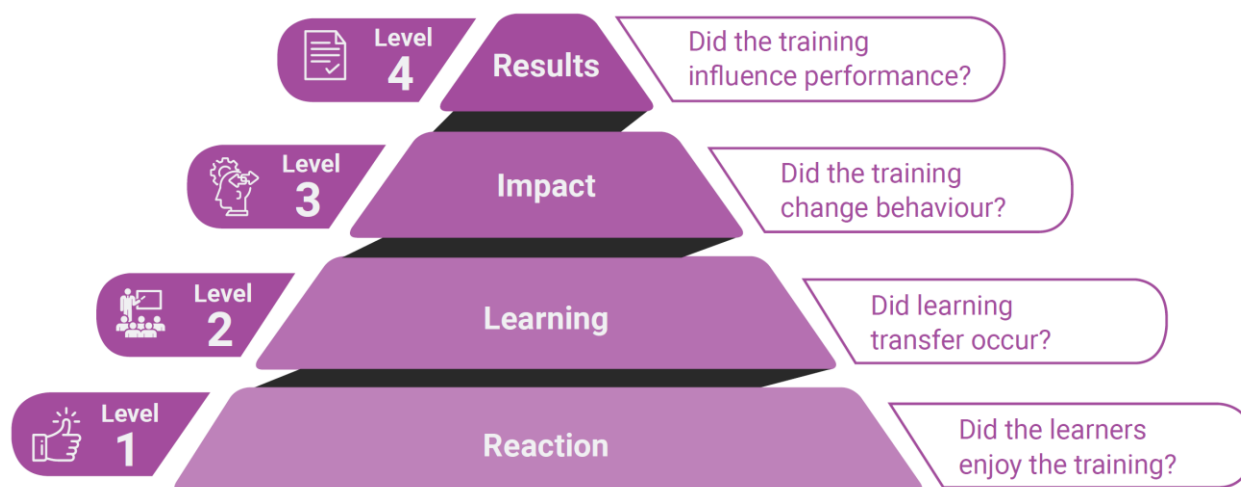
5.   Learning Requests

5.1.   Learning activities / requests that are low cost (less than £100) and are agreed within the personal development plan do not require completion of a learning and development request form. However, there should still be clear learning objectives, evaluation and reflection on the learning outcomes and impact.

5.2.   Learning activities / requests that are either greater than £100 or are not agreed on the personal development plan require completion, and agreement, of a learning and development request form *(Appendix C).*

5.3.   Learning requests of less than £250 can be approved, and paid for, by the appropriate Director. Learning requests over £250 will require approval by the relevant Director and signoff from the Chief Executive.

5.4.   Learning requests will be considered, and prioritised, in line with the needs of the organisation. Criteria used will include whether the proposed learning activity is a requirement of the role (or nice to do), the likely performance impact and how closely it aligns with Durham SU's overall People and Organisation Strategies.

6.   Evaluating Learning and Development

6.1.   It's important that we understand how learning and development activities that have required an investment of time and money add value to the organisation. Evaluating learning activities is therefore crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of initiatives and programmes.

6.2.   All formal learning and development activity should be agreed in conjunction with specific objectives that link to improved performance and business outcomes.

6.3.   We use Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation (1977) as the basis for evaluating learning and development at Durham SU.

6.4.   This approach is designed to collect information to enable the organisation to assess how effective an activity has been, the impact it has had on the organisation, and the business results that it has led to.

6.5.   An explanation of each level of evaluation is below:

Level	Why measure?	How can it be measured?	Who to ask
1	• Reactions of learners – helps the learning process • Confirms that the activity is reaching people	Questionnaires Team Meetings Quality circles/focus groups Video Peer discussion Evaluation sheets Review at end Feedback – informal Online questionnaire Action plans	Learners
2	• See what learning has actually taken place during the session • Confirm that objectives have been met	Assessment during training Online testing pre- and post-course Assessment pre- and post-course Case studies Role plays Simulations Projects Performance review Quiz Game or activity	Learners (during or post-learning)
3	• To see changes in behaviour/output/knowledge etc • Check if learning has "stuck"	Observation & feedback from manager Feedback from peers 360 feedback Self-assessment Presentations Performance review Measurement against competencies	Line Manager

| 4 | • See what the return on investment is (ROI)
• Business results | Volumes
Timescales
People Turnover
Employee opinions
Increased membership / engagement
Cost-benefit analysis
Critical incident analysis
Performance metrics
Member feedback | Stakeholders (e.g. Senior Leadership Team) |

(Above table continues from previous page; top cell reads: Focus group / One-to-one coaching review)

6.6. There is a shared responsibility between participants and their manager to reflect on learning activities and ensure they are evaluated.

7. Responsibilities for Learning and Development

7.1. Everyone has an important role in building a learning culture across Durham SU:

7.2. It is the responsibility of *senior leaders* to:

- Ensure managers are aware of, and operating in line with, Durham SU's Learning and Development policy.
- Champion a learning culture across the organisation.
- Act as role models by taking an active interest in their own learning and development, and constantly growing within their roles.
- Ensure that the learning and development policy is aligned with the organisation's overall strategy.
- Scan the environment to analyse conditions and external factors that affect Durham SU, ensuring staff are developed to cope with a changing landscape.

7.3. It is the responsibility of *managers* to:

- Identify staff development needs to meet individual, team, department and Durham SU's objectives.
- Undertake a pre- and post-development activity discussion to agree and record specific performance outcomes and measures.
- Encourage their staff to identify development needs and consider all requests for learning and development in line with team and area priorities and budgetary constraints. There may be occasions when development activity is postponed or refused as a result.
- Explain the development plans in place to build team capability in order to contribute to achieving the organisation's objectives.
- Encourage their staff to record, and reflect on, any additional informal, internal and external learning and development activity.

7.4. It is the responsibility of *employees* to:

- Identify development opportunities that will assist them to undertake their role more effectively or to enable them to expand their role.
- Where possible, identify appropriate solutions to support a discussion with their manager.
- Participate in pre- and post-development activity discussion with their managers.
- Book and attend activities and complete all evaluations that take place at appropriate points as required by the organisation.
- Regularly update their personal development plan with completed activities so that records can be maintained.
- Give sufficient notice to any training provider should they be unable to attend.
- Actively engage in learning opportunities that are available.

7.5.   It is the responsibility of the *Executive Assistant* to:

- Compile data for personal development plans and job descriptions to produce an annual training plan that highlights objectives, shared priorities and a range of development activities to meet those objectives.
- Ensure a suitable framework and process is in place for requesting, developing and evaluating learning and development.
- Provide advice and guidance to managers on different ways to meet learning needs.
- Retain centralised records of development activities.

8.   Summary

8.1.   It is our belief that the organisation can only be successful in the future if our people are empowered and enabled to perform consistently to a high level. Excellent performance requires effective, and ongoing, learning and development in order to build skills, knowledge, confidence and capability. We are committed to investing in the development of our people to ensure they can thrive and be at their best when working for Durham SU.

APPENDIX A: Your personal development plan

Based on your review of your job description, values and having set your objectives, you should consider what areas of development you wish to focus on for the year ahead. It may be a skill or knowledge that you need to work on to support your job description or it could be an area of development to strengthen your performance against the values.

Area for development Skill, knowledge or behaviours	Actions required What actions will you take to achieve this?	Success measures How will you track and measure your progress?	Timescale When does this need to be completed by?	Progress Make notes on your progress throughout the year

What are your development aspirations for the future (including any future career aspirations) and how could your manager support you?

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APPENDIX B: Learning Agreement

This agreement is to be completed by all staff that undertake a professional qualification funded by the Students' Union (to the value of £250 or greater). Its aim is to document the commitment (financial and non-financial) of the employer and the member of staff to the learning partnership.

Employee Name:			
Department:			
Qualification:			
Start Date:	Month-Year	**Completion Date:**	Month-Year
Full Cost of Course:	£	**Total Funded:**	£
Course Provider:			
Contact Hours p/w:		**Contact Weeks p/a:**	
Study Leave Days:		**Salary Sacrifice:**	Y/N (*for balance if part-funded*)

1.   This agreement is made between the employee and Durham Students' Union to clarify the expectations and commitment made by both parties in the undertaking of the above qualification.

2.   The employer commits to:

   2.1.   Fund / part-fund the above qualification to the value as stated above - the employer's contribution will be paid directly to the qualification provider and the employee should provide supplier details to the finance department.
   2.2.   Provide leave for the total allocation of contact time as stated above.
   2.3.   Provide leave for the employee to undertake exams, group work, presentations or other compulsory, assessed components of the course / qualification.
   2.4.   Provide up to five days additional study leave per year for revision for exams or study preparation for other forms of assessment. The actual allocation depends upon the length / type of qualification and will be agreed in advance with the employee's Line Manager and stated above.
   2.5.   Support the employee's study in any other reasonable and mutually agreed way that does not adversely impact the organisation, for example access to information and agreement for the organisation to be the subject of research.
   2.6.   Regularly review the employee's progress and development on the course through ongoing 1-2-1 meetings between the employee and their Line Manager.

3.   The employee commits to:

   3.1.   Undertake additional requirements of the qualification (excluding those highlighted in 2.3. to 2.5.) within the employee's personal time; this includes required reading, assessed and non-assessed assignments etc.
   3.2.   Strive to apply learning from the qualification wherever possible to their own working activities and to share key learning points with other colleagues where it may benefit them.
   3.3.   Where the qualification includes an element of research - to discuss and agree with their Line Manager where the research topic could add value to the organisation as well as being suitable an in line the course needs.
   3.4.   Strive to achieve the learning objectives as set out in the 'Learning and Development Request Form' submitted by the employee and agreed with their Line Manager.
   3.5.   Be willing to present on key learning outcomes at staff meetings / conferences where requested and relevant.

4. In the event that the employee leaves Durham SU before a period of no less than two years following the completion of the qualification they may be required to repay the costs of the course / qualification based on the following schedule:

4.1. If employee leaves before the course completion date – repay 100% of total costs.
4.2. If employee leaves less than 12-months following completion date – repay 50% of total costs.
4.3. If employee leaves between 12-months and 24-months following completion date – repay 25% of total costs.
4.4. The 'completion date' is defined as the date that the employee receives the results of the qualification (not the final assessment date or graduation date).
4.5. The employer reserves the right in these circumstances to deduct a sum of money equivalent to the above payments from the employee's final salary payment. If the final salary payment is not sufficient to meet this debt, the employee will be required to repay the outstanding balance to the employer within one month of the date of termination of employment.

4.6. If the employee leaves Durham SU due to redundancy or other circumstances out of their control the employee may be exempt from repaying the costs of the course / qualification subject to negotiations between the employer and the employee.

Signatures:

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Employee			**DD/MM/YYYY**
Director			**DD/MM/YYYY**

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APPENDIX C: Learning and Development Request Form

This form is to be completed by all staff making a request to undertake a course, training, qualification or other form of development that incorporates a financial cost over £100. It aims to document the 'learning and development need' that has been identified and set out clear objectives for the proposed L&D activity.

The form can be completed to take forward discussions and a development request from an annual appraisal. It can also be filled out at any point during the course of the year, following a discussion with your Line Manager, to formalise a request for learning / development.

Employee Name:			
Department:			
Learning Need:	*(what is the gap in knowledge, skills, capability etc that this request seeks to address?)*		
Learning Activity:	*(what is the proposed activity to address this need?)*		
Start Date:	Month-Year	**Completion Date:**	Month-Year
Full Cost of Activity:	£	**Total Cost to SU:**	£
Contact Hours p/w:		**Contact Weeks p/a:**	
Activity Provider:			
Type of Learning:	*(i.e. training, action learning, coaching?)*		
Any Additional Info:			

Proposed Learning Outcomes
What will you learn from undertaking the proposed qualification and how will it impact positively on the Students' Union and/or your ability to be successful in your role? (to be completed by the employee)
1.
2.
3.

How will you share this learning with colleagues?
(completed after the completion of learning activity)

Prioritisation Checklist (to be completed jointly by the employee and manager)
☐ Is this L&D activity an absolute requirement of the role / person specification?   ☐ Will this L&D activity have a significant impact on performance in the current role?   ☐ Will this L&D activity have a significant impact on department / organisational goals?   ☐ Has this L&D activity been agreed in principle as part of the appraisal process?   ☐ Will this L&D activity improve the progression and promotion prospects of the learner?
Manager's Additional Comments:
Actual Learning Outcomes (to be completed after completion of activity)   What have you learnt from undertaking the proposed qualification and how have you / will you implement that learning to make a difference for the Students' Union? (to be completed by the employee and line manager after completion and then reviewed after 6-months)
1.
2.
3.

Process:

1. The member of staff should discuss their identified learning need / gap with their Line Manager, either through annual appraisal or at another time during the year.
2. After discussing potential solutions to their learning need, the employee should complete this form to put forward the proposed activity for approval and their training record.
3. If the total cost of the learning activity is under £250, the relevant Director can decide whether to approve the request (based on directorate priorities), and if so the cost will come from the directorate L&D budget.
4. If the total cost of the activity is greater than £250, this form will be referred to the Executive Assistant and SLT (incorporating a commentary from the Director) to decide whether to approve the request, and if so the cost will come from the centralised L&D budget.
5. Any approved activity that costs more than £250 and provides the employee with a qualification (professional or academic) may require a learning agreement. Funding for qualifications will be viewed as an investment, and the request form will be expected to outline the benefits to the Students' Union. If approved, funding will normally be for the full cost, although partial funding may be offered, if it is decided that there would not be a suitable return on the full investment in the qualification.
6. After the completion of the L&D activity the employee's Line Manager will evaluate the success of the activity with them, considering whether it has met the objectives agreed in advance. For longer / ongoing activities, this evaluation should take place on an ongoing basis throughout the duration.

To be completed by the Executive Assistant:

Request Approved?	**Y / N**	**Date of Decision:**	**Month-Year**
Total Funding from SU:	£	**% of Total Cost**	%
Notes / Further Information:			
Administered By:			