

Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board

Professional Learning and Development (PLD) Policy

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1.0 Introduction

Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (herein referred to as WWETB) is committed to creating and maintaining a culture of excellence and recognises that professional learning and development (PLD) is vital to a workforce that anticipates, responds to and meets the needs of a constantly evolving society and economy.

Professional development is a shared responsibility. WWETB recognises the critical role that all staff play in building capability and shaping the professional learning and development culture to achieve organisational success. WWETB endeavours to assist individual staff members and teams to achieve their developmental goals, aligned to their roles. WWETB supports and encourages staff to develop their professional practice and apply their knowledge and skills to the performance of their roles.

WWETB is committed to providing opportunities for all staff to participate in relevant PLD that will both enhance our service provision and will allow staff to maximise their own potential. To support this commitment, WWETB provides financial support towards course fees for Professional Learning and Development for employees. WWETB aims to provide professional development that is accessible and flexible. WWETB also recognises that a substantial part of professional development will be acquired through on-the-job collaboration and WWETB will work to facilitate these opportunities as far as possible.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 To encourage and support employees in their professional and career development as part of their employment with WWETB.
- 2.2 To provide administrative guidelines to facilitate fairness and equity in the application of these general principles.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all eligible staff (see point 4.1.3 below). The policy will operate within the terms of all governing circular letters from relevant government departments and may be amended from time to time to ensure alignment with these circulars and with WWETB policies.
- 3.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents, as applicable:
 - 3.2.1 Professional Learning and Development Procedures – Further Education and Training

3.2.2 Professional Learning and Development Procedures – Teaching Staff and Administrative Staff

4.0 Policy

This document is divided into two sections as follows:

- Section A: Professional Learning and Development (PLD) Scheme
- Section B: General Staff Learning and Development

4.1 Section A: Professional Learning and Development (PLD) Scheme

4.1.1 Course Types

This procedure governs financial support for the following course types:

- a) Undergraduate Certificate
- b) Undergraduate Diploma
- c) Undergraduate Degree
- d) Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma Courses
- e) Masters/PhD programmes
- f) Skills courses¹

Priority will be given to professional learning and development which carries certification. However, each application will be considered on the basis of the content of the course and its relevance to the needs of applicant.

4.1.2 Funding Support

Funding will only be supported for courses that are:

- a) Job Related
 - Directly related to the post that the applicant is fulfilling in WWETB
 - Directly related to the School/Centre/Head Office

In some instances of identified needs, WWETB will seek out categories of staff to participate in training. Participation will be strongly promoted and encouraged but will not be mandatory. (See 4.3 below)

- b) Organisation Related

¹ This could include courses that would assist the staff member in becoming proficient in carrying out their duties in the Irish language.

- Where course outcome can demonstrate a positive benefit to the organisation
- Where course outcomes are relevant to the objectives of the WWETB Strategy Statement

c) Personal Development

- Where course outcomes can demonstrate relevance to the applicants' current role or immediate career prospects

This scheme does not provide support for participation on a course that may directly result in financial gain or an allowance payable. Support cannot be provided for a qualification which results in a direct conversion to another grade or results in changing the terms and conditions of employment of the staff member.

4.1.3 Eligibility criteria

A broad view is taken as to what constitutes PLD and how it can be delivered. Staff may engage in a range of learning activities of relevance to their work – formal, informal, work-based and self-directed – that improve competencies, allow for a higher level of performance and develop potential.

The following staff members are eligible to apply for financial support for PLD:

- a) Staff members who have successfully completed one year's service with WWETB. (Exceptions may apply where staff members have less than one year's service completed)
- b) Staff members who have a contract with WWETB for at least the full duration of the course to be undertaken

Staff members on unpaid leave of absence are not normally eligible to apply.

4.1.4 The application process

- a) All applicants must complete an application form which will be signed by the relevant Manager.
 - [FET PLD Procedures and Application Form](#)
 - [Teaching and Admin PLD Procedures and Application Form](#)

b) All applicants must clearly outline/supply the following information on their application form:

i) The full details and information on the course including course certification, content, cost and duration and amount of funding requested

ii) Details as to how the course will impact on their role and benefit their school/centre/the organisation

4.1.5 Assessment of Application

Professional Learning and Development is funded by, and dependent on, an annual budget. The amount of fee support determined will be in the context of the current financial situation, any budgetary constraints, and the number of applications.

All applications will be assessed by a Staff Development Evaluation Committee²².

The Evaluation Committee will determine whether an application can be funded, and to what level. The Evaluation Committee will make its decisions in the context of the merit of applications received and the overall budget available for the scheme.

All applications for financial support will be assessed on the following:

- a) Compliance with the eligibility criteria outlined in the relevant scheme
- b) The Programme/School/Office/organisation needs and priorities
- c) The availability of funding and value for money of the course
- d) Whether the staff member has received funding in the past from WWETB for PLD programmes
- e) With regard to teachers, whether the staff members is eligible to apply for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) outside of WWETB (e.g. Teacher Refund Scheme)

All successful applicants will receive a letter from the Evaluation Committee, detailing:

- a) Amount of grant aid approved
- b) Drawdown/payment process
- c) Details of the conditions attached to the funding
- d) Other specific requirements

Unsuccessful applicants will receive a letter from the Evaluation Committee detailing why the application was unsuccessful.

²² The Staff Development Evaluation Committee may be specific to a function in WWETB, e.g. FET, Schools.

4.1.6 Conditions of Financial Support

Payment of financial support may be authorised to the following levels:

- 25%
 - 50%
 - 75%
 - 100%
- a) Following notification of a successful application for job related courses WWETB will pay for the course via invoice directly.
 - b) Following notification of a successful application, for Organisation related and Personal Development courses, WWETB will reimburse the staff member for the percentage of the fee amount, as awarded by the Evaluation Committee. Reimbursements will be made to staff for organisation related development (through creditors, as no tax implications) and for personal development (through payroll, as it has tax implications).
 - c) Applicants may be required to give presentations on the matters relating to their studies to other colleagues within WWETB e.g. at Staff Development Days.
 - d) Should an applicant leave the employment of WWETB following completion of the course, WWETB reserves the right to seek reimbursement of funding on a sliding scale as follows:
 - Leave within 1 year of completing the course, 75% of financial support granted to be refunded to WWETB
 - Leave within 2 years – 50% of funding to be refunded to WWETB.
 - e) Should an applicant leave employment of WWETB before completing the course WWETB reserves the right to seek reimbursement of the full amount of financial support.
 - f) Should an applicant fail to progress or not complete the course, WWETB reserves the right to seek reimbursement of the full amount of financial support.
 - g) Following notification of a successful application, for Job Related and Organisation Related courses, WWETB will pay for the course via invoice directly.
 - h) Following notification of a successful application, for Personal Development courses, WWETB will reimburse the staff member for the percentage of the fee amount, as awarded by the Evaluation Committee. Reimbursements will be made to staff for organisation related development (through creditors, as no tax implications) and for personal development (through payroll, as it has tax implications).
 - i) Financial support will not be payable where the applicant must repeat a year.

- j) Staff members will be responsible for the payment of other costs, such as travel and subsistence, course materials, IT equipment, associated with their study unless otherwise agreed as part of the relevant scheme.
- k) Staff are required to declare that fee support for the same programme is not being provided by any other source, or if so, documentary evidence of the amount of support being received from that alternative source.

4.1.7 Seminars and conferences

Normally (but not always) the need to attend seminars and conferences will be instigated by the Line Manager/Principal/Coordinator. These events serve to keep the organisation up to date, legally compliant and provide a valuable learning opportunity for our staff. In these circumstances:

- a) Staff who are given leave to participate in seminars and conferences will do so without having to work up time or use alternative flexi/annual leave.
- b) Staff may also claim travel and subsistence for attending seminars and conferences as per relevant Department of Education circulars.

4.1.8 Study Leave and Exam Leave

- Study and exam leave is available to staff in accordance with the terms and conditions of the relevant support schemes and circulars specific to their contracts.
- A flexible workload in agreement with Line Managers may be arranged locally. Staff may be able to work the same number of hours but at different times for the duration of the course, once work commitments are not affected.
- Study and exam leave should be determined in conjunction with the Line Manager in advance of the commencement of the course.
- If additional leave is required beyond the limits set out, employees should use a mix of annual leave/flexi leave and draw up a formal plan with their Line Manager as appropriate

4.1.9 Post Qualification

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

4.1.10 Relevant Circulars

- Teacher Refund Scheme – Circular letter issued each year (0010/2021)

- Study Leave Clerical and Administration Circular letter F45/82
- CL 32/2010
- CL 18/00 'Brief Absences'

4.2 Section B – General Staff Learning and Development

4.2.1 Guiding Principles

- a) All staff members are encouraged to engage in learning and development.
- b) All staff are encouraged to share their information with Centre/School/Office and Management and colleagues once they have completed a training programme.
- c) A record should be kept of all professional learning and development undertaken.
- d) All training is subject to the School/Centre/Offices' ability to facilitate staff whilst not impacting on Teaching and Learning, or workload in the School/Centre/Office, and available funding.

4.2.2 New Staff

- a) It is the position of WWETB that all new staff members should ideally be offered an Induction/Training Plan to support and guide them in their new roles.
- b) Training Plans for new staff should be in line with the skills and knowledge required for the position offered.
- c) Training Plans should be regularly reviewed by Line Managers.
- d) First Aid and Health and Safety related training will be organised, managed, and funded by the Safety, Health & Welfare Unit.

4.2.3. Administrative Staff in WWETB

- a) It is recommended by WWETB that administrative staff should have an annual Personal Training and Development Plan.
- b) Personal Training and Development Plans in the main should cover on-the-job training, skills development, improving knowledge on relevant policies, procedures, circulars and IT. This should be covered through self-directed learning, cross-functional training, supported sessions, e-learning and networking.
- c) Line Managers are advised to devise the plans directly with staff, to support achievement and to review progress at agreed time intervals.

d) Personal Training and Development Plans and records should be maintained locally by the Line Manager.

4.2.4 Staff – Schools

a) All staff in schools are encouraged to engage in learning and development in accordance with Department of Education in-service such as those provided by JCT, PDST, NSCE etc. Other opportunities are also provided by WWETB and the Teaching Council of Ireland.

b) All training should be in line with the national curriculum and the requirements of the Teaching Council of Ireland.

c) All staff are encouraged to share their information with School management and colleagues once they have completed a training programme.

4.2.5 Staff – FET

a) All staff across Further Education and Training are encouraged to engage in learning and development in accordance with all relevant agencies and particularly SOLAS (Professional Development Strategy for Staff Employed in ETBs), Teaching Council of Ireland and WWETB provided training and skills programmes.

b) Attendance at in-service courses, meetings or professional development events does not count towards accumulation of hours towards any contract of indefinite duration entitlements.

c) Attendance at a WWETB PLD event is an approved absence for purposes of replacement or substitution. Cover/substitution should be provided from local allocation.

d) A flexible workload may be arranged locally once programme delivery is not affected.

e) Local and centrally organised professional development may limit the number of participants per centre or programme to prevent disruption to service and due to budgetary constraints.

f) The existence of strategic priorities does not imply that staff are automatically eligible for professional development in areas outlined in the Strategy Statement.

4.3 Organisation Directed Training and Development

a) In line with the Service Plan, Strategy Statement, and identification of needs, WWETB, from time to time, may direct specific training to certain categories of staff.

- b) This training may be mandatory, and participation required particularly in areas of legal compliance.
- c) In some instances of identified need, WWETB will seek out categories of staff to participate in training. Participation will be strongly promoted and encouraged but will not be mandatory. First Aid and Health and Safety related training will be organised, managed, and funded by the Safety, Health and Welfare Unit.
- d) In such instance training will generally be funded centrally by the organisation.

5.0 Review and Update

The policy contained within these documents will be in place for three years following approval of a review and amendments. An earlier review can take place should exceptional circumstances arise resulting from this policy, in whole or in part, being insufficient for the purpose and/or if there are legislative changes that render this policy obsolete.