

Staff Development Policy¹

1. Introduction

The Open University's mission is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas underpinned by our core values of being inclusive, innovative and responsive. Enhancing the capabilities of the University and delivering an outstanding student experience are fundamental to securing this mission.

It is recognised that the success of the University depends on all staff whatever their role having the relevant skills, knowledge and competencies to support the strategic priorities now and in the future. We are committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency both of the individual and the University by supporting all staff to:

- Identify their own professional development goals, directions or priorities
- Plan for their initial and/or continuing professional development
- Undertake appropriate development activities that are aligned with their core responsibilities
- Review their development and their practice and the relations between them

The University acknowledges that as an educational provider it has a unique responsibility to support and encourage the development of its staff, and recognises that staff development plays a critical role in enhancing the capabilities of the University and building the capability of its workforce.

2. Scope

Staff development embraces all forms of formal and informal development activity including self-directed personal study, experiential learning, online courses, eLearning, face-to-face courses, participation in conferences, workshops and seminars, work shadowing, coaching, mentoring and planned experiences such as secondments.

Further details regarding [Learning and Development](#) can be found on the People Services Intranet.

3. General principles

- The University shows commitment to the development of its staff through encouraging an environment conducive to development.
- All staff development activities will be conducted in accordance with the University's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles](#).

¹ This policy draws on sector endorsed best practice and has been informed by York University's Staff Development Policy

- All staff have equitable access to staff development opportunities, appropriate to their role and aligned to their objectives.
- All internal development activities will support the need to heighten awareness of equality and diversity issues. Where relevant, this will be reflected in the design, content and delivery of each activity. Where a staff development activity is commissioned from an external provider, the training specification supplied by the University will include the need to heighten awareness of equality and diversity issues and meet the needs of all attendees.
- The University is subject to a number of statutory regulations and it must ensure that staff are trained to levels appropriate to their roles in order to perform legally in the best interest of themselves, of others and of the University. Participation in certain staff development activities will therefore be mandatory.
- In order to gain the most benefit, the University's staff development processes need to be closely aligned to other planning and review cycles including staff induction at individual, departmental and University level; career development and appraisal, and probationary review programmes; the annual planning cycle; annual and periodic reviews.
- Funding and/or study leave for the purpose of staff development must be approved by the appropriate Head of Unit/Department or nominee. In a minority of cases, such approval may require consultation with People Services Policy, and/or Research or Teaching Committees. Staff undertaking professional or vocational training courses with an external provider are required to complete the External Training Agreement and in certain circumstances may be required to repay training costs.
- Heads of Units/Departments and Line managers are expected to encourage and support all staff (regardless of job role, grade and work patterns) to take advantage of internal and external staff development opportunities relevant to their identified development needs. It is the University's expectation that all departments participate in appropriate staff development activity.
- The University also recognises that, for its Staff Development Policy to be effective, staff must take responsibility for their own development. In addition to undertaking mandatory and relevant training defined nationally and locally and as requested for a particular role, they are expected to avail themselves of the development opportunities provided to enable them to keep their skills updated and respond flexibly to change.

4. Identification of needs

Staff development needs are identified in a number of ways:

- Managers are expected to discuss staff development needs with each of their staff at least annually as part of the Career Development and Staff Appraisal (CDSA) process.
- The needs of staff new to the University should be identified in accordance with the probation policy within one week of taking up their appointment.
- The needs of staff transferring to a new role within the University should be discussed within four weeks of taking up position.
- Through the needs identified by departments during their annual planning and budgetary cycle.
- Heads of Unit/Departments observations and requests.

- Actions arising from the Staff Survey results.
- Evaluation of feedback from current programmes.

Staff development needs may be identified throughout the year. The planning processes will retain flexibility for agreement of additional development needs as they become necessary.

Further details in relation to the [CDSA](#) process can be found on the People Services Intranet.

5. Responsibilities

There is a shared responsibility for the development of staff at the University, which is summarised below. It is recognised that there will be differences between Units and Departments as to how these responsibilities are fulfilled.

Organisation Learning team

Organisation Learning is responsible for:

- Effective staff development provision, from clarifying the need, to design and selecting methods, through to the delivery and evaluation of interventions.
- Providing all line managers and those involved in the identification and prioritisation of staff development activities with the relevant support.
- Providing an advisory service to Heads of Department, line managers, staff and University networks and committees on external developments within the staff development field.
- Maintaining effective partnerships with departments, trade unions and other staff development providers to ensure individual and team objectives are supported by appropriate development activities.
- Offering guidance on external provision of staff development interventions.
- Ensuring such activities are conducted in accordance with the University's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) principles.
- Supporting the provision of any needs identified from positive action initiatives.
- Providing the mechanisms to ensure accurate training records are maintained.
- Evaluating staff development activities in order to assure and enhance their quality.

Heads of Department/Unit

Heads of Department/Unit are responsible for:

- Demonstrating appropriate behaviours, especially commitment to excellence and continuous development.
- Identifying needs for development of their staff arising from internal and external change at Departmental and University levels.
- Liaising with the [Organisation Learning](#) team regarding the provision of appropriate developmental interventions.
- Providing appropriate resources (time and money) for staff development activities.

- Ensuring staff development opportunities are supported in accordance with the University's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) principles.
- Where appropriate, identifying nominee/s among their senior management team to undertake some aspects of these responsibilities.

Line managers

Line Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that individuals have the opportunity at regular intervals, to discuss their continuing professional development goals and needs.
- Giving staff constructive, honest and timely feedback on their performance.
- Identifying individual and team development needs which take account of both the University goals and relevant aspirations of individuals.
- Regularly considering the development needs which will enable individuals or groups to respond effectively to internal and external changes.
- Establishing priorities taking account of individual departmental and University priorities and making appropriate provision to meet them within the resources available.
- In conjunction with the [Organisation Learning](#) team, identifying appropriate opportunities for staff development.
- Where appropriate, approving attendance at relevant staff development activities and making appropriate provision for the release of staff from their duties.
- Recognising and taking into account that disadvantaged groups may require particular encouragement, or positive action training initiatives, to help overcome historical inequalities.
- Briefing and de-briefing their staff who participate in staff development activities, to facilitate effective consolidation of their learning and in some cases dissemination more widely.
- Ensuring equal opportunities in access to staff development, in accordance with the University's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles](#).

Individuals

Individuals are responsible for:

- Reflecting at regular intervals upon their performance in their current jobs and future career aspirations and identifying their appropriate development needs.
- Discussing these with their line manager during their CDSA review meetings, with a view to establishing priorities in relation to their personal, departmental or University objectives.
- Taking full advantage of such opportunities.
- Applying newly-developed knowledge and skills to their work and the development of their careers.
- Where difficulties occur, raising issues with their line manager and [Organisation Learning](#) in the first instance.

6. Monitoring and review of Policy

- The Organisation Learning team and other providers of in-house staff development activities are responsible for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of what they provide.
- The University is committed to the continuous improvement of our staff development provision and encourage feedback from staff. Where it is appropriate, best practice will be shared as part of our commitment to improve our service provision.
- Those responsible for managing staff should, together with the staff member participating in staff development activities, evaluate the extent to which development undertaken has achieved the intended objectives, and where necessary, agree appropriate next steps with the staff member during their annual CDSA review.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff, regardless of age, care experience, caring status or dependency, civil status, disability, family status, gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or trades union membership status.

8. Useful references

Guidance on the Statutory Right to Request Time to Train

External Training Agreement

Time off for Study – OU Courses and other Further/Higher Education Provision