



Learning and Development Policy

Scope

This policy applies to all staff. This policy operates within the terms and conditions of relevant Circular Letters.

Purpose

This policy has been developed to provide a framework within which the provisions of the relevant Circular letters can be applied and to set out the procedures which will be applied for all matters relating to Learning and Development.

Objectives

To ensure that the various procedures are understood and are applied in an objective, transparent and fair way across the organisation

Policy Statement

The success of Cork ETB in delivering on its strategic objectives, and fulfilling its vision of being a driving force of education and training in Cork, is dependent on its people. In striving to deliver high quality services which are innovative, responsive and inclusive, it is vital that we recruit the highest calibre of staff; it is also crucial that our staff have the ability to learn, train and develop within their roles and the organisation. The purpose of the Learning and Development policy is to set out how Cork ETB will manage the various procedures to support employees in acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge for their roles.

What is Learning and Development?

Learning and Development is a term used to cover the following:

- Training (instructor-led, content based activity)
- Learning (Self-directed, work based process)
- Development (refers to the broader process of learning and training – acquiring skills or knowledge by a range of different means)

Learning and Development Plan

Cork ETB will develop a Learning and Development plan to identify the skills, competencies and capabilities required by the organisation, set learning and development priorities, clarify resources and budget, and identify learning methods and evaluation processes. This plan

will incorporate an annual process to identify Learning and Development Needs, and to address those needs.

Equality of Opportunity

Cork ETB will ensure equal access and opportunity to development, education and training for all staff (within the limits set down by the Department of Education and Skills). Cork ETB strives to offer an environment conducive to learning and development, and to provide all employees with appropriate learning and development opportunities. It is important to note that employees who are most successful in achieving their personal development goals are those who actively manage their personal development.

Budget

All Learning and Development activities are subject to budgetary constraints. All decisions made in relation to internal or external training, fee reimbursement etc are made subject to funding available. In general, training and development costs will be charged to the budget of the school/centre/service that the employee is attached to; however, this will be reviewed and decided on a case by case basis. Budgets for staff training and development will be set out in the annual Learning and Development plans.

Learning and Development Procedural Guidelines:

This policy sets out below the procedures in the following areas:

- a. Reimbursement of Professional Membership Fees
- b. Reimbursement of Tuition and Examination Fees
- c. Study Leave
- d. Attendance at Training, Short Courses, Conferences, CPD events etc

A. Professional Memberships

It is recognised that many members of staff may be required to pay membership fees for professional associations/bodies. In general, no member of staff has an entitlement to have membership fees of such bodies/associations paid by Cork ETB and as a matter of policy, Cork ETB does not reimburse professional subscriptions given the many and varied professional associations that employees are members of and the limited budget available for staff development. The only exceptions to this policy are in the case of professional affiliation fees for Guidance Counsellors or Chaplains employed in schools or centres, and membership subscriptions for Principals for either the NAPD or the PDA.

Application Procedure

Principals or members of staff employed as Guidance Counsellors or School Chaplains should submit invoices for professional affiliation fees to their school/centre for payment. Schools and centres should process same in the normal way following Finance guidelines for payment.

B. TUITION AND EXAMINATION FEE REIMBURSEMENT

Cork ETB recognises that employees may wish to pursue educational qualifications relevant to their positions in order to further their professional development. Such qualifications can bring significant benefits to the person and the organisation.

Teachers

Fee reimbursement for teaching staff registered with the Teaching Council is managed directly by the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme, run by the Marino Institute of Education on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. This scheme provides funding toward the cost of course participation and examination fees of professional development courses that are directly relevant and of benefit to schools, and that are subject to certification/award by an appropriate accreditation authority recognised by the Department of Education and Skills. Applications and fee refunds are made retrospectively for a course undertaken in the previous academic year.

Full details and procedures regarding the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme are published by the Department of Education and Skills annually via Circular Letter, usually in January or February each year. The latest circular at the time of issue of this policy is CL 0008/2016.

Where a teacher is not registered with the Teaching Council (e.g. teachers employed in special schools or Further Education centres) or where a registered teacher identifies recognised professional training qualifications (outside of the above scheme, or normal in-service) which are of significant benefit to his/her school/centre, he/she may apply for reimbursement of the fees for such training under this policy. Such applications will be processed as per the procedures for non-teaching staff set out below, and the same conditions will apply where such applications are approved.

Non-Teaching Staff

There are two different types of qualifications comprehended by this policy, which are set out below.

- i. Recognised qualifications or training which are identified as necessary for the competent performance of an employee's post.
- ii. Recognised qualifications or training which are not essential to the fulfilment of job requirements, but which may carry a significant benefit to the individual and organisation in terms of expanding the employee's skills and knowledge relevant to his/her work within the ETB, allowing for a higher level of performance and greater flexibility or adaptability in taking on other duties and tasks. Such a qualification may also be relevant to the employee's personal and career development plan within the ETB.

Due to the limited nature of the budget available to CETB and the requirement to assign such funding in the most effective way, this policy cannot cover qualifications which are solely or primarily for the purposes of personal development, or which do not benefit the organisation or the employee's performance in his/her role directly.

The following guidelines apply:

1. All funding is subject to the approved budget allowable on an annual basis.
2. All applicants to the scheme should familiarise themselves with the Revenue Guidelines in respect of relief for tuition fees particularly where fees / portion of fees are paid by the employer. It is the responsibility of each individual to ensure that they are compliant with Revenue requirements.
3. For courses which require more than 1 year's attendance, reimbursement will take place annually on successful completion of each academic session. No reimbursement will be permitted for repeat years.
4. In the case of courses leading to a Degree qualification refund of fees will be made for a period not exceeding 4 academic sessions.
5. Fee reimbursement will normally only be paid for courses provided by outside agencies as defined in CL F45/82 which are state funded colleges/institutions. Where a qualification is required in a specialised area not provided by any public body, consideration may be given to other providers.
6. For educational qualification as set out in "Non-Teaching Staff, section (i)" above, which are identified as being necessary for an employee's role, and where the employee is requested to complete such qualifications by the ETB, tuition and examination fees will be paid in full.
7. For education qualifications as set out in "Non-Teaching Staff, section (ii)" above, where there is a real benefit to the ETB from an employee's completion of such a qualification, as a general rule, no more than 90% of tuition and examination fees may be reimbursed to the employee on successful completion of the course. The amount of the refund may vary subject to budgetary constraints. No travel or subsistence expenses may be claimed for such courses.

Application Procedure

Employees who wish to apply for financial support for tuition fees should complete the Application Form for Reimbursement of CPD Tuition Fees. The application form requires employees to outline the essential information about the course, as well as the relevance and benefits of their participation.

The employee should discuss his/her application with his/her Principal/Coordinator/Line Manager in the first instance who must sign the form indicating if they do/do not support the application for fee reimbursement, and add any comments or observations.

The employee should then submit the form to the HR Manager, where it will be considered in conjunction with either the Principal Officer or the Education Officer (depending on whether the applicant is a member of instruction or non-academic staff). Applications should be submitted by the 30th April prior to the commencement of the course; however, late applications may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Payment Procedures

Where an application for fee reimbursement is approved, the HR Manager will generate a purchase order for approved amount and the employee must make arrangements for the institution to issue an invoice for the approved amount to Cork ETB, who will make the

payment directly to the institution following approved Finance guidelines. The employee will be responsible for payment of any outstanding amount directly to the institution.

Direct payment of fees for employees is subject to a number of terms and conditions set out below. In accepting the direct payment of their fees (or part thereof) to an educational institution, an employee is accepting the terms and conditions attached to the scheme.

Terms and Conditions:

Applicants are required to accept the following terms and conditions in order to receive payment under this policy. Employees must indicate acceptance of same in the relevant section on the application form.

Successful Completion of Course:

Staff members must submit transcripts on completion of the course (or at the end of each year, where the course is of more than one year's duration) to show that they have completed and passed the course. Where an employee does not submit transcripts, or has failed to complete or pass the course, the full amount of the fee reimbursement must be repaid to Cork ETB. Such repayment will be made by way of salary deductions over a reasonable period in line with normal procedures, or may be made in a lump sum payment by the employee directly to the ETB where desired. Where an employee terminates his/her employment with Cork ETB or retires prior to the full repayment of the fees, the outstanding balance will be deducted from his/her final pay or pension lump sum payment.

Termination of Employment after completion of Course:

Staff members who receive support under this mechanism will be required to commit to three years' service post qualification with the ETB. If they leave ETB (or other Public Service body in cases of redeployment) in the interim, a sliding scale of fees to be recouped as follows:

1. Within one year – 75% of all costs
2. Within two years – 50% of all costs
3. Within three years – 25% of all costs

Deductions to the maximum of these limits will be taken from an employee's final pay on the termination of his/her employment.

C. STUDY AND EXAM LEAVE

Study/exam leave is leave available to staff other than teachers/SNAs for the purposes of facilitating employees in sitting examinations for courses they are pursuing and/or preparing for same, where such courses are being funded (partially or fully) by Cork ETB.

1. Staff pursuing primary degree courses for which they are receiving fee reimbursement (partial or total) may be allowed 10 days paid study leave for the entire period of the course, with the ability to spread the days over the various course examinations, with a maximum limit of 5 days in each academic year.* This arrangement also applies to other third level courses which last for 3 years or longer.

2. For shorter third level courses 3 days paid study leave may be allowed for each year of the course.
3. If additional leave beyond the limits set out above is required, employees should use a mix of holidays/flexi leave and make arrangements with their line manager as appropriate.

*For members of staff who were formerly SOLAS employees, the entitlement is up to a maximum of 5 days per year for each academic year, repeat years being excluded.

Applications:

Employees wishing to avail of study leave should indicate same on the application form for Reimbursement of Tuition Fees. The HR Manager will review and, where approved, will confirm the number of days applicable and notify the employee. The Leave Returns group will be notified and will create a study leave balance on Core.

The employee may then apply for the individual days required for study leave through Core in the normal way.

ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING, SHORT COURSES, CONFERENCE & CPD EVENTS

It is recognised that from time to time, employees may be requested to attend at training, short courses, conferences etc by their managers.

Employees may also request to attend at these types of events where they believe that they are of value. In such cases, employees should request permission to attend directly from their line manager. In the case of events which may be of interest to more than one team/employee, and there is the possibility that other members of staff may also wish to attend, the line manager should consult with his/her counterparts to discuss the issue, and an agreement be reached in relation to who should attend.

Attendance at approved events is treated as per normal working time, with appropriate travel expenses and subsistence allowable.

Staff who attend such activities, in particular conferences and CPD events, may be required to prepare a summary report to discuss with colleagues, in order to share the information from the event. Where appropriate, any training/information materials received may also be shared with colleagues (subject to copyright restrictions.)

Review

This policy will be subject to review in accordance with organisational needs and/or where it is necessary to do so due to changes in DES regulations, legislation or other such situations.



Signed: _____

Date: 21st April 2016

Timothy Owens

Chief Executive