



BLANTYRE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

BIU STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Purpose and Context

Blantyre International University (BIU) is committed to providing a supportive and rewarding environment for employees and recognises that the quality, responsiveness and professionalism of its workforce are inextricably linked to the University's achievement of its mission and strategic goals.

The purpose of this policy is to encourage and support employees to actively pursue their professional and career development as an integral element of their employment with the University. The University acknowledges that continuing professional development contributes to personal job satisfaction, workplace productivity, reward and recognition.

This policy applies to all University employees on fixed term and ongoing appointments and sets out the principles that underpin professional and career development at the University.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the relevant Clauses of other applicable University policies or procedures.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- a. Professional Development includes the provision of learning and development opportunities and activities to extend and broaden the scope of professional capabilities of employees in relation to their role and responsibilities. Professional development activities build on the collective knowledge and experience of employees and provide employees with opportunities to acquire, practice and adopt new knowledge, thereby enhancing individual, group and organisational learning and capabilities. Within this context:
 - i. Capabilities refer to the combination of attributes, qualities, skills, knowledge and understanding of ethical principles that underpin the professional practices of employees and that enable a person to perform to a high standard in a given context and role.
 - ii. Career Development refers to the process of enabling employees to plan their careers and engage in career development activities that will improve their career prospects and job progression or promotion.
 - iii. Career Management refers to the process of actively planning, managing, developing and evaluating one's career.
 - iv. Continuing Professional Development facilitates recognition of employees



as a professional group and reflects a commitment to demonstrating high professional standards, building professional capabilities, continuous quality improvement in work practices, and optimising career opportunities.

- b. Approved formal award courses are courses that lead to a national qualification issued in the higher education sector and that are recognised. Approved formal award courses must be relevant to the employee's current position or career and have significant value to both the individual and to the University.
- c. Short Courses are courses of short duration that are normally from half a day to five days in length, run on consecutive days or over a period of time, offered by an external provider and which would not normally lead to a qualification.

Policy Statement

The University will identify organisational goals and priorities, and develop and implement a range of strategies and programs to enhance and build the capacity, skills and professionalism of employees to enable them to contribute effectively to the University's mission and strategic goals. The University is committed to providing employees with:

- a. The opportunity to develop capabilities that contribute to organisational and work unit goals.
- b. The opportunity to develop a career plan and participate in career development activities that extend and enhance their capabilities and capacity for advancement within the University.
- c. Equity of access to professional development opportunities.

Organisational units are required to plan and prioritise the development needs of their employees in alignment with organisational goals. Unit Heads are expected to consider staff access and equity issues and to apply the principle of assessing merit or achievement relative to opportunity in planning and determining professional and career development opportunities. Employees are encouraged to take an active role in their own ongoing development and to apply their learning to its most effective use.

Employees are required to participate in the annual performance planning and review process and identify development activities that support their performance objectives and their professional and career development.

The principles that underpin the provision of professional and career development at the University comprise:



- a. Acknowledging Continuing Professional Development as a framework to support and encourage opportunities for continuous learning.
- b. Applying the principle of merit or achievement relative to opportunity to determine equity of access to professional development programs, resources and support.
- c. Recognising that responsibility for professional development is shared between employees, supervisors and managers for the planning and undertaking of professional development relevant to their roles and responsibilities.
- d. Ensuring the provision of training and development that meet the core requirements of the University's and employees' roles and responsibilities and that comply with statutory obligations and University policies.
- e. Using performance planning and career development processes as the primary means of ensuring alignment between individual, unit, and organisational plans and priorities and identifying individual and work unit training and development needs of employees. Planning processes including organisational unit planning; identifying professional development plans and priorities by Heads of Units; ensuring equity of access to professional development for all employees; and individual development plans prepared as part of the University's performance, planning and development process for its employees.
- f. Evaluating employee participation, learning outcomes and the relevance and quality of professional development programmes on an ongoing basis.

Employees and their supervisors should consider a range of professional development activities to enhance organisational and individual development and capabilities. Professional development programs include orientation, induction and on-the-job training; career development and transition programs; teaching and learning support and programs; research supervision and support; undertaking research or project work; participating in internal or external committees or in University governance; and networking, coaching and mentoring programmes.

The University and Unit Heads wherever possible will ensure the provision of resources for professional development including allocation of funding for professional development in all unit budgets and centrally funded internal professional development providers. Provision of professional development funding includes support for attendance at internal or external professional development courses and conferences; Academic Development Programme (ADP) for academic employees; support for ongoing accredited education; study and exam leave; and study visits.



Opportunities for career development within the University include the filling of internal vacancies or the temporary appointment of employees to a higher classified position, secondments or on-the-job training programmes.

Recognition of service to the profession includes being a member of a professional board or committee, volunteering as a convenor of a professional forum or special interest group, judging or assessing professional excellence awards, acting as an assessor on a state or national accreditation committee, writing articles for professional magazines or journals, participation in research related to the profession.

The University may recognise other Continuing Professional Development activities including self-directed learning.

Procedures

Internal University Professional Development Providers

The University has primary responsibility for the provision of University wide professional development programs and activities.

Internal professional development programs will be informed by the University's strategic goals and priorities. Internal providers are funded by the University, and as a general principle, organisational units are not required to fund internal professional development programs other than to provide work time for employees to attend programs or to subsidise costs such as an external consultant, catering or printing.

Where an organisational unit requests the University to develop and deliver a specific development programme, the costs of development and delivery are to be met from the requesting unit's budget with costs agreed to as part of the planning process.

Individual Development Plans

An important component of the University's performance, planning and development process is the planning and discussion of the employee's professional and career development such as undertaking professional development (short courses or conferences), further studies, performing higher duties, undertaking a secondment, on-the-job training, study visit or other Continuing Professional Development activities. It is recommended that each employee develops, in consultation with their supervisor, an Individual Development Plan, and that the employee, with the support of their supervisor and Unit Head, actively implement the Individual Development Plan and summarise progress and outcomes of the plan at least annually as part of the annual performance planning and development process.



Supervisors have a responsibility to ensure the effective planning, support, monitoring and implementation of Individual Development Plans. The Unit Head or delegate, as part of the performance, planning and development process, must approve and support agreed individual development plans in line with organisational unit plans and budgets.

Allocation of Salaries Budget to Meet Professional Development

Wherever possible, Units are expected to support professional development activities for academic and professional employees. Heads of Units must ensure equity of access for all employees when allocating resources for professional development.

The University and Unit Heads wherever possible will ensure the provision of resources for professional development including allocation of funding for professional development in all unit budgets.

Induction

New Employees

The University provides an organisational induction programme for new employees to ensure access to:

- a. Information on the University's Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan; Governance, statutory and policy framework; organisational structure; Code of Conduct and core values; and conditions of employment; and
- b. Support, development and training in core skills or capabilities required for the carrying out of duties related to the position.

Continuing Professional Development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) facilitates the recognition of employees as a professional group. A commitment to CPD by both managers and employees enables joint responsibility for demonstrating high professional standards; reviewing current knowledge and skills; building professional capabilities; continuous quality improvement in work practices; and optimising career opportunities for employees.

CPD allows employees to actively participate in, track and monitor their continuing professional development and recognises the range of development activities that add to or broaden an individual's body of knowledge. CPD may include formal and informal, internal or external professional development activities such as formal short courses of study, seminars and conferences, work-based activities, professional network forums, and self-directed informal learning.



The undertaking of CPD activities should be discussed by the employee with their supervisor at the time of the annual performance, planning and development meeting and form part of the employee's Individual Development Plan.

A guideline of up to 105 hours of CPD every three (3) years (or 35 hours over 12 months) is a recommended minimum, and allows for flexibility in planning and scheduling at the organisational unit and individual level. Within this framework, employees should undertake any mandatory or compliance-related training required from time-to-time as it relates to statutory or legal obligations or application of University policies or systems.

Short Courses and Conferences

An employee may attend a short course or conference that is directly relevant to the employee's work or career or professional development with the support of their Unit Head. Support will be in the form of granting work time to attend the short course or conference and/or a contribution towards the registration fee and travel costs to be met from the Unit budget if possible.

Where an employee is required and directed by the Unit Head to undertake a course essential for carrying out their current duties, the cost of participation should be covered from the Unit budget. Where the employee initiates a request to attend a course or conference that is relevant to the employee's work, the Unit Head may approve a contribution towards the total cost of participation.

Employees seeking to attend a short course or conference should discuss this with their supervisor and apply in writing to their Unit Head. The application should include the following:

- a. Description of the course or conference.
- b. Expected outcomes from participating in the course or conference.
- c. Costs and financial assistance applied for to attend the course or conference.
- d. Recommendation and support for participating in the course or conference by the line supervisor.

Where a Unit Head does not support an application to attend a short course or conference they should provide a reason to the employee in writing.

Where an employee is approved to attend a short course or conference of one day's duration, travel time that exceeds the time the employee would normally spend travelling to their home campus and back, will be included as time worked, as well as attendance hours at the conference.

Breakfast, lunch, dinner and welcome receptions are excluded for the purpose of calculating time worked.



Where an employee attends a short course or conference that extends beyond one day in duration, it is considered that each day's attendance is a seven-hour working day, and no additional time will be allowed for travel, breakfast, lunch, dinner, welcome receptions or events.

In the case of a dispute between an employee and their supervisor and/or Unit Head in relation to the time claimed for conference attendance and travel, the Chancellor will make the final determination on hours to be claimed as work hours.

Academic Development Program (ADP)

Tenured academic employees are eligible to apply for an Academic Development Plan (ADP) which is designed to support academic staff during a period of sustained professional development.

Education Support

An employee undertaking an approved formal award course may be eligible for education support in the form of paid study leave, exam leave and/or an education support allowance. Education support is available to full-time or part-time employees who have completed a minimum of the equivalent of 12 months' full-time continuous service and who have satisfactorily met performance expectations. The approved study and relevance of the course to the employee's career development should be discussed with and agreed to by the supervisor at the time of the performance, planning and development meeting and form part of the employee's individual development plan. Advice may be sought from the Chancellor.

Study Leave

An employee may apply for paid study leave to undertake an approved formal award course. The study leave must be approved by the Unit Head and is consistent with the provisions of the current Staff Conditions of Service.

Study leave may be used to undertake activities directly related to and required by the approved course of study, for example, to attend weekly lectures or a residential program, course related research, or practicum. Where an employee is undertaking study where face-to-face learning is not required, the employee must provide documentation from the provider detailing the equivalent number of hours' study commitment that is equivalent to attending lectures to satisfy course requirements. The number of hours taken into consideration for study leave does not include the additional time for reading, assessments or assignments, study group discussions, exams or travel which would normally be completed outside of lectures.

Study leave will be granted only once in respect of a subject and will not be granted retrospectively. Where an employee fails a subject, no further study leave will be granted for that subject or an equivalent subject.



Study leave for completion of postgraduate research studies will be granted subject to the employee meeting the requirements for satisfactory progression and for completion within the maximum time limit allowed.

The maximum study leave entitlement is 70 hours per annum. Study leave may be used to attend weekly lectures or accumulated and used in a block period where an employee is required to undertake, for example, a practicum or to attend a residential program to satisfy course requirements. If the time needed exceeds this amount, the balance should be taken from other forms of leave such as annual leave.

Study leave will be applied pro-rata for part-time employees in accordance with the fraction that their position represents of a full-time position at the time of application and for the period of the study leave.

Study leave must have prior approval of the supervisor and Unit Head. Employees must provide evidence of satisfactory progress to their Unit Head. The nature and extent of study leave will be determined as part of the annual performance, planning and development and work plan discussions and in accordance with the relevant University policies.

In the event that an application for study leave to undertake an approved formal award course is not approved, reasons for the decision are to be provided to the employee.

Exam Leave

Eligible employees enrolled in an approved formal award course will be granted paid leave to undertake an examination. Exam leave will be limited to the time necessary to complete the examination and does not include travel time. Exam leave is additional to any study leave granted.

Education Support Allowance

The University will wherever possible provide support to employees enrolled in an approved formal award course through payment of an Education Support Allowance. The Education Support Allowance may be used to assist with course fees, purchase of text books or course materials.

The Education Support Allowance is to be approved by the Unit Head and paid from the Unit budget. The amount will be set by the Chancellor and reviewed periodically. The Education Support Allowance is to be agreed between the employee and their supervisor prior to the study being undertaken. The Education Support Allowance will not be paid retrospectively for units completed prior to the application for the allowance.

The Education Support Allowance will be paid via the payroll as a taxable allowance and will



be paid after the census date for the semester the employee is enrolled in. The employee must provide the original receipt of fees paid.

The Education Support Allowance will be granted only once in respect of a subject in a course. Where an employee fails a subject, no further support will be granted for that subject or an equivalent subject.

Employees should complete the Education Support Allowance Application Form to be approved by the Unit Head then forwarded to the Chancellor for processing.

Higher Duties

A temporary short term appointment to perform the duties of a higher classified position provides eligible staff with a career development opportunity and may arise through the taking of leave, secondment or resignation of another employee who is at a higher classified position and is generally within the same organisational unit.

Internal Secondment

A secondment provides an eligible employee with a career development opportunity to extend their skills, knowledge or experience in another position usually in another area of the University. Where a vacancy is advertised internally for a specified period of time and an employee applies and is recommended by the selection committee as the preferred applicant, the employee may request a secondment to the position.

The opportunity for a secondment or other forms of career development should be discussed by the employee with their supervisor at the time of the annual performance, planning and development meeting and form part of the employee's individual development plan.

External Secondment or External Exchange

An external secondment is an arrangement made with the mutual consent of the University and an employee where the University agrees that the employee can work with another employer (host organisation) for a specified period of time and under specific agreed conditions. The opportunity for a secondment or exchange or other forms of career development should be discussed by the employee with their supervisor at the time of the annual performance, planning and development meeting and form part of the employee's Individual Development Plan.

An external exchange is a placement of a University employee with another University or organisation locally and internationally. External exchanges normally involve a reciprocal visit by a staff member from the other organisation or University. The conditions of an external exchange must be negotiated and agreed by both organisations including details of functional placement, cost responsibilities and insurances.



The employee and their supervisor may initiate applications for a secondment or exchange. All details of the proposed programme including estimated costs and conditions of the secondment or exchange together with a written agreement by the host organisation are to be forwarded to the relevant Unit Head for approval. The Chancellor will be available for advice in relation to the secondment or exchange during its operation.

All full-time or part-time employees who have completed a minimum of the equivalent of 12 months' full-time continuous service and who have satisfactorily met performance expectations may apply for a secondment or exchange.

Study Visit

An employee may be eligible to undertake a study visit to another university (ies) or institution(s). A study visit is usually of short duration from a few days to two weeks where an employee undertakes a study visit to a similar unit or area at another university or institution. The purpose of a study visit is to further the employee's professional development and study other business practices, processes or systems to support the implementation of improvements or organisational change initiatives at the University.

All full-time or part-time employees who have completed a minimum of the equivalent of 24 months' full-time continuous service and who have satisfactorily met performance expectations may apply for a secondment or exchange. The opportunity to undertake a study visit or other forms of career development should be discussed by the employee with their supervisor at the time of the annual performance, planning and development meeting and form part of the employee's Individual Development Plan.