

Maynooth University

People Development Policy

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Table of Contents

Revision Record	2
Relevant Information	2
Definitions.....	3
1. Policy Statement.....	4
2. Policy Scope	4
3. Policy Principles	4
4. Identifying Development Needs	5
5. Key Development Resources	6
6. Facilitation Methods Used	6
7. Scheduling of Development Supports	7
8. Guidance on Accessing Development	7
9. Measurement of People Development Activities.....	8
10. Roles and Responsibilities	9
11. Budget Allocation	10
12. Data Retention	11
13. Monitoring and Review.....	11

Relevant Information

[Maynooth University Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028](#)

[Maynooth University Equality & Diversity Policy](#)

[Developmental Review](#)

[Human Resources Website](#)

[People Development Services](#)

[People Development Guide](#)

[Staff Course Directory](#)

[Department Development Plan Template](#)

[Education Support Policy and Form](#)

[Study and Exam Leave Policy and Form](#)

[Fee Remission Policy and Form](#)

[New Employee Supports](#)

[Onboarding New Employees](#)

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions apply.

Head of Department means the Head of an academic Department/School or the Head of an administrative or support Department to which the staff member is assigned.

Nominee shall be understood to mean the person to whom the Head of Department has nominated in their place to carry out the role, as if they were the Head of Department. In many cases this will be the manager.

Soft skills or **professional skills** refer to skills such as, leadership skills, people skills and interpersonal skills.

Technical skills are specialised skills which provide the knowledge and ability required to perform a task or the use of specific tools or programmes in a role.

E-learning refers to learning carried out via digital devices. It can be accessed anywhere, at any time, and is a flexible way of learning.

Blended learning combines digital learning tools and in-person teaching. It allows flexibility and caters to different learning preferences.

1. Policy Statement

Enabling our people at Maynooth University to develop is key to its success. We want to create a University wide learning culture that empowers individuals to take charge of their own development. By creating the right environment, staff can develop and grow, supported throughout their journey by a future career planning and development framework including a robust [Developmental Review](#) process.

A number of areas provide development support which can be requested through the Developmental Review process and information can be sought directly from these [areas](#). This policy focusses on the development provided through People Development, HR.

The People Development Strategy aligns with the People and Culture Implementation Plan as part of the overall University Strategic Plan. The People Development unit aims to enhance staff competencies and support staff development by serving as a crucial resource to support staff growth, enhance their skills, and contribute to the overall success of the university. The unit fosters a culture of continuous learning by promoting professional development and ensuring that development opportunities are accessible to all staff.

The primary purpose of People Development is to develop and enhance the knowledge, skills and competencies of university staff by providing targeted blended development solutions that ensure they are equipped to excel in their roles. The goal of learning is to create impactful ideas, to discover new and innovative approaches and to drive meaningful change.

The purpose of the People Development Policy is to provide information for staff on how they can inform and access their development offerings within the University.

2. Policy Scope

People Development services are available to all permanent and temporary staff of the University including academic, research, administrative, professional, technical and support staff.

Individuals engaged on an occasional basis, can avail of supports on orientation and wellbeing. There are other compliance based supports available to occasional staff provided by the University, such as, [Health & Safety](#), [GDPR course](#), [IT Security Awareness](#) and [EDI Awareness](#). Depending on the nature of the occasional staff engagement, if additional learning is necessary to carry out contracted duties or to meet the University's legal or compliance obligations, it may be provided. If this is the case, we require prior written approval from the individual's Head of Department. All such requests for additional training should be sent to people.development@mu.ie.

A catalogue of development activity including general training as well as more specific, technical training tailored to the requirements and needs of departments within the University is available on the HR website.

3. Policy Principles

People Development in Maynooth University is underpinned by the following principles:

- Encourage a culture of continuous learning where staff are motivated to regularly develop new skills and knowledge.
- Ensure staff members have equal access to learning and development opportunities appropriate for their professional development regardless of any of the nine equality grounds.
- Endeavour to ensure that programmes provided are inclusive and accommodate the diversity of staff.
- Align learning and development initiatives with the strategic goals and objectives of the University to ensure relevance and impact.
- Focus on the needs and career aspirations of staff, providing personalised development plans and support through the Developmental Review framework.
- Support the creation of an environment where learning is encouraged and recognised, and where staff feel safe to take risks and make mistakes.
- Ensure the identification of adequate resources, including time, budget, and tools, are allocated to support learning and development activities.
- Adhere to legal and ethical standards in all learning and development activities, ensuring compliance with relevant regulations and policies.
- Engage leadership in promoting and participating in learning and development initiatives to demonstrate commitment and set an example.
- Offer a variety of learning methods, including workshops, online courses, mentoring, and on-the-job training, to cater to different learning styles.
- Implement regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of learning initiatives and make necessary improvements.

4. Identifying Development Needs

Development needs are identified at a collective level and at an individual level. They are also informed by a number of key drivers, such as,

- Maynooth University Strategic Plan
- Higher Education Authority (HEA)
- Irish Universities Association/Irish Universities Training Network (IUA/IUTN)
- Athena Swan
- Employment Legislation & National/Sectoral Policies
- National Agreements
- Quality Assurance processes
- Internal Partnerships
- Developmental Review
- Exit Questionnaires
- Tailored Training Needs Analysis

At a collective or organisational level, needs analysis are informed by the University Strategy, workforce planning, national policy, quality assurance process, skills assessment, feedback meetings with staff, department development plans, Developmental Review overview of development trends, staff survey outcomes and benchmarking against sectoral standards.

Developmental Review provides a co-ordinated development plan of the department's and individual needs to support the delivery of business and operational objectives for the Department and, by extension, the University.

At an individual level, needs analysis is gathered through the Probation process and Developmental Review by aligning development needs to work objectives and career planning, questions on further supports in evaluation forms, surveys and focus groups.

The HR Partners also provide information, insight and feedback on department level needs.

A [Department Development Plan template](#) for Heads of Department is available on the People Development website. By having a department development plan for the year, it allows the University to identify future skills required across the University. Comprehensive development plans identify the learning needs of staff both at a general level and technical level with a plan on how to meet these needs.

5. Key Development Resources

There are many different types of learning and development activities that support and contribute to an individual's ongoing professional development. These include.

- *hands-on* experience, which allows staff discover and refine their job-related skills, make decisions, address challenges and interact with influential people such as managers and mentors through secondments and being involved in projects,
- *learning from others* through mentoring, coaching and interaction with peers and
- *formal instruction* in the shape of classroom and online learning.

The main development resources currently available to staff through People Development are listed in the People Development Guidelines and on the People Development, HR website.

There are a range of other HR policies that support the development of staff across the University. Further information on each resource is available on the People Development section of the HR website.

6. Facilitation Methods Used

People Development use a mix of facilitation methods which can help create a dynamic and effective learning environment for staff, ensuring they have the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their roles.

- Blended Learning - Combining online tools and in-person courses. It allows flexibility and caters to different learning preferences. Online modules can cover theoretical aspects, while in-person sessions can focus on practical applications and discussions.
- Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) - This method involves live training sessions conducted via video conferencing tools such as MS Teams.
- E-learning platforms provide access to a wide range of courses and materials. These platforms include Inspire wellbeing, the Learning Hub and Moodle.
- Mentoring and Coaching can provide personalised guidance and support for staff.
- Microlearning - Delivering content in small, manageable chunks helps in retaining information better. Many soft skills and IT Skills topics are facilitated in this manner.
- Collaborative tools such as, Microsoft Teams, can facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among staff.
- Customised courses provide tailored learning content to meet the specific needs of different groups within the organisation, ensures relevance and effectiveness such as the Technical Training Network events.
- Interactive webinars and workshops – allowing interaction through polls, Q&A and discussion by using Padlet, Vevox and Mentimeter.

- On-the-Job training integrates learning with daily tasks allowing staff to apply new skills immediately.

7. Scheduling of Development Supports

In general, the scheduling of People Development courses is based on running as many relevant and requested programmes as possible within budget and that can be supported by the team throughout the year. As Departments and different categories of staff will have different periods when they are very busy, it is difficult to find a time that meets everyone's needs for running the courses. The balance is to run courses during and outside of semester, over the 12 months of the calendar year and running the most popular courses multiple times.

To support the blended working pattern of the University, courses are run on campus and online. Courses and activities organised by People Development, HR will take place during normal working hours on the North or South Campus or online. Typically, full day courses take place between 09.30 – 16.30.

Staff participate in the full knowledge and understanding that the programme is likely to require a time commitment away from work. Participants should ensure their current workload is not impacted, if attending a programme.

8. Guidance on Accessing Development

Development should be thought of in its broadest terms, it is more than training. Development includes delegation of work activities supported by mentoring, coaching, on the job training, shadowing, knowledge sharing etc. In fact, any situation in which an individual learns. The way an individual learns is personal to them and this should be considered when agreeing development objectives. A *Development Objective* is an agreed action, which will help you to improve the competencies you identified as relevant to your job.

For People Development the primary route to request development support is through probationary meetings for new staff and through the Developmental Review Framework, for all staff who have successfully completed their probation and are within scope. In order to assist with personal and/or team development, we have put together lists of courses that may be required by specific roles as part of career development, by [grade](#).

Having discussed your development needs as part of the Developmental Review process a development plan will be agreed. Individual staff members are then responsible for actioning this plan within the period agreed for that DR cycle. Development can be viewed as a process that results in growth, progress and positive change. Development can relate to areas aligned to the goals you are aiming to achieve in the coming cycle, personal growth and your broader career focus. Approval to attend a course or partake in a development activity should be approved in advance through your Developmental Review.

Heads of Department can seek advice on individual and departmental development needs from People Development, who may offer the development requirement or signpost how it can be provided.

If you are outside the scope of DR you should discuss your development request with your manager/Head before applying to participate. Workload and availability should also be considered before you register on a course.

People Development use the [Employee Self Service](#) as a booking system for all courses they offer. If the course you are looking for is not scheduled you can add your name to the waitlist and you will be contacted when there is a viable number of people to run the course. If the course you are looking for is not on the booking system, please contact People Development to discuss your need or complete the [course request form](#).

If you have and any special requirements such as, access or where there will be catering, dietary requirements, you can add these under *comments*.

You will receive an automated email confirming that your request to attend the course has been received, and another email once you have been approved by People Development. This approval ensures that the course is suitable for your needs and that a space is available. Individuals engaged on an occasional basis, can avail of onboarding supports, wellbeing supports and compliance training, such as, Health and Safety courses, EDI, Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Cybersecurity. Depending on the nature of your engagement, if additional training is necessary to carry out contracted duties or to meet the University's legal or compliance obligations, it may be provided.

9. Measurement of People Development Activities

Programmes are evaluated through evaluation forms, consultation with individuals and regular feedback from managers/Heads of Department.

The impact of the development supports provided by People Development is assessed through different mediums.

- Participation Rate - Percentage of staff members who participate in People Development programmes annually.
- Participant Satisfaction - Evaluation forms are sent to staff after attendance at courses to assess staff satisfaction with the course. The feedback is then discussed within People Development and shared anonymously with the course facilitator.
- Skill Uptake - Number of staff members who demonstrate improved leadership and soft skills based on feedback from staff and through the Developmental Review process. There is an opportunity as part of the Developmental Review framework to reflect on and document the development initiatives the Reviewee has been involved in during the last cycle and how they benefited from them and to consider how the Reviewee might use the learnings they gained in their role.
- Impact on Performance - The correlation between participation in People Development programmes and individual/team performance can be discussed and measured within departments.
- Feedback and continuous improvement - Regular feedback from participants and managers helps in refining and improving training programmes and keeping content relevant. We engage with staff through one-to-one meetings, networks and forums to gain this information.
- Pre and post assessments for MS365 courses run.
- Action Plans are encouraged for use after each course and templates for action plans are available on the People Development [webpage](#).
- Embedding learning from courses in mentoring, coaching, networking and communities of practice.

- Cost-Effectiveness - Budget utilisation and cost per participant for each programme is measured as well as ensuring that Public Sector Procurement guidelines are adhered to.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for staff development is threefold:

- The personal responsibility of individual members of staff.
- A direct management responsibility of UE members/Heads/managers within the University.
- Through centrally resourced activities, advice and support of the Human Resources Department.

Implementation of the People Development Policy will be the responsibility of UE members/Heads/managers in conjunction with the Head of People Development and other Heads of Unit that provide development for staff, as appropriate.

10.1 Role of Individual Members of Staff

The effectiveness of any staff development activity depends on the active and purposeful participation of the individuals involved. In recognition of the benefits of staff development to the individual as well as to the University, members of staff are encouraged to:

- Seek opportunities to update the skills and knowledge required in their current position.
- Notify their Head of Department/manager where specific needs are not being met.
- Participate in the Developmental Review (DR) framework, if within scope.
- Participate in mandatory, job specific and other personal and professional development activities identified through the Developmental Review process or through the Probation process.
- Participate in Continuous Professional Development, where appropriate.

10.2 Role of the University Executive and Heads of Department/Managers

Senior members of staff, particularly those with managerial responsibilities, are responsible for supporting and sustaining the growth and development of their staff as part of a planned and continuous learning process and must provide appropriate opportunities for their staff to participate in training and development initiatives.

Managers/Heads are responsible for,

- Assisting staff in the identification of required development needs and appropriate development interventions.
- Ensuring that the Onboarding and Probation Procedures are followed for all new members of staff.
- Holding Developmental Review meetings within their department for those within scope.
- Analysing the staff development needs of their department, developing and implementing plans to address those needs through DR and Department Development Plans.
- Making appropriate budgetary provision for individual and group staff development plans devised through Developmental Review and other sources of needs analysis.
- Ensuring that members of their staff are given the necessary opportunities to undertake appropriate development within reason and economic constraints.
- Supporting the new knowledge, skills or abilities in the university.
- Participating in Continuous Professional Development activities within their specific profession.

- Keeping abreast of current leadership thinking and practice by participation in leadership support offered through People Development.
- Encouraging staff to be active in their professional development.

10.3 Role of People Development, HR

There are a number of areas across the University that provide development supports for staff. Below refers to the responsibilities of People Development, HR.

People Development in HR are responsible for,

- Developing and implementing learning and development activities in response to recommendations and actions from departmental and university-wide review processes, including the Strategic Plan and the Institutional Review.
- Reflecting University and wider, national strategies in our internal learning/development activities.
- Contributing to the achievement of the University's vision, purpose, values and strategic goals.
- Delivering a Career Planning and Development Framework.
- Working co-operatively with all relevant departments and committees, involved in delivering development internally to staff.
- Creating and promoting opportunities for staff to engage in lifelong learning relevant to their roles and career aspirations and the changing needs of the University.
- Enhancing service excellence by developing and implementing programmes to support all categories of staff in adopting innovative methods to carry out their work and support their stakeholders.
- Supporting the onboarding and retention of staff.
- Supporting competency development in key areas relevant to the staff member's role.
- Providing a blended learning approach to supports offered, such as, new and challenging experiences, exposure through networks, sharing, mentoring, coaching and structured training programmes.
- Fostering leadership and management skills by offering leadership development programmes for current and emerging leaders.
- Supporting career progression for staff.
- Keeping up to date on new innovative ways of delivering development supports.
- Identifying future skills requirements and delivering solutions for these.
- Ensuring that there is an appropriate and meaningful return on investment by monitoring and evaluating development initiatives undertaken to measure individual and organisational benefits.
- Calculating learning and development KPIs whenever possible and deciding on improvements.
- Providing policy advice on professional development and implementing procedures in accordance with policy.
- Maintaining budgets and resources for People Development and oversight of expenditure on development across the University.
- Playing a critical role in educational and professional development in the third-level sector.

11. Budget Allocation

Finance and the University Executive approve the People Development budget allocated for its programmes and initiatives. This budget covers leadership development, general MS 365 skills training, soft skills support and wellbeing seminars, for the academic year. The budget is based on the Strategic Plan for People Development for the coming year, based on the outcomes of the Developmental Review

framework. The budgetary allocation will be dependent on available funding and plans will be prioritised in the context of the amount of funding available. People Development is responsible for planning, executing, and monitoring expenses related to workshops, training materials, facilitators, and any other relevant costs.

The cost of most seminars and programmes is covered by this budget and there is no charge to the individual/department for programmes offered. However, a cancellation fee may apply in certain instances, to ensure value for money is achieved and that places are filled on each programme. If a staff member is unable to attend an activity they should let People Development know at least 3 working days beforehand by cancelling the place online through the [Employee Self-Service](#) (ESS) so that efforts can be made to fill the place. If a staff member needs to cancel within 3 working days, they will need to contact People Development directly by email people.development@mu.ie, as a cancellation fee may apply. If sufficient notice is not given (more than three working days), €150 will be charged to the staff member's Department to reimburse the cost of their non-attendance. Extenuating circumstances will be taken into consideration. The Head of Department will be notified, and the cancellation fee will be taken from the Department budget (within a month).

All University departments have independent budgets (non-pay budget), and these can be used to support specific and specialised learning and development requests within the department upon consultation and authorisation from the Head of Department or their nominee.

People Development receives an annual update from Finance on expenditure from the non-pay budget of each department. This provides information on expenditure trends and informs future People Development plans.

When it comes to development initiatives outside the scope of People Development (e.g., department-specific training, research-related workshops, or specialised programmes), the following process applies:

- The department identifies its development needs and proposes relevant activities.
- The Head of Department reviews and approves these proposals.
- If the proposed initiative requires funding, the department allocates funds from its non-pay budget.
- People Development collaborates with the department to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Regular reporting ensures transparency and accountability.

The courses run by People Development do not require overnight accommodation or travel. A per MU [Travel and Expenses Policy](#).

12. Data Retention

The documentation associated with People Development shall be stored in accordance with the University's Records Retention Schedules.

13. Monitoring and Review

The Director of Human Resources and the Head of People Development will monitor the application of the policy. This policy will be reviewed after a period of 3 years.