

Learning & Development

The Society is committed to ensuring that all employees achieve their full potential through progressive learning & development policies and practices.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the Society's approach to learning and development. The policy aims to support a working environment where continuous learning and development is encouraged and facilitated.

Scope

This learning & development policy applies to all part-time and full-time employees at the Law Society who have successfully completed their probationary period.

Conditions for Approval

At the Society, **internal learning & development activities** include any activities promoted and funded by the Human Resources Department. This includes training, mentoring, conferences & seminars or any other learning & development activity designed to develop talents, skills, knowledge and / or abilities.

External learning & development activities include external training, mentoring, conferences & seminars or any other activity (including those provided through the Education Department of the Law Society) designed to develop talents, skills, knowledge and / or abilities, and for which external payment and funding approval is required.

All learning and development activities are subject to approval. Each case will be considered on its own merits. However, the following factors will be considered before approval will be given:

- Whether the learning & development activity is directly relevant to the employee's present or future employment in the Society.
- Whether the learning & development activity is of reasonable duration and cost.
- Operational requirements must be satisfied and the timing of an employee's participation at a learning & development intervention must be considered appropriate.
- The employee's length of service.
- Whether the request is recommended by a Department Director.
- Whether the person has been grant aided to do a previous course of study.
- In the context of external learning and development activities, whether the application has been received by the Director of the Department no later than two weeks prior to the commencement of the proposed activity.

External learning & development activities are subject to funding approval. The following is an outline of the **funding rates** granted by the Society:

Full-funding (100%):	Where the activity is directly relevant to the employee's work.
Part-funding (75%):	Where the activity is sufficiently relevant to the employee's work as to bring material benefits to the Society.
Part-funding (50%):	Where the activity is partially relevant to the employee's work with some benefits to the Society.
Part-funding (25%):	Where the activity is relevant for personal development only.

Application Procedure

All employee applications for external learning & development activities must be received by the Director of the Department no later than **two weeks prior to the commencement of the proposed learning and development activity so that they can consider the application.**

Please note that the Department Director can provide final approval for external learning and development activities **with an attached cost of less than €250, or with an attached cost of less than €400** (where the activity is facilitated through the Education Department of the Law Society). Otherwise, in the context of internal and external learning & development activities, the following application procedure will apply:

- The employee completes **Part 1** of the **Learning & Development Application form**.
- The employee's manager reviews the employee's application and if appropriate, submits their recommendation for the application to the Department Director, using **Part 2** of the **Learning & Development Application form**. The manager's recommendation should include a short business case supporting the application.
- The Department Director reviews the business case put forward by the employee's manager and approves it. **For external learning & development activities, Part 2(b) must be completed by the Department Director.**

- **For external learning & development activities**, the Director of Human Resources must review and confirm final approval, or otherwise. In certain cases, applications may be referred to the Senior Management Team.
- Either the employee's manager or the Department Director confirms the final decision to the employee.
- **For external learning & development activities** above the **€250 limit** (for activities outside the Law Society Education Centre), or above the **€400 limit** (for activities through the Law Society Education Centre), a letter from Human Resources follows which confirms the terms of the agreement.

Funding Approval

Any funding for an external learning & development activity will be paid directly to the institution in question.

Once funding has been approved for an employee to undertake an external learning & development activity, the employee is then advised to:

- Book the learning & development activity themselves directly with the provider.
- Follow the Society's financial process to organise payment for the activity:
 - a) In the first instance, send the invoice to accountspayable@lawsociety.ie (to be approved by the Department Director). **If you are employed through Education, or if the learning & development activity is through the Education Centre**, you should send the invoice to eduinvoices@lawsociety.ie.
 - b) If payment is required urgently or if payment is needed online, complete [the Education staff credit card request form](#) or [the Society staff credit card use request form](#) to use the Law Society credit card (to be approved by the Department Director).
 - c) In certain cases, if the course has already been paid for by the staff member, they can claim the cost back on [staff expenses](#) (approved by the Department Director).

Exam Leave

The normal basis of allocation will be exam days / formal exam assignment submission day(s) with a **maximum of five days** in any year. The granting of exam leave in any given year can in no way give rise to an expectation of automatic exam leave in other years.

The employee's manager reviews the employee's application for exam leave and if appropriate, submits their recommendation for the application to the Department Director. Final approval for exam leave is given by the Director of Human Resources. In certain cases, applications may be referred to the Senior Management Team.

Any application for exam leave must be made via completion of the **Exam Leave Application form**.

General

Certificates of learning & development activity attendance / completion, including certificates of CPD should be presented to the Human Resources Department annually.

The payment of any funding / awarding of exam leave will be reviewed on an annual basis. No retrospective payments or approvals will be made and separate applications must be made annually.

For any external learning & development activity and depending on the level of fees paid by the Society, the duration and nature of the learning & development activity, the Society may, as a precondition to the payment of fees, require that an employee give a written undertaking to continue to work with the Society for a specified period of time following completion of the activity, failing which the employee will be required to refund the amount of the fees paid or part thereof.

Where the employee is required to give a written commitment to remain in the employment of the Society, any year of employment to meet this commitment cannot be a year of employment in which the employee has received funding for the learning & development activity.

In other circumstances, the Society may require an employee, as a precondition to the payment of fees, to apply the knowledge gained while participating in the learning & development activity for the benefit of the Society or other staff members, whether through lectures, training sessions, written reports or otherwise, failing which the employee may be required to refund the fees paid or part thereof.

Flowchart: Approval Process for Internal Learning & Development Activities



Flowchart: Approval Process for External Learning & Development Activities

