

Training and Learning Policy

The Organization's training and learning policy is based on the principle that building and maintaining the professional and managerial competence of staff is an important priority, as it represents a critical investment in the Organization's future. Among the key elements of the policy are the following:

- The goal of staff development is to meet organizational needs, and allow individuals to fulfil their individual career aspirations;
- Development programmes are geared to supporting the Secretary-General's reform programme by contributing to organizational culture change and building the human resources capacity required for the future;
- Development activities are based on defined organizational core and managerial competencies; on-going needs assessment is carried out to assess organizational requirements and identify gaps where skills and competencies need to be built or strengthened;
- Staff development is a responsibility shared by the Organization, its managers and staff; the dialogue that takes place in the context of the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) is an important means of assessing development needs and establishing accountability;
- Development needs are addressed through a combination of centrally organized programmes aimed at building core and managerial competencies and promoting a shared organizational culture and values, and decentralized programmes to address specific technical and substantive needs in departments and offices;
- Development opportunities should be made available equitably to all staff at all levels;
- Staff are encouraged to think of training in the broadest sense, including participation in self-study programmes, professional reading, cross-training provided by other colleagues, on-the-job training, coaching and developmental assignments;
- Increasingly, focus will be given to expanding alternative methods of training delivery such as technology-based self-study programmes;
- The United Nations System Staff College will be used in cross-programme areas where staff can benefit from interaction with staff from other organizations within the system;
- Evaluation is an integral part of all development activities to ensure that programmes continue to meet priority organizational needs in an effective and efficient manner.

Core and Managerial Competencies

In the context of the Secretary-General's overall human resource management reform efforts, a participatory process was undertaken to define organizational core values and core managerial competencies. Organizational core values are the shared principles and beliefs that underpin the work of an organization and guide the actions and behaviours of its staff. Core competencies refer to the combination of skills, attributes and behaviours required of all staff, regardless of their level or function. Managerial competencies are the additional skills, attributes and behaviours required of those who manage other staff.

The UN competencies were defined using a participatory process involving interviews and focus groups with a cross-section of staff at all levels throughout the Secretariat, including the Deputy Secretary-General, all heads of departments and offices, and several hundred staff in six duty stations. Information drawn from the process resulted in the following competency model, which contains three core values, eight core competencies and six managerial competencies.



The Secretary-General communicated this model to all staff in ST/SGB/1999/15 of 13 October 1999. He indicated that competencies can provide a shared language for talking, in concrete terms, about high performance and managerial excellence, and noted that the value of competencies will come from their application and integration into other aspects of human resources management. Competencies are now integrated into staff development activities, the e-PAS, generic job profiles and vacancy announcements.

Linking Values and Competencies to Staff Development

Staff development programmes have been aligned, and new programmes developed, to support staff in building and strengthening specific competencies. To assist staff and managers in planning staff development, a box called “The Competency Connection” is included at the beginning of each section of this catalogue. This is intended to highlight the link between the values and competencies and the specific programmes and indicate the key ones that the programmes within that section can help to build or strengthen. It is important to note that competencies include skills, attributes and behaviour that need to be developed and strengthened throughout one’s career. Therefore, acquiring or developing a competency is not the result of a one-time event, but of an on-going process. In addition, participating in training courses is one important way to develop competencies, but experience, coaching, feedback, and a blend of individual learning activities are needed.

For a specific link to a particular training programme and related competencies please refer to the Staff Development and Learning Section (SDLS) website.

Creating a Culture of Continuous Learning

During the participatory process used to define competencies, “commitment to continuous learning” was identified as one of the key competencies needed by all staff in the United Nations of the future. Indeed, experience in other organizations has shown that a culture of continuous learning is a critical factor in ensuring the organization’s ability to adapt as the world changes and as clients’ needs change accordingly. The Secretary-General remains committed to building a culture of continuous learning in the Secretariat. This culture is cultivated through a partnership among the Organization, its managers, and its staff. In “Building the Future”¹, he stresses that the future of the United Nations depends on its ability to learn, grow and change. He further reinforces this in his “Strengthening of the United Nations: An Agenda for Further Change”² reiterating that “reform is a process, not an event, and change will not be realized automatically or overnight” and emphasizing the importance of training in implementing the reforms outlined in his report.

The Organization provides a framework of opportunities to staff, including a wide range of development programmes. In addition, efforts are being made to provide a variety of learning modalities, including instructor-led and self-study learning resources. Emphasis is also being placed on increased opportunities for special projects and work assignments, including mission assignments, and other developmental experiences. Managers are being trained and held accountable for encouraging and supporting the development and learning of staff, and staff, in turn, are expected to commit themselves to continuous professional growth.

¹ ST/SGB/1998/6, 31 March 1998

² A/57/387, 9 September 2002

Organizational Development

Organizational Development (OD) is a holistic effort to strengthen the effectiveness of an organizational entity such as a department or a regional commission. The OD process usually involves diagnosis, identifying gaps between current and desired reality, planning and intervening to close the gaps, together with the usual monitoring, evaluating and learning processes. OD interventions may cover strategic planning, programming, team-building, organizational design, coaching of senior management teams and of individual managers, mapping and streamlining of processes, and client orientation. In promoting OD efforts, an integrated approach is followed which focuses on people, purpose and processes, taking into account the changing environment in which the organization operates.

Linking Staff Development to Performance Management

The e-PAS is an important tool for reinforcing the roles of staff and managers with respect to learning and development. Discussing a staff member's individual learning and development needs is an integral part of the e-PAS process. In the e-PAS, staff members are required to indicate at least one development activity in their continuous learning plan. The developmental goal(s) may focus on skills or knowledge that staff members may need in current or possible future functions with the United Nations. In addition, through the e-PAS, staff with supervisory responsibilities are held accountable for contributing to the development of their staff. While discussion of development and learning should not be a once-a-year event, the e-PAS work planning discussion provides a regular opportunity to focus on this issue. Staff are encouraged to take the initiative to discuss and consult with their first reporting officers about their learning and development. First reporting officers, in turn, should take responsibility for ensuring that all staff are taken into account when formulating departmental training plans and that staff are allowed time for, and supported in, taking advantage of learning opportunities. At the end-of-cycle review, the first reporting officer is expected to comment on the impact of the learning activity undertaken on the work of the unit.

Organizational values, core and managerial competencies can provide a useful basis for staff development discussions. Staff and their first reporting officers may want to agree on one or two competencies to be the focus of the staff member's learning, both in the short and longer-term. Staff with managerial or supervisory responsibilities should discuss the development of their managerial competencies with their own first reporting officers.

In this context, it is important that staff and managers do not confine plans for achieving development goals to participating in formal training programmes, but rather consider a full range of options, including special projects or assignments, individual learning through self-study, coaching by the supervisor, etc.

Secretariat-wide Learning

The Organization's staff development policy includes offering centrally organized programmes designed to build organizational capacity and support organizational reform by contributing to the creation of a shared culture and values, a common understanding of issues, and to building networks of colleagues throughout the Organization.

New Programme Areas

- General Service Development (Phase 3 and 4).
- Mini-workshop on motivation and success at work.

Decentralised programmes and the Annual Training Plan

A key responsibility for determining staff development needs and providing development opportunities lies with managers themselves. Resources for the upgrading of specific substantive and technical skills are therefore allocated directly to individual departments and offices, on the basis of annual training plans submitted to OHRM. These funds are intended for upgrading and refreshing substantive and technical skills and for assisting departments in meeting individual developmental needs of staff and in achieving departmental goals. Full responsibility for the managing of these funds is delegated directly to departments and offices, as detailed in ST/AI/1997/4 on the Upgrading of Substantive and Technical Skills. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that staff members' needs to upgrade substantive or technical skills are identified during performance management (PAS) discussions and included in the overall departmental training plan. The Office of Human Resources Management allocates funds, provides advice, and monitors the implementation of the plans. The staff of the Staff Development and Learning Section are available to assist offices and departments in preparing the annual training plan.

Increased Communication about Learning Opportunities

As commitment to continuous learning is a key element of the overall reform process, priority is given to making staff aware of the importance of making best use of development opportunities available to them.

More in-depth information regarding programmes and scheduling is also available on the Staff Development and Learning Section website <http://learning.unog.ch> which can be accessed by clicking on the drop-down menu of UNOG Services and selecting SDLS (Staff Development and Learning Section).

Guidance and Support from SDLS Staff

Staff responsible for learning and developmental programmes in Geneva are available to assist with assessing learning needs, developing training plans, and identifying a range of options for meeting learning needs. They can also provide assistance and advice to departments or work units on linking development activities with performance management and career support, within the context of the organizational development framework.

SDLS offers information briefings on SDLS programmes to the staff of work units and departments on request.

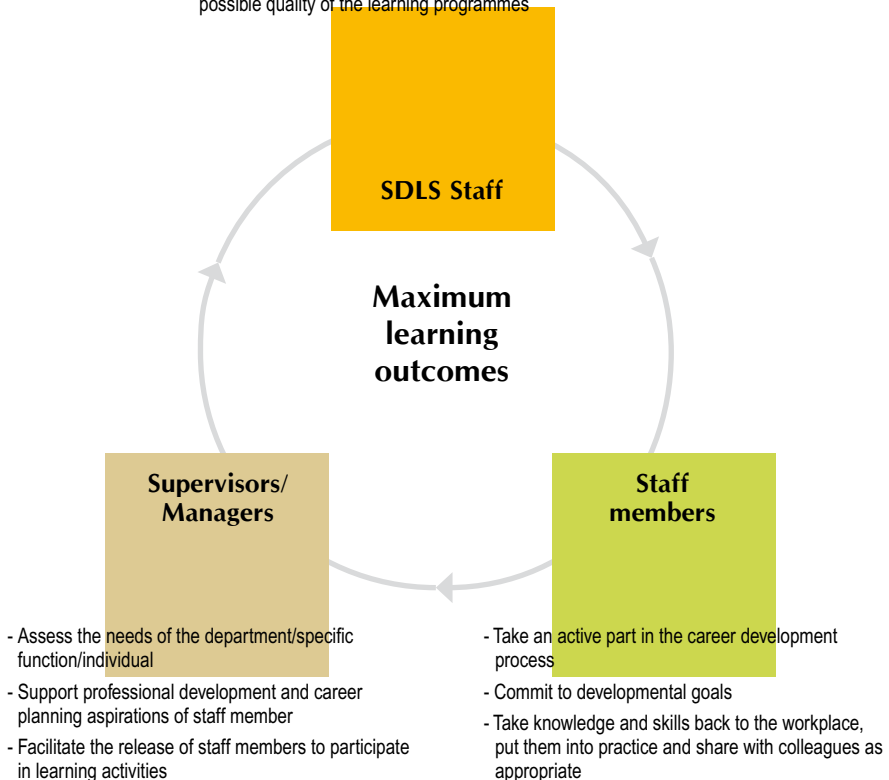
Responsibility is the Key to Success

The diagram of shared responsibilities illustrates that maximum learning outcomes can only be achieved with commitment from the three key groups (SDLS, supervisors/managers, and staff members).

These commitments are continuous over a period of time, which can be divided into "before the programme", "during the programme" and "following the programme".

Shared responsibilities result in maximum learning outcomes

- Design and implement programmes based on United Nations core values/competencies and organizational and individuals' needs
- Ensure the use of the best possible learning methodologies and approaches
- Ensure learning in the classroom takes place in a creative and supportive climate and is of equal benefit to all participants
- Ensure that learning needs (at all levels) are being fulfilled
- Monitor and evaluate training and take action to ensure the highest possible quality of the learning programmes



Staff Members' Commitments

Before the programme staff members should:

- Make sure they have the supervisor's agreement for the appropriate date of the training programme (the supervisor's signature is only required if there is a registration form);
- Make a personal commitment to the date, the time and the duration of the training programme. Only participation in the entire duration of the programme can ensure maximum outcomes. Certificates will only be issued when the participant attends 100% of the programme;
- Cancel attendance only in the case of absolute emergencies and as soon as possible before the programme starts so people from the waiting list can be contacted;
- Complete any type of preparation for a training programme (when requested).

During the programme staff members should:

- Show personal commitment by arriving on time, preparing material, and participating for the full length of the programme.

Following the programme staff members should:

- Fill out evaluations, as they are an integral part of the course delivery process. Evaluations provide feedback to the trainers and help indicate strengths as well as areas for improvement;
- Take the knowledge and skills back to the workplace and apply and integrate them into everyday working life. Share with colleagues as appropriate.

Supervisors'/Managers' Commitments

Before the programme supervisors/managers should:

- Identify learning needs of the department and/or needs of an individual staff member and incorporate them into the annual training plan;
- Discuss with staff expected outcomes of the training programme;
- Support staff in their effort to achieve individual developmental goals;
- Release the staff member for the entire duration of the training programme.

During the programme supervisors/managers should:

- Ensure participation of the staff member without interruptions from the office

Following the programme supervisors/managers should:

- Encourage staff to incorporate the knowledge and skills developed in the training programme into their working life.

SDLS Staff Commitments

Before the programme trainers/teachers should:

- Assess the learning needs of a group.

During the programme trainers/teachers should:

- Ensure that equal learning opportunities are provided to all participants in a creative and supportive atmosphere;
- Ensure that learning needs are met.

Following the programme trainers/teachers should:

- Reflect on evaluations received;
- Make improvements and adjustments for future programmes accordingly.