



Fijian Civil Service

# **Learning and Development Guideline**

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# **LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINE**

**AUGUST 2021**

## **1. Objectives Of The Guideline**

- 1.1. Define the purpose and confirm the commitment to Learning and Development across the Civil Service;
- 1.2. Confirm the policy basis for scholarships, study leave and study assistance;
- 1.3. Confirm the role of the Ministry of Civil Service with regard to core skills training and coordination of development partner assistance; and
- 1.4. Provide the policy basis for Permanent Secretaries to ensure that all Learning and Development activities focus on transfer of learning to the workplace and provide a return on investment for the Civil Service and the Fijian people.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. The Fijian Constitution defines the Values and Principles for the Civil Service, including the efficient, effective and economic use of public resources; and the cultivation of good human resource management and career development practices, to maximise human potential (S123 (d) (h)). Further, the Fijian Constitution states that Permanent Secretaries, with the agreement of their Minister, have the authority to determine all matters pertaining to the employment of staff in the Ministry (S127, (8)).
- 2.2. The aim of learning and development is to develop Civil Servants' capacity – their knowledge, skills and abilities – to create high performing organisations by aligning individual ability and performance with the organisation's overall vision and strategic objectives. Ongoing development of individual Civil Servants contributes to the Fijian Civil Service performing its role of providing effective and efficient delivery of services to the Fijian people.
- 2.3. This guideline applies to all positions in Ministries where appointment is approved by the Permanent Secretary (in agreement with their Minister), including Government Wage Earners, temporary and project staff.
- 2.4. Ministries are required to document and publish their internal procedures ensuring that they adhere to these principles.
- 2.5. The Ministry of Civil Service is responsible for submission of grant claims ONLY for the core skills programmes run through the Ministry of Civil Service. All refunds will be utilised for future core skills learning and development programmes.
- 2.6. Individual Ministries are responsible for their own legislative compliance with the Training Levy and any subsequent legislative amendments, including submission of grant claims for all training run within their own Ministries.

- 2.7. This guideline is to be applied to all learning and development activities. Permanent Secretaries must ensure that Ministry level policy and procedures are consistent with this and all guidelines issued by the Public Service Commission.
- 2.8. The guideline has been updated in August 2021 to reflect changes in coordinating agencies, and to include review timelines.

### **3. Definitions**

- 3.1. Bond is a legal document requiring officers to provide return service for a period of study. The terms and conditions of the bond are as specified by the Office of the Solicitor-General.
- 3.2. Core skills are common across all Ministries and include (but are not limited to) public administration, code of conduct, civil service values, leadership, supervision and other generic skills critical to good public sector workplace management.
- 3.3. Development is defined as activities which prepare an employee for future job opportunities.
- 3.4. eLearning activities are those provided through electronic educational technology.
- 3.5. Learning is defined as a multi-dimensional approach to personal development, which encourages problem solving and application to workplace performance.
- 3.6. mLearning is a form of distance education, utilising mobile device educational technologies.
- 3.7. Return on Investment refers to the improvements in organisational performance as a result of investment in learning and development activities.
- 3.8. Scholarships are funded programmes of study, normally leading to formal qualifications.
- 3.9. Study leave can be with or without pay, enabling an employee to undertake a long term programme of study whilst retaining their position in a Ministry.
- 3.10. Training is defined as a specific activity to provide skills to meet an immediate workforce need.
- 3.11. Transfer of learning refers to the application of skills, knowledge or abilities gained during learning opportunities, to the job / workplace.

### **4. Identifying Learning And Development Needs**

- 4.1. Individual learning and development needs will be identified through completion of the Learning and Development Plan in the MyAPA, or MyPROBA or through skills gaps identified in a formal performance improvement programme.
- 4.2. Organisational skill gaps, as identified through Workforce Plans, may also be used to confirm learning and development needs at the Ministry level, particularly where such skills are not readily available in the market.

- 4.3. Training / Learning Needs may also be identified through programmes of change or formal Training / Learning Needs analysis either within a Ministry or across the Civil Service.
- 4.4. Learning and development needs should be compiled at ministry level and prioritised to meet organisational (Ministry) needs.
- 4.5. Core skills needs will be forwarded by Ministries to the Ministry of Civil Service, for service wide compilation and prioritisation:
  - 4.5.1. Ministries will forward their core skills needs by the end of December each year (through compilation of results from the Interim Assessment in the Performance Management Framework);
  - 4.5.2. Ministries will update their core skills needs following the annual MyAPA process in May each year;
  - 4.5.3. The Ministry of Civil Service will provide core skills learning and development programmes to meet the identified needs of the highest priorities across all Ministries;
  - 4.5.4. The Ministry of Civil Service will consult with Ministries to reconfirm service wide priorities and will publish their training calendar for the next year by the end of January each year. The calendar will be updated with any amendments through the budget cycle; and
  - 4.5.5. Where Ministry's identified priorities will not be met by the Ministry of Civil Service, the individual Ministry should endeavour to support their own learning and development needs.
- 4.6. Ministry learning and development needs which require development partner support will be forwarded to the Ministry of Civil Service by the end of December each year.
  - 4.6.1. The Ministry of Civil Service will utilise the identified learning and development needs to direct development partner offers to the appropriate Ministry as they are received;
  - 4.6.2. Where specific development partners have other timelines, the Ministry of Civil Service will consult with Ministries and update priority needs as required to meet the development partner timelines; and
  - 4.6.3. The Ministry of Civil Service will liaise with development partners to highlight the coordinated learning and development needs of the civil service.

## **5. Meeting Learning And Development Needs**

- 5.1. Learning and development activities should be met by the most cost effective method available.
- 5.2. This Guideline acknowledges that Workplace learning can happen anywhere, at any time and can be one or a combination of:
  - 5.2.1. On job experience;

- 5.2.2. Coaching and mentoring;
  - 5.2.3. Secondments and attachments, task force participation, job rotation and other workplace based development opportunities;
  - 5.2.4. Attendance at conferences;
  - 5.2.5. Classroom learning / courses or workshops;
  - 5.2.6. Distance learning including eLearning and mLearning; and
  - 5.2.7. Academic programmes leading to professional qualifications.
- 5.3. Learning and development is a shared responsibility to ensure that the civil service has the required capacity and capability to provide quality services to the Fijian people:
- 5.3.1. Employees take responsibility for their own learning and development needs and for transferring new knowledge into their workplace;
  - 5.3.2. Managers lead by example, demonstrating continuous self-development and support their teams in continuous improvement and knowledge transfer; and
  - 5.3.3. Ministries regularly identify capacity gaps and encourage employees to participate in learning and development opportunities.
- 5.4. The Ministry of Civil Service is responsible for ensuring that the core skills learning and development needs across the civil service are met in a coordinated and cost effective manner. They are the main point of contact for all development partners, unless exemption is approved for bilateral negotiations:
- 5.4.1. Ministries requiring exemption will do so through request to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Civil Service, stating the reasons and need for bilateral arrangements. Examples would include the bilateral arrangements between the World Health Organisation and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services.
- 5.5. The Ministry of Civil Service is responsible for liaising with all development partners to ensure that opportunities are utilised to benefit the capacity development of civil servants and the resulting service delivery to the Fijian people.

## **6. Scholarships And Study Leave**

- 6.1. Ministries do not fund scholarship opportunities – they provide leave to allow employees to take up scholarships offered through scholarship providers including development partners.
- 6.2. Study leave and study assistance may be provided for employees who achieve a minimum performance assessment rating of “competent” (step 3) or higher, unless specific special circumstances apply:
  - 6.2.1. Specific special circumstances will be approved by the Ministry of Civil Service, mainly to meet scarce skills needs.

- 6.3. Where an individual seeks and is awarded a scholarship, they may be provided with study leave under the following provisions:
  - 6.3.1. The programme of study must be compatible with an identified priority need in the Civil Service;
  - 6.3.2. The employee must have notified their Permanent Secretary, through their manager, of their intention to seek the scholarship and subsequent period of leave without pay, prior to the final submission of their application for scholarship;
  - 6.3.3. Leave will be without pay, for a period not exceeding the remaining duration of their contract;
  - 6.3.4. Contracts may be extended to cover a further period to allow completion of a programme of study, provided the employee's last performance assessment was "competent" (step 3); or above;
  - 6.3.5. Any period of study leave without pay does not count as service for the purpose of performance assessment in accordance with the performance management framework;
  - 6.3.6. During the period of study leave without pay, no other leave will accrue and no other benefits (e.g. FNPF) will be paid;
  - 6.3.7. Bonding is not required for a period of study leave without pay;
  - 6.3.8. Where the employee occupies sponsored government housing and the period of scholarship is greater than 12 calendar months, they will be required to vacate the sponsored housing at their own expense to allow for a replacement employee to live in the sponsored housing; and
  - 6.3.9. On return to duty, the employee will be guaranteed placement at their band, in a similar job to the one vacated. No guarantee of location or section can be given and placement will be made to suit Ministry needs and priorities.
- 6.4. Where a Ministry has identified an area of scarce skills, that would be met by a programme of study of greater than 12 calendar months leading to academic qualifications, they will liaise with the Ministry of Civil Service who will coordinate with development partners for the provision of scholarship opportunities to meet such scarce skill needs – unless the Ministry of Civil Service provides exemption for the individual Ministry to seek bilateral support for the scholarship.
- 6.5. Once development partner support is secured for the scholarship, the following will apply:
  - 6.5.1. The position / scholarship opportunity will be advertised, for appointment including a sponsored period of study;
  - 6.5.2. Selection for the position / scholarship opportunity and the sponsored period of study will follow the requirements of OMRS (paragraph 2.7.4) – this includes the setting of objective selection criteria, advertising and selection by a panel compliant with the OMRS guideline;

- 6.5.3. Leave will be provided on full or partial salary for the successful applicant to complete the programme of study. Determination of the amount of salary will be at the discretion of the Permanent Secretary, considering the stipend provided by the scholarship and the available budget within the Ministry;
- 6.5.4. Leave on full or partial salary will not be extended to cater for programmes which are not completed on time. Leave without pay may be granted in exceptional circumstances, where the employee demonstrates that they will complete the programme with a short extension of time and where the sponsor is willing to continue sponsorship of the programme.
- 6.5.5. Where an employee fails units / courses of study and it becomes apparent that they will not be able to complete the programme within the allocated period of time, their leave may be cancelled and they may be required to immediately return to the workplace. Further action in accordance with the Discipline guideline may be instituted if the Permanent Secretary believes the employee has been negligent in their approach to their study.
- 6.5.6. During a period of study leave on full or partial salary, all other benefits (e.g. FNPF) are payable (proportionate to the salary paid). Allowances that are due for specific duties performed (e.g. location allowance, higher duties) are NOT payable during the period of study leave on full pay;
- 6.5.7. No other allowances are payable, all scholarship costs are to be met by the sponsor;
- 6.5.8. During a period of study leave on full or partial salary, other leave entitlements cease to accrue. Employees are able to take the semester breaks without return to work;
- 6.5.9. The contract of employment will cover the full programme of study and a return of service bond of a minimum of 1.5 times the length of the study period (to a maximum of 5 years in total);
  - 6.5.9.1. Where the employee's current contract does not cover the period of study and bond, the contract may be renewed prior to the employee's departure on their period of study to cover the period of study and bond provided this does not exceed the maximum of 5 years in accordance with the Civil Service Regulations;
- 6.5.10. Where the contracted period of 5 years is not sufficient to cover the study and bond, the contract may be renewed during the study period, for a period not exceeding 5 years provided progress in the study has been satisfactory in accordance with paragraph 6.3.6 or any additional requirements made by the scholarship sponsor;
- 6.5.11. The employee will be required to maintain a minimum pass in every subject / unit (or higher if required by the scholarship sponsor) taken to remain on study leave on full or partial salary. The employee is required to provide their semester results to their Permanent Secretary within two weeks of the issue of such results;

- 6.5.12. Where the development partner cancels the scholarship, the period of leave is also automatically cancelled and the employee must return to work as soon as is practicable;
  - 6.5.13. No increments or performance payments are payable during the period of study, and the period on study does not count as time served in a position for the purpose of the performance management framework requirements which will apply once the employee resumes normal duties. There is no automatic movement in step for completion of any qualification or period of study;
  - 6.5.14. Where the employee occupies sponsored government housing and the period of scholarship is greater than 12 calendar months, they will be required to vacate the sponsored housing at their own expense to allow for a replacement employee to live in the sponsored housing;
  - 6.5.15. On return to duty, the employee will be guaranteed placement at their band, in a job matching the identified scarce skills for which they were recruited. No guarantee of location or section can be given and placement will be made to suit Ministry needs and priorities.
- 6.6. Where the Ministry has identified a skills gap which can be met through a formal programme of study of less than 12 calendar months, all such offers will be coordinated and finalised through the Ministry of Civil Service, unless specific exemption has been provided for bilateral approvals (for example, the World Health Organisation and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services). Within such requirements, the following provisions will apply:
- 6.6.1. The Ministry of Civil Service will seek (or have offered) a suitable programme to meet the skills gap;
  - 6.6.2. The Ministry of Civil Service will call an expression of interest in accordance with the OMRS guideline, with advertising and eligibility being open to all either working in the identified position or who would reasonably aspire to be appointed to a position requiring the skills;
  - 6.6.3. Utilising the “Learning Contract Proposal” format at Annex A, the applicant’s supervisor/ manager will identify the expected changes in work practice / service delivery as a result of the programme of study;
  - 6.6.4. The Permanent Secretary of the line Ministry will include a recommendation on the suitability of the programme to the Ministry;
  - 6.6.5. The study opportunity will be offered to the most meritorious applicant following the EOI, as determined by the Ministry of Civil Service;
  - 6.6.6. Study leave will be granted on full or partial salary for the duration of the study programme, as determined by the employee’s Permanent Secretary;
  - 6.6.7. Where the programme is funded by a sponsor, no additional allowances are payable by the Ministry, unless such cost sharing is specified in the agreement with the sponsor;

- 6.6.8. The employee will be required to sign a bond of return of service for a minimum period of 1.5 times the duration of the programme of study;
- 6.6.9. The contract of service will be renewed prior to departure on study to cover the period of the study and the required bond (if required);
- 6.6.10. The period of study does not count as service in a position for the purpose of increments and/or performance payments in accordance with the performance management framework, but does not break continuity of service. There is no movement in step on a band for completion of any programme of study;
- 6.6.11. The employee will be required to provide a report on return to service, covering skills / knowledge gained and confirmation of how such skills and knowledge will be utilised in the workplace (matched / referring to paragraph 6.5.1);
- 6.6.12. Where the employee occupies sponsored government housing they may be required to vacate the sponsored housing at their own expense to allow for a replacement employee to live in the sponsored housing;
- 6.6.13. On return to duty, the employee will be guaranteed placement at their band, in a job matching the identified scarce skills for which they were sent on study. No guarantee of location or section can be given and placement will be made to suit Ministry needs and priorities.

## **7. Attendance At Other Learning And Development Opportunities**

- 7.1. Other learning and development activities are offered or identified through a variety of means. This section relates to activities which do not result in a formal qualification but do meet an identified need and where the activity is for four calendar months or less (full time equivalent, including any travel time).
- 7.2. Activities may include (but not be limited to) on the job training activities; attachments and secondments with other ministries, mentoring programmes, and short conferences and workshops which are conducted locally and overseas.
- 7.3. Attendance at these learning and development are regarded as duty time.
- 7.4. International and development partner activities will be coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Service:
  - 7.4.1. Each Ministry will identify a “Learning and Development Focal Point” who will receive all offers and ensure they are actioned within their Ministry within the timelines specified by the Ministry of Civil Service.
- 7.5. For all opportunities that require international travel, or where the activity is greater than two calendar weeks, the opportunity will be advertised by the Ministry of Civil Service, to the appropriate audience, to seek Expressions of Interest in attending the opportunity. Expressions of Interest will include a “Learning Contract Proposal”, which covers the minimum information in the template included in Annex A:
  - 7.5.1. Selection of the most meritorious candidate will be approved by the Ministry of Civil Service. Merit will be based on objective criteria, focussed on the

anticipated return on investment demonstrated by the applicants for the opportunity.

- 7.6. Where the programme is funded by a sponsor, no additional allowances are payable by the Ministry, unless such cost sharing is specified in the agreement with the sponsor.
- 7.7. Programmes which are run locally and do not require travel with an overnight stay, will not attract any allowances.
- 7.8. Where a programme is run locally and requires an overnight stay away from the Officer's duty station, the officer will be provided with accommodation and meals or meal allowances where meals are not provided, in accordance with the General Orders.
- 7.9. Employees who are on probation, or who have not achieved a minimum of "competent" (step 3) in their last performance assessment are ineligible for international learning and development opportunities:
  - 7.9.1. Specific exemptions may be sought by Ministries where scarce skills or special circumstances apply. Such exemptions are to be sought in advance, and will be approved by the Ministry of Civil Service.
- 7.10. Where bilateral arrangements have been approved, the responsible Ministry may carry out the above process for the opportunity except that scarce skills approval will remain with the Ministry of Civil Service (7.9.1).
- 7.11. On return to duty, the employee will review their "Learning Contract Proposal" and confirm how they will implement their knowledge / skills acquired through the opportunity. Their implementation will be incorporated into their work plan in their MyAPA and will form part of their next Performance Assessment.

## **8. Study Assistance**

- 8.1. Individual employees are encouraged to undertake formal programmes of study, including to further their own development.
- 8.2. Employees requesting support for a formal programme of self-initiated study, must have their programme of study approved by their Permanent Secretary, prior to commencement of each semester of study.
  - 8.2.1. The request will include details of the support being sought, approval will confirm the level of support approved.
- 8.3. Employees with approval for support to pursue formal programmes of study under their own initiative may be supported in the following ways:
  - 8.3.1. Leave on full pay to attend compulsory examinations – applications for leave must be accompanied by the examination timetable and the period of leave will cover the examination and reasonable travel time only;
  - 8.3.2. Priority access to utilise annual leave entitlements to complete assignments, attend seminars or residential schools or study for examinations;

- 8.3.3. Reimbursement of full or part payment of compulsory course fees, for ministry priority programmes, where such reimbursement was approved at the start of the semester and where a pass or higher was achieved for the unit / course of study;
- 8.3.4. Reimbursement is not obligatory, and approvals will include the amount of refund which may be made following successful completion of a semester of study;
- 8.3.5. Approvals may not be retrospective and payments are not to be made without the appropriate approvals;
- 8.3.6. Flexible hours of work to attend lectures – provided there is no disruption to the programme of work, employees may seek prior approval to vary their normal hours of work to enable the attendance at lectures. E.g. working an additional hour on two days per week to access two hours off on another day to attend lectures. Overtime and meal allowances are not payable on these days. The variance to working hours must be approved at the start of the semester and must suit the office / work unit and must not contravene the Employment Relations Act (work cannot be made up through lunch hours).

## **9. Core Skills Development Across The Civil Service**

- 9.1. The Ministry of Civil Service is responsible for providing learning and development programmes to meet the core skill needs of the civil service. Programmes will be run through the most cost effective and efficient means available.
- 9.2. Programmes may be run internally or outsourced, as determined by the Ministry of Civil Service.
- 9.3. The Ministry of Civil Service will publish a programme of planned core skills development programmes annually. Ministries will nominate individuals to attend programmes, to meet their core skill needs.
- 9.4. Where staff have been nominated to attend learning and development programmes, and they do not attend without prior notice or nomination of an appropriate replacement, the Permanent Secretary of the responsible ministry will be notified and cost recovery may be sought for the lost development opportunity. Such cost recovery may include surcharge of the individual employee in accordance with the Finance Instructions or other appropriate action in accordance with the Discipline Guideline.

## **10. Measuring Return On Investment**

- 10.1. Each ministry will report on its investments and return on investment from funded learning and development activities.
- 10.2. Reporting will be included in the Ministry's Annual Report to Parliament, and will be linked to Ministry outcomes and Individual Performance Assessment results.

## **11. Review Of This Guideline**

11.1. The guideline will be reviewed by the Ministry of Civil Service once every 24 months with a report submitted to the Public Service Commission within one month of conclusion of the review

## **12. Endorsement By The Public Service Commission**



**Vishnu Mohan**

**Chairman, Public Service Commission**

Date: 30 August 2021

# ANNEX A LEARNING CONTRACT PROPOSAL

## MINISTRY AND LOGO

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

WORK UNIT / DEPARTMENT / SECTION \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to apply for the following Learning and Development Opportunity:

Provide a brief description of the opportunity offered, including sponsor, duration, location.

Include investment required from the Ministry – e.g. per diems not covered by the sponsor.

On return to duty, I will be able to implement / improve the following aspects of my work:

Provide a brief description of the activities in your learning and Development Plan / Individual Work Plan (MyAPA) that directly relate to this L & D opportunity and how the opportunity will enable you to improve your work or the work of your Section / Department / Ministry.

Provide a brief overview of what you think you will learn on the programme and how you will apply this learning in your work.

**This box is the basis for determining merit for the programme.**

I declare that my last performance assessment was (insert result), and that I am not currently under any discipline investigation or performance improvement programme.

|                    |                                |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Employee Signature | Printed Name, EDP/TPF and Date |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|

### SUPERVISOR ENDORSEMENT

I agree / disagree that the programme proposed will benefit the team / section / department. I recommend / do not recommend approval of the application.

Supervisor Comments:

Provide brief comments on the employee's proposal for the programme, and whether their plans are acceptable to the team / work unit.

|                      |                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
|                      |                              |
| Supervisor Signature | Printed Name, Title and Date |

The sections above are to be completed as a response to an Expression of Interest for a Programme.

### MINISTRY RECOMMENDATION

Endorsed / Not endorsed

Reasons:

|                               |                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
|                               |                    |
| Permanent Secretary Signature | Printed Name, Date |

### MINISTRY OF CIVIL SERVICE FINAL OUTCOME

Approved / Not approved

Reasons:

|                                     |                    |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
|                                     |                    |
| Permanent Secretary (MCS) Signature | Printed Name, Date |

**ON COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAM - to be completed within 2 weeks of return to duty**

#### Employee to Complete

|  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <p>I confirm I learned the following (refer to what was expected and what was learned):</p><br><p>As planned (refer to your plan above), I seek endorsement for the following activities which will be incorporated into my IWP:</p> |                                |
| Employee Signature   | Printed Name, EDP/TPF and Date |

#### Supervisor Endorsement

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| <p>Provide comments on the Employee's proposed plan, whether you agree and how it will benefit the team / work unit.</p> |                              |
| Supervisor Signature   | Printed Name, Title and Date |

**To be submitted within two weeks of return to duty from the Programme.**