School of Education

Operational Guidelines 2010

Professional Learning Funding

These guidelines are designed to assist eligible School of Education staff members (Academic, Teaching and General) who wish to apply for funds for professional learning and research activities. There are two parts to this Professional Learning Fund (PLF) process:

- PART ONE: Application
- PART TWO: Activity Report (completed within one month after the activity).

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.0 Background

Professional Learning Fund supports opportunities for staff to work collaboratively on developing a constructive culture of learning and teaching (communities of practice) within the School of Education. The overall aim of the Fund is to enable School of Education staff to engage in professional learning and research to enhance their professional practice to improve the quality of learning and teaching within the School.

These guidelines are designed to assist you to explore how you might engage with your professional learning to improve your learning, teaching and support to meet the needs of students. Consequently, you should consider planning your professional learning simultaneously while you develop, negotiate and review your workplan.

1.1 General Principles

Professional learning, is rarely an isolated human activity. Frequently, it is the result of collaborating with others in researching, developing and implementing innovation or sharing your own professional learning with members of your team/s or partnerships. Consequently, applications to the Professional Learning Fund are considered and guided by the following general principles:

1.1.1 identification of working collaboratively with others, e.g. the request for the professional learning funds supports further learning to build understanding towards an innovation that is being developed in communities of practice both internal and external to the School of Education. (refer to Sect 1.2)

1.1.2 alignment of proposed professional learning activity with one or more priority areas specified within these guidelines and/or broader university
guidelines for innovation in learning and teaching such as the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2007-2010 and Academic Plan.

1.1.3 implementation of a plan for sharing the learning with others, e.g. presenting a Brown Bag Lunch Seminar within the School of Education or running a professional learning activity for your team as a result of your learning.

1.1.4 allocation of funds is determined by the School Executive within the parameters of the School’s professional learning funds budget.

1.2 Priority areas
The Learning and Teaching Committee for the School of Education identified three priority areas to foster innovation in quality learning and teaching within the School. The purpose of identifying priority areas is to develop a strategic focus for the professional learning that is undertaken within the School. The priority areas support the development of a coherent approach to professional learning that aims to improve the quality of learning and teaching from the individual, team, program and School perspectives.

1.2.1 Reflective Practice
This priority area is concerned with creating opportunities for School of Education staff to reflect in formal and informal ways their own teaching to improve the quality of learning and teaching within the School. Reflecting on our own teaching provides opportunities to document our professional practice, analyse and examine its strengths and weaknesses, and investigate ways of improving it. Hence, this priority area encourages School of Education staff to engage in professional learning that provides opportunities to work individually or in a small team to improve the teaching and learning experience of students within our programs.

1.2.2 Different Ways of Working for Learning
This priority area focuses on where the learning meets the needs of teaching and support services. It focuses on how School of Education staff can re-think ways of planning, delivering and supporting programs to meet student learning needs. Professional learning in this priority area may involve investigating different models for course/program delivery and management from within or beyond RMIT University.

1.2.3 Working Together, Creating a Culture of Learning
This priority area aims to encourage professional learning within community of practice teams across programs and sectors within the School of Education. It may also involve seeking partnerships with staff from other schools, College or beyond the RMIT University. Professional learning in this priority may involve engaging in new ways of learning and teaching across programs/ sectors/ institutions to improve student learning.
2. **Submission Dates**
Applications are due on the last Friday of the month (COB) and will be considered on a monthly basis. Late applications will be considered at the following month’s School Executive meeting.

3. **Applications**
- Application is a two part process:
  - **Part 1** Completion of the Professional Learning Fund Application form
  - **Part 2** Completion of the Activity Report form. This document is to be completed within one month of undertaking an approved activity.
- Applications should be typed, avoid jargon and acronyms, include as much detail as possible. Applications are to be submitted to the Secretary, School Executive.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Late applications will be held over until the next month’s School Executive meeting.
- Applicants should nominate the type of professional learning activity they are applying for on the application form.

4. **Assessment Criteria**
School Executive will use the following criteria in assessing applications:

- The Professional Learning and Research activity should relate to a School learning and teaching priority area:
  - Reflective Practice
  - Different Ways of Working for Learning
  - Working Together, Creating a Culture of Learning
- All requirements for previous funding have been fulfilled, if not the application will be deemed ineligible.
- There are sufficient funds in the School budget to cover the activity.

5. **Approval of Applications**
In making its decisions, School Executive will endeavour to ensure that:

- funding is spread between all priority areas and across the School
- funding is apportioned to each Semester
- in addition, applicants should note that the number of other staff attending the same conference may be limited. If there are multiple applications to the same conference, the limited funds may be divided between all the participants.
- applications for funding for formal qualifications will not be considered
- consideration is given to the applicant’s previous access to professional learning funds from within the University or elsewhere and the applicant’s demonstrated record of outcomes, feedback and information sharing from previous funding
- staff learning is offered to support organisational initiatives and directions
• the applicant has discussed and negotiated a staff learning activity, in consultation with his/her work team and manager/COORDINATOR that reflects current and future needs for the individual that aligns with the strategic initiatives of the work-team and the School

• satisfactory arrangements have been made to cover teaching and administrative work during the absence of staff engaged in professional learning activities.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT

All staff are required to fulfil the commitments agreed to on the application form and approved by School Executive (evidence to be supplied within one month). If not, any further application for funding may be deemed to be ineligible.

7. FUNDING PROCEDURES

• Applicants need to provide copies of all documentation relating to costs before funding can be provided.
• Funding can be reimbursed to the individual applicant or can be issued ‘up-front’ if an invoice is supplied.

★ Please consult the School Finance Manager for advice.

8. REPORTING OF SCHOOL EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Secretary shall inform the applicant as soon as possible after the relevant School Executive meeting. Successful decisions will also be reported in the School Newsletter.

9. LEAVE AND ENTITLEMENTS

• Successful applicants must apply for professional development leave through ess to cover the conference days and travel days (where needed – for overseas travel only).
• Each staff member is entitled to a maximum of 10 professional development leave days per year.

10. ENTITLEMENTS OF FRACTIONAL - TIME/CONTRACT/CASUAL STAFF

All staff will be considered for PLF (ongoing, contract, part time and sessional staff). In instances of limited funding preference may be given to ongoing and contract staff employed 0.5 or above.

11. GLOBAL FUNDING LIMITS

Staff may apply for a professional learning activity or an activity such as a conference presentation, poster display or organising role with a maximum limit of $750 per staff member per academic year. Collaborative projects are encouraged and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. These funding limits are guides and are subject to the budget process of the School as a whole.

Professional Learning funds are only available for local and national activities.
★ It is not possible to receive support from both the Research and Professional Learning Funds as a staff member's attendance at a conference is EITHER as a presenter at a refereed research conference OR as a presenter/participant at a conference as professional development. Participation in a conference is either not both so a successful application can only be made to one fund source.

★ Support is available from both Professional Learning and Research Funding. Therefore, the maximum funding per staff member per academic year from both fund sources is $3250.

12 **Appeals Process**

If the applicant is not satisfied with School Executive’s decision they may appeal in writing (via email) to the HOS but will need to respond to the reasons given for the unsuccessful application provided by School Executive. The written response should be addressed to and received by the Secretary within one month of notification of School Executive’s decision to the applicant.
13. FLOW CHART FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Applicant completes PLF Application form

Supervisor signs form – if applicable

Application forwarded to School Executive (SE) Secretary. Applications accepted monthly

Secretary checks that Application is complete

Application approved by School Executive

Secretary informs applicant via email

Application not approved by School Executive

Secretary informs applicant via email

Applicant applies for professional development leave via ESS

Applicant makes arrangements for funding with secretary, supervisor and finance officer

Expenditure recorded against internal order by Finance Officer. Attendance recorded in SAP

Applicant submits an activity report using proforma within one month of activity

Applicant may appeal decision to Head of School (HOS). Refer to section 11

Decision made by HOS and applicant notified via email

NB: An outstanding report or actions from a staff member will mean that future funding to that staff member will not be considered.
School of Education

Application Form

Professional Learning Fund

Applicants should have read the ‘Operational Guidelines’ for professional learning funds prior to making an application, in order to inform themselves as to their eligibility and to ensure that their application does not exceed funding limits. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Late applications will be held over until the next School executive meeting. This form should be typed with all sections completed and submitted to the Secretary, School Executive.

1. **APPLICANT’S DETAILS:**

   - First Name:   
   - Surname:   
   - Program:   
   - Staff Number:   

     - General Staff
     - VET
     - HE
     - Ongoing
     - Contract
     - Time Fraction

2. **ACTIVITY FOR WHICH FUNDING IS REQUESTED:** Please tick one only.

   - Conference
   - Short Course/Seminar
   - Industry Placement
   - Secondment
   - Work Integrated Learning
   - Other:   Please specify
3. PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PROPOSED STAFF LEARNING PROJECT/COURSE/CONFERENCE:

Note: The ‘provider’ relates to the group or organisation responsible for sponsoring or coordinating the activity. The provider may contract another group or organisation to deliver the activity, in which case you should record the provider, not the deliverer.

Course, Conference or Activity Title: ___

Dates of Attendance or Participation: ___

Course or Activity Provider: ___

Description of Activity: ___

4. WHICH PRIORITY AREA DOES YOUR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITY RELATE TO:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflective Practice</th>
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<td>Different Ways of Working for Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Together</td>
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5. DESCRIBE THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE ACTIVITY.

6. HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO YOUR ANNUAL WORKPLAN:

7. OUTLINE THE WAYS IN WHICH THE KNOWLEDGE GAINED WILL BE SHARED:
8. AMOUNT OF FUNDING REQUESTED

Provide a breakdown of funds requested (e.g., registration, materials etc.), with supporting documentation (e.g., invoice, registration sheet, receipts, copy of conference program).

NB: Please be aware that limits exist for allocation of payment and reimbursement from the Professional Learning Fund. Please read the School of Education, ‘Operational Guidelines for Professional Learning Funds’ in order to ascertain funding limits. Applications for amounts exceeding funding limits will not be considered, and any approval will be ‘rounded down’ to a maximum as stated in the guidelines.

Indicate the amount of financial assistance you are requesting under the following categories:

- Course/Registration Fees $ 
- Travel Costs $ 
- Teacher Replacement Costs $ 
- Other related costs (please document) $ 

9. HOW IS THIS ACTIVITY TO BE FUNDED IN THE INTERIM: (NB: There is no guarantee of reimbursement – funding is only provided to successful applicants)

- [ ] I will cover myself and request personal reimbursement.
- [ ] Payment is required ‘up front’, direct to the activity holder. Invoices etc are attached to this application or will be provided asap.
- [ ] Other arrangement – please detail:

10. OUTLINE ANY TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE REPLACEMENT ARRANGEMENTS:

The following colleagues have to take on my teaching related responsibilities:

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<th>Course:</th>
<th>Name:</th>
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[Table for course, name, and signature]
Where sessional staff is taking up teaching responsibilities please identify funding source:

__________________

The following colleagues have to take on my administrative related responsibilities:

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11. **THE FOLLOWING TASKS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED:**

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<tr>
<th>Part Bs have been uploaded and approved</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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<th>Results have been processed</th>
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<th>Proxies have been notified of upcoming meetings</th>
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12. **EVIDENCE OF CONTRIBUTION TO THE SCHOOL:**

Evidence of planning for contribution to the School on completion of activity (see Professional Learning Summary form).

Signature: __________________________  Date: _______________________
DISCIPLINE HEAD, HIGHER EDUCATION/ DIRECTOR OF VET PROGRAMS
RECOMMENDATION (if Supervisor is not Head of School)

I recommend this application (tick as appropriate)

YES

NO

Discipline Head, Higher Education Programs/Director of VET Programs Signature:

_______________________________ Date: _______________________
School of Education

Activity Report

To be used for both Professional Learning and Research Funding

This document is to be completed within one month of undertaking an Activity and submitted with any relevant attached documents/information to the Secretary, School Executive.

1. **APPLICANT’S DETAILS:**
   
   First Name:               Surname:
   
   Program:                 Staff Number:
   
   General Staff  □         VET □         HE □

2. **COURSE OR ACTIVITY TITLE:**

   Dates of Attendance or Participation:

   Course or Activity Provider:

   Professional Learning Activity:  □
   
   Research Activity:  □
   
   Local:  □          International:  □

3. **SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY:**

   Activity under $200 (50-200 words) / Other Activities (250-500 words)

4. **HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE SHARED WITH COLLEAGUES:**
5. **FROM THIS CONFERENCE/APPROACH I HAVE SECURED THE FOLLOWING CONTACTS:** (for supervision, guest speakers, examiners)

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<th>NAME &amp; POSITION</th>
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**AREA OF EXPERTISE:**

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**AREA OF EXPERTISE:**

**★**Attach any other relevant information – outcomes of activity undertaken (eg, copy of paper, seminar presentation, etc).

Signature: __________________________ Date: _______________________