

POLICY P3.3.1

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Version Number	2.7
SOPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > SOP P3.3.1-1 Management of Professional Development > SOP P3.3.1-2 Responsibilities of Managers and Applicants > SOP P3.3.1-3 Funding and Reimbursement
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1 Purpose

- 1.1 The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) provides staff members an effective means by which they can attain professional development opportunities appropriate to their needs.
- 1.2 Appropriate professional development enhances the skills and capabilities of individuals, making the workplace more productive and effective.
- 1.3 Professional development and new skills can be gained through a range of means including, but not limited to, experience, such as opportunities to act in other roles, self-directed learning or structured training.
- 1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with Policy P7.1.6 NSW RFS Employee Work and Professional Development Planning and Review and Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members.
- 1.5 This policy does not cover training that is necessary for an individual to maintain the essential requirements of their role or for legislative or compliance requirements, as this is not considered professional development, nor an enhancement. Examples include safety related training, licenses and investigation techniques.

2 Definitions

- 2.1 For the purpose of this policy document, the following definitions apply:
 - a. **Course fees:** includes tuition costs only. Does not include student union/membership fees, textbooks, parking, travel, accommodation.
 - b. **Professional Development:** the enhancement of the professional skills and capabilities of staff members.
 - c. **Staff members:** are as defined as those employed by the NSW RFS under the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*.

3 Policy

- 3.1 This policy provides guidance to staff members and assists them in fulfilling the responsibility of their own professional development needs and career aspirations.
- 3.2 Managers must meet with their staff members biannually to discuss sectional work requirements, individual work plans and professional development needs as documented in the individual staff member's professional development plan (in accordance with P7.1.6).
- 3.3 Staff may apply for professional development opportunities to enhance career progression subject to satisfactory work performance and after attaining the required level of education for their role as set in Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members.
- 3.4 If an individual staff member intends to apply for funding assistance, the application **must** be submitted **prior** to enrolment, and in accordance with the provisions of SOP P3.3.1-3.
- 3.5 This policy provides guidance to the Professional Development Committee (PDC), which oversees professional development to ensure the process is fair, equitable and accessible for all staff members.
- 3.6 The PDC is responsible for the review, approval, payment and reimbursement of all professional development applications for staff members within the guidelines of this policy.
- 3.7 The Learning and Development Section, with the assistance of the PDC, shall conduct a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) as required, to support organisational professional development demands.
- 3.8 The PDC may consider a block release, or group course, in-house to meet an identified workplace need (from the TNA), or if multiple applications for any given course are received.
- 3.9 Executive and administrative support for the PDC is provided by the Learning and Development Section.
- 3.10 Where appropriate, preference will be given to professional development programs that lead staff to the award of a recognised qualification.
- 3.11 All professional development is to be funded from the Professional Development budget with the **exception** of:
 - a. Training described in clause 1.5 of this policy;
 - b. District and operational training for staff directed to participate in training as detailed in the (annual) District and Operational Officer (D-OpO) Training Information Booklet;
 - c. Internal training programs; and
 - d. Service wide participation in Conferences and Forums (e.g. AFAC/BNHCRC).
- 3.12 Information regarding development opportunities will be distributed when applicable.
- 3.13 Professional development inquiries should be directed to fdc@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

4 Related documents

- > [Rural Fires Act 1997](#)
- > [Government Sector Employment Act 2013](#)
- > [Public Service Commission Personnel Handbook](#) (as appropriate)
- > [NSW Public Sector Capability Framework](#)
- > [Service Standard 1.1.3 Grievances](#)
- > [Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members](#)
- > [Policy P7.1.6 Performance Development Planning and Review](#)
- > District and Operational Officer (D-OpO) Training Information Booklet
- > PDC toolkit

5 Amendments

AMENDMENT DATE	VERSION NO	DESCRIPTION
28 November 2006	1.0	Initial release
14 December 2007	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade P3.3.1 v1.0 > Update Links > SOP P3.3.1-1 Add new clause 2.7 PDC Sponsored Courses > SOP P3.3.1-1 Clause 2.9 Study Leave > SOP P3.3.1-1 Update forms
18 September 2009	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade P3.3.1 v2.0 > Updated links and changed position titles arising from realignment > All references throughout document relating to the administration of PDC changed from Staff Services to Learning and Development Systems
27 August 2011	2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade P3.3.1 v2.1 > Title changed from “Training and Professional Development” to “Professional Development” > Minor amendments made to reflect the effect of the business planning review on the professional development process
6 November 2012	2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade P3.3.1 v2.2 > Minor review to reflect change of ownership of PDC applications from MCU to L&D
27 October 2015	2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade P3.3.1 v2.3 > Reviewed and updated to reflect current practices and titles
2 December 2016	2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade P3.3.1 v2.4 > Minor amendments made to distinguish between training and professional development > Inclusion of a time frame for staff to be advised of PDC decisions
26 February 2019	2.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repealed and remade P3.3.1 v2.5 > Amendments to provide greater clarity around current processes > Addition of SOP P3.3.1-2 and SOP P3.3.1-3
19 July 2019	2.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Repeals and remakes P3.3.1 v2.6 > Clause 2.4 Table – Category C courses – addition of Director, Membership Services as approver for applications from staff in the Corporate Planning, Risk and Learning section.

SOP P3.3.1-1

MANAGEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) details the process for the management of professional development for staff members through the Professional Development Committee (PDC).

2 Procedures

Professional Development Committee (PDC)

- 2.1 The PDC comprises a minimum of a representative from each directorate. The PDC membership includes:
- Director, Corporate Planning, Risk and Learning or Director, Membership Services;
 - Director from Infrastructure (or delegate);
 - Director from Operations (or delegate);
 - Director from Finance and Executive Services (or delegate);
 - Directors, Regional Services (or delegates);
 - Manager, Volunteer Relations and Workforce Planning and Development;
 - Manager, Learning and Development (chair);
 - One Employee Representative and the PSA departmental chairperson from the NSW RFS Workplace Advisory Committee (WAC); and
 - Learning and Development Business Officer (executive and administrative support).
- 2.2 The PDC meets quarterly (or as required).
- 2.3 The PDC can attend to matters out-of-session, if required.

Professional development categories

- 2.4 The following categories of professional development are available to staff members:

DEVELOPMENT CATEGORY	TYPE	DETAILS	FURTHER INFORMATION
A	PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT COURSES AFAC COURSES	> Course fees are paid for up front by the Service.	www.psmprogram.gov.au www.afac.com.au/services/training/leadership
B	TAFE UNIVERSITY (undergraduate)	> Course fees are paid for by the staff member. > Reimbursement* of course fees, will need to be sought by the staff member following successful completion of each unit of study.	www.tafensw.edu.au www.australianuniversities.com.au/list/ www.open.edu.au > *The amount reimbursed is determined by the priority of the development (refer to SOP P3.3.1-2 clauses 2.3 and 2.4)

DEVELOPMENT CATEGORY	TYPE	DETAILS	FURTHER INFORMATION
<p>C Courses which may not lead to a nationally recognised qualification (rather a certificate of completion may be awarded)</p>	<p>SHORT COURSES</p> <p>WORKSHOPS</p> <p>SEMINARS</p> <p>CONFERENCES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Courses fees are paid up front by the Service > Courses typically have a duration of between 1-3 days and cost up to \$3000. > Depending on the type of event, staff members may have to provide information and feedback that is of relevance to the NSW RFS to their manager. 	<p>This development type can be submitted for approval to the Director, Corporate Planning, Risk and Learning and does not require review by the PDC; however, PDC will note at meetings.</p> <p>Note: the Director, Membership Services will approve applications from Corporate Planning, Risk and Learning staff.</p>
<p>D Courses which fill a gap across a number of people within a team, section or directorate i.e. Cert IV Training and Assessment for all L&D Officers</p>	<p>IN HOUSE TARGETED GROUP TRAINING</p> <p>EXT. TRAINING PROVIDERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Manager may identify a number of staff members requiring similar development, in which case tailored group training may be considered. The L&D Section should be contacted in the first instance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > For the PDC to consider a Category D course, the manager shall provide the PDC with a memorandum outlining the costs, the target group, rationale, timeframes for delivery and expected outcomes / benefits for NSW RFS. > When a Category D course is established, staff members nominate for these programs by way of Expression of Interest (EOI), or by their manager nominating them.
<p>E High level postgraduate courses, which comprise of postgraduate programs at Master and Doctorate levels; Case Study Proposals or Research Projects</p>	<p>UNIVERSITY (Postgraduate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Course fees are paid for by the staff member. > Reimbursement* of course fees, will need to be sought by the staff member following successful completion of each unit of study. 	<p>www.australianuniversities.com.au/list/</p> <p>www.open.edu.au</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > *The amount reimbursed is determined by the priority of the development (refer to SOP P3.3.1-2 clauses 2.3 and 2.4)

2.5 The PDC may offer a group targeted course (block release) in-house, based on an identified workplace need from a training needs analysis, or if multiple applications for any given course are received.

2.6 In order to assist the NSW RFS in meeting the qualification levels as set in Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members the PDC sponsors and promotes a range of courses. These may include:

- a. Certificates III & IV; and
- b. Diploma and Advanced Diploma.

- 2.7 Staff members nominate for these programs by way of Expression of Interest (Eoi) and require management approval.
- 2.8 Priority for places on these courses is given to staff members requiring the particular qualification for their position, as detailed in Service Standard 6.1.2 Qualifications for NSW RFS Members.

Funding

- 2.9 The PDC operates under an annually approved budget, and the number of applications approved will be restricted to this budget.
- 2.10 The PDC manages the procurement arrangements for approved applications.
- 2.11 For further details on funding, refer to SOP 3.3.1-3 Funding and Reimbursement.

PDC Review and notification process

Overview

STEP	PROCESS	NOTES
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Conduct quarterly PDC meetings and out-of-session meetings when/ if required > Action outstanding items from previous meeting minutes > Discuss broad training needs as identified in the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) 	<p>New to the PDC?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Read the 'PDC responsibilities' section of the PDC toolkit
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Group like applications and consider need for 'group targeted course' > Review current PD applications > Discuss the merit of each application, with reference to the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currency of qualifications attained • Temporary assignment to role • Listed current achievements • Documented linkage to Service needs • Documented linkage to professional development and/or career progression • Priority given <p>And with consideration of the following: Service wide TNA PDC Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Determine the outcome of each application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Read the 'merit based approval' section of the PDC toolkit
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Advise applicants (within five working days) of the outcome of their application 	<p>Where appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Advise applicants of why they were unsuccessful > Encourage applicants to re-apply or consider alternate or more suitable pathway

Merit based approval

- 2.12 The PDC shall consider a range of information to determine merit based approval. The PDC must apply a fair and equitable process to each application and consider the applicant's unique situation, such as:
- a. Currency of qualifications attained;
 - b. Temporary assignment to role;
 - c. Listed current achievements;
 - d. Documented linkage to Service needs;
 - e. Documented linkage to professional development and/or career progression; and

Notification

- 2.13 Applicants (and their line manager) will be advised of PDC determinations in writing within five working days of each PDC meeting, including details of approved reimbursement levels where applicable.

3 Related forms

- > None

SOP P3.3.1-2

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGERS AND APPLICANTS

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) details the responsibilities of managers and staff when applying for, and receiving professional development funding.

2 Procedures

Training Priority

- 2.1 Staff members and their managers are jointly responsible for identifying training and professional development, including determining priority level, by way of the biannual individual work planning process.
- 2.2 Applications should be based on the relevant training priority, and will be reimbursed accordingly.
- 2.3 In the event of a significant organisational realignment, consideration may be given to fund a professional development application up front, up to 100%, for affected individual staff members.

Training priority	Relation to role	Reimbursement rate
Priority 1	Development which addresses an emerging skill to enhance the undertaking of the role	100%
Priority 2	Development which is advantageous but not essential to carry out the role	75%
Priority 3	Development which will improve prospects for transfer or career progression	50%

Funding

- 2.4 NSW RFS staff wishing to apply for funding assistance for a designated course must do so **prior** to enrolment and in accordance with SOP P3.3.1-3 Funding and Reimbursement.
- 2.5 Applications received post course commencement will not be put forward for review to the PDC and staff members will need to reapply prior to the next intake of the desired course.

Application process for staff member and manager

- 2.6 Refer to Overview table on following page.

Application process - Overview

STEP	PROCESS	NOTES
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Conduct a meeting biannually to complete Employee Work and Professional Development (PD) plans.> Determine the 'development category' and the 'priority' of professional development needs identified> Select appropriate courses (applicant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Read the 'applicant' section of the PDC toolkit
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Complete the PD application form> Attach a copy of the PD plan> Send application and PD plan to PDC <u>prior to enrolment</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Retain a copy of the PD application and PD plan

STEP	PROCESS	NOTES
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Discuss outcome of PDC application <p>If successful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Arrange course enrolment <p>If unsuccessful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Discuss alternate pathways to fulfil PD needs and/or career aspirations within the Service 	<p>If successful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ask L&D for further assistance with enrolment where required > Read the 'study guide' section of the PDC toolkit <p>If unsuccessful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Request further feedback

Appeals against PDC decisions

2.7 A staff member may appeal a decision of the PDC in accordance with Service Standard 1.1.3 Grievances.

Enrolment

2.8 The approved applicant will make their own arrangements for their enrolment and/or participation in the approved development opportunity.

2.9 The approved applicant will supply L&D with all necessary information to raise the purchase order and associated procurement activities for the development opportunity.

Study Leave

2.10 Study leave is managed by the Membership Coordination Unit (MCU) and is a separate process to that of professional development, as not all courses undertaken by members require study leave.

2.11 Applications for study leave must be submitted, approved and quotas calculated prior to the taking of leave. Study leave forms are located on the MCU intranet page.

2.12 Study leave time of up to 4 hours per week is paid leave granted to staff members for part time studies in approved courses. For full details of study and exam leave, refer to Section 6-20 of the Personnel Handbook.

2.13 Once the quota has been calculated, MCU will enter the allocated hours into SAP. Study leave must then be applied for via the standard leave request process.

2.14 Managers may write to MCU (with a valid reason) with a view to reducing the amount of approved hours (for example part of the leave entitlement may be utilised during office hours). Alternatively, a suitable arrangement between staff and management can be organised and attached to the application form prior to formal approval.

Changes to employment

Resignation from the NSW RFS

2.15 Upon resignation from the NSW RFS, all PDC arrangements will be rescinded.

Transfer to, or from, the NSW RFS

2.16 Staff members with approved funding for professional development, who transfer to another state government department within the NSW Public Sector, will need to re-negotiate the continuation of their studies and associate funding with their new employer.

Suspension from the NSW RFS

2.17 Staff members suspended from duty will have their fee subsidy entitlements suspended until such time as they are reinstated, or in the case of dismissal, the entitlement will be permanently rescinded.

Changes to application, course or situation

- 2.18 Staff members must notify the PDC immediately of:
- a. any change to/withdrawal from the approved course or its subjects; or
 - b. the receipt of any alternative sources of scholarship or funding (either at the time of application or after participation is approved); or
 - c. any temporary secondment to another role or agency.
- 2.19 A staff member who withdraws or does not successfully complete the course will be required to repay funding received back to the NSW RFS. Additionally the staff member will be placed on a register and may not be eligible for funding from the PDC for a period of up to two years.
- 2.20 If a staff member defers their program of study, either in part or in full, formal notification of deferral should be advised in writing to the PDC as soon as possible. This notification should include a copy of the deferral from the training provider. Any funding entitlement may be rescinded. If a staff member plans to recommence studies previously deferred, they will need to re-apply for funding.

Completion of Studies – Qualifications / Transcripts

- 2.21 Upon completion of studies, a verified copy of the attained qualification and supporting transcript (as appropriate) must be forwarded to workforce planning and development at workforceplanning@rfs.nsw.gov.au to update organisational databases.

3 Related forms

- > Professional Development Application form
- > Study Leave Request form

SOP P3.3.1-3

FUNDING AND REIMBURSEMENT

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) details the process for funding and reimbursement of course costs.

2 Procedures

Eligibility

- 2.1 Any staff member employed under the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 in an ongoing role is eligible to apply for funding.
- 2.2 Any staff member employed under the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 in a temporary role is only eligible to apply for funding under Category 3, i.e. short courses. Any exception to this must be supported by the relevant Executive Director for consideration by the PDC.

Applications for funding

- 2.3 Prior to enrolment, NSW RFS staff wishing to apply for funding assistance are to submit the following forms to the PDC at pdc@rfs.nsw.gov.au:
 - a. a duly authorised Professional Development Application form reflecting the priority of the professional development (refer to SOP P3.3.1-2 clauses 2.3 and 2.4); and
 - b. a copy of their Personal Development Plan.
- 2.4 Applications received post-enrolment will not be put forward for review by the PDC. Staff members will need to reapply prior to the next intake of the desired course.
- 2.5 The PDC manages the procurement arrangements for approved applications.

Reimbursements

- 2.6 Reimbursement of costs is set in accordance with the priorities and at the levels detailed in clauses 2.3 and 2.4 in SOP P3.3.1-2, and will be advised to the applicant in writing.
- 2.7 Reimbursement will only be made for those subjects successfully completed in a single course for any one applicant at any time. Failure in a subject will render any claim void for that subject. Repeat subjects will have to be paid for by the applicant.
- 2.8 A Professional Development Reimbursement Request form must be completed for each reimbursement and receipts and results must be attached.
- 2.9 In determining payment, the following costs are excluded from reimbursements:
 - a. textbook costs;
 - b. student administration fees;
 - c. relevant required material;
 - d. student union/council fees;
 - e. parking fees;
 - f. library fees.
- 2.10 The PDC will ensure that course fee reimbursements are within the limits of the set budget. The Commissioner has discretion to vary reimbursement provisions.

Associated Costs

- 2.11 In the majority of cases, accommodation, meals and associated costs are not covered by the PDC. However, reimbursement may be sought from the relevant sectional budget in some circumstances, following written approval by the sectional manager.
- 2.12 In some circumstances, accommodation, meals and costs associated with PDC sponsored courses will be met by the PDC budget (e.g. for residential programs).
- 2.13 Travel costs will be met by sectional budgets or by the staff member.

Personal tax

- 2.14 It is strongly recommended that professional taxation advice be sought by the staff member when preparing their taxation return to confirm compliance with latest taxation laws in relation to any costs/reimbursements relating to their professional development studies.

FEE-HELP

- 2.15 The FEE-HELP scheme is a Commonwealth program established to assist students with funding tertiary study.
- 2.16 Eligible students can borrow up to the FEE-HELP limit to pay tuition fees.
- 2.17 The staff member is to claim reimbursement for a unit or on a semester basis against their FEE-HELP on submission of proof of successful results and evidence of the FEE-HELP liability.
- 2.18 Any monies paid by the NSW RFS in relation to such reimbursement are to be paid by the staff member directly to the ATO to offset their FEE-HELP debt.
- 2.19 Once this payment is made, a receipt from the ATO must be provided to the PDC/the Finance section as proof of payment.
- 2.20 Information about eligibility for FEE-HELP and FEE-HELP providers can be found at: <http://studyassist.gov.au/sites/studyassist/help-payingmyfees/fee-help/pages/>.

3 Related forms

- Professional Development Reimbursement request form