

Staff Training and Development Policy v2

The Open College

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Figure 1: A close up of a sign Description automatically generated

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1 Document Control

Document Version

2.0

Responsibility

Leadership Team

Review Cycle

Yearly

Next Review

May 2026

1.1 Record of Revisions

Version	Date	Description	Approved by
2.0	May 2025	Version 2 Update	AB

Staff Training and Development Policy

Introduction:

The Open College recognises that the quality of its programmes and learner experience is fundamentally dependent on the skills, knowledge, and commitment of its staff. As an institution, we place a particular emphasis on the development of digital pedagogy, online learner engagement, and remote service delivery skills.

This policy outlines our institutional approach to staff learning and development, including structures, principles, roles, and budgetary frameworks. It supports our quality assurance system and strategic commitment to building and sustaining staff capacity across all functions of the College.

Purpose:

This policy affirms The Open College's commitment to fostering a culture of continuous professional development (CPD), aligned with our organisational goals and individual growth. We aim to ensure all staff are equipped to perform their roles confidently and to adapt to evolving pedagogical, technological, and regulatory expectations.

Staff development is essential to:

- Supporting high-quality online teaching and learning

- Ensuring compliance with regulatory and QA standards
- Building capacity across academic and operational teams
- Supporting retention and progression through effective learner support
- Fostering a culture of innovation and reflective practice.

Scope:

This policy applies to all college staff, including:

- Academic staff (tutors, programme leaders, placement coordinators, assessment staff)
- Administrative and support staff (student services, operations, IT)
- Leadership and governance teams.

It includes formal and informal development, structured CPD, training related to quality assurance, and personal development supported by the College.

Principles:**1. Strategic Alignment**

All staff development activity contributes to the College's Strategic Plan and the delivery of fully online QQI-accredited programmes.

2. Shared Responsibility

Individual staff members are encouraged to take ownership of their development. Managers are expected to facilitate access to opportunities, and the College provides the necessary infrastructure, funding, and oversight.

3. Development Lifecycle

Development begins with induction and probation and continues through structured Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) processes, including one-to-ones, appraisals, KPIs, and self-reflection.

4. Digital Competence

Given the online-first model, staff are supported to develop competencies in:

- Online teaching and assessment
- Moodle and associated platforms
- Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Use of emerging tools including AI, Turnitin, and screencasting

5. Inclusion and Wellbeing

Development opportunities are designed to support both personal and professional growth, with training available in wellbeing, EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion), and respectful digital engagement.

6. Quality-Linked CPD

Training is embedded in QA expectations and aligned with programme development, delivery, and review cycles.

Development Activities and Opportunities:

The College offers a range of staff development supports, which may include:

- **Structured Induction** for all staff, covering systems, policies, QA, GDPR, digital pedagogy, and college operations.
- **Bespoke Online Training** in Moodle, Turnitin, BigBlueButton, and assessment design.
- **Digital Teaching and Learning Modules**, including in-house courses on technology-enhanced learning.
- **Ongoing CPD** through workshops, recorded training, peer sessions, and monthly tutor forums.
- **External Opportunities**, including conferences, seminars, postgraduate qualifications, and discipline-specific upskilling.
- **Mentoring and Peer Support**, particularly for new staff and during programme development.
- **Short Courses and Microcredentials** via internal or external providers
- **Leadership and Management Training** for those with line-management or strategic responsibilities.
- **Health, Safety and Compliance Training** including EDI, online conduct, safeguarding, and accessibility.

Staff also have access to internal resources including screencasts, template libraries, and instructional design guides developed by the Education Technologist.

Identification of Needs:

Training needs are identified through:

- Induction and probation reviews
- Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) and structured staff conversations
- Programme validation or review outcomes
- Learner feedback and analytics
- Implementation of new systems, processes, or policies
- External developments (e.g. changes in QQI guidelines, sectoral shifts, new technologies).

Staff are encouraged to reflect on their development, document their progress, and discuss plans with the Operations Manager.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Operations Manager:** Coordinates CPD planning and delivery, maintains training records, and monitors uptake. Oversees budget allocation and implementation of this policy.

- **Education Technologist:** Designs and delivers digital pedagogy training, advises on tool adoption, and supports staff with technology integration.
- **Programme Leaders:** Identify staff development needs through PMDS and ensure opportunities are made available and supported.
- **Leadership Team:** Ensures development activities align with QA and strategic goals. Approves major initiatives and ensures resourcing.
- **All Staff:** Engage proactively with development opportunities and take responsibility for recording and reflecting on learning.

Resources and Budget:

Resources are allocated annually and prioritised as follows:

1. Mandatory training (QA, H&S, GDPR, assessment integrity)
2. CPD aligned with strategic or QA goals
3. Teaching and learning enhancements (e.g. AI, UDL, accessibility)
4. Discipline-specific development (subject to demand and funding)
5. Accredited qualifications and further study (via competitive funding)
6. Short courses, microcredentials, and conference participation.

Funding decisions consider alignment with College's priorities and impact on delivery quality. Where external funding is unavailable, staff may be supported through internal schemes where budgets permit.

Monitoring and Review:

Engagement with CPD is monitored by the Operations Manager and reported through QA structures. Participation in induction and mandatory training is logged centrally. Development outcomes and feedback inform programme and institutional review cycles.

This policy is reviewed annually as part of the QA review schedule or in response to changes in strategic direction, QQI requirements, or staffing needs.