



Secretariat

20 October 2023

Administrative instruction

Staff learning and development programme

The Secretary-General promulgates the following procedures to implement the staff learning and development programme with a view to advancing the substantive, managerial and technical skills of staff members:

Section 1

Objectives and contents of the programme

1.1 The purpose of the staff learning and development programme is to provide the offices of the International Seabed Authority with a means to ensure that they can carry out their work and adjust to new mandates and responsibilities by maintaining and developing the substantive, managerial and technical skills of their staff within the allocated resources. The programme provides staff with opportunities for professional growth and development and, as stipulated in section 2.1 of the Secretary-General's bulletin on the learning and development policy ([ISBA/ST/SGB/2018/1](#)), learning and development are a responsibility shared by the Authority, its managers and each staff member.

1.2 Staff learning and development activities that may take place under the programme include specialized training: research, seminars, refresher courses, e-learning, professional conferences, workshops and any other activities mentioned in section 2.6 of [ISBA/ST/SGB/2018/1](#). Where the skills and knowledge required can best be acquired through hands-on experience, on-the-job training assignments may also be included. Activities may be carried out in-house or externally. While the Authority does not fund degree programmes, support for a course that is part of a degree may be offered from the allocated funds at the discretion of the head of office, in accordance with the conditions set out in section 6.4 below, provided that all other conditions have been met.

1.3 With a view to promoting the tripartite approach reflected in the Authority's learning and development policy, managers and supervisors at all levels need to ensure that adequate, responsive and high-quality learning opportunities are provided to all staff. Staff need to acquire and maintain the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to ensure high-quality performance and optimum contributions to office goals and objectives and, more importantly, to the mandate of the Authority. The policy stipulates that the approach and human resources development shall be built upon the three-partner principle:



- (a) The staff member, who takes the lead in directing his or her career;
- (b) The supervisor, who plays a role in feedback, development and coaching;
- (c) The organization, which provides an enabling environment to ensure a good fit between the staff member's skills and organizational priorities.

Section 2

Mandatory learning and development programme

2.1 Staff members are to complete a self-paced mandatory learning and development programme within six months of issuance of the relevant information circular, or within six months of joining the Authority or assuming a role for which additional learning and development is mandatory. Heads of offices and supervisors are responsible for ensuring compliance with mandatory learning and development requirements and shall allocate sufficient time for staff members to complete them as part of their official duties. Staff members are responsible for checking their requirements for mandatory training and development and ensuring that they are up to date with the programmes.

2.2 The Human Resources Officer is responsible for providing the Senior Management Group with recommendations on the mandatory learning and development programme, and such recommendations are to be reviewed at least once a year.

Section 3

Group learning and development

3.1 To maximize the use of limited resources, a centrally coordinated group learning and development programme should be developed and implemented each year.

3.2 Usually in November of each year after the midterm review under the performance management and development system, the Human Resources Officer shall conduct an internal survey on common learning and development needs of all staff members. Based on the outcome of the survey, the Human Resources Officer should, usually in December, propose a group learning and development programme for the next year to the Senior Management Group for its approval. The Human Resources Officer, with the support of the procurement team, shall identify available group learning and development opportunities on the basis of the approved programme and communicate this information to staff members no later than January of the following year. The group learning and development opportunities are open to all staff members, subject to approval by the heads of the relevant offices.

3.3 Group learning and development programmes are usually offered in the areas of leadership, resource and project management, career support, information technology, health and well-being, and language and communications skills, including e-learning opportunities. Proposals for external training may be approved in cases in which equivalent training is not available within the Authority or within other agencies of the United Nations common system, or in which it would not be cost-effective to organize in-house training.

Section 4

Individual learning and development

Delegation of authority

4.1 Responsibility for managing the resources allocated to each office under the provisions of the present instruction is hereby delegated to the head of the office concerned.

Annual learning and development plan

4.2 The head of each office shall determine the learning and development needs of the office and set priorities for achieving its strategic goals for developing its human resources. Individual learning and development requirements shall be identified during work planning and performance management discussions in the context of the performance management and development cycle or in individual discussions of learning and development requirements with supervisors, which staff members are encouraged to initiate. On that basis, the head of office shall prepare, usually in November after the midterm review under the performance management and development system, an annual office learning and development plan that is aimed at providing learning and development opportunities to the staff of the office. The plan should be prepared in consultation with the staff members concerned, utilizing individual learning and development plans established under the performance management and development system. Adjustments may be necessary based on the outcome of the end-of-cycle performance review, as is usually the case.

4.3 The head of office should send a copy of the office annual learning and development plan to the Human Resources Officer once it has been finalized by the relevant office.

Implementation of the individual annual learning plan

4.4 The head of each office is responsible for the execution of the approved individual learning and development plans of the relevant office.

4.5 Allocated funds may be used for payment of consultants to deliver in-house learning and development courses to increase cost-effectiveness, and for tuition fees, travel expenses and per diem or academic stipends, as applicable, in the case of an individual external training and development programme. Efforts should be made to reduce travel expenses to a minimum by combining travel with other official business (including entitlement travel).

4.6 Offices may need to identify extrabudgetary resources to supplement the allocated funds, as necessary.

4.7 If necessary, the head of office may adjust the implementation of the plan that was originally approved, provided that the adjustments are within the limits of allocated funds.

Section 5**Allocation of budget resources**

5.1 Up to half of the annual budget for staff learning and development should be allocated to the group learning and development programme, and the balance of the budget allocated equally among the offices for the purpose of executing individual learning and development plans.

Section 6**Conditions for participation of staff members in the learning and development programme***Eligibility*

6.1 Staff members at all levels who hold a letter of appointment under the Staff Rules are eligible to participate in the programme. To be granted financial assistance for external training, there should be an expectation of continued service for at least one year in the Authority after completion of the proposed training activity.

6.2 Staff members should have completed the mandatory learning and development programme before participating in any group or individual learning and development activities.

6.3 Staff members should have completed any approved individual learning and development activity before participating in any other individual learning and development activity.

Conditions

6.4 In the case of individuals wishing to pursue learning and development activities outside the Authority, the following factors should be taken into account in deciding whether the learning and development activities should be approved:

(a) The relationship of the learning and development activity to the functions of the staff member and/or organizational needs;

(b) The suitability of the staff member for the proposed learning and development activity;

(c) The quality of the programme and the sponsoring institution;

(d) The expected impact of the proposed learning and development activity on the staff member's professional development and the work of the office;

(e) The possibility that the learning and development activities will have a multiplier effect (that is, for the beneficiary of the learning and development activity to impart the knowledge gained to other staff members).

Language training

6.5 The United Nations administers the language proficiency examinations and, as such, the relevant United Nations administrative instruction on language proficiency and language allowance ([ST/AI/2021/1](#) at the time of writing) applies.

Leave arrangements

6.6 Staff members participating in learning and development activities outside their office may be placed on special leave with or without pay, in accordance with the Staff Rules of the Authority. They may also use accrued annual leave for all or part of the period of study. The Secretary-General may approve special leave with pay for the purposes of the programme for a period of up to 20 working days or, in exceptional cases, for a longer period.

Section 7

Monitoring and reporting

7.1 The Human Resources Officer shall monitor the manner in which group and individual learning and development programmes are executed. For that purpose, staff members, after participating in the relevant learning and development programme, should submit to the Human Resources Officer a copy of the certificate for successful completion of the relevant learning and development activity, where applicable.

7.2 The Human Resources Officer shall prepare an annual learning and development report, including data and statistics concerning the implementation of group and individual learning and development programmes, and submit it to the Senior Management Group at the meeting usually held in December (see para. 3.2). For this purpose, the Human Resources Officer should collect information from heads of offices concerning the status of the approved individual learning and development activities, with an assessment of the impact of the completed learning and

development activities on the work of the office and of the individuals involved, including on the expenditure of the allocated funds.

Section 8

Final provisions

- 8.1 The present instruction shall enter into force on the date of its issuance.
- 8.2 [ISBA/ST/AI/2018/3](#) is hereby replaced.

(Signed) Michael W. Lodge
Secretary-General
