



# RCSI

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## Educational Support Policy

### 1. Purpose

RCSI is committed to supporting the professional development of our staff through the provision of access to appropriate learning and development opportunities. This policy applies in cases where the need to complete a programme of part-time study has been identified in order to enable the individual to increase effectiveness in their current role and/or further their professional development in line with the strategic aims of the University. The need will have been identified and recorded through the professional development planning process.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all RCSI staff in all locations in Ireland. In RCSI campuses outside of Ireland, local policies apply.

Programmes covered by this policy are qualifications at Level 7 or above on the NFQ framework including:

- Undergraduate Degrees
- Postgraduate Diplomas
- Masters Degrees
- Doctoral Degrees

### 3. Policy Statement

#### **3.1 Funding Support up to Masters Level Degrees**

On an annual basis the University will accept applications for funding support as part of the Staff Development Scheme. This is a competitive process which provides an opportunity for staff to pursue a select number of RCSI taught postgraduate programmes at a significantly discounted cost. Applications for assistance with funding for courses outside of RCSI will also be considered but only where an equivalent course is not available within the University and the completion of the qualification will significantly enhance the individual's ability to be successful in their role.

For successful applicants, the University will fund up to 80% of course fees for RCSI courses. For external courses RCSI will make contributions up to 50% of an individuals' course fees, to a maximum of €3,000 annually. All decisions on funding support for both internal and external programmes will be made by the Staff Development Scheme committee.

The first step for any staff member considering further study is to discuss the appropriateness, timing and departmental capacity with their Line Manager and Head of Department. If they are

in agreement, a Staff Development Scheme application form must be submitted in line with the advertised deadlines for that year. The application allows the staff member to present a business case outlining their rationale for pursuing the qualification, the associated benefits to both themselves and RCSI and indicating their Head of Department's support. Applicants are expected to have familiarised themselves with the demands of the relevant course, including speaking with course leaders and current/completed students and to have discussed the likely impact on work schedules clearly with their Head of Department.

Full details of the Staff Development Scheme and the application process will be advertised to all staff annually and can be found on the [Further Educational Supports portal page](#).

### **3.2 Funding Support for Doctoral Level Degrees**

Since a doctoral degree is an externally monitored metric in quality evaluation of academic staff and institutions, RCSI will consider providing up to 80% funding support for staff in education focused roles wishing to pursue a doctoral degree. In most circumstances the degree would need to be undertaken on a part-time basis, over a maximum of six years.

Doctoral studies should be undertaken within RCSI wherever possible. Staff members should only consider completing their doctoral studies in another institution where RCSI cannot support their proposed programme of research.

Potential candidates must have previously demonstrated their ability to complete a significant piece of academic research and have obtained at least an upper second class (2.1) honours degree in a relevant subject. Applicants should also have identified an RCSI or other relevant supervisor with whom they have considered the topic for their thesis and the logistical details for their candidature, for example start date and location for initial research training. This should be the subject of initial discussions with their Head of Department before plans are advanced.

Any education focused staff members wishing to apply for funding support should complete the 'Doctoral Degree Funding Support Request Form'. Each application will be considered on its merits in light of faculty priorities and available budget. Applications will be accepted once annually and the closing date will be advertised by Staff Learning and Development.

Further details including application form can be found on the [Further Educational Supports portal page](#).

## **4. Eligibility**

Applicants must have successfully completed two year's service at RCSI when commencing their course and hold a contract of employment which extends to the expected completion date of the course. Staff who are employed on a part time basis are eligible to apply and any fee support will be pro-rated accordingly. It should be noted that funding support covers registration and tuition fees only, it does not cover travel and subsistence for attendance at programmes.

To remain eligible for funding support, the staff member must remain in employment during the programme of study. Where a staff member who has been granted funding support leaves the employment of RCSI during the course of their study or within 12 months of course completion, RCSI may seek to recoup any fees paid at the discretion of the University.

Please note:

1. Staff applying for fee support under this policy must have obtained the minimum entrance requirements of the accrediting body concerned.
2. The learning must be relevant both to the individual's role within the School/Department and be of benefit to the strategic aims of the University. Preference will be given to qualifications that are deemed an essential/regulatory requirement to their role.
3. The Head of School/Department must approve the learning need and agree the learning objectives with the individual.
4. The ability of the University to provide funding support for any type of further study will be subject to prevailing economic circumstances and we will be limited in the number of applications that can be supported.

## **5. Attendance**

In agreeing to support an application for funding, the Head of Department is indicating their acceptance of the impact of course attendance, examination and study leave on the regular work schedule of their staff member. Where attendance at an educational programme requires a staff member to be released from their work or they are unable to execute their existing workload due to the requirements of the programme, arrangements must be agreed between the individual, their Head of School/Department and HR. Additional funding will not be available to cover staff back fill and should be considered by the Head of School/Department before approval of any further education support requests.

When making an application, please note the following:

- Evidence of satisfactory progression (exam results or Research Thesis progression reports) will be required for each year of a multi-year programme of study
- If a staff member discontinues a programme of study, they may be required to repay the cost of the support provided
- The cost of repeating a programme of study or examinations will not be funded
- All staff may avail of the facility to repay their portion of the cost of educational fees through a monthly salary deduction. Repayments can be spread over a period of up to 6 months.

## **6. Post Qualification**

On completion of the programme and receipt of the advanced qualification, staff members are asked to please update their academic qualification profile on CORE.

Staff who have been supported by the University to successfully complete doctoral programmes are subsequently required to supervise or co/supervise research students, as appropriate.

Staff who have been supported to successfully complete qualifications below PhD level will be expected to feedback or report on their research findings at appropriate fora e.g. team/college/functional meetings.

All staff who have received funding support will be asked to share their experiences and suggestions as a student on the programme as part of RCSI's drive towards ongoing quality and process improvement.

## **7. Acceptance of Conditions**

Staff members in receipt of an award of funding are required to sign a 'Funding Support Agreement' form to indicate agreement with the above conditions before any fee support is paid.

## **8. Getting Further Help**

The Human Resources department is available to support any member of staff in understanding or implementing the content of this policy and procedure.

## **9. Policy Review**

The Human Resources Department will ensure that this policy will be monitored and kept under review.