

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

### POLICY

Solon recognises that for an organisation to succeed, its employees must possess the appropriate skills and expertise. Solon usually recruits trained workers, but changing needs and technology, and the constantly changing environment in which we operate, mean that workers should be trained and developed on a continuous basis.

Training means investing in people to enable them to perform better and to empower them to make the best use of their natural abilities. In particular Solon recognises that -

1. Solon's training should be planned and geared to developing workers to meet Solon's objectives. Training should be undertaken to meet identified training needs rather than as an ad hoc response to particular courses that workers may become aware of.
2. Provision of training should also take into account the lack of a career path in Solon. A course may appear to benefit a worker more than the Association, but enhancing a worker's skills or qualifications may assist in the motivation and retention of effective workers
3. There should be special provision for new workers who may need extra training as identified by their section/interview panel.
4. As most workers do their own administration, all workers should receive up-to-date computer training so that they make effective use of the technology available.
5. Workers should attend courses to up-date and reinforce their existing knowledge and skills.
6. All workers should receive training, both specific to their jobs and of general use to the Association and there should be a balance between specific job-related training and more general training.
7. The budget for training should be based on the amount of time spent in training rather than purely on grounds of what the Association has to pay for courses. This is because the annual budget figure does not reveal the cost to the Association of the loss of (immediately) productive work time. The use of a financial budget only may also discriminate against some workers receiving enough training because courses in their subjects tend to be more expensive.

## PROCEDURE

Training activity should be linked to Solon's Mission, Objectives and Strategies incorporated in the current Corporate Plan, and to the Business Plans of Sections and Working Parties. At the time of year when budgets and business plans are being prepared by Sections and Working Parties, training needs arising from proposed strategies should be assessed and reported to the Personnel Worker. In addition, any general training needs identified by the Corporate Plan Working Party and specific individual needs identified during the staff assessment process should also be taken into account. The Personnel Worker should discuss the best ways of meeting these training needs with the Sections and set priorities for the coming financial year.

The Personnel Worker will then prepare a Training Plan for Solon, ensuring that general training needs and the priorities of the Association as a whole as well as section needs for the next financial year are taken into account. This plan should be approved by the Administration Section and the Workers' Meeting. The Personnel Worker will also prepare a budget and report against it and the plan quarterly. However, new training needs may arise during a financial year e.g. there may be a change in legislation or a section may unexpectedly get involved in a new area of work, and the Training Plan must be flexible enough to accommodate this.

Individual time budgets allow for four days training per worker per financial year, allocated to courses as follows:

- 2 days for courses directly related to the workers' job (excluding day-release, evening classes or courses leading to professional qualifications)
- 1 day for courses related to general areas of benefit to the Association as a whole
- 1 day for computer training

The above allocation must also be flexible to ensure that each worker attends the training they need, and this allocation does not include time spent attending conferences.

Attendance at courses is not the only available method of personal development. Training on-the-job can be effective for new workers, secondment to another section or participation in an outside group can give workers new experience and skills and a better overview of their own jobs. All ways of fulfilling training needs should be considered. Individual workers should compile their own personal development plan, following their annual assessment, in agreement with their section and with the assistance of the Personnel Worker.

## **SELECTION OF COURSES**

The Personnel Worker will be responsible for maintaining up-to-date details of courses available and for researching courses and training suppliers when necessary. He/she will give advice on appropriate courses and make recommendations. Information received on topical courses will be passed on to appropriate workers and/or sections.

## **DAY RELEASE/EVENING/DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES**

(usually leading to a formal/professional qualification)

A worker who wishes to do a day release, evening or distance learning course should first discuss it with and obtain approval from their section. Ideally, this should be done before the Training Plan and budget have been agreed.

When considering a request for one of these courses and whether Solon should pay the fees, the following should be considered:

1. the benefits to Solon
2. the benefits to the individual in view of the lack of a career path in Solon
3. if the course will involve daytime hours out of the office, whether the worker will be able to do their job effectively in the reduced time available and how the section will reorganise itself to accommodate the worker's absence
4. what money is available in the training budget
5. if the fees are over £1000 per annum, whether the worker is prepared to sign an undertaking to repay a proportion of the fees if they do not remain employed by Solon for at least a year following completion of the course.

The request should then be submitted to the Administration Section for further recommendation and forwarding to the Workers' Meeting who will give final approval. If approval is not given at any stage, the worker may still apply to the Workers' Meeting for approval and the reasons for non-approval will be taken into account.

Once commitment to support a worker's attendance at a course has been given, it will last for the duration of the course, provided all the above points continue to be satisfied. The worker's Section should also give support and encouragement and carry out regular reviews. The Administration Section will review the situation annually.

Workers on day release should not attend other courses, except essential courses and compulsory courses arranged for the whole of Solon. No more than one person from each section should be on a day release course at any one time. Workers cannot start a day release, evening or distance learning course during their six month probationary period.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

The Personnel Worker is responsible for co-ordinating Solon's Training and Development Policy and Procedure. He/she should encourage workers and sections to attend appropriate courses in order to meet the training needs identified in the training plan.

He/she is responsible, in consultation with the Administration Section, for arranging in-house courses to meet the general needs of the whole Association.

Individual workers and sections may book their own courses if they wish, but, as the budget holder responsible, the Personnel Worker will approve all training invoices. Therefore, he/she should be consulted on the appropriateness of a course and the budget implications before it is booked.

There is a separate training budget for attendance at conferences and the training allowance in time budgets does not include conferences. The Personnel Worker will maintain accurate training records of course and conference attendance, including attendees' names, dates, course titles and costs.

## **EVALUATION**

All training activity should be evaluated to assess its effectiveness in meeting its objectives. Before attending a course, a worker should note what they wish to achieve by attending and identify where the course fits into their personal development plan.

Within a week of attending a course, workers should produce a written report summarising and assessing the course. If the course is specifically job-related, they should discuss the report with their section. If the course is more general and related to the Association as a whole, they should discuss it with the Administration Section. Copies of the reports should be given to the Personnel Worker for future reference.

The Personnel Worker will ensure that feedback is obtained from all workers who attend in-house course arranged by him/her and will write an assessment report.

Feedback and evaluation reports should be referred to and should inform the organisation and selection of future training. Sections should assess whether training has met the objectives set for it in their business plans. Staff assessments should also address the issue of whether training undertaken has improved performance or assisted in the meeting of targets.