# Toolkit for Developing Human Resource Policies and Supportive Institutional Environments in Higher Education

## Background and introduction

Human Resource (HR) systems play a key role in positioning higher education institutions as preferred workplaces for academic and non-academic staff alike. As these institutions face increasingly complex challenges, they must find ways to strategically manage and support their staff. A well-organised, fair, and adaptable HR system is important for attracting, retaining, and developing talented individuals to meet their strategic objectives and adjust to the changing demands of the labour market.

This toolkit is aimed at providing a practical guide for universities to evaluate, enhance, or establish effective HR policies and practices. It provides a straightforward approach to identifying policy gaps, aligning with best practices, and creating an environment that prioritises fairness, staff wellbeing, and career growth. While based on widely recognised HR management principles, the toolkit can be tailored to fit various institutional types and national contexts. By using this toolkit, higher education institutions can lay a strong foundation for enhanced staff engagement, improved institutional effectiveness, and strategic alignment, thereby ensuring that HR policies and environments meet both current and future demands.

Importantly, this work is positioned to contribute to the mission of OER Africa in supporting sustainable African education systems and institutions that empower academics and leaders to implement OER (Open Educational Resources) effectively, thereby enhancing the affordability and quality of higher education on the African continent.

The toolkit first provides a summary of core HR policy domains, followed by a guide on good practices in HR processes. Templates and references to useful HR resources are provided in the List of Resources and as appendices.



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Based on a work at [www.oerafrica.org](http://www.oerafrica.org)

## How to use this toolkit

* 1. Start by completing the Institutional Self-Assessment survey (**Appendix A**) to identify gaps in HR policies and processes.
	2. Work through the document to identify good practice in HR documentation and processes.
	3. Use relevant templates and examples (provided in the document and as appendices) to develop or review HR policies or processes.
	4. Review institutional processes to support policy development, monitoring and evaluation, review, and approval processes.
	5. Adjust institutional processes to support sound practices in HR management.

## Core HR domains

Traditionally, human resource management has been focused on recruitment, overseeing fair compensation, ensuring that staff have opportunities for professional development, creating a safe and supportive work environment, facilitating labour relations, and ensuring compliance with national legislation and policies on labour. Recent years have seen a stronger focus on targeted talent management, which has added another layer to the tasks of human resource professionals, encouraging them to take a more strategic approach to managing human resources.

1. Human resource management branches



Looking more closely at the HR functions depicted above, two broad domains stand out, i.e. serving individual employees and the work environment, and ensuring strategic alignment of HR functions with institutional and national priorities. Figure 2 illustrates these core HR domains. On an individual and work environment level, HR policies and procedures focus on the conditions of service for each employee, as well as providing opportunities for individual development and support. HR professionals are also tasked with ensuring that policies and procedures support a safe, and value-driven work environment, and at the broader, organisational level, they oversee the alignment of HR-related work with the strategic pursuits of the institution. These domains are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

1. Core HR domains

### HR and the work environment at individual level

The Conditions of Service (CoS) document lies at the heart of HR services and outlines the expectations, rules, regulations, and agreements inherent to employee appointments. Such documents ought to be comprehensive, legally compliant, and tailored to specific employees. CoS documents must furthermore be subject to relevant legislation and institutional statutes. While application differs between institutions, a comprehensive CoS document would typically include the elements below.

#### The nature of the appointment (permanent, part-time, etc.)

Institutions must clearly **define and classify the appointment type** relevant to their employees. This requires providing detailed definitions of permanent, short- or medium-term contractual, casual, or other appointment types, explicitly outlining their unique characteristics and associated terms of employment. Furthermore, this section should specify any **probationary periods** applicable to the appointment category, as well as commencement dates and duration of service.

Ideally, employees should also be made aware of their relevant **reporting structures** within departments/units, and institutions should articulate their **policies concerning joint appointments and secondary roles** held within or outside the university, including any **limitations on concurrent employment**.

#### Job title and job description

This section should clearly define the employee's official designation within the university's organisational structure. A job title and job description provides an **overview of the job’s purpose, key responsibilities, and expected duties**. Furthermore, it may detail the required qualifications, skills, and experience necessary for successful performance in the position, ensuring both the employee and the university have a shared understanding of the expectations and accountabilities of the role. **Appendix B provides a generic job description template that can be adapted for own use**.

#### Salary structure and payment schedule

The salary structure and payment schedule section should either comprehensively outline the **institution’s salary classification framework by detailing the salary scales and bands** applicable to different positions, or make reference to such a framework if published elsewhere. For the sake of transparency, this section should also include **provisions for determining initial salary placement based on qualifications, experience, and market factors** and it must also specifically state the employee's **salary**, the **frequency of payment** (e.g., monthly), the **method of payment** (e.g., direct deposit), and the typical **payday schedule**. Furthermore, it may provide information about tax deductions, benefits, and other **deductions or withholdings**.

#### Benefits and allowances

This section should comprehensively detail the **supplementary provisions** offered to employees beyond their base salary. This might include a range of potential **benefits**, such as contributions towards medical aid, retirement funds, life insurance, disability cover, or study benefits for employees and their families. Furthermore, this section specifies any applicable **allowances**, such as housing, relocation, travel, connectivity, childcare assistance, or research allowances. The **eligibility requirements**, and related **terms and conditions** under which benefits and allowances are applicable to staff have to be clearly stated. **Non-monetary awards** and incentives, such as length-of-service awards, and recognition programmes, should also be included here, as well as additional benefits staff might receive (e.g., free/discounted university gym memberships, special library access and support, or similar activities).

#### Working hours and leave

The required **working hours**, in line with the nature of the appointment, should be clearly stated, along with reference to policy statements on working overtime. The institution’s position on **alternative work arrangements** (e.g., remote work, flexi-/hybrid work, etc.) should also be noted here, along with the accompanying conditions of such arrangements. This section should also summarise the key elements pertaining to leave from work, with reference to the institution’s formal leave policy. **An example of a leave policy is provided in Appendix C**.

#### Staff development and performance appraisal

Staff development and support opportunities include, but are not limited to a:

* Personal Development Plan (PDP)
* Competency framework
* Performance Management (PM) policy
* Staff Development policy
* Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework
* Staff wellbeing and mental health policy

These documents should be closely aligned with each other and serve as a foundation for the personal and professional development of staff. Ideally, **each staff member should have a PDP**, developed with managers/supervisors early on in the appointment, which helps staff to reflect on their current skills, identify areas for growth, and set specific, measurable goals for future development. It serves as both a roadmap and a personal commitment, guiding individuals to actively engage with their own learning and career advancement. A well-crafted PDP **aligns personal aspirations with institutional priorities**, ensuring that staff members continue to grow in ways that support both their professional ambitions and the university’s mission. **A PDP template is provided in Appendix D**.

Supporting the PDP and PM process is an institutional **Competency Framework**, which outlines the key skills, behaviours, and knowledge areas expected of staff in various roles across the university. It provides a common language for discussing performance and development, making expectations clear and helping staff to understand the standards they are working toward. This framework feeds directly into the individual development plans, as it helps staff and supervisors pinpoint which competencies are strengths and which may need further attention or development. **Links to examples of competency frameworks are provided in the List of Resources.**

The **PM policy formalises how staff performance is reviewed and supported**. The cyclical PM process typically includes biannual meetings with supervisors/managers to discuss performance, review indicators, and reflect on developmental paths. The PM policy aims to create a **standardised process for supporting a fair evaluation of staff** that optimally aligns professional efforts with institutional goals, and helps to create career paths for employees. Importantly, PM connects directly to personal development by pursuing both personal and professional development needs and opportunities arising from PDPs, the Competency Framework, and performance reviews. **A PM policy template is provided in Appendix E.**

New employees need to understand that a well-implemented PM system and staff development framework fosters a culture of continuous improvement, engagement, and mutual growth. It further signals the university's commitment to its staff, encouraging ownership of professional development and contributing to a more skilled, motivated, and high-performing workforce.

A **Staff Development policy** is strongly focused on institutional efforts to support staff growth, career progression, leadership development, and alignment with the university’s strategic goals. Such a policy may include initiatives such as mentoring or leadership training to support succession planning, and organisational development programs that align with the institutional Competency Framework. Staff development policies are typically broad and cater for a range of development opportunities for a variety of different staff appointments. Such policies should be clear about the value that the institution places on staff development, how institutions will support such efforts, and how development efforts will benefit all parties (e.g., supporting a staff member to obtain a postgraduate qualification, where the institution and students benefit from the staff member’s acquired knowledge, skills, and status). **Appendix F provides a template for a Staff Development policy.**

**CPD is strongly related to staff development** and involves institutions encouraging academic and non-academic staff to engage in continuous learning and development through CPD policy statements, strategies, or frameworks. CPD focuses specifically on continually updating career-specific skills, knowledge, and competencies for staff to stay current in their roles. This often includes activities like attending workshops, pursuing certifications, engaging in professional networks, or staying informed about new research or sector trends. CPD is often required by professional boards and is particularly relevant for academic and specialist staff who are required to meet evolving professional standards. CPDis a core component of OER Africa’s drive to support the development of African universities and higher education systems.[[1]](#footnote-2) It has developed a CPD framework consisting of 11 domains of professional development, as shown in Figure 3. OER Africa has developed resources for four of these domains, namely Course Design, Materials Development, Learning Facilitation, and Effective Assessment and Feedback, with others in process. On completion of the resource development, the framework will make an important contribution to how universities and academics understand and implement CPD to advance the quality of teaching and learning, research, institutional management, and community engagement in higher education institutions.

1. OER Africa’s CPD framework and domains



Finally, **staff wellbeing** and mental health initiatives recognise that personal and professional development are only sustainable when staff are supported holistically. These policies and programs focus on creating a healthy, supportive work environment, offering resources such as counselling services, flexible work arrangements, and wellbeing activities. By prioritising mental health and wellbeing, the university acknowledges that staff who are well-supported emotionally and physically are better positioned to engage fully in development efforts and to contribute meaningfully to the university community. **A template for a mental health policy is provided in Appendix G.**

#### Promotion criteria and processes

It is important for the CoS document to include a **statement on promotion criteria and processes**. This section should reference relevant documents/policies that outline the pathways for the advancement of academic, administrative, and professional non-academic staff, and should include details pertaining to relevant qualifications, experience, and other considerations required for each level.

For academic staff, promotion criteria typically include **excellence in teaching, research and community engagement**, while the criteria for administrative and professional non-academic staff might focus on **demonstrated competence in their roles, leadership qualities, contributions to institutional effectiveness, and professional development**. Promotion processes must be clearly outlined, ensuring transparency and consistency, including the timeline for the promotion cycle, submission requirements, review bodies involved, and expected avenues and forms of feedback.

#### Code of conduct

This section of the CoS document should make reference to the institution’s **Code of Conduct** document (**see Appendix H for a template**) and provide an overview of the desired (and prohibited) behaviours expected of staff and students. These behaviours are based on the **institution’s values and principles** and should include statements on harassment, bullying, inappropriate relationships, ethical conduct, and conflict management, among others. This section could also summarise the **disciplinary consequences** of contravening the code of conduct, including the processes relating to appeals, reviews, and disciplinary actions that may result from inappropriate, unethical, or illegal behaviours. It should further make mention of the **processes to protect whistleblowers**, as well as the processes to follow when staff wish to submit a grievance.

The code of conduct should also include sections dedicated to **responsible use of university property and the responsibilities of all parties to create a safe working environment**. University property might include physical grounds, buildings (office buildings, lecture rooms, laboratories, etc.), infrastructure (physical and technological, etc.), physical resources (desks, chairs, etc.), technology (hardware, software, etc.), official vehicles, or any other property owned by the institution and used by employees in their daily work. Statements on personal/private use of university property, keeping property safe, removal of property, and the consequences of misuse, abuse, or unauthorised use of university property, should also be included.

**Occupational health and safety regulations** are often subject to legislation that requires employers to adhere to practices that ensure the safety of employees. This section should summarise key messages on health and safety, with reference to legislation, and outline the roles and responsibilities of the institution and employees (and students) to keep the work environment safe for all.

All staff members and students are expected to be aware of potential hazards in their work or study environment, to follow established safety procedures, and to use any provided safety equipment or personal protective equipment (PPE) correctly. This includes prompt reporting of any unsafe conditions, accidents, or injuries, and taking reasonable steps to prevent harm to themselves and others. Specific guidelines may address issues such as laboratory safety, fire safety, safe use of equipment, and emergency procedures.

Furthermore, the university may call on volunteers to be departmental or unit health and safety officers that oversee health and safety compliance on the ground. Compliance with such regulations is not only a legal obligation but also an ethical one, and violations of safety protocols may result in disciplinary action.

#### Conditions for termination of employment

Employees need to understand the **different types of termination of contract** – typically voluntary/involuntary resignation, retirement, dismissal, contract expiration, job abandonment, or death. This section should describe each form of termination, along with due processes that precede or follow each action. For example, if a staff member wishes to resign, they need to provide notice in accordance with labour laws and they would need to adhere to stipulated rules around notice periods (e.g., notice of resignation must be tendered no less than thirty [30] days before vacating the position). They would need to submit their resignation in written form to both the HR division and their direct manager/supervisor. They would also need to be informed about taking leave during notice periods, and about how salaries, rewards and benefits are configured upon resignation.

#### Accessibility provisions

As part of the CoS, the institution should **declare its commitment to creating an inclusive environment**, and note the efforts that ensure equal access and opportunities to all staff members and students. An example of such a statement might be:

“The university is committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for all members of its community. We recognise the diverse needs of individuals and strive to eliminate barriers that may hinder full participation in academic, social, and professional activities. The university will provide reasonable accommodations and support services to ensure equitable access for individuals with disabilities. This includes, but is not limited to:

* Ensuring physical accessibility at university facilities and events.
* Providing materials in accessible formats (e.g., large print, braille, digital).
* Offering captioning, sign language interpretation, and other communication supports.
* Maintaining digital resources and platforms that comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
* Ensuring that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles guide all pedagogical processes.”

All members of the university community are expected to respect the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities, and to adhere to accessibility guidelines in communications, presentations, and digital content. Discrimination based on disability or failure to comply with accessibility obligations constitutes a violation of university policy. Individuals are encouraged to report accessibility concerns, and the university will take appropriate action to address them.

#### Data protection and confidentiality

HR divisions and personnel have access to a range of personal or sensitive datapoints collected from staff and students. This section should **note the efforts that the institution makes to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all personal and sensitive data in accordance with applicable laws and policies**.

Confidential information, including student and staff records and research data, must be protected from unauthorised access, disclosure, or misuse. Access to such data should be restricted to individuals with a legitimate need and must comply with national legislation and institutional and national policies. Personal data should not be shared outside the university without proper authorisation, and any breaches or suspected violations must be reported immediately. In addition, data infrastructure should ensure the safe storage and management of personal and sensitive data. HR policy statements on confidentiality should be read alongside additional institutional policies on intellectual property, research, and data protection and management. **See also Appendix H for the inclusion of confidentiality as part of the Code of Conduct.**

#### Intellectual property and ownership of research output

The CoS document should make **reference to institutional Intellectual Property (IP)** and research policy statements to manage the expectations of new employees and guide them towards good research practices. A summary of these policies for inclusion in the CoS might comprise key statements on IP, patents, business partnership prospects, general ownership of academic work, academic freedom and integrity, internal research approval processes, availability of seed funding, publication incentives, and recognition of excellence.

### HR and the organisational level

The role of HR professionals has evolved from being a largely administrative function to them being a key strategic partner within the institution. Tasks like recruitment, selection, and payroll processing have developed in such a way that HR now plays a critical role in shaping the long-term direction and success of universities by engaging in strategic human resource management and forming part of institutional decision-making teams.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Some key developments that have driven this transformation include the increasing reliance on information, technology, and data, all of which require HR teams to manage complex software systems for data analysis, performance tracking, and workforce planning. Another is the emphasis on the increasingly competitive higher education environment, which demands a more targeted approach in recruiting, developing, and retaining staff.

Talent management typically takes place in four stages:

1. Workforce planning
2. Sourcing and recruiting talent
3. Staff development
4. Retention strategies

To effectively recruit, develop, and retain staff, **higher education institutions must engage in structured workforce development planning**. This process constitutes an important aspect of talent management, ensuring that human resource efforts align with the institution’s mission, vision, and long-term goals. Workforce planning needs to align with the institutional strategic plan, identifying key priorities that require targeted workforce support. Institutions then analyse their current workforce to identify skill gaps and critical roles, while also identifying potential candidates for internal talent development. In parallel, environmental scanning is necessary to assess internal and external factors, such as technological advancements, funding, regulatory changes, program adjustments, and retirements, that may impact workforce needs. **A workforce planning template is provided in Appendix I.** Based on these analyses, institutions can review and refine their recruitment strategies, staff development initiatives, and retention practices to attract and maintain the talent necessary to achieve their goals.

Institutions should also ensure **that job vacancies are filled in a way that aligns with their strategic goals**. Ideally, a talent management committee should identify key positions needed to advance these goals, and these positions should be approved by top management, as well as finance and human resource departments. Before recruiting externally, institutions should **consider internal sourcing of talent**. All other job vacancies not identified through strategic workforce planning should follow standard human resource policies. When sourcing talent to advance strategic goals, institutions should follow HR policies but may also use alternative methods such as headhunting or talent pools to find candidates with specialised skills. Individuals with exceptional academic merit or scarce skills that can contribute directly to the institution's strategic goals may be targeted for strategic talent sourcing.

While appointed, institutions can include a range of **benefits, awards, allowances, and learning opportunities with which to develop and retain staff**. Retention strategies in higher education should also focus on career progression pathways, leveraging experienced talent to act as mentors and leaders, and providing alternative and flexible appointment options.

## Conclusion

This toolkit offers higher education institutions a practical and strategic resource to reflect on and enhance their HR practices. Through a combination of templates, guidance materials, and a self-assessment survey, the toolkit facilitates meaningful internal dialogue and supports evidence-based decision making. Through its use, institutions can benefit from increased clarity around HR priorities, improved alignment between HR functions and institutional goals, and a stronger foundation for long-term planning. Additionally, the toolkit encourages a culture of continuous improvement, helping universities to foster more inclusive, responsive, and effective HR practices that support the wellbeing and development of their staff.

# List of resources

### Openly licensed sources on human resource management

Alice Vilas Boas, A. 2024. Human resource management: An update. IntechOpen. [Human Resource Management - An Update](https://directory.doabooks.org/handle/20.500.12854/140334)

Banyai, T. 2019. Sustainable human resource management. MDPI. [Sustainable Human Resource Management | MDPI Books](https://www.mdpi.com/books/reprint/1764-sustainable-human-resource-management)

Boas, A. A. V. 2024. Human resource management: An update. IntechOpen. [Human Resource Management - An Update](https://directory.doabooks.org/handle/20.500.12854/140334)

European Union. 2025. Toolkit on enhancing transparency and accountability in human resource management for higher education institutions. [TOOLKIT Transparency and Accountability in Human Resource Management for Higher Education Institutions](https://rm.coe.int/human-resources-in-education-management/168075e905)

Fahed-Sreih, J. 2018. Human resource planning for the 21st century. IntechOpen. [Human Resource Planning for the 21st Century](https://directory.doabooks.org/handle/20.500.12854/130056)

LibreText. 2025. Beginning management of human resources. <https://biz.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Management/Beginning_Management_of_Human_Resources>

Mura, L. 2017. Issues of human resource management. IntechOpen. [Issues of Human Resource Management](https://directory.doabooks.org/handle/20.500.12854/129570)

Patterson, D. 2023. Human resources management. 3rd ed. Fanshawe Open. <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/humanresourcesmgmt/>

Sánchez Gardey, G., Martín-Alcázar, F., & García-Carbonell, N. 2021. Beyond human resources: Research paths towards a new understanding of workforce management within organizations. IntechOpen. [Beyond Human Resources](https://directory.doabooks.org/handle/20.500.12854/130980)

Thunnissen, M., & Boselie, P. (eds). 2024. Talent management in higher education. Emerald Publishing Ltd. <https://www.emerald.com/books/oa-edited-volume/16843/Talent-Management-in-Higher-Education>

## (Higher education) human resource associations and communities of practice

* Association for Talent Development: <https://www.td.org/>
* Association of African Universities: <https://aau.org/>
* Association of Commonwealth Universities HR in HE community: <https://www.acu.ac.uk/members/networks-and-communities/hr-in-he-community/>
* College and University Professional Association for Human Resources: <https://www.cupahr.org/>
* International Association for Human Resource Information Management: <https://www.ihrim.org/>
* Society for Higher Education Human Resources Executives: <https://shehre.net/>
* Society for Human Resources Management: <https://www.shrm.org/home>
* Universities South Africa Human Resource Directors’ Forum: <https://usaf.ac.za/communities-of-practice/human-resource-directors-forum/>

### Examples of institutional human resource documents

* **Staff handbook** ‑ Landmark University, Nigeria: <https://www.lmu.edu.ng/XownCMS/assets/documents/staff_handbook.pdf>
* The **Open University** has an extensive collection of HR policies, with the added benefit of illustrating how institutional policies figure in the context of an open university: <https://www5.open.ac.uk/foi/main/policies-and-procedures/human-resources>
* The **University of Cape Town** has a comprehensive list of HR-related policies that serve as examples of good practice: <https://uct.ac.za/administration/policies>
* The University of Edinburgh provides **CoS documents by appointment type**: <https://human-resources.ed.ac.uk/policies-guidance/conditions-service>
* University College London provides an **online CoS document with links to relevant policies**: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/ucl-australia-conditions-service-academic-staff>
* Examples of **competency frameworks**: <https://hr.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/media/documents/hr_uct_ac_za/386/UCT-Competency-Framework-Version5-Jan2021.pdf>; <https://www.london.ac.uk/sites/default/files/governance/Universtiy-of-london-Competency-Model.pdf>; <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/sites/default/files/competency-framework.pdf>
* **OER Africa’s CPD frameworks**: <https://www.oerafrica.org/continuous-professional-development-frameworks>
* Examples of **Code of Conduct**: <https://www.notredame.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/2105/Employee-Code-of-Conduct-and-Ethical-Behaviour.pdf>; <https://policy.unisq.edu.au/documents/13279PL>; <https://www.stithian.com/uploads/files/Information/Code_of_Conduct_for_Staff_-_March_2021.pdf>; <https://i.unisa.edu.au/siteassets/human-resources/ptc/files/policy-consultation-documents/code-of-conduct.pdf>; <https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/5/ZP_Files/Policies/code-of-conduct-for-employees.zp136084.pdf>
* **Workforce planning** templates and examples: <https://hr.uci.edu/partnership/futureofwork/pdf/Staff-Workforce-Planning-Template.pdf>; <https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/workforce-planning-toolkit>; <https://www.ucop.edu/local-human-resources/_files/manager-resources/workforce-plan-phases-1-5_11-6-19.pdf>; <https://www.aihr.com/blog/strategic-workforce-planning/>
* **Retention strategies:** <https://ujcontent.uj.ac.za/esploro/outputs/graduate/Retention-strategies-for-millennial-academics-in/9927205507691>; <https://sajhrm.co.za/index.php/sajhrm/article/view/1975/3036>; <https://www.cupahr.org/issue/feature/the-higher-ed-employee-retention-crisis-and-what-to-do-about-it/>

# Appendix A: Institutional self-assessment framework

Use the rating scale below to reflect on the current state of your institution's HR policies and institutional practices that can help in identifying strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement.

**Rating Scale**

* **1 – Not in place**
* **2 – Developing** (some elements present, but not consistent or comprehensive)
* **3 – Functional** (in place but needs improvement or is limited in scope)
* **4 – Strong** (well-developed, applied consistently)
* **5 – Exemplary** (fully institutionalised, regularly evaluated and improved)

All components scored 1-3 should be reviewed and considered for improvement.

| **Institutional self-assessment rating scale** |
| --- |
| **Current HR policies and other guiding documents** |
| 1. The institution has formal policy statements\* in place for:
 |  |  |  |  |  |
| * + Leave
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Recruitment
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Performance management
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Staff conduct (Code of Conduct)
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Staff mental health
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Benefits and awards
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Salary and promotion criteria
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Conditions of Service (e.g., work hours, overtime, ending contractual agreements, etc.)
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Disciplinary actions
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Occupational health and safety
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Staff development
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Continuous Professional Development
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Accessibility
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. HR policies are reviewed regularly (as indicated in policies)
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. All HR policies are up to date
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. There is a formal institutional structure overseeing the development, review, and approval of policies
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. There are clear processes that encourage all staff to provide inputs to policies
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. Staff are generally active participants in policy creation and review processes
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. New staff receive orientation on HR policies
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. HR policies are easily accessible to all staff
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. Staff understand HR policies well
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **Policy alignment with institutional strategy, mission, and values** |
| 1. HR is seen as a strategic partner within the institution
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. The institution has a talent management strategy in place
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. HR policies reflect the institution’s mission, vision, and strategic priorities
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. The institution’s HR policies promote diversity, equity, and inclusion
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. The HR processes are fair and transparent
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. HR policy implementation is foregrounded at all levels of the institution
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. Annual institutional reports include feedback on the institutional environment from an HR perspective
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **HR technology and data management** |
| 1. HR software is in place to:
 |  |  |  |  |  |
| * + Capture staff profiles
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Record policy implementation and review
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Capture performance management
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Flag staff development needs
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| * + Provide real-time dashboards on HR information
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. HR software is interoperable/compatible with other institutional software (such as to manage payroll)
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. All HR data management processes are governed by an institutional data management policy
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. All HR data are subject to institutional data privacy and security policy
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **HR professionals** |
| 1. The institution has sufficient HR capacity to meet demands
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. HR professionals are required to engage in regular continuous professional development opportunities
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| 1. HR has sufficient technical support to implement and maintain HR software
 | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** |

\* Policy statements refer to institutional positions on these topics and can either be included in a broader policy document, or as a stand-alone policy document.

# Appendix B: Job description template

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **JOB TITLE** |  | **FACULTY** |  |
| **DEPARTMENT/UNIT** |  | **JOB FAMILY/CATEGORY** |  |
| **SALARY BAND** |  | **APPOINTMENT TYPE** |  |

|  |
| --- |
| ***MAIN PURPOSE OF THE POSITION*** |
|  |
| ***KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS (KPAs)*** |
|  |
| ***DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO KPAs (MEASURABLE INDICATORS TO BE USED IN PERFORMANCE DISCUSSIONS)*** |
|  |
| ***QUALIFICATIONS / EXPERIENCE REQUIRED FOR THE POSITION*** |
| * ***EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION***

**Minimum:** **Recommended:**  |
| * ***EXPERIENCE IN YEARS***

**Minimum:** **Recommended:** |
| **THIS SECTION APPLIES TO THE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK** |
| * ***TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES (JOB-SPECIFIC)***

**Minimum:****Recommended:** |
| * ***BEHAVIOURAL/GENERIC COMPETENCIES REQUIRED***
 |

# Appendix C: Leave policy template

Initial headings will be determined by individual institutions, but will typically include the following sections:

* **Introduction/Background**: The introduction section might include statements on the institution’s commitment to support employees in maintaining a healthy work-life balance, tending to family responsibilities, taking time to further educational goals, attending official engagements outside of work, and recovering from illness or injury.
* **Definitions**: Typical terms that might need clarifying in this context include differentiating between different types of leave, calendar days, workdays, notice period, leave approval, leave cycle, and relevant labour legislation that guides conditions of employment.
* **Scope**: The scope of the policy stipulates the intended audience to which the policy is applicable. Leave policies should be applicable to all permanent and contractual staff who qualify for leave benefits as part of their conditions of appointment, regardless of whether they are appointed in an academic, non-academic, or administrative position.
* **Principles**: Institutions typically list a set of principles that the policy statements are based on. These might include compliance with legislation and institutional statutes, valuing equity and fairness, enabling work-life balance, ensuring operational continuity, and committing to support for professional development.
* **Policy alignment**: Listing relevant policies or guiding documents that need to be read alongside the leave policy.

Thereafter, policy statements on the following aspects of leave could be considered:

## Vacation leave

This section should include statements on:

* Defining and explaining what constitutes vacation leave, and what it excludes.
* Labour law guidelines regarding vacation days (if relevant).
* How vacation leave is calculated.
* Who qualifies for vacation leave, and whether the number of days differs between job categories (e.g., non-academic and administrative staff on full-time or contractual appointments might receive 20 days per year, while academic staff might receive 30 days per year).
* How the vacation leave cycle works (when annual leave refreshes), and what happens to unused leave.
* How leave applications and approvals work.
* Conditions of taking vacation leave, including when application for vacation leave might be rejected.
* Regulations about vacation leave when terminating employment with the university.
* Processes to follow if there are queries about leave procedures or approvals.

## Research and study leave

In most institutions, staff are entitled to research or study leave. Research leave typically applies to academic staff who need to take leave to do fieldwork, write up findings, or finalise publications. However, institutions could consider widening these benefits to professional staff advancing research in student support, higher education management, facilities planning, and similar fields that often fall outside of traditional academic appointments. Study leave, in turn, includes sabbaticals for staff who are also postgraduate students to complete theses and dissertations, and leave for staff who are attending courses or engaging in continuous professional development opportunities.

Policy statements on research and study leave should be clear on:

* The conditions under which research and study leave apply and to whom it applies.
* The number of days allocated for research and study leave per leave cycle.
* Leave application and approval processes.
* Conditions for cancellation of research and study leave.
* Any other conditions accompanying research or study leave, e.g., work-back agreements, workload arrangements, etc.

## Work-related leave

Work-related leave, also referred to as special leave, typically includes time spent away from work on official engagements, including attending conferences, traveling to satellite campuses, presenting workshops, and so forth. Policy statements on work-related leave should include:

* Conditions or activities that are supported by work-related leave, as well as eligibility criteria for staff.
* The number of days allocated for work-related leave per leave cycle.
* Leave application and approval processes.
* Conditions for cancellation of work-related leave.
* Any other conditions accompanying work-related leave, e.g., work-back agreements, workload arrangements, etc.

## Sick leave

Institutional sick leave policy statements should align with national legislation. Typically, staff members are allocated one day of paid sick leave per month. However, there are certain terms and conditions that guide the transparent and responsible use of paid sick leave. Policy statements should therefore:

* Stipulate how institutional provisioning of paid sick leave aligns with national legislation.
* List the conditions of sick leave, including the number of days allocated for sick leave per cycle, conditions pertaining to frequency of use, and requirements from medical practitioners to support applications.
* Leave application and approval processes.
* Conditions for cancellation of sick leave.
* Consequences of misuse of sick leave or deception.

## Maternity/Paternity leave

Most institutions have expanded traditional maternity leave to include paternity leave. Some are further expanding this benefit by including other forms of parenting, such as adoption or fostering of child dependants. Maternity/Paternity leave policy statements should include:

* Conditions of maternity/paternity leave, as well as eligibility criteria for staff (this should include restrictions on length of employment, stipulating inclusion criteria for applications, and listing any impact that these conditions will have on receiving one’s full salary and benefits).
* The number of paid leave days/months allocated for mothers and fathers respectively per leave cycle, along with possibilities for extension.
* Leave application and approval processes.
* Any other conditions accompanying work-related leave, e.g., work-back agreements, workload arrangements, etc.

## Family responsibility leave and compassionate leave

Family responsibility leave and compassionate leave are types of leave that allow employees to take time off to manage serious personal or family-related matters. Although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, family responsibility leave usually comprises caring responsibilities for close family members, or dealing with emergencies, while compassionate leave is generally provided when an employee needs time off due to the death of a close family member, or for attending funeral or memorial services. Such leave types should include policy statements on the:

* Conditions of family responsibility / compassionate leave, as well as eligibility criteria for each.
* Number of paid leave days allocated per leave cycle.
* Leave application and approval processes.

## Unpaid leave

Unpaid leave is a form of absence from work where an employee is granted time off from work, where they do not receive their regular salary for this period of leave. Policy statements should clearly outline the conditions under which unpaid leave may be granted, including the types of situations that qualify, such as extended personal or family responsibilities, travel, further study, or when paid leave entitlements have been exhausted. The policy should specify the approval process, including who may authorise such leave and any documentation required. It should also address how unpaid leave affects employment status, including the suspension or adjustment of benefits such as pension contributions, medical aid, and leave accrual.

# Appendix D: Personal Development Plan template

**Name:**

**Current position:**

**Department/Faculty/School/Unit:**

**Date:**

**Name of HR professional supporting PDP development:**

**Supervisor/manager:**

**Revision date:**

## Self-reflection

* 1. **What aspects of my job do I like most?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

* 1. **What unique abilities do I bring to my job?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

* 1. **What opportunities would I like to pursue in the next 12 months?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

* 1. **What are my long-term career goals?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

## Goal-setting

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Goal** | **Development opportunity to meet goals** | **Resources and support needs** | **What success looks like** | **Target date for completion** |
| List of key personal and professional goals the staff member wishes to achieve in the next X months/years.  | What actions will be taken in pursuit of goals? | What resources and support would be needed? | What evidence will there be of success in reaching/ pursuing goals? | By what dates should goals be completed? |

# Appendix E: Performance Management Policy template

Initial headings will be determined by individual institutions, but will typically include the following sections:

* **Introduction/Background**: The introduction states the objective of the Performance Management (PM) policy and positions PM within institutional priorities. Typically, objectives will include ensuring alignment between staff capacity and institutional strategic goals, guiding personal and professional development, and rewarding excellence.
* **Definitions**: Key terms related to PM include performance assessment, competency, competency framework, department, development, Key Performance Area (KPA), Key Performance Indicator (KPI), manager/supervisor, performance, Personal Development Plan (PDP), performance management, and performance management cycle.
* **Scope**: The scope of the policy stipulates the intended audience to which the policy applies. The PM policy will typically apply to all full-time and part-time staff (excluding short-term contractual staff).
* **Principles**: Institutions typically list a set of principles that the policy statements are based on. These might include compliance with legislation and institutional statutes, as well as providing statements based on the institution’s values and strategic mission. In the context of PM, principles might include an emphasis on fairness, equity, accountability, personal and professional development, recognition, and ensuring that human capacity supports strategic goals.
* **Policy alignment**: Listing relevant policies or guiding documents that need to be read alongside the performance management policy.

The following headings can be used to guide PM policy statements:

## The PM cycle and procedures

This section should describe the PM cycle and what it entails to ensure that relevant staff members understand the purpose and procedures of PM at the institution. It should provide a clear description of the PM cycle and timeline, what is expected to be achieved from each engagement, and what the possible outcomes will entail. Staff should be made aware of the roles and responsibilities of role players and they must be given an explanation of the basis on which PM assessment takes place. This broad overview will serve as a summary of the PM process, and individual aspects of the process are discussed in more detail further in the policy.

PM processes, in turn, should be described in more detail to ensure that all role players understand how it works. Key points to include here:

* Describe where the PM process starts – an HR professional supporting the employee and supervisor/manager to develop an individualised PM framework with KPAs that align with the employee’s job description, and a PDP.
* The first PM discussion takes place between the supervisor/manager and employee to discuss KPIs.
* In six months, the supervisor/manager has an informal check-in meeting to discuss progress on KPIs and to determine if there are any support needs.
* After a year, the supervisor/manager conducts a formal PM assessment by rating KPI achievements and relevant competencies. The assessment gives rise to renewed goals and KPIs, along with recommendations for development opportunities or performance rewards.
* HR staff collate PM information from various departments/units and coordinate development opportunities and rewards.
* HR staff compile a report for the HR management committee containing a summary of current and needed workforce competencies to support strategic institutional goals.

This section should also describe the software that supports PM cycles, where staff can access training and troubleshooting support, and how the software enables feedback about capacity and competency trends to supervisors/managers and higher-level managers.

## Roles and responsibilities in PM

Role players in the PM process will typically include employees, supervisors/managers, HR staff, and HR management committee members. This section should clearly list the roles and responsibilities of each role player in the PM process. For example, the roles of supervisors/managers will likely include:

* Setting personal and professional objectives (KPIs) with employees, based on their PDP and KPAs.
* Monitoring and assessing employees’ performance and development against KPIs, desired competencies, and PDPs.
* Using reward and recognition to reinforce good performance, in accordance with relevant institutional policies.
* Using development opportunities in accordance with relevant institutional policies.
* Managing poor performance appropriately.
* Ensuring that employees understand what is expected from them.
* Providing ongoing feedback to employees.
* Providing appropriate support and a conducive work environment for employees.
* Engaging in relevant training opportunities to implement PM tasks.
* Engaging with HR professionals to ensure compliance with policies and procedures.

Employees’ roles and responsibilities will likely include:

* Actively participating in the PM process by reflecting on personal and professional goals, suggesting KPIs, engaging in development opportunities, communicating openly with supervisors/managers about progress and challenges, and collecting evidence to support the achievement of KPIs throughout the year.
* Taking responsibility for the standard of their performance.
* Asking for help, support, and feedback.
* Keeping the supervisor/manager informed about challenges or problems that might affect their ability to achieve certain goals.

HR staff and management committee responsibilities will likely include:

* Ensuring new employees are informed of the PM system and what is expected of them.
* Drafting KPAs that align with job descriptions and working with employees and supervisors/managers to translate KPAs into KPIs.
* Supporting new employees to draft a PDP.
* Providing training and support to supervisors/managers to implement PM.
* Ensuring that appropriate HR policies (PM, staff development, continuous professional development, etc.) are in place and updated regularly.
* Overseeing any queries or appeals from employees or supervisors/managers.
* Drafting a competency framework that aligns with strategic institutional priorities.
* Coordinating training/development opportunities resulting from PM assessments.
* Overseeing the quality of institutional PM processes.
* Reporting to institutional management on workforce planning and development to support institutional priorities.

## Key Performance Areas and Key Performance Indicators

KPAs are typically drawn from the tasks listed in the job profile and may include specific work responsibilities. The PM policy should clearly state how KPAs and KPIs are determined, how many KPAs should be considered for each employee (e.g., typically between three and six KPAs per job), and what constitutes good practice for KPIs (e.g., being measurable, appropriate timeframes, etc.).

## Rating scales

Rating scales are intended to provide some level of standardisation when supervisors/managers assess employees’ performance. Such scales:

* Typically range from 1-3, 1-4, or 1-5. With 1 = does not meet required standards and the maximum (3, 4 or 5) = exceeds required standards.
* Can be used to assess the extent to which KPIs have been achieved, as well as the extent to which employees meet generic and technical competency requirements.
* Help to identify staff development needs, as well as to identify excellence.
* Are only used in annual PM assessments.
* Are typically completed by supervisors/managers and employees, then used as a discussion tool to reach an agreed score for KPIs and competencies, and ultimately to determine a way forward.

## Review of performance assessments

Completed assessments are submitted for review by HR professionals. While the HR department cannot alter any of the scores, it can check for irregularities and consistency in implementing the HR policy and make recommendations for further actions. This section of the policy should stipulate what happens after assessments have been completed, including review and quality assurance processes, reporting procedures, and timeframes for HR data updates (e.g., when departmental trends will be reviewed and published).

## Appeals and grievances

PM policies should be clear on procedures for lodging an appeal – for both employees and supervisors/managers. This might include requiring a written letter of appeal directed to the HR department, and review processes within the HR department and beyond that will guide decisions. The procedures should align with those stipulated in the Code of Conduct or Conditions of Service documents where relevant.

## Performance rewards and staff development opportunities

The PM policy should clarify what rewards and development opportunities are available to staff as a result of the PM assessment. Examples of performance rewards may include:

* Merit bonusses
* Promotions
* Research incentives
* Excellence awards
* Coaching or mentoring opportunities

The policy should also be clear on how to deal with underperforming staff. For example, this can be done by:

* Stipulating under which conditions employees should be directed to development opportunities (and what development opportunities are available to enhance desired skills, competencies, or knowledge). These statements should align with staff development and continuous professional development policies.
* Guiding employees and supervisors/managers in determining when performance is considered beyond rectification through development opportunities, and what steps to follow from there. These statements should align with institutional disciplinary and termination policies.

## Policy implementation

The PM policy should have clear guidelines on how the policy will be implemented, how monitoring and evaluation will take place, and when it should be reviewed.

# Appendix F: Staff development policy template

Initial headings will be determined by individual institutions, but will typically include the following sections:

* **Introduction/Background**: The introduction section might include statements on the institution’s commitment to lifelong learning and encouraging employees to actively pursue personal and professional development as an integral part of their employment. It should further also position the policy and accompanying development opportunities as a vehicle to address gaps in skills, promote competencies, or support the development of required knowledge to perform duties and advance in careers. The introduction section should also include statements on the institution’s commitment to provide Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for staff to advance research skills, disciplinary knowledge, skills and competencies, teaching and learning methods, or development in other strategic priorities, such as community engagement. If relevant, the institution’s provisioning of CPD opportunities for external professionals (in partnership with ministries or professional bodies) could also be mentioned here.
* **Definitions**: Typical terms that might need clarifying in this context include academic staff, professional staff, non-academic staff, competency framework, performance management, lifelong learning, development, training, supervisor/manager, development cycle, formal qualifications, non-formal training, formal and informal CPD, credits, accreditation, short courses, and professional bodies.
* **Scope**: The scope of the policy stipulates the intended audience to which the policy applies. Staff development policies typically include all staff, regardless of whether they are appointed as academics or non-academics (professionals or administrators), while CPD is mainly reserved for professional or academic staff.
* **Principles**: Institutions typically list a set of principles that the policy statements are based on. These might include compliance with legislation and institutional statutes, valuing equity and fairness, lifelong learning, and committing to support professional development.
* **Policy alignment**: Listing relevant policies or guiding documents that need to be read alongside the staff development policy.

Thereafter, policy statements on the following aspects of staff development could be considered:

## Identification of development needs

Institutions should provide clear guidance about the avenues that will be used to identify development needs among staff. Such avenues might include identifying development needs when drafting the Personal Development Plan shortly after commencing the appointment, during performance management discussions and assessments, or through other avenues such as self-identification or the requirements of professional boards for CPD.

## Financing and approval processes

This section should have clear instructions on which training and development opportunities are funded fully, partly, or not funded at all by the institution. For example, formal qualifications or training programs not directly related to job descriptions are often not funded. If possible, funding allocations can be further specified by indicating inclusion or exclusion criteria, such as stipulating whether funding is limited to tuition fees, or whether extras such as travel and relevant equipment are included/excluded. Cost limits should also be included.

Approval processes also have to be clearly outlined, along with the conditions that shape participation in training and development opportunities.

## Available training and development opportunities

A list of training and development opportunities that have been approved and are readily available to staff should be provided. This may include courses related to developing competencies, such as leadership or management courses, digital literacy courses, professional communication courses, and so forth. It is also important to differentiate between the different types of training and development opportunities and any conditions associated with participation in them (e.g., opportunities leading to certification/qualifications, attending workshops/conferences/webinars/short courses, staff exchange / visiting fellowship opportunities, and so forth).

The policy should also be clear about conditions determining engagements in internal vs. external training and development opportunities (e.g., tuition fees for qualifications / other opportunities at home institutions are often discounted or waived. However, home institutions might not offer certain qualifications / training opportunities, compelling staff to turn to other institutions).

An important addition is to provide incentives or motivation for staff to engage in training and development, which might include time off (through special leave), CPD recognition for advancement in disciplines, Teaching and Learning awards for innovative pedagogical efforts, or career progression initiatives linked to CPD or other development efforts.

## Rules/conditions of participating in training and development

Eligibility criteria and any additional conditions/rules of participation in training and development (including CPD) should be listed here. This may include listing the responsibilities of staff (e.g., submitting reports); work-back agreements (e.g., working back 6 months for a short course attended or conference attended); stipulating the number of hours/days of training and development allowed per annual cycle; what the limitations of certain appointment categories are (e.g., certain opportunities only available to academic staff); and identifying which training and development opportunities are compulsory if identified through PM, professional bodies, or other formal means.

## Policy implementation

The Staff Development policy should have clear guidelines on how the policy will be implemented, how monitoring and evaluation will take place, and when it should be reviewed.

# Appendix G: Mental Health Policy template

Initial headings will be determined by individual institutions, but will typically include the following sections:

* **Introduction/Background**: The introduction section might include statements on the institution’s recognition of the importance of a holistic approach to the health of employees, and its commitment to providing mental health support to staff.
* **Definitions**: Typical terms that might need clarifying in this context include staff (academic, professional, administrative), mental health, mental disorder, mental illness, mental health practitioner, reasonable accommodation.
* **Scope**: The scope of the policy stipulates the intended audience to which the policy applies. In this instance, a mental health policy focuses on all staff members of the institution, although many institutions combine the mental health policies of students and staff into a single, comprehensive policy.
* **Principles**: Institutions typically list a set of principles that the policy statements are based on. These might include compliance with legislation and institutional statutes, valuing equity and fairness, health and wellness, confidentiality, disclosure, and reducing stigmatisation and discrimination.
* **Policy alignment**: Listing relevant policies or guiding documents that need to be read alongside the mental health policy.

Thereafter, policy statements on the following aspects of mental health could be considered:

## Institutional support structures

Ideally, institutions should have mental health support structures in place (like a wellness centre or counsellors/psychologists) or should have standing agreements with external service providers to be able to support their staff. Further, taking a preventative or proactive approach is deemed good practice. This implies having regular activities or engagements to inform staff about mental and physical health or organising events to promote habits that support physical and mental health.

The policy should be clear about which support structures are in place, whether there are any restrictions on eligibility to access such services, and what processes have to be followed to gain access to these services.

Exclusion criteria should also be addressed. For example, institutional resources may not replace existing treatment or be used to treat newly diagnosed mental health disorders.

## Responsibilities and procedures

The policy should be clear about what processes to follow in the event of an emergency – both for staff experiencing a mental health emergency, and their colleagues/managers. Further, to avoid stigmatisation and discrimination against staff with mental health challenges, the institution should make an effort to educate staff on common myths and misunderstandings surrounding mental health.

The policy should also be clear about what processes are in place to provide continued support to staff suffering from mental health challenges, illnesses, or disorders (e.g., implementing a ‘reasonable accommodation’ approach to staff who require additional support).

## Leave

In line with the institutional leave policy, this section should clearly state the conditions of sick leave and how it applies to mental health illnesses and disorders.

## Policy implementation

The Mental Health policy should have clear guidelines on how the policy will be implemented, how monitoring and evaluation will take place, and when it should be reviewed.

# Appendix H: Code of Conduct template

The Code of Conduct is also considered a policy document. Initial headings will be determined by individual institutions, but will typically include the following sections:

* **Introduction/Background**: The introduction section might include statements on the purpose and objectives of the Code of Conduct. For example, a Code of Conduct provides a foundational framework for cultivating a respectful, inclusive, and safe environment that supports learning and teaching, research, and community engagement. It reflects the university’s core values and serves as a guide for ethical decision making and interpersonal interactions across the university community. The Code of Conduct outlines clear expectations for behaviour, promotes respectful communication and strictly prohibits discrimination, harassment, and any conduct that compromises the dignity and wellbeing of individuals or groups. It may also be extended to address the responsible use of university resources, adherence to health and safety standards, and ethical practices in research and professional engagements. The Code of Conduct helps prevent misunderstandings and provides a basis for addressing unacceptable behaviour consistently and fairly. A well-defined Code not only reinforces the university’s commitment to ethical principles and accountability but also helps build a community in which all members feel respected, supported, and empowered.
* **Definitions**: Typical terms that might need clarifying in this context include staff (academic, professional, administrative), ethical conduct, professional conduct, disciplinary actions, harassment, bullying, intimidation, and so forth.
* **Scope**: The scope of the policy stipulates the intended audience to which the policy applies. In this instance, a Code of Conduct applies to all staff, students, and visitors to the institution.
* **Principles**: Institutions typically list a set of principles that the policy statements are based on. These might include compliance with legislation and institutional statutes, valuing equity and fairness, confidentiality, and reducing stigmatisation and discrimination.
* **Policy alignment**: Listing relevant policies or guiding documents that need to be read alongside the Code of Conduct.

Thereafter, policy statements on the following aspects of conduct could be considered:

## Professional and ethical conduct

The policy should clearly state desired behaviours from staff members, particularly what it understands professional conduct to mean. This may include statements on:

* Academic integrity
* Respecting diversity and inclusion
* Being accountable
* Respecting personal boundaries
* Professional communication
* Being punctual and reliable
* Adhering to university rules, policies, and procedures
* Being a considerate work colleague
* Valuing honesty, fairness, and transparency
* Safeguarding private or sensitive information
* Respecting intellectual property
* Reporting misconduct

## Harassment, bullying, and discrimination

Policy statements on harassment, bullying, and discrimination should clearly outline expectations, prohibited behaviours, and processes for addressing violations. This might include:

* A statement of affirmation that the university does not tolerate any form of harassment, bullying, or discrimination. It should also include reference to national legislation and policies that prohibit such behaviours.
* Reaffirming the scope of the policy and include physical spaces too. For example, it applies to all members of the university community: students, faculty, staff, contractors, and visitors. It also covers conduct on campus, during university-sponsored activities (including online environments), and off-campus when related to the university.
* Providing examples of prohibited behaviour, such as verbal abuse, slurs, threats, or derogatory remarks, physical intimidation or assault, cyberbullying, including harassment via email or social media, exclusion, humiliation, or manipulation in group settings, sexual harassment (including unwelcome advances or comments), and retaliation against individuals who report or oppose such behaviour.
* Ensuring that staff are clear about their rights and responsibilities, including to learn and work in an environment free from discrimination and abuse, and to treat others with dignity and respect.
* Providing clear guidance on how to report incidents.
* Stipulating how those who report incidents will be protected from retaliation.
* Indicating which institutional support services and resources are available for those experiencing any form of bullying, harassment, or discrimination, along with relevant contact information for such support structures.

## Interpersonal relationships

Policy statements on interpersonal relationships at work, particularly those involving power imbalances (e.g., staff-to-staff or staff-to-student) should uphold professionalism, prevent conflicts of interest, protect all parties (especially those in vulnerable positions), and maintain institutional integrity. These policy statements could include a focus on:

* Professional boundaries
* Prohibition or regulation of relationships involving power imbalance (e.g., discouraging romantic relationships between staff and the students they teach or supervise to avoid conflicts of interest)
* Protection statements for vulnerable staff/students (e.g., what to do when being taken advantage of by someone)
* Support and reporting mechanisms.

## Conflict of interest

Conflict of interest might include:

* Decision-making bias / favouritism (e.g., grading a student they are dating, or recommending a promotion for a romantic partner)
* Financial conflicts (e.g., having a financial stake in a vendor contracted by the institution)
* Dual professional roles (e.g., holding multiple positions that may compete with professional interests)
* Use of institutional resources for personal gain.

Policy statements should be clear on the institution’s position on such conflicts, as well as what steps staff should take to disclose potential conflicts of interest.

## Gifting and donations

A Code of Conduct policy should be clear about what gifts/donations are acceptable under which conditions. Receiving gifts/donations could be viewed as attempts to influence relationships or decisions and the institution’s stance on such behaviours and the correct way to deal with receiving/giving gifts and/or donations should be clear.

## Fraud, theft, and corruption

Institutions are subject to legislation and should be clear on how it will deal with criminal offences such as fraud, theft, and corruption.

## Use of institutional property

The responsible use of institutional property is often included in Code of Conduct policies as it guides staff behaviour towards what is acceptable and unacceptable when using institutional property. Some focus points of policy statements can include:

* General use statements that describe what is meant by institutional property, and what is expected from staff when using it. For example, such a statement could be: all facilities, physical assets, and technological infrastructure should be used ethically, responsibly, and only for recognised institutional purposes.
* A statement limiting the use of institutional property for personal matters (not related to work).
* Protection of institutional property by keeping it safe, not allowing unauthorised access, and regular maintenance.
* Respecting intellectual property and copyright.
* Reporting loss or damage.
* Processes to follow when discarding, replacing, or returning property.

## Confidentiality

Staff should be made aware / reminded of any legislation on confidentiality (e.g., protection of personal information), as well as contractual and ethical obligations of confidentiality (e.g., non-disclosure agreements, research participant protection agreements, and so forth). Importantly, institutions should be clear on expected confidentiality of institutional data and information, adherence to intellectual property restrictions, and the responsible use of academic freedom and speech.

## Academic freedom

Academic freedom is an important concept in higher education. However, staff should be aware of the institution’s position on academic freedom, with policy statements that might include:

* A statement affirming the institution’s commitment to academic freedom.
* Ensuring that core university functions, such as learning and teaching, research, and community engagement are supported by the principle of academic freedom.
* Statements on the ethical and responsible use of academic freedom.
* Differentiating between personal and institutional views.
* The extent to which the institution will protect academic freedom among staff, students and the broader university community.

## Occupational health and safety

Policy statements on occupational health and safety should both reflect the efforts made by the institution to create a safe working environment for staff and students, as well as listing the responsibilities of staff to contribute to a safe working environment. Such statements may include a focus on:

* The institution’s commitment to the health and safety of staff, students, and the broader university community
* Compliance with labour legislation on the health and safety of employees
* Noting the shared responsibility of health and safety between the institution and the university community
* Training and awareness opportunities
* Incident reporting and risk management
* Use of personal protective equipment (ranging from laboratory safety to contractors working on university property)
* Emergency preparedness and procedures
* Responsibility of third parties

## Non-compliance

Code of Conduct policies should be clear on the consequences of non-compliance, which may include statements on:

* The obligation to comply
* Reporting obligations
* Disciplinary actions that may follow on non-compliance
* Appeal processes
* Corrective and remedial actions

## Policy implementation

Parties responsible for implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and timelines for review should be noted here.

# Appendix I: Workforce Planning

Workforce planning typically takes place in five steps:

1. Define short-, medium- and long-term institutional strategic goals
2. Understand the current workforce
3. Identify gaps between current workforce and future needs
4. Develop, communicate, and implement an appropriate action plan
5. Monitor progress, review, and adapt the action plan as needed

Key actions within each of these steps are expanded on below:

## Step 1: Define short-, medium- and long-term institutional strategic goals

Institutions typically have clear vision and mission statements, along with annual, five-year, or ten-year strategic plans. However, public higher education institutions are also largely dependent on state funding and influenced by national and international shifts in economies, labour requirements, and other priorities that shape the focus of higher education.

A series of workshops/sessions with representatives from HR, strategic planning, top management, faculty representatives, and the finance department could be a useful approach to clarify strategic priorities and list potential HR requirements to support such priorities. The table below provides an outline of what to include in these sessions, and what some of the key questions might be to guide discussions.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **External trends**  | **Strategic institutional goals** | **Key priorities** | **Timeframe** |
| What are the international and national considerations influencing strategic directions (e.g., climate change, AI, demographic changes, university funding, regional and national priorities, etc.)? | What are the short-, medium-, and long-term strategic goals of the institution? | What are the key priorities (often stated as visions) that should be taken into account (e.g., losing capacity through mass retirement or to the private sector; wanting to create pockets of research excellence; wanting to strengthen open and distance learning opportunities, etc.)? | When are these trends, goals, and priorities expected to take place and how does that influence the institution’s planning? |
|  |  |  |  |

## Step 2: Understand the current workforce

The second step is to understand the current workforce by assessing the current composition, capacity, and capabilities of the workforce at a macro level. A well-functioning performance management system, built on a comprehensive competency framework, will make this process much easier as the alignment of staff members’ performance with institutional priorities is already captured and can merely be analysed. However, it is likely that performance systems are either not in place or are not implemented as they should be. Therefore, alternative approaches are recommended.

To assess workforce capacity, institutions should have comprehensive data on staff, including headcount, contract type, retention, salary bands, vacancies, upcoming retirements, and so forth. A next layer of needed staff data will be an analysis of skills and competencies, critical roles, and assessments of performance, productivity, and development potential.

If the institution does not have these datasets available, the process can be made more manageable by providing departments with a spreadsheet to complete, then collating information within the HR department.

To support the assessment of workforce capacity, supplementary data, such as current and projected student numbers, courses, fees, etc. should also be considered.

## Step 3: Identify gaps between current workforce and future needs

During this step, the workforce planning committee will analyse estimated workforce needs from the strategic mapping and compare it with the current workforce capacity to identify mismatches and gaps (in skills, expertise, leadership, equity appointments, or other key areas). Importantly, the estimated workforce needs should take into account increasing competition for expertise, new and evolving positions, anticipated demands for skills, competencies and needs driven by changes in approaches to education provision (e.g., needing expertise in online pedagogy, technical infrastructure expertise, and so forth). This step should result in a clear statement of human resource needs that can be reviewed by top management, the finances department, and other relevant stakeholders.

## Step 4: Develop, communicate, and implement an appropriate action plan

A clear action plan should be developed to guide institutional role players towards closing workforce gaps and building future capacity. The action plan should include plans for:

* Talent acquisition. Clear strategies about how the required human capacity will be acquired by the institution. This might include strategies such as head-hunting, ensuring market-competitive salaries and benefits, and implementing candidate-centric processes to identify, appoint, and onboard staff.
* Talent development and succession planning. Drawing on the current workforce analysis, identify staff who can be positioned to take up leadership or other key roles through investing in their development. The plan should also include additional, concrete strategies to implement sustainable succession planning.
* Workforce flexibility, by providing guidelines for hybrid work.

## Step 5: Monitor progress, review, and adapt the action plan as needed

The action plan should have a clear monitoring and evaluation framework that allows for its regular review in alignment with changing strategic priorities.

1. See <https://www.oerafrica.org/continuous-professional-development-frameworks> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/7003407> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)