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Training, Learning & Development Policy

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CONTENTS

Strategy	2
Who Is Responsible For Learning And Development?.....	2
All Staff	2
Senior Managers (Chief Officer Related Grades)	3
Human Resources:	3
The Identification Of Learning Needs	3
Planning Learning And Development	4
Providing And Enabling Development Activities	6
Ensuring That Learning And Development Activities Improve Performance	6
Advice And Guidance	7
Procedures And Guidance	8
Improving Performance Through Learning And Development	8
Delivering Results.....	8
Rationale For Training	8
Learning And Development Priorities.	8
Learning And Development Methods	10
Process	10
Academic And Vocational Study	10
Supporting Learning And Development.....	11
Leave Of Absence	12
Full Time Courses	12
Part Time Courses	12
Study Leave	12
Examination/Assessment Attendance	12
Graduation/Award Ceremonies	13
Finance And Resources.....	13
Subsistence Allowance	13
Travelling Expenses	13
Fees	13
Grants And Awards	13
Registration And Membership Fees To Professional Organisations	14

Provision Of Books, Equipment And Other Resources	14
Use Of Office Facilities	14
Additional Information.....	14
Appendix 1	15
Pre-Course Evaluation (Eval 1)	15
Appendix 2	16
Learning Agreement/Request For Funding	16
Appendix 3	20
Post – Course Evaluation (Eval 2).....	20

“Rhondda Cynon Taf will be a community where everyone who lives, works in or visits the area will enjoy the benefit of a better quality of life, achieving their potential, while helping to develop and protect the area for the benefit of others”. A Better Life – Community Plan 2004 - 2014

A key goal of the Learning for Growth theme within the Community Plan is for “ a local workforce equipped with all the skills they need to take advantage of new employment opportunities, new ways of working, and changing technologies in the workplace.”

In Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, we believe that ensuring staff learn and develop effectively is fundamental to delivering high quality and sustainable services to the communities we serve. We are committed to ensuring equality of access to development opportunities for all staff regardless of the hours or shifts worked.

In addition, an effective approach to learning and development can:

- Reduce staff turnover
- Reduce sickness levels
- Reduce accidents
- Reduce wastage
- Enhance staff motivation
- Enhance the Council’s flexibility and responsiveness to change
- Increase capability and competence
- Improve performance

As the largest employer within the County Borough, the Council also understands that enhancing the skills of its workforce contributes significantly to the skill pool within the local labour market, promoting the economic potential of individuals, communities and the County Borough as a whole.

Accordingly, enabling and supporting staff to develop the right skills for the tasks they undertake now, and preparing them with the skills our communities will require of them in the future is one of the Council’s highest priorities.

It is the Policy of this Council to integrate learning and development processes into the Council’s overall improvement strategies such that learning and development is a critical element of performance management at individual, operational and strategic levels. This will result in learning and development actions being directed at the short and long term goals and objectives of the Council, and therefore at providing flexible, sustainable and high quality services to our communities.

1. **STRATEGY**

This strategy document describes the approach that the Council will take to ensuring the fair and effective management of learning and development, and to ensuring that learning and development activities contribute to improving the performance of the Council.

“Learning and development” includes all activities by which staff acquire or develop competencies that are necessary or desirable in enabling them to achieve their performance targets effectively, or to prepare them to achieve future performance targets. Learning and development therefore includes induction and career management activities.

2. **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT?**

All staff have responsibility for learning and development:

2.1 All staff:

- 2.1.1 will assist in identifying their learning needs,
- 2.1.2 will make best use of the learning and development opportunities afforded to them,
- 2.1.3 will provide feedback to enable learning and development activities to be evaluated,
- 2.1.4 will actively work to apply what they have learnt to improve their performance at work,
- 2.1.5 in addition, staff with particular strengths should, with an appropriate level of support, assist the learning and development of their colleagues through explanation/demonstration etc.

2.2 Team Managers:

- 2.2.1 will review the performance of their team members and provide individual feedback in order to highlight both areas of particular strength and areas where development is needed.
- 2.2.2 will work with staff to prioritise learning and development needs to reflect organisational, team and individual performance targets.
- 2.2.3 will maintain a plan for the learning and development of their team.
- 2.2.4 will enable the provision of relevant learning to their staff.
- 2.2.5 will monitor the quality of learning and support the implementation and application of learning to improve work performance.
- 2.2.6 will evaluate the impact of learning and development actions on individual and team goals and targets.

2.3 Senior Managers (Chief Officer related grades)

- 2.3.1 will ensure that overall priority areas for learning and development reflect the Council's overall priorities.
- 2.3.2 will ensure the availability of appropriate resource, including budget, to meet learning and development needs.
- 2.3.3 will ensure the development and delivery of learning and development plans.
- 2.3.4 will ensure equality in the identification, planning and delivery of learning and development.
- 2.3.5 will evaluate the impact of learning and development on organisational goals and targets, and identify potential improvements where possible.

2.4 Human Resources:

- 2.4.1 will provide professional advice and support to team managers and senior managers in order to support them in exercising their responsibilities for learning and development.
- 2.4.2 will offer a range of learning solutions focussing on those areas that are of the highest strategic importance.
- 2.4.3 will monitor the effective and fair planning and delivery of learning and development across the Council.

3. THE IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNING NEEDS

The identification of learning and development needs takes place at four levels:

- 3.1 Council Wide – on an annual basis, Corporate Management Team will determine and communicate the broad priorities for performance improvement through learning and development across the Council. This statement of priorities will not preclude necessary learning and development at a lower level, but will provide managers with a broad framework in which to prioritise learning and development needs.
- 3.2 Service – on an annual basis, Group or Service management teams will determine and communicate overall priorities for performance improvement through learning and development within the service. This will take account of Council wide priorities and, in addition, will identify service level priority areas.
- 3.3 Team – responding to business priorities and assessment of team performance and competence, team managers will, on at least an annual basis, determine and communicate priorities and targets for performance improvement through learning and development.

- 3.4 Individuals – the Performance Plus! review and associated discussions with the line manager is the mechanism for identifying individual learning and development needs. Every member of staff must have a Performance Plus! review and Individual Action Plan. The Individual Action Plan is a rolling document which will be maintained up-to-date at all times.

4. PLANNING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 As with the identification of learning and development needs, planning of learning and development takes place at several levels:
- 4.1.1 The Individual Action Plan will specify the learning and development targets and actions for the individual, based on an assessment of their competence, measured against their performance targets and the needs of their service. The plan will specify those actions that can be managed effectively within the team, and those that will require resource, whether financial or other, which cannot be provided from existing team resources.
 - 4.1.2 Team managers are responsible for the collation of information from Individual Action Plans, and subsequent prioritisation to form a team learning and development plan.
 - 4.1.3 Group Management teams are responsible for the collation and production of higher level learning and development plans. These will draw together needs identified at operational level with those identified strategically and will prioritise appropriately. It is acknowledged that different structures will require different approaches to planning at this level. It is for Group Management teams to determine whether to create a single learning and development plan for the Group, or whether to devolve Learning and Development plans to a Divisional level.
 - 4.1.4 Corporate Management Team, whilst not needing full details of every learning and development intervention planned, will require confirmation that their priorities (see 3.1 above) are being appropriately addressed. A Council wide overview plan, prepared by Corporate Management Team, will enable this assessment, and provides opportunity for cross-cutting themes to be planned for effectively.

4.2 A series of cascading plans for learning and development will emerge from the planning exercise identified in paragraph 4.1:

- Individual Plan – the shared responsibility of the individual and their manager resulting from the Performance Plus! review;
- Team Plan – the responsibility of the team manager, collated from the needs identified through Performance Plus! reviews;
- Service/Division or Group plan, the level and responsibility being determined by the relevant Group Director, prioritising the results of team plans and Corporate needs.
- Council wide overview plan, outlining corporate learning priorities – the responsibility of Corporate Management Team.

Learning and development plans at team, service/division and overview levels must link closely with Business, Strategic and improvement plans respectively, and should be considered an element of these plans.

4.3 Plans for learning and development must be realistic and resourced. Relevant resources may include:

- Learner's Time
- Manager's, coach's or mentor's time
- Books, videos or other learning materials
- Finance
- Equipment (e.g. PC, Laptop)

4.4 Plans for learning and development must be appropriately prioritised. Priority levels, whether at individual or service level will usually be ascribed according to the following criteria:

- Learning required by Law, regulation or regulatory authority, or that reflecting highest Council wide priority.
- Learning required in order to maintain existing, required services, or to enhance services where they are under-performing
- Learning reflecting Council wide priorities, or that required to enhance existing service levels
- Learning required to satisfy future service needs or other future plans

4.5 Learning and development plans form an important annex to all performance plans, such that all business plans should be supported by a current learning and development plan.

5. PROVIDING AND ENABLING DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

- 5.1 Planned learning and development objectives that are prioritised and agreed have the same level of importance as any other performance objective. Indeed, as learning and development is a key tool for enabling service improvement, achieving learning and development targets is fundamental to the achievement of performance targets. Accordingly, managers must treat the achievement of their staff's learning and development goals and objectives as one of their fundamental performance targets.
- 5.2 Whether additional budget is required, or whether learning and development targets can be achieved through existing team resources, learning and development needs must be addressed in as efficient and effective a way as possible. In practice, this means:
 - 5.2.1 that careful consideration is given to the most effective method for achieving learning
 - 5.2.2 that staff must have adequate preparation prior to embarking on any learning activity,
 - 5.2.3 that staff must be afforded adequate time and other resources to learn effectively,
 - 5.2.4 that staff must be de-briefed after learning activities and must be supported in applying acquired knowledge or skill to their work.
- 5.3 In all circumstances, learning must be delivered in ways that do not disadvantage groups or individuals. For example, consideration must be given to the particular needs of part-time staff and other staff whose normal work pattern falls outside core hours.

6. ENSURING THAT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

- 6.1 The impact of learning and development on the performance of individuals, teams, services and the Council as a whole must be measured in order that a return on investment may be gauged and that future improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of learning and development activities may be identified. Whilst an initial assessment of the impact of a particular learning and development intervention may be carried out immediately, valuable information relating to the impact of learning on the achievement of performance targets will become available over time.

- 6.2 Individual Action Plans should be reviewed regularly by the line manager with the individual concerned. These reviews should normally be part of regular one-to-one supervision meetings, but in any event must be at intervals not exceeding four months. These review meetings will be used to determine the degree of achievement of individual learning and development objectives, their impact on individual performance targets and to agree and plan any further action or variation to targets that is required.
- 6.3 Managers at all levels should maintain management control over learning and development plans, and should formally review the progress of these plans and the impact on team and service level objectives at intervals not exceeding six months. These formal reviews will provide most value where they are integrated with a review of the business plan. The review will focus on the degree of achievement of team or service learning and development objectives, their impact on business objectives and will highlight necessary variations to existing plans.
- 6.4 Where external circumstances or overall service priorities change, learning and development plans must be reviewed and adjusted to reflect these changes.
- 6.5 By maintaining an on-going approach to review, learning and development plans become increasingly flexible and responsive to the changing public service environment.

7. ADVICE AND GUIDANCE.

The Director of Human Resources will issue guidance and procedure to managers relating to the effective management of learning and development. In addition, the Director of Human Resources will disseminate information on best practice and act as a conduit for information exchange between service areas.

PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

This document supports and underpins the Council's Training, Learning and Development Policy and Strategy. It aims to provide clarity for managers and members of staff about their responsibilities in respect of this policy and strategy and how those responsibilities should be exercised. It also aims to provide the philosophical basis against which matters of judgement should be made.

The Council's Competency Framework includes Core Competencies relating to learning and development and to delivering excellence in work:

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE THROUGH LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Understand own strengths and development needs. Take appropriate responsibility for meeting these needs in partnership with own manager through setting clear targets. Learn effectively and use learning to continually improve own performance. Support others with their learning.

DELIVERING RESULTS

Help to achieve excellence by demonstrating a strong personal commitment to delivering high quality outcomes. Positively contribute to the setting and achievement of individual, team and organisational targets. Understand how own performance contributes to service/organisation performance.

This document focuses on how staff and managers may best manage learning and development in order that they may improve the Council's ability to 'Deliver Results'.

1. RATIONALE FOR TRAINING

1.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf Council will support Training, Learning and Development opportunities which:

- Meet the employee and Council's needs and are relevant to the employees job role
- Are linked to the aims and objectives of the Council as stated in the Community, Council wide and Business Plans
- Are part of an employees structured Personal Development Action Plan
- Can be achieved within the available group resources.

2 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES.

2.1 The Improvement of Performance through the Learning and Development strategy document defines the overall priorities for learning and development:

- Learning required by Law, regulation or regulatory authority, or that reflecting highest Council wide priority.
- Learning required in order to maintain existing, required services, or to enhance services where they are under-performing
- Learning reflecting Council wide priorities, or that required to enhance existing service levels
- Learning required to satisfy future service needs or other future plans

It is important to emphasise however, that this priority statement should be used as a guide rather than an absolute. It is the responsibility of all managers to strike an appropriate balance between the short and long term needs of the Council when prioritising learning and development needs. Managers should be able to justify these decisions in relation to the needs of the Council and its citizens.

Example: *In preparation for significant change of priority, or for development in strategic policy, it may be that learning that would normally fall within the third priority area would be elevated to top priority.*

Example: *Where a service is preparing for substantial development in order to meet a future service need, learning that would normally fall within a lower priority area is likely to assume a much higher priority*

2.2 Particular staff groups should also be viewed as priority for learning and development. Managers should pay particular attention to:

- New staff – both those new to the Council, and those who have recently changed jobs. Particular attention should be paid to providing new and newly promoted staff with a thorough induction. The Councils' Induction Policy and supporting documentation will provide managers with detail of the Councils' induction procedure.
- New managers – the transition from practitioner to manager is critical, and requires effective support. It should be remembered that becoming a manager or supervisor involves the use of an entirely new set of skills. Supporting the learning and development of a new manager has impact; not only on the individual concerned, but on the staff he/she manages.
- Other staff identified within health & safety regulations. (e.g. lone workers)
- Literacy and Numeracy - those staff who fall below the national standard in basic literacy, numeracy or any other basic skill should be supported to develop those skills.

3. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT METHODS

3.1 There are many different ways of enabling and supporting learning. Whilst we may immediately think of a training course as the usual way people learn, this is not always the best method. A range of development methods should be explored to meet the identified needs. Development methods may include, for example, shadowing, coaching, mentoring, training courses, distance learning, e-learning, seminars and conferences as well as formal and informal mechanisms for sharing best practice/working with others. Advice and support on identifying the most appropriate methods can be gained from individual group learning and development officers.

4 PROCESS

- 4.1 Before any training, learning and development activities are undertaken; a personal development planning session must take place between the employee and their line manager in order to identify development needs. This session may come about as a result of a formal assessment through Performance Plus! or through supplementary discussions between the line manager and employee to discuss individual or business priorities. Documentation to support this process is provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 For any training, learning and development activity where there will be a financial cost incurred by the group, the document provided in Appendix 2 must be completed and a copy returned to the People Development Team in Human Resources
- 4.3 Following any training, learning and development activities evaluation sessions must take place between the employee and their line manager to establish that the learning objectives have been met and to identify how learning will be put into practice in the workplace. Documentation to support this process is provided in Appendix 3.

5 ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL STUDY

5.1 Where it has been agreed that an individual will be supported in the pursuit of an accredited qualification, the form provided in Appendix 2 must be completed. The line manager should ensure that sufficient budget is allocated to fund the **full** duration of academic study and that the appropriate budget code is apportioned. At this stage the line manager should agree the logistics of academic study including time off for study and exam leave, use of Council property (e.g. computers, stationary) and ownership of material associated with the study. (see section 6)

- 5.2 Employees who withdraw from the course without adequate reason (e.g. long-term illness etc or circumstances which, in the opinion of the Chief Officer are exceptional), will be required to repay the course fees in full. These monies will be deducted at source over a period of time not exceeding twelve months.
- 5.3 Employees who fail to make adequate progress at the end of the first year will be withdrawn from the course. The decision will be based on feedback from the educational establishment providing the course. After evaluation and monitoring of the activity a discussion must take place between the individual and their manager to determine the appropriate action.

6 SUPPORTING LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

In order for employees to benefit from training, learning and development and for the organisation to benefit from this learning, employees will need to be supported with, for example, study leave, time off etc.

6.1 TIME OFF

- 6.1.1 For employees following qualification routes no overtime or enhancements will be paid.
- 6.1.2 For full or part time employees on seminars, conferences and non-qualification courses, where attendance occurs on a normal working day, hours will be credited in accordance with their normal hours of work, e.g. full time employees who operate under the Council's flexi-time scheme will be credited with 7 hours and 24 minutes.

Where the training hours exceed the normal hours of work for part time staff they will be paid for the time attended, not exceeding 7 hours and 24 minutes.

- 6.1.3 For employees undertaking qualification courses on a day release basis time will be credited in accordance with the principles outlined in 6.1.2. Should the course require afternoon into evening attendance employees will be credited time from when they leave work, including reasonable travel time, up to 5pm less ½ hour for lunch (if not already been accounted for).
- 6.1.4 Attendance for full or part time employees at any training, learning and development event which does not occur on a normal working day, compensatory time off in lieu will be granted according to the principles outlined in 6.1.2.

6.1.5 For employees working shifts, unsociable or irregular hours, special arrangements may be made at the discretion of the Chief Officer.

6.2 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

All requests for Leave of Absence for course time, examinations and other study activities MUST be agreed with the line manager prior to booking.

6.2.1 **Full Time Courses**

In exceptional circumstances employees attending a full time academic qualification course may be eligible for leave without pay at the discretion of the Chief Officer.

6.2.2 **Part Time Courses**

Leave of absence with pay may be granted for course attendance as follows:

- i) at College of other place of training or study, or
- ii) at residential workshops, via the Open University etc, or
- iii) day release to support distance learning courses, not exceeding the number of days allowed for equivalent college based courses.
- iv) seminars/conferences and non-qualification courses.

Where leave of absence cannot be granted an employee may be eligible for financial support to undertake these activities in their own time.

6.2.3 **Study Leave**

All employees will be eligible to study leave for the purpose of pre-examination study, preparation of theses, dissertations or preparation for other recognised formal qualification. Managers must use discretion in granting study leave and should consider the number of examinations, involved the level of qualification being undertaken (e.g. NVQ or Post - Graduate qualification are likely to involve very different levels of study leave). Advice on study leave allowances can be gained from each groups learning and development officer and agreement should be reached prior to the commencement of the learning activity.

6.2.4 **Examination/Assessment Attendance**

Leave of absence will be granted for an examination or assessment together with reasonable travelling time. Time will also be granted for one re-sit.

6.2.5 Graduation/Award Ceremonies

Time required for the ceremony including reasonable travelling time, up to a maximum of one day.

6.3 FINANCE AND RESOURCES

6.3.1 Subsistence Allowance

- i) Residential training courses and seminars/conferences which require an overnight stay: The employing Division will meet the cost of the course accommodation/meal provision in full.
- ii) In cases where accommodation is not provided, the accommodation required will be booked through the employing Division. Where meals are not provided as part of the course arrangements, allowances will be payable in line with the Council's agreed scheme for subsistence allowance.

6.3.2 Travelling Expenses

Travelling expenses accrued as part of any agreed training, learning and development activity will be reimbursed in accordance with the Council's agreed scheme for the payment of travelling expenses. **No traveling expenses will be payable for travel to qualification courses held within the geographical area of the Council.**

6.3.3 Fees

The employees Division will pay for all fees associated with approved programmes of training. For example:

- i) enrolment fees
- ii) registration fees
- iii) examination or assessment entry fees (including 1 re-sit per exam where applicable)
- iv) residential fees
- v) the fees associated with an approved development activity

6.3.4 Grants and Awards

Every effort should be made to secure external funding for training, learning and development activities. Fees as outlined in 6.3.3 will only be provided for the element of expenditure not covered by grants and awards from other sources.

6.3.5. Registration and membership fees to professional organisations

Where membership of a professional body is a prerequisite to a course or examination entry, registration and membership fees will be paid to the relevant professional body during the period of study only.

6.3.6. Provision of books, equipment and other resources

Each group should aim to develop a library of resources for any employee undertaking learning and development, particularly those following a qualification course. If a resource is not available through the group then the following shall apply:

- i) use of the Councils library service to source and borrow resources
- ii) books and equipment may be purchased following approval from the Chief Officer. The books will remain the property of the Council and should be returned to the group library on completion of the qualification.

6.3.7. Use of Office Facilities

Where there is a requirement that an employee provides a written submission as part of their approved course of training, photocopying and ICT facilities may be granted.

7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The provisions set out in this document should be read in conjunction with the improvement of performance through Learning and Development policy other procedures, policies and provisions adopted by the Council. No variation or amendment can be made to these provisions without the prior agreement of the Director of Human Resources.

PRE-COURSE EVALUATION (EVAL 1)

This pre-course evaluation form (Eval 1) should be completed with your line manager prior to each learning event.

Name	Learning Activity
Date of event	Venue

For the following sections, please refer to the course outline & objectives if available;

1. Personal Objectives:

(i.e. what do you want to achieve? e.g. Time management course – ‘prioritise my workload effectively to meet deadlines’).

i): _____

ii): _____

iii): _____

2. Business Objectives:

How will this learning event support the delivery of business objectives?
(Refer to service area/ team business plan).

3. How will we (manager and employee) measure that the above objectives have been met?

Signed line manager: _____ **Date:** _____

Signed employee: _____ **Date:** _____

Waives their right to submit their claim to an employment tribunal.

LEARNING AGREEMENT/REQUEST FOR FUNDING

Once all parties have signed the agreement, including the finance officer, the individual and line manager should retain one copy and a copy should be sent to Team Manager, People Development, Human Resources, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale, CF40 2XX.

N.B. Learning and Development Activity *must not* commence without the authorisation of the finance officer.

Group	
Division	
Name of Employee	
Designation and Grade	
Work location	
Name of Line Manager	
Course Start & Finish Date	
Duration of course	
Course title	
Qualification Title (where applicable)	
Training Provider	
Reasons for application for training learning and development:	

LEARNING AGREEMENT/REQUEST FOR FUNDING

Please refer to Learning and Development Policy Procedures and Guidance when completing and agreeing the following.

Study Leave	
Resources and Materials	
Course Fees	
Type of attendance (i.e. day release / afternoon/ evening)	

Training costs

List all costs associated with this course.

Fees	
Year 1	
Year 2	
Year 3	
Year 4	
Year 5	
Exam fees	
Other	
TOTAL COST	

Additional Information:

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LEARNING AGREEMENT/REQUEST FOR FUNDING

Details of any other courses you have studied that have been funded by this Council:

--

Any other comments

--

I confirm that if my request for undertaking a formal qualification at the expense of the Council is approved I agree to the following conditions:

- should I leave the service whilst undertaking an academic course, I understand that I may be required to repay the course and/or registration fees in full.
- withdraw from the course without adequate reason (identified in the Training, Learning and Development Procedures and Guide) I will be required to repay the course fees in full. These monies will be deducted at source over a period of time not exceeding twelve months.
- fail to make adequate progress at the end of the first year I understand I will be withdrawn from the course. This decision will be based on feedback from the provider of the course.

Employee		Date	
-----------------	--	-------------	--

I confirm that this application meets Council requirements, in that:

- The training and development activity meets the employee and the Council's needs and is relevant to the employee's job role.
- The training and development activity forms part of an employee's agreed Performance Plus! action plan or development plan.

Line Manager		Date	
---------------------	--	-------------	--

I confirm that costs will be met by the financial resources available to this Division

Finance Officer		Date	
------------------------	--	-------------	--

Budget Code			
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POST – COURSE EVALUATION (EVAL 2).

Following your learning event, you need to complete this post-course evaluation, with your line manager, referring to your pre-course evaluation form (Eval 1) and review again in 3 – 4 months.

Name	Learning Activity
Date of event	Venue

1. Objectives - Referring to your pre-course evaluation, assess how the following objectives were met;

i) Personal Objectives

ii) Business Objectives (to be completed when measurable)

2. Learning Outcomes

i) Describe your main learning outcome from the course

Now

3 months time

ii) List three ways you could apply what you have learnt in practice

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

3. Delivery method

How compatible was the method of delivery to your learning style?

4. Opportunities for further development

List any opportunities to further your development.
(i.e. further training, follow up work, sharing knowledge/skills with others etc)

Now

3 months time

5. Further review.

Use this space to arrange a date to review sections **2** and **4** (*ideally in 3 to 4 months time*) to review personal and business objectives.

Date: _____ Time: _____

Signed employee: _____ Date: _____

Signed line manager: _____ Date: _____