

## Learning, development and training

*Our people are our most valuable resource as we rely on our highly qualified and professional skills and experience to carry out public audit. We want to be an employer of choice for those who wish to pursue a career in audit and to make a difference to the delivery of public services.*

The successful realisation of our mission and the achievement of our objectives are entirely dependent upon our capacity to recruit and retain a highly motivated, experienced and skilled team of staff.

That's why we place great importance on supporting and investing in the development of our staff as individuals. We want work experience with the Office to be personally fulfilling and career enhancing. An ongoing programme of learning and development assists staff in developing and maintaining the capabilities to deliver high quality products and services.

It is important that staff have the drive and commitment to public service and professional values, are trusted for their expertise, are effective at engaging others and can contribute to maintaining a supportive and productive workplace. These are among the key areas of performance focus which are described in more detail in the Office's Competency Framework (available [here](#)). The Office has a three pronged approach to learning and development:

- support for the attainment of professional accountancy qualification
- a training programme aimed at developing core competencies and skills
- opportunities for further professional development.

## Professional Accountancy Education

The programme which is aligned to our business objectives to be recognised as a learning institution and the leader in accountancy/audit recruitment in the public sector, provides financial and other supports for entry level staff.

Trainees joining the Office enjoy a number of benefits and supports as part of their contract. The key features are as follows

- qualification as a professional accountant via any of the nine recognised prescribed accountancy bodies<sup>1</sup>
- initially a one year contract (subject to a satisfactory probation assessment) with another six years to attain the professional qualification
- financial support for student membership, studies and examinations
- additional support for examination practice
- leave allowance for studies and examinations
- flexible working arrangements allow staff to utilise hours for studies
- provision for on-the-job training upon appointment, usually with an experienced auditor
- a varied client base including government departments, regulators, State agencies, educational and health bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> The nine recognised accountancy bodies are prescribed by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority

## Training Programme – core competencies

The programme comprises both technical and general courses and is structured to align with the core competencies contained in the development framework. It is aimed at providing staff with the education and training requirements to undertake the various roles in the Office and includes the continuing professional development of qualified staff.

The Office offers a blended programme of classroom training, comprising both technical and general (soft skills) courses. Courses comprise

- specifically designed and developed technical courses specific to its work
- a number of *One Learning*<sup>2</sup> courses aimed at developing general skills
- an *Insights Programme* which brings more in-depth understanding of key areas.

Training is provided in-house or through other trainers. The topics include:

- audit specific issues
- personal and people development
- governance
- leadership and management
- communications
- well-being

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<sup>2</sup> One Learning is the civil service training and development programme and provides structured training events.

## **Opportunities for Further Development**

There is a range of development opportunities for professional qualified staff to further develop their skills.

### ***Further education support***

The Office contributes to the costs for staff pursuing approved business related courses. Courses must be provided by a university or another recognised educational institution and must lead to a recognised qualification. An example of a course is the certified information systems auditor.

### ***Masters programme in policy analysis***

As part of a programme to build capacity for examination and reporting work, the Office sponsors staff to undertake postgraduate studies in policy analysis. The courses are run by universities or other recognised educational institutions. Fees are paid in full and leave with pay is provided for lectures, studies and examinations.

### ***Leadership Programme***

The programme provides managers with the opportunity to develop leadership capability and skills through the understanding of contemporary theories and practices in leadership and effective management . It provides participants with access to workshops and related activities, 360 degree feedback, action plans and one-to-one tutor meetings.

### ***Other working environment opportunities***

The Office supports opportunities for staff to gain learning and experience in other workplaces through secondments to other organisations. Some opportunities include working in

- other national audit offices
- undertaking audit work with international organisations (e.g. European Space Agency).

The Office also nominates representatives for audit boards of European agencies, such as Eurocontrol, and for international working groups on specific auditing issues.

In addition, individual staff may apply for unpaid leave (career breaks) to work in other sectors or undertake full time studies. Secondments and career breaks are covered by civil service regulations and subject to the Office's procedures for avoiding conflicts of interest.