**Approving Study Support Guidance**

Read this guide alongside the [Study Support Policy](https://colleagues.coop.co.uk/study-support-policy). For more information about Learning and Development you can read our guide [here](https://colleagues.coop.co.uk/guide-to-learning-and-development)

**How do I know whether to approve a request?**

These are some things you should always consider when reviewing a study request – use this as a checklist to guide you:

* **What’s the most cost-effective option for our Co-op? (apprenticeship or other qualification)**

Our preferred route in Co-op is to utilise apprenticeships where possible, as this route provides both significant colleague support (in the form of paid hours away from the job for study), as well as financial support via the Apprenticeship Levy, which helps us pay the costs.

We know, however, that in some instances, the cost of the 20% for study time for the duration of an apprenticeship, plus the fees of any exams/additions can amount to a higher total cost than an alternative qualification. While we urge you to consider the whole picture including the amount of support a colleague might need, and whether they’ll be supported enough via other routes, if an alternative qualification will be significantly more cost-effective you may choose to pursue this route instead.

* **Do we offer this from an approved supplier?**

L&D work closely with Procurement to identify and approve suppliers whose values and ethics match our own and give us great quality and competitive prices. If we have an approved supplier who offers what you’re after, we must look to use them over other providers. L&D can help you to check if what you’re after is offered by any of our existing providers. You can email the team at [learning&development@coop.co.uk](mailto:learning&development@coop.co.uk)

We’ll only look to use suppliers who aren’t on our approved list in instances where what you’re after can’t be offered by our existing suppliers. If this is the case, L&D will work with you and Procurement to identify the best provider for what you need as well as explore how to pay this supplier – see the procurement processes below for more information. Please do not request a new supplier set up or pay for services on purchasing cards before speaking with the L&D team.

* **Exams and additional costs – agree the expectations with the colleague**

As part of the study agreement with the colleague you may agree to pay for exams and/or additional costs. To pay these extra costs it’s usually easiest for the colleague to pay themselves, and then claim back via expenses. You can read the Travel and Expenses policy [here](https://colleagues.coop.co.uk/travel-and-expenses-policy)

Before signing the agreement it’s best practice to discuss this with the colleague to understand if they’re in a financial position to pay these costs out themselves – not all colleagues can afford to pay this out and await the expenses to be paid back to them. If a colleague can’t pay the expenses themselves this should form part of the Procurement conversation so a central payment can be arranged.

If the qualification will take more than 12 months to complete it’s also good practice to check in with the colleague periodically to ensure their financial position hasn’t changed and they’re still able to pay the expenses out themselves before being reimbursed.

* **Reach out for advice if needed**

While the decision on whether to support a study request is up to the People Advisor and the colleague’s line manager, don’t forget your Apprenticeship Team and L&D Partner are there to help if needed.

The Apprenticeship Team can check whether there are any suitable apprenticeships to meet the needs of the colleague and explain more about what’s involved in an apprenticeship if you need more detail.

Your L&D Partner can advise you about approved suppliers who could support the need.

**The procurement process**

The information below explains how the procurement process works in each scenario

* **We’ve decided to utilise an apprenticeship**

After working with the Apprenticeship team to identify an appropriate apprenticeship for the colleague and decided this is the best route, the Apprenticeship team will help you to get this set up with the provider. You can contact the Apprenticeship team by emailing: apprentices@coop.co.uk.

* **We’ve decided to use an alternative qualification and there’s an existing approved provider who can deliver this**

After working with L&D and/or Procurement to identify the approved provider who can deliver the required qualification, the request needs to be input on Coupa by your department for the Purchase Order (PO) to be raised. To do this you’ll need:

* + the cost centre to be charged
  + the Cedar nominal to be charged
  + approval from the cost centre owner
* **We’ve decided to use an alternative qualification but have confirmed there’s no approved provider who can deliver this**

If there’s no existing provider who can deliver what you need, Procurement will need to decide on the best way to proceed to either:

* + identify an ideal provider and onboard them onto our Co-op contract and systems (please note that using an approved supplier is always quicker as they already have already been vetted, have a contract in place and are on our systems – where we are onboarding a new supplier we are dependent on their responsiveness throughout the process and them being willing to sign our Co-op Ts&Cs, so timescales can vary)

or

* + agree that an exception can be made to use the provider as a one-offTo request an exception, you will need to provide the following to Procurement:
    - justification for using a one-off supplier
    - the cost centre to be charged
    - the Cedar nominal to be charged
    - approval from the cost centre owner
    - any suppliers which you would like to be considered to supply the services

It’s important to remember not to enter into discussion with any suppliers before engaging with Procurement in line with our Procurement Policy. Click [here](https://hcnq.fa.em2.oraclecloud.com/hcmUI/faces/deeplink?objType=WLF_LEARN_LEARNING_ITEM&action=NONE&objKey=learningItemId%3D300004519605638) to complete the Spending Co-op money elearning module if you need a refresher.

Please note that if you request to set up a new supplier on Coupa without L&D and Procurement support, your request will be rejected due to being out of our agreed processes.