



## Secretariat

3 August 2018

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### Administrative instruction

#### Advancement of substantive and technical skills

The Secretary-General promulgates the following procedures to implement the programme for advancing the substantive and technical skills of staff members:

##### Section 1

##### Objectives and contents of the programme

1.1 The purpose of the programme for advancing substantive and technical skills is to provide the offices of the International Seabed Authority with a means to ensure that they can carry out their work and adjust to new mandates and responsibilities by maintaining and developing the skills of their staff within the allocated resources. The programme provides staff with opportunities for professional growth and development and, as stipulated in section 2.1 of the Secretary-General's bulletin on the learning and development policy ([ISBA/ST/SGB/2018/1](#)), learning and development are a responsibility shared by the Authority, its managers and each staff member.

1.2 Staff development activities that may take place under the programme include specialized training; research, seminars, refresher courses, e-learning, professional conferences, workshops and any other activities mentioned in section 2.6 of [ISBA/ST/SGB/2018/1](#). Where the skills and knowledge required can best be acquired through hands-on experience, on-the-job training assignments may also be included. Activities may be carried out in-house or externally, under the conditions set out in section 3 below. While the Authority does not fund degree programmes, support for a course that is part of a degree may be offered from the allocated funds at the discretion of the head of office, in accordance with the conditions set out in section 6 below, provided that all other conditions have been met.

##### Section 2

##### Mandatory learning

2.1 Staff members are to complete a mandatory learning programme within six months of issuance of the relevant information circular or, in the case of new staff members, within six months of joining the Authority. Supervisors and heads of offices are responsible for ensuring compliance with mandatory learning requirements and shall allocate sufficient time for staff members to complete them as part of their official duties.



2.2 The Learning Advisory Board is responsible for providing the Senior Management Group with recommendations for the mandatory learning programme, and such recommendations are to be reviewed at least once a year.

### **Section 3**

#### **Annual learning plans**

##### ***Preparation***

3.1 Each office shall determine its learning needs and set priorities for achieving its strategic goals and developing its human resources. Individual learning requirements shall be identified during work planning and performance management discussions in the context of the performance appraisal system or in individual discussions of training requirements with supervisors, which staff members are encouraged to initiate. On that basis, the office shall prepare an annual training plan that is aimed at providing training opportunities for all categories of staff and achieving gender balance. When developing the plan, offices may wish to consider other appropriate opportunities for external studies offered by the Authority. Offices may wish to consult the Office for Administrative Services on the formulation of the plan. The plan shall be prepared in collaboration with the Learning Advisory Board, as provided for in section 3 of [ISBA/ST/SGB/2018/1](#).

##### ***Submission, review and approval***

3.2 Individuals shall submit their annual training plans at the end of each calendar year to the Learning Advisory Board for review and approval. All plans shall be reviewed to determine whether they are consistent with the objectives and contents of the programme set out in section 1 above, and with the guidelines for preparing such plans specified in section 3.1 above. When the various plans reveal common needs, centrally coordinated training programmes may be proposed for consideration by the Office for Administrative Services to maximize the use of resources. Centrally coordinated programmes are offered in the areas of leadership, resource management and administration, career support, information technology and language and communications skills, and include e-learning opportunities as identified for staff. Proposals for external training shall be approved in cases where no equivalent training is available within the Authority or other agencies of the United Nations common system of salaries, allowances and benefits to which staff have access, or where it would not be cost-effective to organize in-house training.

### **Section 4**

#### **Funding and administration of the annual training plan**

4.1 After review and approval of the training plans, the Learning Advisory Board shall submit the consolidated plan with a proposed allocation of funds to the Senior Management Group for final review before the beginning of the new performance cycle. The criteria applied in allocating resources include, but are not limited to, an equitable distribution of available resources among all offices, their effectiveness in carrying out the previous year's plan, the Authority's strategic priorities for the coming year and the number of regular budget posts in the office. Allocated funds may be used for payment of consultants to deliver in-house training courses to increase cost-effectiveness, and for tuition fees, travel expenses, per diem or academic stipends, as applicable, in the case of individual external training. Efforts should be made to reduce travel expenses to a minimum by combining travel with other official business (including entitlement travel).

4.2 Each office shall be responsible for the execution of its training plan. It shall inform its staff of the approved plan and shall be responsible for the administration

of the use of the funds allocated, including the approval of individual training requests, which shall be considered in accordance with section 6 below.

4.3 Offices may need to identify extrabudgetary resources to supplement the allocation, as necessary.

4.4 If necessary, the office may adjust the plan that was originally approved, provided that the adjustments are within the limits of allocated funds and are described in the required quarterly report, as provided for in section 5 below.

## **Section 5**

### **Monitoring and evaluation of the execution of the annual training plan**

5.1 The Learning Advisory Board shall monitor the manner in which each annual training plan is executed. For that purpose, each office shall submit, at the end of each quarter, an expenditure report on the use of the allocated funds and an updated training plan describing the training undertaken by its staff during the year, together with an assessment of the impact of the training on the work of the office and of the individuals involved. The two reports may be consolidated into one presented in a template to be provided by the Office for Administrative Services.

5.2 The reports shall be reviewed and evaluated by the Learning Advisory Board. Effectiveness in carrying out the approved annual training plan and making optimal use of the allocated funds shall be a major factor in determining the allocation of funds for the programme in subsequent years.

## **Section 6**

### **Conditions for participation of staff members in the programme**

#### ***Eligibility***

6.1 Staff members at all levels who hold a letter of appointment under the Staff Rules are eligible to participate in the programme. To be granted financial assistance for external training, there should be an expectation of continued service for at least one year in the Authority after completion of the proposed training activity.

#### ***Individual requests for training***

6.2 Individual requests for training shall be submitted, through the immediate supervisor, to the office responsible for the approval of such requests. Requests consistent with the annual training plan may be approved within the limits of available resources. In the case of requests both for individuals to pursue training outside the Authority and for groups of staff to be trained in-house under the programme, the office shall take into account the following factors in deciding whether the request should be approved:

- (a) The relationship of the studies to the functions of the staff member and/or the organizational needs;
- (b) The suitability of the staff member for the proposed studies;
- (c) The quality of the programme and the sponsoring institution;
- (d) The expected impact of the proposed training on the staff member's professional development and the work of the office or department;
- (e) The possibility that the training will have a multiplier effect (that is, for the beneficiary of the training to impart the knowledge gained to other staff members).

***Language training***

6.3 The United Nations administers the language proficiency examinations and, as such, the relevant United Nations administrative instruction on language proficiency and language allowance ([ST/AI/2016/9](#) at the time of writing) applies.

***Leave arrangements***

6.4 Staff members participating in training activities outside their office may be placed on special leave with or without pay, in accordance within the Staff Rules of the Authority. They may also use accrued annual leave for all or part of the period of study. The Secretary-General may approve special leave with pay for the purposes of the programme for a period of up to 20 working days or, if supported by the Learning Advisory Board, for a longer period.

**Section 7**

**Final provisions**

7.1 The present instruction shall enter into force on the date of its issuance.

7.2 ISBA/ST/IC/2011/2 and [ISBA/ST/IC/2013/11](#) are hereby withdrawn.

(Signed) Michael Lodge  
Secretary-General

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