



## External Online Learning: The Supervisor's Guide

“The supervisor’s attitude and knowledge about learning have tremendous impact on how employees develop professionally.”

# INTRODUCTION

Los Angeles County University (LACU) has partnered with an external online learning provider to offer one or more of your employees with access to an online library of training courses. These online courses are taught by expert instructors and cover a range of learning objectives relevant to helping employees be more effective on the job and better prepared to achieve their career goals.

This Guide provides information to help you successfully use this online learning resource.

## Benefits

Online learning empowers you with greater options for developing your employees. A few of these beneficial options are described below.

- **Develop your employees on a day-to-day basis.**  
You can assign online learning courses that address each employee's specific and unique development needs. Online learning courses are practical components to incorporate into individual development plans or prepare employees to successfully complete new assignments.
- **Enable your employees' self-directed learning.**  
Employees can recognize a learning need and have direct, immediate access to resources that help them learn at their own pace, without the challenges that can be associated with traditional learning environments (class scheduling, availability, cost, group learning dynamics, etc.).
- **Offer your employees flexible learning paths.**  
Employees can watch brief tutorials on targeted, specific topics (a few minutes) or entire courses on broader topics (several hours). Employees can repeat a course, a segment of a course, and/or a segment of a segment at-will as needs arise for focused learning.

# REQUIREMENTS

The following section outlines the steps for getting your employee ready to use his/her online learning license, along with an approximate time commitment for each step.

1

## **Read through this Guide and PPG 205**

PPG 205 describes the general policies, procedures, and guidelines associated with the license – for both *you* and *your employee*. PPG 205 and this Guide work together to provide the foundational information for getting started.

2

## **Design a usage framework for your employee**

There are broad Countywide and departmental requirements on the use of the online learning license. However, it is at your discretion **within the bounds of those requirements** to decide how you will let your employee use the license while on the job. Provided below are some considerations to keep in mind:

*Oversight* - You may determine a need to exercise strong oversight (more supervisor guided), general oversight (more employee self-directed), or something in between.

*Input* - You may determine it is best to obtain your employee's input or to design the usage framework entirely on your own.

*Variation* - You may determine that the usage framework for one employee should be different from the framework for another employee.

These determinations depend on individual factors such as the employee's FLSA classification (nonexempt versus exempt), level (entry versus journey), previous exposure to online learning, work autonomy, depth of development need, etc.

The next page of this Guide provides information to help you design the usage framework for your employee. It lists various elements you could include in the usage framework, along with examples to illustrate them in action. You could choose to include any number of these or other appropriate elements in the framework you design for your employee. Additionally, your HR or management may have provided guidelines for you to follow.

3

## **Discuss the usage framework with your employee**

Clearly explain the usage framework to your employee because he/she will be responsible for complying with it.

4

## **Review PPG 205 and any departmental requirements with your employee**

It is important to ensure your employee is aware of these requirements.

## What usage framework is best for my employee?

| Framework Element   | Examples  |
|---|---|
| <b>Number of hours</b><br><i>How many hours can your employee view the online courses each day or week?</i>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 1 hour per day</li> <li>Up to 2 hours per day, but not more than 4 hours per week</li> <li>Up to 3 hours per week</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Specified days</b><br><i>On what day(s) can your employee view the online courses?</i>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fridays only</li> <li>Tuesdays and Thursdays</li> <li>Any day as needs and opportunity arise</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Specified hours of the day</b><br><i>During what times of day can your employee view the online courses?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8am to 10am</li> <li>Afternoons only</li> <li>Any time of day as needs and opportunity arise</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Course topics</b><br><i>What types of online courses can your employee view?</i>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Software courses only</li> <li>Business skills courses only</li> <li>Any courses specified on the employee's development plan</li> <li>Any courses that align with the employee's learning objective</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Completion requirements</b><br><i>Does your employee have to complete every course he/she begins?</i>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes, any course that is started must be completed</li> <li>No. If the course is not meeting the learning objective, the employee need not complete it.</li> <li>No. If the course has already provided the desired learning, the employee need not complete it.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Pre-approval requirements</b><br><i>Which courses must your employee obtain your pre-approval to view?</i>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All courses require pre-approval</li> <li>Courses over 1 hour require pre-approval</li> <li>Courses outside of a specified topic area or learning plan require pre-approval</li> </ul>   |

## What would different usage frameworks look like?

### Supervisor-Guided

Amy's supervisor decided that it would be best to *assign* external online courses to Amy. He evaluated several courses and assigned four of them to help build her critical thinking skills. He gave her two hours every Friday to complete the courses. As Amy views the courses over several weeks, her supervisor begins observing that she is writing more complex documents. Her coworkers are now seeking her out for her new critical thinking expertise. Because of this outcome, Amy's supervisor decides to assign her two writing courses to further develop her.

### Employee Self-Directed

Trevor's supervisor decided that it would be best for Trevor to explore software courses as needed throughout his work day. On one occasion, Trevor was having difficulty creating a pivot table in Microsoft Excel. He did a quick search and found a 3-minute segment of an external online course on pivot tables. After viewing the course segment, he was able to figure out what he had been doing incorrectly. Within minutes, Trevor had applied what he just learned. He shared this positive outcome with his supervisor, and obtained his supervisor's approval to take the full 5 hour Advanced Excel course over the next few weeks to continue his learning.

The online course provides the learning content.  
Supervisors create the environment for its success.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

To reap the full benefit of the license for your employee (and your team), you must actively create an environment that supports its use. Specific recommendations are provided below.

## ✓ Set the Stage

To best introduce the license, convey your excitement about the learning opportunities the license provides to your employee.

## ✓ Explore the Course Library

Become familiar with the course offerings available to your employee. LACU has developed several course recommendations to make this easier.<sup>1</sup>

## ✓ Space Course Timing

Allow your employee time to absorb the content of a given course or course segment before proceeding to the next one. This will give your employee the opportunity to apply what has been learned and see firsthand the value of the license.

## ✓ Assess Outcomes

After viewing a course or course segment, your employee should demonstrate improved proficiency. You can make this evaluation by conversing with your employee about his/her learning, checking results of the quizzes featured in many courses, and observing your employee's work performance or products.

## ✓ Integrate social learning

Encourage your employee to share what he/she has learned with the team. It could be as simple as helping another team member complete tasks related to recent learning or arranging group discussions about a course.

## ✓ Obtain Input

Ask your employee about his/her experience with online learning and involve your employee in setting his/her learning goals.

## ✓ Explain the Relevancy

For courses that you assign, describe to your employee how the courses relate to specific learning objectives, development needs, and/or career goals.

## ✓ Be Flexible

Assign mandatory courses along with optional courses your employee can take to demonstrate initiative and commitment to learning. Also, be open to courses your employee sees as beneficial to determine whether they can be viewed on-the-job.

## ✓ Reinforce the Message

Talk about online learning frequently, send weekly emails with links to useful new courses, and engage in online learning yourself. Be a role model for the learning interest and behavior you wish to see in your employee.

## CONCLUSION

Supervisors must create partnerships with their employees about online learning – setting expectations and helping employees see the value in investing in it. They must create an atmosphere of openness and trust while still holding employees accountable for improved performance and development. Lastly, they must promote networks among the team that reinforce and share what has been learned.

---

<sup>1</sup> These resources are available from your departmental training coordinator.

