

Enhancing Governance, Management and Reform in Sri Lankan Universities through Non-Academic Staff Training: ENACT

Non-academic Staff Training and Development Strategy Eastern University, Sri Lanka

KA2 ERASMUS+ CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Project Title	Enhancing Governance, Management and Reform in Sri Lankan Universities through Non-Academic Staff Training: ENACT
Project Number	619185-EPP-1-2020-1-LK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JPEPPKA2-CBHE-JP
Deliverable Type	Report
Del. number	3.5
Date of Delivery	01.01.2025
Author(s)	Eastern University, Sri Lanka
Related WP	WP3 - Integrating non-academic staff learning and development into university operations
Availability of Deliverable	ENACT Website
Status	Published

Preamble

Non-academic staff play a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth functioning and success of a university. Their contributions range from administrative operations to technical support, creating an environment conducive to academic excellence. However, these staff members have lacked access to regular and continuous training programs to enhance their knowledge and skills, leaving them ill-equipped to adapt to evolving workplace demands.

This gap has led to challenges such as inefficiencies in university governance, operational bottlenecks, and declining performance at both institutional and national levels. Additionally, the lack of professional development opportunities has left many non-academic staff feeling frustrated and disengaged due to outdated knowledge and skill gaps.

Recognizing this critical need, Eastern University, Sri Lanka and other five universities partnered with the European Union on a collaborative project named Enhancing Governance, Management, and Reform in Sri Lankan Universities through Non-Academic Staff Training (ENACT), designed to enhance the skills and competencies of non-academic staff across six universities.

Institutional Context, Strategic Change, and Implementation

The Eastern University, Sri Lanka has developed its Strategic Plan for five-year period – 2023 to 2027 and addressed the importance of human asset development through its goals and objectives:

Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027	
Goal	03 Enhancing the Institutional Capacity through Human and Physical Resources
Objective	3.1 To create an efficient, effective and self-esteem academic, administrative and supportive workforce
Strategy	3.1.1 Promoting continuous professional development
Activity	3.1.1.3 Providing trainings for staff through ENACT project

Under the objective of creating an efficient, effective, and self-assured academic, administrative, and supportive workforce, Eastern University, Sri Lanka (EUSL) has prioritized strengthening its administrative and financial management systems. This focus is central to **Goal 3** of the university's Strategic Plan, which emphasizes promoting good governance, operational efficiency, and effective administration. Achieving this goal necessitates the continuous enhancement of the competencies of Non-Academic staff in critical areas such as administrative functions, financial management, and governance.

To align with this strategic objective, EUSL recognizes the importance of structured and ongoing training programs for Non-Academic staff. These programs aim to address evolving institutional needs, ensuring that staff members are equipped to contribute effectively to the university's vision of becoming a more efficient, effective, and transparent institution.

The **ENACT Project** (Enhancing Governance, Management, and Reform in Sri Lankan Universities through Non-Academic Staff Training), co-funded by the European Union Erasmus+ program and partnered by the Eastern University, Sri Lanka, is a pivotal initiative in fulfilling this mandate. This strategic project is dedicated to building the capacity of Non-Academic staff, fostering their professional growth, and supporting sustainable institutional development. By focusing on governance, management, and reform, the ENACT Project is a cornerstone for creating a robust, skilled, and forward-thinking workforce that aligns with EUSL's long-term strategic goals.

Inefficiencies and Gaps identified

Eastern University, Sri Lanka (EUSL) identified key challenges faced by its non-academic staff through stakeholder consultations, workshops, annual appraisals, and training feedback. These challenges include:

1. Skill and Knowledge Gaps

- Significant gaps in skills and knowledge among non-academic staff hinder their effectiveness.
- Lack of structured mechanisms to transfer knowledge from senior to junior staff results in underutilization of valuable institutional expertise.

2. Reliance on Manual Processes

- Outdated manual methods slow operations, increase errors, and reduce productivity.
- Limited funding for digital transformation further delays the adoption of tools and systems that could streamline workflows and improve efficiency.

3. Uneven Access to Training

- Professional development opportunities, including job-specific training and CPD programs, are inconsistently distributed.
- Available training programs often fail to address the diverse needs of employees, calling for equitable and comprehensive initiatives.

4. Gaps in HR Practices

- Supervisors lack adequate training in areas such as workload distribution, work-life balance, and employee well-being.
- Improved HR practices can create a supportive work environment, boosting satisfaction and productivity.

5. Communication Barriers

- Poor communication between staff categories hampers collaboration and creates misunderstandings.
- Team-building activities, workshops, and regular forums for dialogue can foster cohesion and teamwork.

6. Low Morale and Engagement

- Low motivation and engagement among staff negatively impact performance.
- Recognition programs, motivational initiatives, and opportunities for staff to contribute ideas can enhance morale and commitment.

Recommendations for Improvement

To address these challenges, EUSL should:

1. Develop structured knowledge transfer mechanisms to bridge skill gaps.
2. Leverage internal academic expertise for targeted staff development programs.
3. Invest in digital transformation to modernize workflows and boost productivity.
4. Implement equitable and inclusive training programs tailored to diverse needs.
5. Provide supervisors with training in HR management to promote a supportive environment.
6. Launch communication enhancement initiatives to build collaboration and mutual understanding.
7. Foster employee engagement through recognition, motivational sessions, and participatory opportunities.

By addressing these challenges, EUSL established a sustainable mechanism through the ENACT project. A key milestone was the establishment of the **Non-Academic Staff Development Cell (NASDC)** under the Staff Development Center (SDC), supported by a comprehensive mandate document. The Cell was equipped with the necessary physical, financial, and human resources to ensure its effective operation.

In addition, clear roles and responsibilities were defined for the staff and entities involved in non-academic staff development and training. The **Non-Academic Staff Development Strategy** was seamlessly aligned with the university's strategic plan, further enhancing its sustainability and effectiveness. These achievements represent significant steps forward in creating a robust framework for the continuous professional growth of non-academic staff at EUSL.

Staff Development Cell at the Staff Development Center (SDC) and its Role

The Non-Academic Staff Development Cell (NASDC) aims to enhance the professional skills, performance, and overall capacity of non-academic staff members. It strives to foster a culture of continuous learning and development, aligning the personal growth of non-academic staff with the institution's strategic goals.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the NASDC are:

1. To identify the training and development needs of non-academic staff.
2. To design and deliver professional development courses, programs, workshops, and seminars.

3. To foster leadership, teamwork, and technical skills among staff while promoting strategies for effective work-life integration.
4. To facilitate career progression and satisfaction within the institution.
5. To promote inclusivity and ethical practices in the workplace.

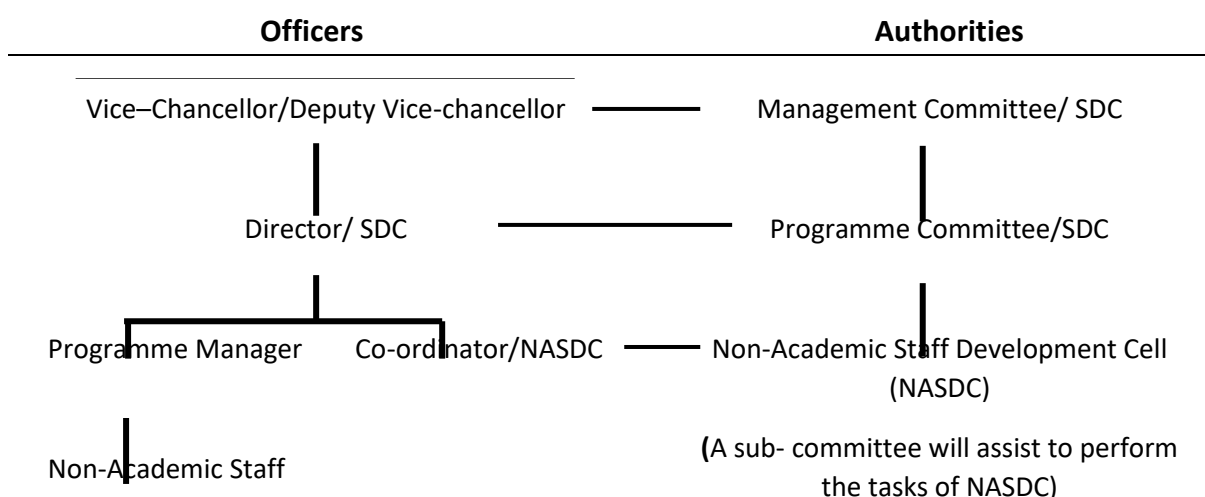
Scope of Operations

The NASDC shall:

1. Cater to the professional development needs of all non-academic staff of the university.
2. Develop annual training plans based on needs assessments and institutional priorities.
3. Collaborate with internal and external trainers, consultants, and institutions.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of training programs and modify them accordingly.
5. Maintain records of all staff training and professional development activities.

Governance and Structure

The structure of NASDC shall be:



Responsibilities

The NASDC is responsible for:

1. Conducting regular training needs assessments.
2. Making suggestions to Program Committee on training curriculum, training programs, workshops.
3. Coordinating with departments to align training with institutional goals.
4. Reporting on activities and outcomes to the Program Committee, annually.

The tasks will be performed by the **sub-committee of NASDC**. The composition of the sub-committee of NASDC:

- Coordinator/ NASDC– Chairperson
- Deputy Registrar/ Non-academic Establishments - Member
- Senior Assistant Registrar/ Assistant Registrar/ staff welfare - Member
- Program Manager – Secretary & Member
- Representatives of administrative and other non-academic (Non-administrative, Technical, Non-technical, Primary Grade) staff – one from each category

Implementation Plan

❖ Curriculum and Program Design

A comprehensive and tailor-made training curriculum, along with corresponding training resources, was developed to address the specific needs of both the non-academic staff and the institution. This curriculum is designed to be dynamic, with provisions for periodic updates and revisions to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.

EUSL is well-equipped with a pool of trainers who were trained through the ENACT project, as well as experienced and knowledgeable faculty members. Together, they form a strong foundation for delivering high-quality training and professional development programs that cater to the evolving demands of the institution.

❖ Training Methods:

Training shall be provided through the following methods:

- **Instructor-Led:** Workshops, seminars, or lectures.
- **Online/Blended Learning:** E-learning platforms or a combination of digital and in-person sessions.
- **On-the-Job Training:** Practical, hands-on experience within the work environment.
- **Peer Learning and Mentoring:** Facilitating knowledge sharing among employees.

❖ Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

The subcommittee of NASDC shall assist to NASDC to identify the training needs of non-academic staff regularly and annually and further assist to NASDC to measure the impact of its programs, including:

1. Feedback from participants and trainers.
2. Pre- and post-training assessments.
3. Review of annual performance/appraisals of employees.

❖ Funding and Resources

The Non-academic training and development activities shall be funded through:

1. Annual UGC allocation for SDC.
2. Grants and sponsorships from external organizations

Legal and Institutional Framework

The NASDC has been established by the Council at its 325th meeting held on 30.07.2022. and operates under the policies and regulations of the Eastern University, Sri Lanka. It is subject to the rules governing staff training and development, as outlined in institutional and national guidelines.