



Employee Tuition Assistance – External Courses Procedure

Procedure Number: 404P

Responsible Office: Human Resources

Forms: N/A

Effective Date: 08/2015

Date Last Reviewed: 01/22/2024

1. Purpose

The President of Northern Virginia Community College is authorized to provide tuition assistance to members of the faculty and staff for professional improvement activities. Tuition assistance shall be granted only after the member of the faculty or staff has received approval for participation in the professional improvement activity.

Tuition assistance is neither a guaranteed benefit nor an entitlement of employment at NOVA. Employees must meet established eligibility criteria and follow application procedures for tuition assistance.

2. Definitions

Degree Requirement: Academic courses taken at regionally accredited institutions:

- a. To enable qualified administrative and teaching faculty to attain advanced degrees for the maintenance of established standards of the college or to meet specific needs that have been authorized by the college.
- b. To enable classified employees to complete degree programs which will enhance job performance or support the mission of the college.

Job Related: Education or training related to employees' current positions to meet one of the following objectives:

- a. To provide training for new employees meeting only minimum qualifications who were appointed to positions because better qualified applicants were not available.
- b. To provide training in the use of new or modified methods and equipment.
- c. To provide training in skills and knowledge required by changes in the employee's current position.
- d. To help keep the employee's knowledge current with advancements in their field.

Successful Completion:

- a. For credit bearing courses, must receive a grade of "C" or better.

- b. For Continuing Education classes, a "P" or Certificate of Completion is satisfactory. CEUs must be earned.

Tuition Assistance: Financial support for approved educational courses or the acquisition of job-related degrees. The financial support shall consist of the cost of tuition and mandatory fees only. Mandatory fees are limited to \$100 per semester.

3. Procedure

The College considers tuition assistance requests from eligible employees who apply. Management considers requests based on staffing constraints, budget availability, and business needs.

Administrative Council members approve tuition assistance requests according to college and campus priorities. Tuition assistance funds are allocated based on a priority system as follows:

- a. Employee is required to take the course by supervisor due to immediate college need (supervisor should discuss implications with Human Resources).
- b. Employee requests job-related coursework.
- c. Employee is enrolled in a degree program and needs to take courses to fulfill degree requirements.

A. Eligibility

a. Employee Criteria

- i. Full-time faculty (Administrative, Professional, and Teaching faculty) and classified staff may apply for tuition assistance after completing one year of employment in an eligible position at NOVA.
- ii. Time in service from adjunct faculty and wage/P-14 positions and from other state agencies does not count toward this requirement.

b. Program Criteria

- i. Qualifying academic and continuing education courses must enable employees to complete degree programs, be job-related, or support the mission of the college.
- ii. Whenever possible, eligible employees are encouraged to pursue job-related continuing education that is awarded units of measurement by a recognized organization (e.g., CEU, PDU, PDH, LU, etc.), or receive a certificate of completion. Full-time faculty and classified staff may receive educational assistance for continuing education courses.
- iii. During the course of employment at NOVA, eligible employees may receive a maximum of nine (9) semester credit hours, or the equivalent of tuition assistance funding, for independent research, the dissertation, or thesis work.
- iv. Continuing education classes at NOVA, such as Workforce Development, are covered by this policy as long as they are job-related.



B. Application

- a. Complete online Form 105-043b Employee Educational Assistance Request. Requests for tuition assistance must be approved by the supervisor, VP/Provost, and Human Resources prior to the course start date and registration for the course. The employee must ensure that all requested information is included as an attachment when submitting the online request.
- b. Requests for coursework at another accredited college or university must include:
 - i. Documentation that shows the current tuition rate at the school.
 - ii. Acceptance letter or verification of degree in pursuit of degree-required courses.
- c. The maximum credit hour load is six (6) credit hours per semester for any combination of credit courses.
- d. Allow at least two weeks for the approval process to take place, keeping registration deadlines in mind. Incomplete or inaccurate information will result in delays and may prevent approval.
- e. Employees will be automatically notified upon Human Resources approval of online requests and may also check the status of the request at any time. Employees are responsible for ensuring that management takes action on the request until it reaches Human Resources.
- f. A promissory note is required for all external tuition assistance requests prior to Human Resources review and approval. The employee will need to complete the promissory note before any payment is made.

C. Promissory Note

- a. Employees receiving up-front tuition assistance for a course must execute a promissory note for the total amount of costs to be paid by the College. The note will be executed on the first day of the course and interest will begin to accrue on the date study is terminated.
- b. The employee's signature on the promissory note records an agreement that the employee will reimburse the College for any tuition paid in the event the employee receives a grade less than a "C" in the course, withdraws from the class, or leaves the College prior to six months from the course start date.

D. Payment Options

- a. Up-Front Tuition Payment Option
 - i. An employee may request that tuition be paid by NOVA directly to the college or university where the employee is taking the course.
 - ii. The employee must provide an itemized invoice for the course after full approval and before payment is processed. Early approval is recommended to ensure timely payment.

- iii. Upon completion of the course, the employee must submit evidence of completion, typically in the form of an unofficial transcript or certificate of completion within one month of course completion.
- iv. The promissory note will be cancelled if the employee fulfills the obligations outlined in the promissory note or if the employee repays the tuition.

b. Tuition Reimbursement Option

- i. After the employee receives notification of approval for the tuition assistance request from Human Resources, the employee may register and pay the cost of tuition to the institution where the course is taken.
- ii. After successful completion of the course, the employee will be reimbursed by submitting the following documentation to Human Resources:
 - 1. A copy of the approved Form 105-043b Employee Educational Assistance Request, attached/uploaded to the original online request form.
 - 2. Proof of a satisfactory grade in the course (grade report, unofficial transcript, certificate), which should be uploaded to the same request if completed online.
 - 3. Proof of tuition payment by copy of receipt, credit card or bank statement, which should be uploaded to the same request if completed online.
 - 4. A signed promissory note, unless already completed online.
- iii. Upon confirming receipt of above documentation, the Human Resources office will initiate a check request to the Office of the Controller, which will reimburse the employee in accordance with the prior approval.
- iv. Tuition reimbursement must occur in the approved fiscal year; therefore, late submission of final paperwork from the employee may not be paid if it falls into the next fiscal year. It is the employee's responsibility to keep Human Resources informed of any possible delays in submitting all final documentation. Reimbursement will not be granted unless a pre-approved tuition assistance request is on file in Human Resources.

E. Repayment of Tuition Assistance

- a. An employee who receives tuition assistance under this policy is required to remain an employee of NOVA for six (6) months from the start of the course. An employee who leaves before fulfilling this obligation must repay tuition to the College on a pro rata basis.
- b. An employee who fails to complete the course successfully or who drops the course after the census date will be required to repay the College.
- c. If an employee receives an "I" (Incomplete) grade, the tuition assistance authorization will be extended through the next full semester, after which time a final grade should be submitted to Human Resources.

- d. In any case where the employee must repay the College for a course, the employee will not be eligible for further tuition assistance of any kind until full repayment has been made and verified.
- e. Repayment should be made to Human Resources within 30 calendar days of notice, or prior to separation from the College.
 - i. Exception: Employees who are terminated as a result of a reduction in force or military reservists who are activated for duty after enrollment in coursework for which tuition assistance has been approved will be allowed to complete the approved coursework without obligation for repayment of the tuition assistance.

F. Employee Responsibilities

- a. When the employee experiences any change to this agreement, such as dropping the course, not enrolling, receiving other funding to cover the course, or when the employee does not obtain a satisfactory grade, it is the employee's responsibility to notify Human Resources within five business days. Any employee who fails to notify Human Resources within five business days of any change to the approved course may forfeit their option for up-front payments and only be approved for reimbursement payments thereafter. Approval prior to the course start date still applies.
- b. If the employee intends to leave the College prior to six (6) months from the course start date, the employee must contact Human Resources prior to the last day of employment to confirm repayment arrangements.
- c. It is the employee's responsibility to submit the grade and any other final documentation promptly to the Human Resources office upon course completion to avoid repayment collections in accord with the promissory note.

G. Time Allowance and Work Schedules

- a. Any modifications to an employee's work schedule should be approved and documented in writing between the employee and supervisor. Adjustment to work schedules may include requiring the employee to use annual, compensatory, overtime leave, or VSDP family and personal leave (for VSDP participants). The supervisor shall maintain the employee's revised work schedule and is responsible for monitoring work schedule compliance.
- b. If NOVA requires an employee to take a course, the employee must be compensated for time when attending the course, whether the course time falls during the normal work schedule, or outside of the normal work schedule. It is recommended that the supervisor consult Human Resources before requiring an employee to complete a course.
- c. Exempt Employees
 - i. Generally, exempt employees will adjust their work schedule to fulfill their normal work hours per week, or take leave to account for class time, unless the supervisor documents approval of this time exception with the employee.
- d. Non-Exempt Employees



- i. Time in a job-related course during normal work hours is considered hours of work when computing any overtime liability.
 - ii. Education time outside normal work hours is not considered hours of work for computing overtime, if the employee's attendance is voluntary (employee requested).
 - iii. Supervisors may adjust work schedules to avoid overtime liability. Adjustments may take the form of reducing the work schedule.
 - iv. A full-time employee's work schedule may not be reduced below fifty percent (50%) of a normal 40-hour a week work schedule without affecting the employee's health insurance benefits.
- e. Faculty
 - i. Faculty must select classes that do not conflict with their own teaching/work schedules, office hours, and/or service schedules.