

Policy Procedure: Employee Tuition Assistance – External Courses

Procedure Number: 404P

Contact Information: hrlearn@nvcc.edu

Forms: [Form 105-043b Employee Educational Assistance Request](#)

Last Reviewed Date: 08/03/2020

1. 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.

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.

- 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.
7. 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.

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.