

# Tuition Reimbursement

Policy 603.5

## 1 Purpose

1.1 The Tuition Reimbursement program at Appalachian State University is also known as Academic Assistance, Education Assistance, and Education Opportunities (formerly App State University Policy 603.4). In accordance with the Academic Assistance Policy outlined in the State Human Resources Manual, the tuition reimbursement program is for workforce planning and development. It provides a tool for managers and employees to support academic activities that directly relate to the employee's current or potential job duties. It may be used to maintain, enhance, or develop knowledge, skills, or abilities necessary for career development within the UNC System, or to achieve the university's mission, vision, and values. The tuition reimbursement program is not an employee benefit, right, or entitlement; it is a management program for workforce development.

## 2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all University Full-time and part-time (half-time or more) permanent, probationary, and time-limited employees are eligible for Tuition Reimbursement.

2.1.1 Probationary employees are eligible after satisfactory performance for a period of not less than six months as determined by management.

2.1.2 Temporary and part-time (less than half-time) are not eligible.

2.1.3 Management may consider disciplinary action including active documented coaching, performance improvement plans, letters, or any other current disciplinary action for job performance or personal conduct prior to the approval of the application for reimbursement.

2.1.4 Denial of participation in the tuition reimbursement program cannot be grieved, except on grounds of discrimination.

## 3 Definitions

### 3.1 Academic courses

a course/degree provided by an accredited community college/college/university.

### 3.2 Academic costs

Academic costs are defined as charges assessed by an academic source to every person enrolling for the course.

## 4 Policy Statements

### 4.1 Documentation Requirements

4.1.1 Utilization of the tuition reimbursement program shall be identified, described, and documented in the employee's performance plan.

4.1.2 Requirement for Reimbursement - Requests for reimbursement should be submitted within 30 days of completion of the course or receipt of grade. The applicant shall receive reimbursement of approved academic costs upon submitting evidence of satisfactory completion of a preapproved course. Completion is defined as "Satisfactory," "Pass," or a grade of "C" or better for undergraduate courses, and a "B" or better for graduate courses. An "Incomplete" shall not be reimbursed until a final grade is issued.

### 4.2 Employee Eligibility Requirements

4.2.1 Full-time and part-time (half time or more) permanent, probationary and time-limited employees are eligible for Tuition Reimbursement.

4.2.2 Probationary employees are eligible after satisfactory performance for a period of not less than six months as

determined by management.

**4.2.3** Temporary and part-time (less than half time) are not eligible.

**4.2.4** Denial of participation in the tuition reimbursement program is not grievable, except on grounds of discrimination.

## **4.3 Course Requirements**

**4.3.1** Employees may take up to 20 credit hours, or 32 quarter hours per fiscal year of courses that provide academic credit per academic term.

**4.3.2** Academic courses/degrees from accredited community colleges/colleges/ universities via traditional classroom, video-based, distance learning, web-based, eLearning and certain correspondence courses are eligible for approval.

**4.3.3** Academic courses which are audited are eligible for tuition reimbursement; however, an employee may be reimbursed for the same course or course equivalent only once, and the employee must provide satisfactory evidence that they attended at least 85% of the scheduled class meetings during the academic term.

**4.3.4** Courses taken at the request of the University - When specific high-priority skill needs of the university prompt management to request an employee to take specific courses or degree programs the following shall apply:

1. All limitations under the provisions of this policy are waived.
2. Employees are still responsible for requirements for withholding taxes and FICA.
3. All expenses to the individual should be reimbursed related to acquiring the necessary course or degree, including travel costs; examinations and administrative fees; textbooks, and other course materials. (Any books or materials paid for by the university become the property of the university.)

**4.3.5** Mandated licensure or certification - Tuition Reimbursement may be used to cover mandated licensure or certification only if obtained via academic coursework.

## **4.4 Application Policy**

**4.4.1** The manager or the employee may request Tuition Reimbursement for degree programs and courses (including corresponding non-work-related courses within a degree program) that:

1. provide academic credit (as opposed to CEUs),
2. have a direct benefit to both the university and the employee,
3. benefit the employee in the completion of their current and/or potential job duties, and
4. are listed in the college/university course catalog, and charge tuition in the traditional meaning of tuition (as opposed to only registration fees).

**4.4.2** Managers are responsible for stewarding employee development in accordance with the University's non-discrimination policy and holding employees accountable for completing their required employment obligations. When an employee submits a request for Tuition Reimbursement to their manager for review, the manager should respond in a timely manner (e.g. within 2 business days). The manager should base their decision upon whether or not enrollment in the course will interfere with the satisfactory performance of the employee's normal employment obligations.

## **4.5 Course Restrictions**

**4.5.1** Correspondence courses not accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation for academic credit are not eligible under this policy.

**4.5.2** Job-related thesis/dissertation research courses at the masters/doctoral level are restricted as follows:

1. All required written examinations for the degree shall be successfully completed before the course is approved.
2. A maximum of 15 hours leave may be approved for each academic credit hour.
3. All leave hours shall be used during the academic term and may not be accumulated.
4. A maximum total of 9 academic credit hours are allowed for any one employee.

## **4.6 Ceiling Rates**

**4.6.1** Tuition reimbursement ceiling rates are established and published by the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) for each fiscal year. Ceiling rates apply to all educational institutions that are not University of North Carolina institutions or institutions of the North Carolina Community College System.

## 4.7 Allowable Costs

**4.7.1 Academic Costs** - Eligible employees approved for tuition reimbursement may be reimbursed for academic costs charged by the academic source at which the employee is enrolled. Academic costs are defined as charges assessed by an academic source to every person enrolling for the course. These charges are required of everyone and are neither negotiable nor discretionary for the individual enrolling in the course. Academic costs include in-state tuition, fees, and course/lab fees. Course/lab fees must always be itemized. Reimbursement of course/lab fees may require a written statement from the academic source justifying the fee as a required fee in addition to other fees.

**4.7.2 Amount of Reimbursement** - Eligible employees may be reimbursed all academic costs charged by the academic source where enrolled, but not fees unrelated to registering for a course or a degree program, such as dorm, student union construction, athletic fees, student health service, cultural event fees, etc. as outlined in the table below.

Academic Source	Reimbursable Amount
University of North Carolina System Institutions and Institutions of the North Carolina Community College System	100% of academic costs for up to 20 credit hours per fiscal year. Up to the maximum academic cost charged by the UNC institutions for up to 20 credit hours or 32 quarter hours per fiscal year as determined by OSHR and published within 10 working days of the adjournment of the General Assembly and the meeting of the UNC Board of Governors to approve fees (see "Ceiling Rates"). Reimbursement of tuition and fees from outstate colleges/universities shall not exceed the amount as specified above.
All other community colleges/colleges/ universities accredited by an agency recognized by the US Department of Education	

**4.7.3 Special Graduate Programs** - Graduate professional programs with unusual course/lab fees, tuition or other fees will be considered on a course by course basis.

**4.7.4 Other Financial Assistance** - Financial assistance from any other financial aid program shall not be duplicated under this program.

**4.7.5 Non-reimbursable Expenses** - Reimbursement shall not be made for: charges specifically related to processing or receiving continuing education units (CEUs); application, examination, and graduation fees; transportation costs; textbooks and supplies.

**4.7.6 Reimbursement When an Employee Transfers or Separates** - If an employee transfers to another State agency or university, and subsequently completes an approved course, the employee should submit a request for reimbursement to the employing agency/university. The employing agency/university is responsible for processing the request per the provisions of this policy and providing reimbursement if funds are available. Employees who separate from State service, except by reduction in force are not eligible for reimbursement.

## 4.8 Funding Policy

**4.8.1** Upon satisfactory completion and submission of the App State Tuition Reimbursement Application, 100% of approved expenses, not to exceed the published ceiling rates, will be reimbursed to the employee from the account code and funding center specified therein.

## 4.9 Educational Leave Policy

**4.9.1** Approved course(s) for Tuition Reimbursement should be taken on the employee's own time whenever possible. If the course meets during the employee's regularly scheduled work hours the manager should work with the employee to adjust the work schedule to accommodate the course meeting times if doing so will not adversely affect department operations. However, if the work schedule cannot be adjusted or doing so will adversely affect department operations, the employee may request either:

1. MSA-Misc. Leave Administrative through the established channel for leave request/reporting, or
2. a leave of absence with or without pay in compliance with the Office of State Human Resources Policy Manual Educational Leave Policy.

## 5 Authority

[Statutory Authority: G.S. 126-4](#)  
[Administrative Rule: 25 NCAC 01K .0300](#)  
[Academic Assistance Program Policy](#)

