
ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR EPA EMPLOYEES
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Office of the Provost, July 2002
Amended, November 2002

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Academic Assistance Program (the "AAP") is workforce development. The AAP provides supervisors with a means to support academic activities that support the mission, vision, and values of the organization. The AAP provides reimbursement of academic costs if funds are available at the departmental level, and/or time away from normal responsibilities if the course is available only during working hours. The AAP is not an employee benefit, right or entitlement; it is a management program for workforce development. Denial of participation in the AAP is not grievable, except on grounds of discrimination.

COVERED EMPLOYEES

This policy applies to nonfaculty employees Exempt from the State Personnel Act ("EPA"), Senior Academic and Administrative Officers, Tiers I and II ("SAAO") and faculty at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The types of EPA, SAAO and faculty appointments covered are outlined below:

Type of Appointment (Full-time or Part-time)	Eligible	Not Eligible
Tenured, tenure track and "at will" employees	X	
Term appointments	X	
Temporary		X
Intermittent		X

SELECTIVE SERVICE REGISTRATION

NCGS 143B-421.1 requires those eligible for selective service to be registered in order to be reimbursed academic costs. The federal Selective Service law specifies that males, both US citizens and immigrant aliens residing in the US and its territories, between the ages of 18 and 26, shall register with the Selective Service.

ORIGINATION OF REQUEST

Requests for academic assistance may be initiated by the employee or management.

Employee initiated to:

- Maintain/enhance current skills
- Develop new skills/competencies for career development within the agency

Supervisor initiated to:

- Ensure employees have mandated licensure or certification
- Address a shortage of skilled workers
- Develop a pool of employees for succession planning
- Build specific high priority skills

- Address performance expectations of the employee

Job-related degrees and corresponding non-work related courses within a degree program may be approved at the discretion of the supervisor.

ELIGIBLE SOURCES

Courses taken at any of the following accredited institutions are eligible for selection:

- high school,
- business school,
- community college,
- technical institute,
- college,
- university, or
- correspondence school

The Division Head (Provost or appropriate Vice Chancellor) may also approve any other academic source that is accredited by a national accrediting agency.

APPROVED COURSES

The determination, by a supervisor, whether to provide assistance to take a specific course is based on the principle: "Deemed beneficial to both The University and the employee." Completion of the course should have a direct benefit to The University. The improved knowledge, skills and abilities gained by the employee should benefit the individual in completion of his/her current and/or potential job duties. Supervisors should consider workforce planning, succession planning and career development in approving employees to receive academic assistance.

Guidelines to consider are:

- Courses which provide knowledge and skills directly related to maintaining or improving current job skills; courses mandated by law or regulation or which are required by the employer in order for the employee to retain the job;
- Courses directly related to the profession in which the employee is currently working, other than courses for incumbent employees who do not meet the minimum academic and experience requirements for the job;
- Courses included in an academic program directly related to the job and which are necessary to complete a degree program other than courses for incumbent employees who do not meet the minimum academic and experience requirements for the job.

Assistance should not be granted in cases where a supervisor has determined that neither the course, nor the degree pursued, is of sufficient benefit to The University. Exceptions to the approved courses listed above need the approval of the Division Head.

AUDITED COURSES

Academic courses, which are audited, are eligible for academic assistance. However, an employee may be reimbursed for the same course or course equivalent only once. Reimbursement requires a statement written on school letterhead and signed by the instructor that the employee attended at least 85% of the scheduled class meetings during the academic term.

ACADEMIC LEAVE

An approved course should be taken on the employee's own time. If a course can be taken only during working hours, eligible employees must request leave prior to the beginning of the course allowing sufficient time for the normal approval process. Academic leave during work hours may be approved not to exceed one course per academic term (a semester, quarter or summer session) up to five (5) semester hours or eight (8) quarter hours credit. (Use class/laboratory contact hours per week to compute equivalency.) Reasonable travel time as determined by the supervisor may be permitted to attend approved courses. If approved, academic leave shall not be charged to the employee's vacation leave.

THESIS/DISSERTATION RESEARCH COURSES

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

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

ACADEMIC COSTS

Academic costs are defined as charges assessed by an eligible source to every person enrolling for the course. These charges must be required of everyone and are neither negotiable nor discretionary for the individual enrolling in the course. Academic costs include 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 eligible source justifying the fee as a required fee in addition to other fees.

AMOUNT OF REIMBURSEMENT

Eligible employees may be reimbursed academic costs charged by the eligible source attended up to the maximum cost charged per course by UNCG.

SPECIAL GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Graduate professional programs (medicine, veterinary medicine, etc.) with unusual course/lab fees, tuition or other fees will be considered on a course-by-course basis. The Division Head may approve payment of these academic costs.

UNAUTHORIZED EXPENSES

Reimbursement shall not be made for:

- charges, other than academic costs, specifically related to processing or receiving continuing education units (CEUs),
- transportation costs,
- graduation or examination fees, or
- textbooks and supplies.

OTHER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance from any other financial aid program shall not be duplicated under this program. However, the difference, if any, between such aid and the allowable costs under UNCG's plan may be reimbursed.

REQUIREMENT FOR REIMBURSEMENT

The applicant employee shall receive reimbursement of approved academic costs upon submitting evidence of satisfactory completion of the course, and documenting academic costs. Requests for reimbursement should be submitted within 30 days of completion of the course.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

To receive Academic Assistance, an employee shall:

- Make application to the immediate supervisor and
- Submit it in advance in accordance with schedules established by The University to allow time for review, approval and notification of the employee. The Division Head may approve an application received after class begins if circumstances warrant.

The application should include:

- The course title(s), institution, location, class schedule, and whether the course is for credit or non-credit, or for certification/licensing.
- A description of the course(s), demonstrating how the course(s) meet criteria for the approved courses, or for certification/licensing.
- The amount of academic cost reimbursement, specifying tuition and/or fees and any course/lab fees requested.
- Specifications of requested time off from work for academic leave, including all travel time.

- If time off from work is requested, a statement demonstrating unavailability of the course except during work hours.

APPROVAL OF APPLICATION

Once the supervisor completes the supervisory and departmental budget approval sections of the application, it should be sent to the Provost's Office for final approval.

Employees applying for academic assistance should receive a written response from his or her supervisor regarding approval/disapproval of academic assistance requests, which notes any changes in the application or conditions of approval.

EXCEPTIONAL SITUATIONS

Courses taken at University request require prior written approval of the Division Head.

COURSES TAKEN AT UNIVERSITY REQUEST

Because of specific high-priority skill needs of The University, employees may be requested by their supervisor to take specific courses or degree programs. Under these circumstances, the following applies:

- All limitations under the provisions of this policy are waived
- All expenses to the individual should be reimbursed, to include transportation 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.)
- The designation, "At University Request," can only be determined with the approval of the Division Head.

CERTIFICATION/LICENSING

Incumbent employees who meet minimum academic requirements and for whom certification/licensing is required after employment or is deemed desirable by their supervisor and approved by the Division Head are eligible for academic assistance under the following conditions:

- Certification/licensing is mandated, or
- Certification/licensing is a policy requirement of The University.

Academic leave is authorized for courses and examinations required for initial certification/license and renewal of the certification/license. Reimbursement is authorized for 100% of the academic costs, less any applicable withholding taxes and FICA.

Certification/licenses resulting solely from attainment of academic degrees shall be considered under academic assistance for academic course work.

ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBILITY

The Provost is responsible for the interpretation of this policy and may amend it from time to time to respond more effectively to the changing needs of The University.

MAINTAINING RECORDS

The Provost's Office is responsible for retaining records, on a fiscal year basis, of academic assistance activity. This information shall be reported annually to the Chancellor upon request and shall include the following:

- Number employees participating in the program,
- Amount reimbursed,
- Number employees granted academic leave,
- Number employees taking courses at University request,
- Number employees taking audited courses, and
- Number employees taking courses for mandated/required certification/licensing.