

**Human Resources Department
The City of Burleson**

Policy Name: Tuition Reimbursement

Effective Date: 08/15/08

Revised: 10/2014; 8/2017

1.0 General Policy Statement: The purpose of the tuition reimbursement program is to assist employees by supplementing the cost of higher education with the hope of enhancing knowledge of their current position or to assist them in achieving potential advancement within the City of Burleson. Availability of the Tuition Reimbursement program is dependent upon annual budget review. The City Manager or Deputy City Manager may approve appropriate exceptions.

2.0 Eligibility:

A. Employees:

Full-time and regular part-time (year round part time employees working at least 20 hours per week) employees who have completed the six month probation with the City of Burleson prior to the first class day are eligible to apply for tuition reimbursement.

To be eligible to receive reimbursement, the employee's most recent evaluation must reflect an overall score of "acceptable" or "expected."

Employees interested in utilizing this policy shall first visit with their immediate supervisor to determine if taking educational courses would interfere with employment responsibilities and tasks.

Courses approved for Tuition Reimbursement will be taken on the employee's personal time.

B. Courses:

1. Courses eligible for consideration include those courses taken for college credit by a recognized and accredited university for undergraduate level and graduate level programs.

Courses for graduate programs must have a direct tie to the employee's existing position, unless documentation provided by the Director provides justification for graduate courses that could benefit the city in other ways. Such documentation should be attached to the employee's application, and will be subject to review and approval of the City Manager or Deputy City Manager.

2. Colleges and Universities must be recognized by one of the following accrediting bodies:
 - Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS - Commission on Colleges).
 - Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSA)
 - Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCC)
 - Higher Learning Commission of North Central Region (NCA)
 - New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
 - Wester Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)
3. Coursework must be directly tied to a degree plan that benefits the City of Burleson business operations. The employee's Director will review the request and meet with the employee to determine if the college degree or specific courses requested are applicable to a city-related job and have a potential benefit to the City. The Director will consider factors such as job-relationship, necessity, and relevance to the employee's future employment (or potential promotion opportunities).
4. Courses that are pre-requisites to achieve a degree that is directly related to business operations (i.e. "basics") may be approved, if the Director has reviewed the degree plan as described above.
5. Examples of disciplines and course work that may be approved include;
Fire Service
Criminal Justice
Political Science
Public Administration
Urban Planning or Community Development
6. Courses may be taken when a degree plan has not been filed, if the course has a direct tie to the employee's current job or it has been requested by senior management of the City that the employee take the course.

C. Eligible & Ineligible Expenses:

- A. Eligible Expenses: Reimbursement will apply only to tuition and mandatory fees. Books and optional fees will not be reimbursed.
- B. Ineligible expenses:
 - Books
 - Fees for student activities
 - Student ID fees
 - Other administrative fees

- D. **Funds:** Eligible funds that can be reimbursed include tuition and fees related to payment of tuition up to the semester maximum or the actual out-of-pocket for the student whichever is less.

Student A's actual expenses are: \$850 for the semester
Semester expenses per student budgeted: \$400
Max student can receive (with acceptable grades & receipts): \$400

Student B's actual expenses are: \$350 for the course
Semester expenses per student budgeted: \$400
Max student can receive (with acceptable grades & receipts): \$350

3.0 **Repayment of Tuition Reimbursement Benefits:**

- A. Employees who voluntarily resign employment are required to reimburse the City for any tuition reimbursement benefit received in the 24 months prior to the last day of work. Reimbursement is requested prior to the final day of employment. Unless prior arrangements are made, reimbursement to the City will be made from the employee's final paycheck. Advance arrangements are expected by the City with Human Resources prior to the final working day.
- B. Employees are not responsible for repaying the City tuition reimbursement funds received if:
- (1) the position is eliminated due to a reduction in force.
 - (2) the employee is involuntarily called to military service.
 - (3) there is an extended illness (as approved with family medical leave) resulting in the employee's inability to return to work.
 - (4) Other reasons which are determined by the City Manager's Office, to be beyond the control of the employee.

4.0 **Request Protocol:**

- A. Employees are required to submit the request to the employee's Director (with a copy to Human Resources) no less than 30 days prior to the first day of class.
- B. Degree Plans
1. Employees with less than 30 credit hours are required to show proof of acceptance and/or enrollment in the college or university with the "Tuition Reimbursement Approval Request." This form can be secured from the Human Resources Department or the city-wide intranet.

2. Employees with more than 30 credit hours must include a complete degree plan from the college or university outlining the required courses, and a "Tuition Reimbursement Approval Request." This form can be secured from the Human Resources Department or the city-wide intranet.

C. If a Director denies the employee permission to participate in the Tuition Reimbursement program, he/she will provide a written memo to the employee explaining why the request has been denied. A copy will be sent to the Human Resources Department.

5.0 Application and Reimbursement Procedures:

Students must do the following in order to be considered:

- (1) Fulfill service time and performance review criteria in advance of first class day. See 2(A) above.
- (2) Review the course work desired to assure it either applies to the current position or a related position within the City. Courses that do not directly apply, but are required in order to fulfill an appropriate degree plan, will be accepted (i.e. basics).
- (3) Turn in application (with a copy of the course description, and university's calendar) to their Director and Human Resources.
- (4) Wait for notice of approval from Human Resources.
- (5) Collect and retain receipts for tuition and fees.
- (6) Complete course work.
- (7) Secure grade report.
- (8) Attach grade report and receipts to the request for reimbursement form, and submit within 30 days of the final semester class day or the day of the final exam.
- (9) Secure Director's signature.
- (10) Forward to Human Resources.

6.0 Budgeted Funds:

- A. The annual approved budget amount will be distributed as approved and completed grade reports and reimbursement forms (with receipts) are submitted. All receipts and request for reimbursement must be submitted in a timely manner to be considered.
- B. The amount allocated per semester is subject to change, based upon budgetary review. See the approved schedule of budgeted funds attached to the policy for the most up-to-date list of eligible funds.

7.0 Administrative Notes

- A. Grades: A student must make a C or better (or a "pass" on pass/fail courses) in order to be considered for reimbursement.
- B. If a student receives a scholarship, grant, or any other type of education assistance, the amount the student receives will be deducted from the amount he/she would be eligible to receive from the City.

Example:

- Student A receives \$1,000 scholarship or grant.
 - Student A's tuition and fees are \$1550 for the semester
 - Max eligible for consideration from the city is \$550.
 - This particular semester City's allocation per semester is \$400.
 - Max eligible for reimbursement to student is \$400
- C. Calculation of Semesters: There will be three semesters considered each year (this applies to class taken in the class-room or on-line or in a mini-semester setting).
 - Fall Semester: classes beginning August 1 through December 31.
 - Spring Semester: classes beginning January 1 through May 15.
 - Summer Semester: classes beginning May 16-July 31.
 - D. The Human Resources department may request any additional documentation necessary to determine that the student is enrolled, is in good standing, has achieved the required grades, etc. in order to assure city funds are paid to students who are fully eligible within the policy guidelines.
 - E. This benefit does not create a contract of employment. There is nothing in this policy intended to change or modify the at-will status of City employees or to create or confer any property rights or expectation of continued employment of any employee, expressed or implied.
 - F. Receipts submitted must be distributed by the school (tuition and fees) showing what was paid for, in order to be considered. Credit card receipts alone will not be a sufficient proof of payment.
 - G. Applications for Tuition Reimbursement and receipts will be processed by the Human Resources Department.
 - H. Employees on Workers' Compensation leave, Family Medical Leave (FML), or sick leave must get permission from their Director to continue with school when absent from work.

Approved policy:

Maria Reed
Maria Reed, Human Resources Director

8/2/17
Date

Schedule of Budgeted Funds: FY 2018-2019

Note - based on budgeted funds, the City expects to approve the following allocations for this fiscal year:

- \$900 per semester with a maximum of three semesters per calendar year (Spring, Fall, Summer) - \$2700

All applicable elements of the policy must be in place for the student to be eligible for the budgeted funds.