



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSC OP: 70.14, Employee Development and Tuition Assistance

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Health Sciences Center Operating Policy and Procedure (HSC OP) is to establish the policies and procedures regarding eligible TTUHSC participant training and development in accordance with Texas Government Code, Chapter 656, Sub-chapters C and D and the Educational Assistance pursuant to the Texas Tech University System Section 127 Educational Assistance Plan.

REVIEW: This HSC OP will be reviewed by April 1st of every year (EY) by the Senior Director, HR Benefits and HRIS, with recommendations for revision forwarded to the Vice President for Human Resources by April 15th.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

1. General.

TTUHSC is an institution of higher education dedicated to the pursuit of educational, research, and public service objectives. To attain these objectives, TTUHSC recognizes the importance of its employees, acknowledges their valued contributions to the accomplishment of its mission, and promotes lifelong learning for the advancement of the institution.

It is the policy of TTUHSC to provide development programs so that eligible participants may gain job-related knowledge and behaviors and personal and professional skills to improve job performance and contribute to the long-term improvement of the institution.

2. Development Program.¹

- a. Development programs are available to individuals employed to perform services or duties on behalf of TTUHSC and paid through the payroll system with accompanying tax withholding as provided by law; individuals on approved extended developmental leave; or individuals who have provided services on a substantially full-time basis for at least one year under the institution's primary direction or control. This includes full or part-time faculty, staff, and student employees.
- b. TTUHSC encourages employees to identify and participate in eligible development programs that will improve job performance, increase the participant's potential, and enhance the institution.
- c. TTUHSC may require an employee to attend a development program if it is related to the employee's current or prospective job duties.²
- d. Training, education, or developmental learning experiences:
 - 1) It may include but is not limited to, short courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, and technical or professional training.

¹ In accordance with Internal Revenue Service, development programs defined in this section are job-related courses deductible under Code Section 162 (e.g., nontaxable to the participant under Code Section 132(d) – Working Condition Fringe Benefit/Employee Business Expense).

² In accordance with Texas Government Code, Chapter 656.045

- 2) May be provided by TTUHSC departments, outside vendors, other accredited institutions of higher education or trade schools, or other providers of continuing education
- 3) Related to the current job, upcoming job requirements, or provides additional job-related knowledge that increases the value of the participant and provides a benefit to the institution

e. Program benefits are available to all eligible TTUHSC participants.

3. Funding and Approval for Development Programs.

- a. The State Employees Training Act allows TTUHSC to use public funds for development programs related to either current or prospective duty assignments.³
- b. Funds may be expended from departmental accounts for employees to participate in development programs upon supervisor and departmental approval.
- c. Appropriate expenses include, but are not limited to, salary, tuition and other fees, travel and lodging expenses, training stipends, training materials, and other necessary expenses of an instructor, student, or other participant in a training or education program.⁴
- d. Time spent in class, as well as time spent traveling to and from class, is considered working hours when TTUHSC funds the development program.
- e. Reimbursements may be made to eligible participants during the plan year for all or part of the cost of attending qualified educational courses; however, only reimbursements up to \$5,250, as defined by the Internal Revenue Service, will be excluded from taxation.

4. Qualified Development Programs.

a. TTUHSC Programs.⁵

Developmental programs are deemed necessary by TTUHSC to carry out the mission, vision, or strategic plan of the institution, and they are provided by TTUHSC at low or no cost to the employing department or the employee. These programs are either sponsored or provided by departments within TTUHSC and are provided to:

- 1) Fulfill state and federal requirements.
- 2) Clarify TTUHSC's systems, policies, and procedures.
- 3) Ensure the improvement of the institution's quality, service, and productivity.
- 4) Orient employees to TTUHSC to train institutionally specific knowledge, behaviors, and skills for job-related duties and to provide ongoing improvement of personal and professional knowledge, behaviors, and skills.

³ In accordance with Texas Government Code, Chapter 656.044

⁴ In accordance with Texas Government Code, Chapter 656.047

⁵ In accordance with Internal Revenue Service, development programs defined in this section are job-related courses deductible under Code Section 162 (e.g., nontaxable to the participant under Code Section 132(d) – Working Condition Fringe Benefit/Employee Business Expense).

b. External Programs.⁶

Development programs authorized by the employing department for employees which are funded from department accounts, and where the participant may be provided release time. These programs are approved with the following criteria:

- 1) Program provides job-related knowledge, behaviors or skills for current or prospective job requirements.
- 2) May consist of workshops, seminars, institutes, training sessions or other special programs.
- 3) Programs include continuing education for licenses or certifications that are a required qualification of the position but may also qualify the participant for another position determined to be vital to the growth, continuance or mission of the institution.
- 4) Courses are offered by an accredited or other recognized provider and lead toward a recognized degree or certification within a defined plan of study. They may include graduate-level courses.

c. Extended Development Programs.⁷

Development programs are paid for by TTUHSC, during which the employee's salary is continued, but the employee does not perform regularly assigned job duties for three months or more, including Faculty Development Leave. These programs include the following criteria:

- 1) Program does not include training required by state or federal law.
- 2) Must be approved by the Chancellor, President, Dean, or appropriate Vice President.
- 3) At a minimum, the participant must work for TTUHSC following the development program for at least one month for each month of the development period or repay TTUHSC for all costs associated with the development program, including any amounts of the employee's salary that were paid and were not accounted for by paid vacation, work time, or compensatory leave.⁸
- 4) TTUHSC shall require the participant to submit an [Employee Extended Development Agreement](#) in compliance with the above requirements before the development program begins.
- 5) The Board of Regents may waive the requirements prescribed in subsection (3) and release the participant from the obligation if such action is in the best interest of TTUHSC or is warranted because of an extreme personal hardship suffered by the participant.
- 6) If a participant does not provide the services required, provides those services for less than the required term, or fails to make payments as required, and the participant is not released from their obligations, then the participant is liable to TTUHSC for any costs and reasonable expenses incurred in obtaining payment, including attorney's fees.

⁶ Job requirements or prospective job requirements required for present job are considered job-related courses deductible under Code Section 162 (e.g., nontaxable to the participant under Code Section 132(d) – Working Condition Fringe Benefit/Employee Business Expense). If “prospective job requirements” means skills that would qualify employee for a new job, then payments/reimbursements would fall under Section 127, reimbursement of greater than \$5250 is taxable to the employee.

⁷ In accordance with Texas Government Code, Chapter 656.103-104

⁸ These payments are compensation/wages that must be paid through the Payroll Office with applicable employment taxes withheld.

- 7) Any final pay or other amounts owed to the participant may be withheld to reimburse TTUHSC in the event of default of the Employee Extended Development Agreement by the participant.
- 8) Each year, the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer will submit an annual report to the Legislative Budget Board, which details the amount of money expended in the preceding fiscal year for Extended Development Programs based upon notification by the appropriate Dean or Vice President.

5. Responsibilities.

a. Supervisors and Managers.

Employee development is the responsibility of every supervisor and manager. Supervisors and managers are responsible for:

- 1) Providing employees with on-the-job training in the proper performance of tasks.
- 2) Providing a climate in which employee training and development is encouraged.
- 3) Integrating an employee's growth and development needs with the goals and objectives of the institution.
- 4) Identifying opportunities for employee development which also benefits the institution.
- 5) Releasing the employee for the full length of the program, encouraging the employee's complete participation in the learning experience, and involving the employee with job application of knowledge, behaviors, and skills.
- 6) Ensuring employees comply with institutional training requirements.
- 7) Assisting the participant with obtaining all appropriate approvals and associated documentation.

b. Employees.

Each employee or participant is responsible for the following:

- 1) Obtaining appropriate approvals prior to the beginning of any qualifying courses.
- 2) Attending the full length of the development program and fully participating in all learning activities.
- 3) Submitting specified documentation of expenses to be reimbursed as well as documentation of grades, progress or any degrees or certifications awarded, and completion of each qualified course and/or other educational program.
- 4) Failure to submit appropriate progress documentation as referenced in section 5.b.3 may result in any prior payments being classified as non-qualifying and may result in collection by TTUHSC as described in Section 4(c)(7).
- 5) Application of knowledge, behaviors, and skills gained for the benefit of the institution.
- 6) Reimbursement of hotel and travel for business-related educational expenses will be handled through the normal travel reimbursement process.⁹

⁹ In accordance with Internal Revenue Service Section 132(d)

6. Course Enrollment Restrictions.

A regular full-time faculty or staff member may enroll in courses subject to the following restrictions:

- 1) During regular duty, a maximum of three hours of work per week may be taken off for class attendance or course-related activities. The class hours taken off during normal duty hours are subject to approval by the administrator concerned, and any work time missed must be made up, charged to vacation accrual, or taken as leave without pay.
- 2) Enrollment in any class that requires more than three hours per week of lost work time must be approved by the appropriate Vice President or Dean.

There is no limit on the number of class hours that may be taken during off-duty time, providing that the employee's job performance is unaffected.
- 3) Members of the faculty who hold a rank higher than Instructor or equivalent need to consult with their Dean regarding specific training and development rules and requirements.
- 4) Courses are offered by an accredited or other recognized provider and lead toward a recognized degree or certification within a defined plan of study. They may include graduate-level courses.
- 5) A part-time employee may not take time off during scheduled work hours to attend class, but there is no limit on the number of class hours that may be taken during off-duty time.
- 6) An employee may audit courses subject to the same rules as above.

7. Tuition Assistance Waiver Program.

Employee tuition assistance waiver program for employees enrolled at Texas Tech University or Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center is handled by Student Business Services. This program waives TTU System employees' statutory, designated tuition and mandatory fees for one permitted course per term (fall, spring, and summer, with summer I and summer II being combined into one summer term), not to exceed three courses in an academic year for employees that have been employed in a full-time position for more than six months. Due to the nature of the funding source, the employee must meet additional requirements to be eligible. The program must be formula-funded by the state, and the employee must reside in Texas.

This program will not waive the graduate tuition charged for graduate-level courses but will cover state and designated tuition for all course levels. Please be aware that all fees assessed are not considered mandatory fees and may not be covered under this benefit. These include, but are not limited to, Malpractice Insurance Fees, Graduation Fees, and Binding/Thesis Fees.

Eligible employees taking a permitted course offered by TTU or TTUHSC do not need to apply for the Employee Tuition Assistance Program. An automated process will be initiated by Student Business Services to identify eligible employees and apply for the tuition/fee waiver prior to the beginning of the term.

8. Tuition Reimbursement Assistance.

The Tuition Assistance Waiver program applies to employees enrolled at Texas Tech University or Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center.

With the Tuition Reimbursement Assistance program, employees may enroll at an accredited Texas (State) Community College or a Texas (State) four-year accredited institution of higher education located in their area. If a Texas (State) accredited institution of higher education is not available in the area of the employee's primary worksite, the employee may attend an accredited four-year institution.

Eligible employees may receive a \$300 reimbursement per semester for an unlimited number of semesters (fall, spring, and combined summer terms) for a maximum of three (3) courses per academic year. Request for reimbursement must be submitted within one year of the date the course was taken.

a. Program Criteria.

Anyone participating must meet the following program criteria:

- 1) Must have been employed by Texas Tech for at least six months.
- 2) Must maintain a 2.25 minimum cumulative GPA.
- 3) Must be a full-time benefits-eligible employee of Texas Tech (TTUSA, TTU, TTUHSC).
- 4) Must be seeking a degree or certification verifiable by admission status.
- 5) Must meet the institution's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements.

b. Reimbursement Process.

- 1) Reimbursement will not exceed the state educational institution rate in effect at the time of enrollment.
- 2) Employees must submit a [Tuition Assistance Certification Form](#) along with the required documentation listed on the form.
- 3) Human Resources will process the reimbursement through the Employee One-Time Payment System (EOPS).
- 4) Reimbursements will be reduced, or repayment will be required for any financial assistance or scholarship awards received by the participant.
- 5) Requests for tuition reimbursements for the current semester will not be approved prior to the 20th day of class.

9. Related Operating Policies.

- a. For leave available for use to attend lectures, meetings, and training programs, refer to [HSC OP 70.06](#).
- b. For faculty development leave with pay, refer to [HSC OP 60.02](#).
- c. For guidelines relating to travel to and from employee development programs, refer to HSC OPs [79.02](#) and [79.06](#).
- d. For submission of continuing education expenses or all other educational expenses not covered by this OP, refer to [HSC OP 72.03](#).

Right to Change Policy. TTUHSC reserves the right to interpret, change, modify, amend, or rescind this policy in whole or in part at any time without the consent of employees.