

*m*                    ***Tuition and Education Assistance***

The City of Baltimore (“City”) encourages the professional development of employees through education and training, as well as by preparing employees for advancement. The City provides financial assistance to employees in order to improve the quality of City services, to assist employees in the performance of their jobs, and to prepare employees for promotional opportunities.

**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Policy is to set forth guidelines which allow for City employees to receive reimbursement for qualified educational expenses that are job-related, or that are required in a job-related degree program, or that prepare an employee for a higher level position, or allow an employee to change careers within the City.

**II. SCOPE**

This Policy applies to regular full-time and part-time employees involved in the City’s operations based on specific criteria in the applicable Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Employees who are not represented by a union, but receive the benefits of a specific union, may also use that union’s MOU. Employees serving their initial probationary period or any other required probationary period under City regulations are not eligible for tuition reimbursement.

**III. REQUIREMENTS**

**A. General**

1. A job-related course is a course that meets any of the following requirements:
  - i. contributes toward enhanced performance in an employee’s present position, for example by updating and improving knowledge and skills that will enable the employee to more effectively perform their duties
  - ii. aids an employee in qualifying for consideration for a higher level position within the City to which the employee may reasonably aspire and for which there is probable opportunity for advancement
  - iii. prepares an employee for a professional examination provided the professional certificate, license or registration granted by successful completion of the examination is required in the performance of the employee’s current job or will significantly enhance that performance
  - iv. allows an employee to participate in non-degree, continuing education courses required to maintain a professional certification or license.
2. Educational expenses eligible for reimbursement is limited to the cost of tuition, expenses related to certification or licensure, administrative fees, and books required for the eligible job-related course of study. Administrative fees include registration, library, student activity or union fees, mandatory fees for accident insurance and health services and a one-time application fee for admission. Eligible educational expenses do not include late fees, or travel expenses.

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3. An acceptable educational institution is a public or private secondary, vocational, trade, or business school; or a public or private college, university, professional school, or technical institution. It is required that the educational institution is accredited or recognized by some agency or governing body from within its general functional area or frame of reference. Professional associations may be acceptable educational institutions as providers of professional examinations and continuing education courses.
4. Employees interested in participating in this program must complete *AM 219-1-1 Tuition and Education Assistance Request Form (AM 219-1-1)*, prior to the commencement of any coursework for which the employee desires to be reimbursed.
5. Employees must sign the designated section of *AM 219-1-1*, which requires an individual to serve as a City employee for one (1) year after completion of any course where they received tuition reimbursement.

**B. Higher Education**

1. Employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement assistance for approved courses and certain administrative costs.
2. Employees must attain a minimum grade of “C” or higher, to be eligible for tuition reimbursement. Courses taken on a Pass/Fail basis are not eligible for tuition reimbursement.
3. The maximum number of allowable courses an employee may take per semester is four (4), with a maximum of ten (10) credits.
4. Courses may not be taken during the employee’s regular working hours. Regular working hours are considered to be any approved shift period.

**C. Professional Examination, Certification, or License**

1. Employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement assistance for approved courses to prepare for professional examinations, certifications or licensure.
2. When grades are not given or a course of study taken is non-credit, a certificate or statement of successful completion from the school or organization must be submitted.
3. For courses which require an examination to receive certification, the employee must pass the necessary exam within three months after completion of the course to be considered for tuition reimbursement.

**D. Continuing Education**

1. Employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement assistance for approved courses required to maintain a professional certification.
2. A certificate or statement of successful completion from the school or organization must be submitted.

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**IV. FUNDING TUITION REIMBURSEMENT**

- A. Receipt of tuition reimbursement depends upon the availability of funds in the Agency’s budget. If funds are not available in the requesting employee’s Agency, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) will deny the request for tuition reimbursement.
  
- B. If an employee is approved for tuition reimbursement by their Agency and that employee voluntarily transfers to another City Agency before classes conclude, the employee’s previous Agency is not obligated to reimburse the employee. The employee must seek funding approval from the new Agency.

**VII. REQUESTING TUITION REIMBURSEMENT AND APPROVAL AUTHORITY**

- A. Prior to registration, employees must complete and submit *AM 219-1-1* to their immediate supervisor.
  
- B. The immediate supervisor shall review the application, make a recommendation regarding approval and forward the application to the Agency Human Resources Practioner.
  
- C. The Agency Human Resources Practioner shall review the request for accuracy and completeness to include verification that the employee and the selected course of study are eligible for tuition reimbursement. The Agency Human Resources Practioner shall make a recommendation regarding approval and forward the application to the Agency Head or Authorized Designee.
  - 1. The Agency Human Resources Practioner may consult with the Department of Human Resources (“DHR”) Classification Division in determining the job-related nature of a tuition reimbursement request.
  
- D. The Agency Head or Authorized Designee shall review the request for accuracy and completeness to include verification that funds are available. The Agency Head (or designee) shall approve or disapprove the request. If the request is disapproved, the employee will be notified of the reason(s).
  
- E. All requests for tuition reimbursement, whether approved or denied, must be forwarded to the Department of Human Resources (“DHR”). DHR reviews all tuition reimbursement forms for compliance with this policy and the applicable MOU.

**IX. PAYMENT AUTHORIZATION**

Within thirty (30) days of successful completion of course work or examination, the official transcript with the acceptable grades or other acceptable proof of completion and proof of payment are to be submitted to the Agency’s Human Resources Practitioner for processing. The Agency must immediately process the tuition reimbursement request for payment upon

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receipt of an employee’s official transcript with the acceptable grades or other acceptable proof of completion and proof of tuition payment.

**X.     AUTHORITY**

This Policy was issued pursuant to *AM 002-1* and *002-1-2 Administrative Manual* wherein the Department of Human Resources recommended changes to the Administrative Manual to the Board of Estimates for approval.

**XI.  INTERPRETATION**

The Department of Human Resources reserves the right to revise or eliminate this Policy at any time. The City’s Board of Estimates reserves the right to approve proposed policy revisions or eliminations as determined by the Department of Human Resources.

**XII. RELATED POLICIES**

AM-219-1-1    Tuition and Education Assistance Request Form

AM-303-1     Direct Payment Orders

MOUs         <http://labor-commissioner.baltimorecity.gov/contract-agreements>