



Tuition Assistance Policy #16

August 2016

I. PURPOSE

The City of Portsmouth Tuition Assistance Policy (TAP) promotes the professional development of employees by providing educational reimbursement for college and special courses, and certification tests required by the job. The policy encourages employees to work continuously toward strengthening their skills and abilities to perform their respective job, thereby building a stronger knowledge base.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Accredited Institution** – Colleges or universities that are nationally accredited by the U.S. Department of Education or the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- B. **Educational Assistance** – Financial aid received from other sources, including but not limited to: non-City government agencies, organizations, businesses, or associations that award scholarships, internships, grants, and/or veteran's benefits (i.e., G.I. Bill).
- C. **Reimbursable Expenses** – Tuition related costs only. Textbooks, learning aids and materials, university fees, lab fees, technology fees, parking or activity fees are not reimbursable.

III. ELIGIBILITY

The following individuals are eligible to apply for tuition assistance:

- Regular full-time City employees, who have completed one (1) year of service and have worked 2080 hours as of the date of their application.
- All employees appointed by the City Council or the City Manager; and Constitutional Officers and their employees, but excluding members of boards and commissions.
- Employees must have at least an overall performance standard of "meets" on their most recent performance evaluation.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management administers the tuition assistance policy and is responsible for ensuring that courses submitted for reimbursement are in compliance with policy.

B. Department Heads

Department Heads are responsible for approving tuition assistance applications, ensuring that submitted courses are relevant to the employee's position and determining that the courses will not interfere with the employee's normal work day.

C. Employees

Employees are responsible for initiating the tuition assistance process and complying with all terms as stated in this policy and the tuition assistance agreement. Failure to do so will result in non-payment by the City or forfeiture of the tuition assistance benefits.

V. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

1. Applications for tuition assistance must be submitted to Human Resource Management no later than two (2) weeks prior to the official start date of the course(s). Applications submitted after the official start date of the course(s) will be denied.
2. Upon receipt of the completed tuition assistance application, the employee will receive via email a pre-approved reimbursement decision for the selected course(s).
3. Employees shall disclose on the application any and all information relating to the educational assistance received from any other source. Failure to disclose other educational assistance may result in one of the following:
 - a. Employee being responsible for repayment of tuition assistance to the City, either partially or in full; and/or
 - b. The employee being ineligible for tuition reimbursement in the future.
4. Subject to the availability of funds, courses for reimbursement shall be pre-approved on a first come, first serve basis.
5. Tuition assistance is not guaranteed and the City reserves the right to reduce the amount of tuition reimbursement provided or to amend or discontinue this policy at any time.

VI. REQUIREMENTS

- A. All courses applied toward a degree or diploma, in order to be eligible for reimbursement, must be closely related to the employee's present function in the City as confirmed by the Department Head's concurrence and the Human Resource Management Director's approval.
- B. All courses must be attended on the employee's own time, utilizing personal transportation.
- C. Employees must attain a minimum grade of "C" for undergraduate level courses/degrees or "B" for graduate level courses/degrees. If enrolled under a special course for professional development or enrichment for their current position, the employee must maintain an equivalent satisfactory grade, such as a certification of completion.
- D. Employees are eligible for a maximum of six (6) semester hours or quarter hour equivalent reimbursement per fiscal year (July 1 – June 30).

VII. REIMBURSEMENT:

- A. Tuition costs will be paid initially by the employee. To receive reimbursement for an approved course(s), the employee must provide tuition receipts and evidence of the grade(s) received to Human Resource Management within sixty (60) calendar days of the completion of the course(s).
- B. Employees who successfully complete the above stated requirements will be reimbursed for tuition at the following rate, not to exceed the total cost of \$215 per credit hour/maximum six (6) credits per fiscal year.
- C. If you receive funding to cover the *full* cost of your tuition fees from other sources such as grants, scholarships, stipends, fellowships, (excluding student loans) then you are not eligible to receive funding from the City's Tuition Assistance Policy. However, the City will assist with the difference of any remaining tuition cost if you receive a partial grant, scholarship, stipend, fellowship, etc.

VIII. REPAYMENT:

Employees, who leave (either voluntarily or involuntarily) the City's employment within one (1) year of completing course work that was reimbursed through the City's Tuition Assistance Policy will be required to repay all funds received in the last twelve (12) months. Repayments will be deducted from the employee's available annual leave balance and/or the final paycheck (after payment of the federal minimum wage). If there are insufficient hours to cover the cost of repayment,

employees will be required to set up a payment plan with the Finance Department. In addition, employees who leave the City's employment prior to receiving payment for requested tuition will forfeit payment of the requested funds.

IX. DURATION OF THE POLICY

Funding for the tuition assistance policy will be reassessed each year during the annual budget deliberations.

Approved:



Letitia Patton
City Manager