

## DELAWARE COUNTY

Subject	Effective	Supersedes	This Sheet	Total
Tuition Assistance Policy	February 13, 2014	02/26/96 Revised 01/15/00, 05/14/01 <u>1/1/2005</u>	1	7

### 1.0 Purpose

It is the desire of Delaware County to create an environment that stimulates, challenges and encourages employees to broaden their knowledge and skill by continuing their education. Reimbursement of primary expenses associated with a degree program or individual course work is available to those employees who meet the criteria and successfully complete the program or course.

### 2.0 Scope

Eligible full-time employees are those employees working forty (40) hours per week that report to elected officials within Delaware County including, the following: the Board of Commissioners, the Court of Common Pleas, the Clerk of Courts, Juvenile and Probate Court, the County Treasurer, the County Recorder, the County Auditor, the County Prosecutor, the County Coroner, the County Sheriff, and the County Engineer.

Employees under grant funds in any department or office and those employees that report to the, Board of Elections, the Soil and Water Conservation District the Delaware City-County Health Department, the Delaware County Board of Developmental Disabilities, the Delaware County Regional Planning Commission, Veterans Services, the Transit Authority, and the Delaware County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board; are excluded from this Tuition Assistance Policy. Employees of these agencies may seek alternative programs from their Appointing Authority.

### 3.0 Distribution

To all supervisors, managers, directors and county personnel under the direction of all elected officials.

### 4.0 Definitions

Employee: any full-time (working forty hours per week) individual who has completed at least one year of continuous active service with Delaware County.

Accredited: an institution that has been state certified and is registered with the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools or another accrediting agency recognized by the Committee on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation.

Reimbursable Expenses: Delaware County will reimburse the employee upon completion of the course(s), 90% of the costs for course tuition fees, lab fees and 50% of the total cost of **required** textbooks, which must be paid in full by the employee prior to reimbursement under this policy.

Statement of Justification: A written narrative that fully explains the relationship of the course to the applicant's career goals, and how the course may impact on the employee's knowledge and skill level. The applicant and his/her supervisor must submit a Statement of Justification attached to application for each request. .

Non-reimbursable Items: Items such as **recommended** study guides/text books, notebooks, pens, paper, travel expenses, parking fees, student health insurance fees, deferred payment fees, enrollment and/or application fees, administration fees, general fees and graduate fees are considered non-reimbursable items.

## 5.0 Policy

Delaware County will reimburse an employee up to 90% for the actual course tuition and required lab fee costs and 50% of the required book costs, not to exceed \$2,500 in total reimbursable expenses annually, during the County's budget cycle (review Section 4.0 for specific items). The employee shall provide proof of payment in full before reimbursement will be processed.

### A. Reimbursement Eligibility Requirements:

Courses must correspond or be applicable to the employee's current position or department within the county and must directly benefit the county. (For example: coursework in nursing would not be reimbursed because the County does not have a nursing department or similar position).

1. Employee eligibility is based on the job-related performance of the employee, which must be in good standing prior to and throughout the period for which the tuition assistance was approved. The employee should not have had any written warnings, suspensions or other disciplinary action filed, nor be subject to a performance improvement plan within one year of applying for tuition assistance. No employee on a paid or an unpaid leave of absence, unauthorized leave of absence, disability

leave, workers' compensation leave, or injury leave may apply for tuition assistance.

2. The employee must have one (1) or more years of continuous full time (forty hours per week) active service with Delaware County prior to applying for tuition assistance.
3. The applicant's supervisor must provide a statement of justification explaining why it would be currently beneficial to the County to provide tuition assistance to the applicant.
4. It is the responsibility of the employee to obtain approval for tuition assistance from his/her supervisor/manager, the Department of Human Resources and his or her Appointing Authority **at least thirty (30) days prior to the start of the course(s) for each academic term.**
5. The employee must receive a grade of "B" or equivalent, or better to receive tuition assistance for each course that tuition assistance is requested.
6. The college or university must be an accredited institution as defined in Section 4.0.
7. If an employee is eligible to receive or is receiving financial assistance from any governmental (federal, state or local entity) or private agency for the academic term, whether or not applied for and regardless of when such assistance may be received, that amount shall be deducted from the County's tuition assistance allowance.

**B. General Information:**

1. Tuition assistance applies toward specific courses, associate and undergraduate degree programs as well as post-graduate degree programs such as MBAs or law degrees as long as the degree program coincides with the employee's position or department.
2. Tuition assistance does **not** apply to seminars, workshops, conferences, certifications or self-help courses.
3. Due to many educational institutions offering satellite locations and Internet capabilities, the tuition assistance would be extended to those courses associated with an accredited university or college.

4. All courses must be taken outside regularly scheduled working hours whenever possible. Flexible scheduling may be permitted with prior written approval of the Director. All scheduled hours for courses must be filed with the Director. All courses are subject to approval under the guidelines of this policy. .
5. If a course(s) is not successfully completed (grade of "B", its equivalent, or better), Delaware County will not provide for tuition assistance for that course.
6. An employee who is terminated during enrollment through job elimination, a reduction in force, or who is transferred within the County and unable to complete courses in progress, will be reimbursed in accordance with the provisions of this policy.
7. If an employee voluntarily resigns, retires or is terminated for cause from the County and is currently participating or has participated within the last (3) three years in the tuition assistance program, he/she must repay the tuition assistance based on the following schedule:
  - 100% repayment of tuition assistance received if the employee is no longer employed by Delaware County within less than one (1) year of the date the course was completed.
  - 50% repayment of tuition assistance if the employee is no longer employed by Delaware County one (1) or more years but less than three (3) years of the date the course was completed.
  - 0% repayment of tuition assistance if the employee is no longer employed three (3) or more years after the date the course was completed.

The employee will have thirty (30) days following separation of employment with Delaware County under these terms to make full and final payment.

8. Delaware County reserves the right to suspend or restrict tuition assistance at any time based upon the availability of funds.
9. Where applications exceed available funds, actions such as the following may be taken:
  - Delaware County may reduce the number of courses or credit hours eligible for tuition assistance;

- Delaware County may select employees whose learning needs are critical to Delaware County;
- Delaware County may set an official, uniformly applied percentage figure as the amount of tuition assistance for which Delaware County is responsible.
- Delaware County may reject any and all applications for tuition assistance.

**C. Taxable Income:**

The use of tuition assistance may affect your taxable income. For more information please discuss with a tax advisor on how best to file.

**D. Application Procedure:**

Courses and degree programs shall be clearly classified as job-related, job-enhancement and offer technical or skill growth that will enable the employee to perform at a higher level or prepare him/her for advancement within their department or office.

Employees seeking tuition assistance must present verification from the educational institution of his/her acceptance for the specific degree program or course.

**Application Process**

1. The employee may contact his/her supervisor or the Human Resources Department to obtain information on the Tuition Assistance Policy and the Tuition Assistance Application. The policy and application may be found on the Delaware County website: [www.co.delaware.oh.us](http://www.co.delaware.oh.us).
2. The employee must fully complete the Tuition Assistance Application, attach the course description as well as the Applicant Statement of Justification / Supervisor Statement of Justification and receive the necessary signatures for approval prior to submission to Human Resources.
3. Employees that report to appointing authorities other than the Board of Commissioners must have their appointing authority sign the application form prior to submission to Human Resources. Employees under the appointing authority of the Board of Commissioners must submit the form

to Human Resources without the appointing authority signature. Human Resources will ensure completion of the appointing authority or designee's signature.

4. The fully completed application (including necessary signatures as defined above) must be received by Human Resources **at least thirty (30) days prior to the beginning of the course(s) for which funds are sought.** If the employee has registered for multiple courses, indicate all courses on the Application.
5. Human Resources will review all applications to ensure all policy requirements are met, ensure availability of funds and will approve or deny each application according to policy guidelines.
6. Human Resources will provide a copy of the completed application to the employee and supervisor following the review process.
  - All original applications will be maintained in the Human Resources Department.
  - If the Appointing Authority, designee, or Human Resources denies the Tuition Assistance Application, the application and a written statement specifying the reason(s) for the action will be returned to the employee and the immediate supervisor.
  - An employee, whose request has been denied at any level, may ask for a meeting with the denying party, to discuss the reason(s) for denial.

#### **E. Reimbursement Procedure:**

Employees will only be reimbursed **after** each course is satisfactorily completed according to policy guidelines.

1. When the employee has successfully completed the course(s) for which tuition assistance was approved, the employee must submit the following documentation to the Human Resources Department:
  - An itemized tuition statement indicating full payment, a zero balance, tuition costs, lab fees and other required fees;
  - Grade report of a "B", its equivalent or better; and
  - Book receipts reflecting reimbursable items **required** for the course(s).

2. The Human Resources Department will complete Section IV and will forward the application and reimbursement form to the Auditor's Office for processing.
3. If there are discrepancies or questions with the submitted documents, a delay in reimbursement processing may occur. The Human Resources Department will contact the employee to rectify the discrepancies within a reasonable time.
4. With the exception of the original reimbursement page, receipts, and grade information, the original Tuition Assistance Application and final documentation will be retained in the Human Resources Department.