



City of Pittsburgh  
Operating Policies

**Policy: Tuition Reimbursement Program for  
AFSCME Local 2719, AFSCME Local  
2037, PJCBC and Teamsters Local  
Union 249 Employees**

**Original Date: 9/30/09  
Revised Date: 04/2019**

**PURPOSE:** This policy is issued to provide a uniform system of administering the City of Pittsburgh's Tuition Reimbursement Program for all eligible Union and Non-Union employees.

**POLICY STATEMENT:** All eligible Union and Non-Union employees are to follow this policy when requesting tuition reimbursement for courses that will enhance their job performance. NOTE: If an employee submits an initial Pre-Approval Form for Tuition Reimbursement and the employee is working towards completion of a degree/program (i.e., Associate's, Bachelor's, etc.), once the program is approved as "job related" all of the required course work for the program/degree will be considered as job related.

*Disclaimer: No statements in this policy are intended or set forth as contractual commitments or obligations of the City to any individual employee or group of employees, or to establish an exception to the employment-at-will doctrine beyond that specified in the Civil Service Statutes and Rules or pertinent collective bargaining agreement. If there are differences between the various collective bargaining agreements and this policy, the pertinent collective bargaining agreement takes precedence.*

**AFSCME Local 2719, AFSCME Local 2037, PJCBC and Teamsters Local Union 249  
Employees**

**GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

- A. To be eligible to request participation in this Program, the employee must:
  - 1. Have completed one (1) year of employment with the City of Pittsburgh as a full time regular employee from date of hire, rehire or reinstatement, AND
  - 2. Have completed the probationary period and be employed in a fulltime regular position covered by the collective bargaining agreement between the City of Pittsburgh and AFSCME 2719, AFSCME 2037, PJCBC or TEAMSTERS LOCAL 249 at the time of submitting the Pre-Approval Request, AND
  - 3. Not be on Disciplinary Probation, Workers' Compensation, Short Term or Long Term Disability, Sick Leave, Parental Care Leave or other paid or unpaid leaves of absence at the time of submitting the Pre-Approval Request, AND
  - 4. Be a current employee of the City in a position covered by either AFSCME 2719, AFSCME 2037, PJCBC or TEAMSTERS LOCAL 249 at both the time of submission of his/her request for reimbursement and receipt of reimbursement.
- B. An eligible employee must complete a Pre-Approval Request Form C and submit it, along with all required supporting documents, to his/her Department Director as early as possible, but at least ten (10) work days prior to the date the course starts.
- C. The employee's Department Director must submit the Pre-Approval Request Form C, with all required supporting documents and the Department Director's recommendation for approval or disapproval, to the Director of the Department of Human Resources & Civil Service (HRCS) as soon as possible but at least five (5) work days prior to the date the course starts.
- D. The Director of the Department of Human Resources & Civil Service (HRCS) may require additional information or documents from the employee before approval or disapproval. Failure of the employee to provide the requested additional documents or information to the Director of HRCS prior to the date the course starts will preclude approval and the Pre-Approval Request will be disapproved.
- E. The City may revoke pre-approval at any time prior to the employee's payment of tuition and lab/technology fees becoming irrevocable.
- F. Eligible employees who have received approval of the Pre-Approval Request will receive 50% reimbursement of tuition and lab/technology fees upon the successful completion of a college, university, technical school, trade school or certified apprenticeship course which is job related (i.e., will improve employee's knowledge and skills to perform present job duties or enable the employee to meet the minimum requirements, as established by the Civil Service Commission, for promotion into another position within the bargaining unit). Courses (credit or noncredit) must be taken at an accredited college, university, technical or trade school or as part of a certified apprenticeship program and must be credited toward a degree, certificate or license. Correspondence courses will not be eligible for consideration.
- G. Employees covered by the AFSCME 2719 and AFSCME 2037 agreements ONLY can present grievances over the City's determination that a course is not job related directly to Step III. The grievance must be filled within five (5) days of the City notifying the employee of the determination. The grievance procedure is specified in Article XXIV, Section 6 of the AFSCME 2719 bargaining unit agreement and Article XVI, Section 6 of the AFSCME 2037 bargaining unit agreement.

- H. Successful completion of a credit or noncredit college, university, technical/trade school or certified apprenticeship course is defined as achievement of a "C" grade or better for all undergraduate, technical/trade or certified apprenticeship work completed, and achievement of a "B" grade or better for all graduate level work completed, or achievement of a "P" grade for courses graded on a Pass/Fail basis only as determined by the college or university. Attainment of a "C-" for undergraduate, technical/trade or certified apprenticeship coursework or a "B-" for a graduate course does not constitute successful completion of a course.
- I. Reimbursement will be made only after the employee submits a completed Tuition Reimbursement Program Reimbursement Request Form verifying the successful completion of a pre-approved course. Reimbursable costs will be for tuition and lab/technology fees only. Fees for registration, university, computer, administrative or late fees, graduation, books, instruments, transportation, meals, etc. are not reimbursable under the Program.
- J. Reimbursements will be treated as ordinary income, and as such may be subject to Federal, State and/or Local taxes based on IRS requirements in effect at the time of the request.
- K. If an employee receives other available tuition assistance, such as a grant and/or scholarship from government, college/university and/or private funds, the City's Tuition Reimbursement Program will reimburse 50% of the difference between such other available tuition assistance and the amount of the tuition and lab/technology fees.
- L. Employees must attend class on their own time. Participation in the Tuition Reimbursement Program must not interfere with the employee's work responsibilities or hours of work.
- M. Approvals of both Pre-Approval and Reimbursement Request Forms under this Program are subject to and contingent upon City Council appropriating sufficient funds for the Program. The funds appropriated to each department for the Program shall be used to cover tuition and lab/technology fees incurred by any department employee, regardless of bargaining unit status. Once the amount of pre-approved requests equals the allotted funds for a department in any given year, no further approval will be given to employees who enroll in courses during that year. If the funds allocated to the department for any given year are insufficient to pay for all requests for reimbursement, then the Department Director shall determine which requests to approve. Pre-approval for courses which carry over or begin in the fiscal year following pre-approval are contingent upon the City appropriating sufficient funds to cover the tuition and lab fees.
- N. Employees who transfer to another City department must seek approval for reimbursement of that course from their new City Department Director or Bureau Chief. Employees who transfer to a position outside of their bargaining unit are ineligible for reimbursement for that course.
- O. An employee who resigns or is terminated from employment for any reason prior to the completion of a pre-approved course will not be eligible for reimbursement.

## **II. PROCEDURES:**

### **A. Pre-Approval Procedures**

1. Employee's Request – Part I of Tuition Reimbursement Program Pre-Approval Request Form C
  - a. A Pre-Approval Request Form C must be completed for each proposed

course. The form must be submitted to the employee's Department Director at least ten (10) work days prior to the date the course starts. Forms are available online.

**b.** Part I of the Pre-Approval Request Form includes:

- Identifying employee data
- Name and address of the accredited institution or certified apprenticeship program
- Grants, scholarships, awards or any other non-repayable financial assistance received for tuition costs (e.g., PHEAA, PELL, etc.)
- Title of the proposed degree (including major), certificate or license program
- Course number
- Title of course
- Number of credits for the proposed course, if applicable
- Tuition costs for the proposed course
- Lab/technology fees, if any, for the proposed course
- Starting and ending dates for the proposed course
- Calculation of requested 50% reimbursement
- Description of why the proposed course is job related. (i.e., will improve the employee's knowledge and skills to perform present job duties or enable the employee to meet the minimum requirements as established by the Civil Service Commission for promotion into another position within the bargaining unit)
- Employee's signature verifying an understanding of and agreeing to the General Guidelines and Procedures of the Program

**b.** The employee must attach to the Pre-Approval Request Form C a copy of the institution's formal description of the proposed course and confirmation from the institution of the tuition and lab/technology fee costs associated with the course and source(s) and amount(s) of any scholarships, grants, etc.

**c.** Eligible employees are SOLELY responsible for providing supporting documents for each proposed course to the satisfaction of his/her Department Director and the Director of Human Resources and Civil Service to receive full consideration under the City's Tuition Reimbursement Program. Failure to do so within the time frame specified in the Procedure shall result in the disapproval of the employee's request.

2. Department Director Action – Part II of Pre-Approval Request Form C

**a.** Upon receipt of the Pre-Approval Request Form C with Part I completed, the Department Director will review the request to verify that the request has been submitted in a timely basis and that all required information and supporting documents are complete and accurate.

**b.** The Department Director will review the request to determine if the employee meets the following qualifications for consideration under the Tuition Reimbursement Program:

- Is the employee eligible as defined in Section 2-A. above?
- Is the employee's identifying data (e.g.: job title, start date, etc.) accurate?
- Is the college, university or technical/trade school where the course will be taken accredited or is the program a certified apprenticeship program?
- Is the course a non-correspondence course toward a degree, certificate or license?
- Is there money available in the appropriate code account to cover this request?
- Is the proposed course job related (i.e., will improve the employee's knowledge and skills to perform present job duties or enable the employee to meet the minimum requirements as established by the Civil Service Commission for promotion into another position within the employee's bargaining unit)?

**c.** The Department Director will complete 6a. in Part II describing how the course and/or

degree, license or certificate program is job related. The Director will also complete Part II of the Pre-Approval Request Form C recommending approval or disapproval of the proposed course. If approval is recommended the Director will sign the Form. Any modification, change, correction, etc. made to Part I of the form must be initialed and dated by the Department Director or his/her designee.

**d.** The Department Director must submit the completed Pre- Approval Request Form C and all accompanying documents to the Director of Human Resources and Civil Service for review and approval/disapproval at least five (5) work days prior to the date the course starts.

**e.** The Department Director is responsible for ensuring that the Pre-Approval Request Form C and all supporting documents are complete and accurate before forwarding them to the Director of Human Resources and Civil Service.

3. Director of the Department of Human Resources and Civil Service Action – Part III of Pre-Approval Request Form C

**a.** The Director of Human Resources and Civil Service will review the Pre-Approval Request Form C, all accompanying materials, and the recommendation from the appropriate Department Director.

**b.** The Director of Human Resources and Civil Service will complete Part III of the Pre-Approval Request Form C indicating approval/disapproval of the request and state the reason(s) for the final approval or disapproval of the request. All decisions of the Director of Human Resources and Civil Service shall be final.

4. Copies will be distributed to department director, employee, payroll, and the employee's personnel file upon approval from Director of Human Resources and Civil Service.

## **B. Reimbursement Process**

1. The employee is responsible for initiating the reimbursement request process. Requests for reimbursement must be submitted in a timely fashion and no later than sixty (60) days after completion of a pre-approved course. Departments must accurately note the date the Reimbursement Request was received and the form must be initialed by the person who receives it.

2. To be eligible for reimbursement consideration the employee must:

**a.** Be a current employee of the City in a position covered by either the AFSCME 2719, AFSCME 2037, PJCBC or TEAMSTERS LOCAL 249 bargaining unit agreement at both the time of submission of his/her request for reimbursement and receipt of reimbursement, AND

**b.** Complete the Reimbursement Request Form which includes employee identifying data, course title, course number, name of institution, whether the course is a graduate, undergraduate or other level course, verification of cost incurred (copy of paid invoice, receipt or cancelled check) and a grade report to be sent to his/her Department Director.

3. Upon receipt of the Reimbursement Request Form and all required documentation validating that the employee has successfully completed and paid for the course that has been pre-approved, the Department Director will complete the section of the Reimbursement Request Form entitled FOR DEPARTMENTAL USE ONLY.

4. Reimbursement may occur only upon successful completion of a preapproved course and the availability of sufficient funds for allocation for tuition reimbursement. (See General Guidelines I and N).

5. If the reimbursement request is disapproved, the Department Director shall state the reason(s) why the request for reimbursement was denied
6. The approved reimbursement shall be charged to and be payable from each department's Education and Training Code Account.
7. The completed Reimbursement Request Form, with all attachments, must be sent to the Director of Human Resources and Civil Service. If the Department Director has approved the Reimbursement Request the Director of Human Resources and Civil Service will review all information submitted for compliance with the procedures and if approved will transmit it for processing. If the request is disapproved the Department Director and Employee will be notified with an explanation.

NOTE: Pre-Approval Forms and Reimbursement Request Forms can be obtained online at <http://pittsburghpa.gov/humanresources/humanresources-policies>