

Tuition Assistance Program

Effective 01/01/2021

Objective

NOVA Parks believes that formal education has a positive impact on an employee's contribution to the Organization and supports self-development and educational efforts by providing reimbursements for certain expenses associated with continuing education courses.

Scope of Program

Eligible full and part-time employees who have worked for at least twelve (12) consecutive months are eligible for benefits under the Tuition Assistance Program. Part-time employees are benefit eligible employees regularly scheduled to work 30 or more hours per week. Seasonal employees are not eligible for benefits under this program.

Employees may use the program to pursue undergraduate or graduate courses from accredited educational institutions, provided the course is related to the employee's current job duties, other relevant positions within the agency that represent advancement opportunities, or is a required core course to complete a job-related degree. The employee must successfully complete the course with a grade of "C" or better or "P" for a pass/fail course to be eligible for reimbursement.

Covered Expenses

Tuition is the only expense eligible for reimbursement through the Tuition Assistance Program.

Other miscellaneous expenses, such as books, lab fees, exam fees, parking, supplies, social dues, athletic fees, computer access charges, etc., are not eligible for reimbursement. NOVA Parks' reimbursement will be reduced by any other financial aid that does not have to be repaid (such as the GI Bill, scholarships, and grants).

Reimbursement is limited to 100 percent of actual expenses, not to exceed the in state undergraduate tuition rates of George Mason University.

Reimbursement will not be provided for conferences, seminars, certifications, and certificate programs that are a component of job required credentials, courses required for maintaining a license or certification, or continuing education credits. Separate funds are available to assist with these forms of staff development.

Amount of Tuition Assistance

While courses may be taken at any accredited institution, the per credit hour reimbursement will be based on the in state undergraduate tuition rates of George Mason University. Applications will be reviewed based on the rate in effect at the time the application for tuition assistance is submitted.

A full-time employee regularly scheduled to work 40 hours per week and who has worked the required 12 consecutive months is eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 9 credit hours per fiscal year. A part-time employee regularly scheduled to work 30 or more hours per week and who has worked the required 12 consecutive months is eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 3 credit hours per fiscal year. The reimbursement amount may not exceed the maximum amount identified in IRS regulation section 127 to classify it as a tax free benefit.

In calculating the benefit amount, the course end date will be used to determine the fiscal year to which the benefit is applied. For example, a course that ends on June 1, 2019 will be applied to the employee's FY19 benefit. A course that ends on July 31, 2019 will be applied to the employee's FY20 benefit.

The amount of tuition benefits available will be determined annually during the budget process. The availability of funds will be determined at the time the approved application is received by Human Resources. Once budgeted funds have been exhausted, new applications will not be accepted until the next fiscal year.

Separation from Employment

Employees whose employment with NOVA Parks ends for any reason, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, within twelve (12) months of receiving a tuition reimbursement will be required to refund the entire amount of the reimbursement provided over the previous twelve (12) months.

Nothing in this Program alters the at-will employment relationship between NOVA Parks and employees.

Procedures and Approval

Employees may apply for tuition assistance at any point during the year. Applications with a cost estimate must be submitted to the employee's direct supervisor for review prior to scheduling or beginning the course. The employee is solely responsible for the timely and accurate submission of their application. Incomplete or inaccurate applications will be returned to the employee. Once an application is received, the

employee's direct supervisor will assess the course and/or degree, taking into account the employee's current and future assignments. The direct supervisor will then submit the request for final approval to the department Director. After receiving the approved application, the Human Resources Administrator will verify that funds are available and that the employee is eligible to receive benefits.

Reimbursable expenses must be submitted for payment within 45 days from the end of the semester or term. Reimbursement for expenses will be made provided the employee has successfully completed the course with a grade of "C" or better or "P" for pass/fail courses. The official grade record/transcript and itemized receipts documenting all expenses should be provided to the Human Resources Department.

Any questions or comments should be directed to the Human Resources department.