

Memo To: All UH-Downtown/PS Holders
From: Dr. Loren J. Blanchard, President
Subject: Staff Training and Development Policy

UH-Downtown/PS 02.B.12
Issue No. 9
Effective date: 04/20/2023
Page 1 of 6

1. PURPOSE

This PS establishes the policy for implementing, monitoring, and participating in staff training and development programs, including the College Release Program, at the University of Houston-Downtown, in accordance with [Texas Government Code, Chapter 656.041, Subchapter C](#), referred to as the State Employees Training Act, [UH System Administrative Memorandum 02.A.26](#), and [UH System Administrative Memorandum 02.A.41](#).

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 College Release Program (CRP): An educational benefit that allows full-time, benefits-eligible staff to attend graduate and undergraduate college courses of up to three (3) hours per week, per regular semester (fall and spring), at the University of Houston-Downtown or other accredited institutions of higher education.
- 2.2 Full-time, benefits-eligible staff: University employee who is employed for 40 hours per week for a period of at least four and one-half continuous months, excluding students employed in positions for which student status is required as a condition of employment, and employees holding a teaching and/or research position, classified as faculty.
- 2.3 Staff Education Reimbursement: An educational benefit that reimburses tuition and course-related fees to full-time, benefits-eligible staff attending credit-bearing classes through an accredited institution of higher learning in the regular semesters (fall or spring) leading to a degree or course applicable to their job.
- 2.4 Career Ladder Action Plan: A formal outline of training required to prepare an employee to move to the next higher-level job as outlined in a pre-determined career ladder or to obtain increased responsibilities in the current job for the purpose of reclassification and salary adjustment. See [PS 02.B.08, Staff Salary Compensation Program and Salary Guidelines](#).

3. POLICY

- 3.1 The University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) encourages staff and managers to identify educational and development opportunities and training that will improve job performance and develop staff potential in current and prospective positions.
- 3.2 Purposes that may be served by training and development opportunities include the following:

- a. enhanced leadership skills;
- b. dealing with new technologies and legal developments;
- c. quality customer service skills necessary to improve internal services and support student recruitment and retention initiatives;
- d. increased opportunities for promotion within the University;
- e. increased competence and productivity, and;
- f. obtain skills and knowledge needed for progression within an employee's position or career ladder.

3.3 Training and development opportunities include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. training opportunities offered by various departments at UHD and held on campus during work hours;
- b. training on mandated compliance issues such as equal opportunity and sexual harassment;
- c. seminars, workshops, and conferences held off campus or out of the city;
- d. the College Release Program, and;
- e. on-the-job training to acquire the skills associated with a higher-level job on a pre-defined career ladder.

3.4 [UH System Administrative Memorandum 02.A.26, Employee Development and Training](#), states it is the responsibility of each employee to complete annual mandatory training. Employees who do not complete annual mandatory training by the published deadline will not have met their job expectations and will, therefore, not be eligible for merit increases. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring their employees' training performance.

3.5 State Employees Training Act (SETA)

- 3.5.1 [Texas Government Code, Chapter 656.041, Subchapter C](#), referred to as the State Employees Training Act (SETA), allows UHD to use public funds for development programs related to either current or prospective duty assignments. Funds may be expended from departmental accounts for employees to participate in development programs with supervisor and departmental approval. Appropriate expenses may include salary, registration fees, travel expenses, and training materials. Any reimbursement for travel expenses associated with seminars, workshops, or similar training events must meet all applicable policies, rules, and statutory provisions regarding travel of state employees.

3.6 Eligibility

- 3.6.1 All staff may participate in training and development opportunities, subject to:
- a. supervisor's approval;
 - b. eligibility restrictions for the individual courses or programs, and;
 - c. availability of funds (where costs are involved).

- 3.6.2 Only non-probationary full-time, benefits-eligible staff are eligible to participate in the College Release Program and/or receive Staff Education Reimbursement, subject to the same restrictions as in 3.6.1.

- 3.6.3 Staff may participate in either the College Release Program or the Fitness Release Time Program each semester. Details regarding the Fitness Release Time Program may be found in [PS 02.B.13, Employee Wellness Program Policy](#).
- 3.7 Training and development programs are normally offered during regularly scheduled work hours. Staff are encouraged to participate in training at times that accommodates the departmental work schedule when appropriate. To the extent that it is possible and practical, supervisors are encouraged to allow their staff to participate in training and development programs.
- 3.7.1 Supervisors may require attendance at certain training programs as part of the individual's position and/or duties and responsibilities.
- 3.7.2 Staff attending training and development programs with the supervisor's approval are not required to make up time spent in training and development sessions.
- 3.8 Staff are responsible for providing to their supervisor certificates or other proofs of completion of training, and/or attendance at seminars, workshops, and conferences held off campus, and to include this information in his/her Performance Journal in the performance management system. It is the supervisor's responsibility to request from HR verification of all on-campus training completed by their direct reports for inclusion in the Manager's Performance Journal in the performance management system.
- 3.9 College Release Program
- 3.9.1 The College Release Program provides non-probationary full-time, benefits-eligible staff up to three (3) hours per week release time from normal duties to take credit-bearing courses toward a degree plan at an accredited institution of higher learning.
- 3.9.2 The College Release Program is available during regular semesters (fall and spring) only.
- 3.9.3 Classroom time and travel to and from class may not exceed three hours per week.
- 3.9.4 Staff must:
- 3.9.4.1 go through the regular admission process and meet the relevant admissions requirements of the institution;
- 3.9.4.2 complete his/her probationary period before the semester begins;
- 3.9.4.3 acknowledge that his/her primary responsibility is to his/her job. An approved [College Release Program and Staff Education Reimbursement Request](#) represents a department's commitment of release time for class attendance. Staff are obligated to his/her job responsibilities during work hours when the class is not in session. And staff must;

3.9.4.4 request CRP leave through Absence Management for the approved hours per week release time from normal duties to take credit-bearing courses and reflect CRP release time on their electronic timesheets. The classroom time required to complete a course approved on the CRP and Staff Education Reimbursement Request may not be charged against any leave or reflect deductions in salary.

3.9.5 The cost of non-course related fees and books are the responsibility of the employee.

3.9.6 The College Release Program is only applicable to courses leading to a degree or for professional development applicable to the employee's job or career ladder.

3.10 Staff Education Reimbursement

Staff may be eligible to receive education reimbursement, subject to availability of funds, provided they meet the following criteria:

- a. they are employed at UHD in a non-probationary capacity prior to the beginning of the semester for which they are seeking reimbursement;
- b. they are employed in a full-time (40 hours per week), benefits-eligible position;
- c. they are enrolled at an accredited institution of higher learning in credit-bearing classes leading to a degree or course applicable to their job or career ladder;
- d. they are employed at UHD through the official close of the term (as shown in the official semester class schedule) for a specified semester;
- e. they earned a "C" grade or better in the specified semester, and;
- f. they have no prior financial obligations to UHD or other components of the UH System.

3.11 Staff enrolled in classes at UHD may receive staff education reimbursement for one class based on UHD's rates at the time the reimbursement is sought. Reimbursements for the CRP are nontaxable per [Internal Revenue Code \(IRC\), Section 127](#).

3.12 Staff enrolled in classes at other accredited institutions of higher learning may receive education reimbursement for one class at UHD rates at the time the reimbursement is sought or their accredited institution's rate, whichever is less. Reimbursements are nontaxable based on [Internal Revenue Code \(IRC\), Section 127](#).

3.13 Staff who did not earn a "C" or better for the specified semester, or who dropped/withdrew from classes approved under the CRP, will not be eligible for College Release Time nor Staff Education Reimbursement the following semester.

4. PROCEDURES

- 4.1 Prior to the official beginning of the semester and before registering for classes, staff will complete Sections A and C of the [College Release Program and Staff Education Reimbursement Request](#) (Request), sign it and forward it to his/her supervisor.
- 4.2 The supervisor will review the Request and approve or deny up to three (3) hours per week release time in Section B of the Request and return it to the employee.
- 4.3 Staff will register for class(es) and forward the approved Request with a copy of his/her registration and fee statement to HR prior to the official beginning of the semester. Staff attending another university must also attach a copy of the institution's tuition and fees chart. HR will maintain a list of all employees enrolled in the CRP as well as those requesting staff education reimbursement only. This list will reflect the date and time registration and fee statements were received in HR. Only employees whose requests for Staff Education Reimbursement are received prior to the beginning of the semester will be eligible for reimbursement, provided all requirements in section 3.10 have been met and funds are available.
- 4.4 At the close of the semester, HR will review the participant's grade and complete the certification sections (Sections D and E) of the Request.
- 4.5 Staff taking a class at another college or university must provide proof of a final grade to HR within 15 days of the official close of the term.
- 4.6 Staff may be eligible to receive Staff Education Reimbursement for one class at UHD's rates at the time reimbursement is sought, or their accredited institution's rate, whichever is less, provided the criteria outlined in 3.10 has been met. No reimbursement will be granted for more than one class in one regular semester (fall or spring).
- 4.7 Once HR certifies the final course grade, the list of staff eligible for education reimbursement will be sent to Student Accounting.
- 4.8 Student Accounting will review the student's financial record.
 - 4.8.1 If the staff member:
 - a. has a financial obligation to UHD or other component of the UH System for anything other than the semester being reimbursed, reimbursement will be denied. "Reimbursement Denied" will be checked on the Request.
 - b. does not have any financial obligations or only owes for the reimbursement semester, the reimbursement will be approved. "Reimbursement Approved" will be checked on the Request.
 - c. received UHD-funded grants or scholarships, the staff education reimbursement will be reduced by the amount of any such scholarships.
- 4.9 Once all staff education requests have been processed by Student Accounting, they will be forwarded to Payroll.

4.10 Reimbursements will be processed through the payroll system. If the employee has a financial obligation for the semester being processed, the reimbursement will be offset by the amount owed.

4.11 HR will scan the Request into the employee's personnel record.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

Responsible Party: (Reviewer): Vice President for Human Resources

Review: Every three years on or before August 1st.

Signed original on file in the Office of Human Resources.

6. POLICY HISTORY

Issue #1: 01/09/08

Issue #2: 04/28/08

Issue #3: 09/29/08

Issue #4: 08/20/09

Issue #5: 08/18/10

Issue #6: 10/10/13

Issue #7: 07/09/15

Issue #8: 08/02/19

7. REFERENCES

[UH System Administrative Memorandum 02.A.26](#)

[PS 02.B.13, Employee Wellness Program Policy](#)

[UH System Administrative Memorandum 02.A.41](#)

[PS 02.B.08, Staff Salary Compensation Program and Salary Guidelines](#)

[Texas Government Code, Chapter 656.041](#)

[Internal Revenue Code \(IRC\), Section 127](#)