

8.3 Educational Leave

Purpose

The capacity of organizations to meet their present and future knowledge/skill requirements is essential. Requirements for certain types of knowledge and skills can be most effectively and economically met by means of educational leave.

Note: If any provision in this policy conflicts with policy established for health care institutions, the health care policy will prevail.

Definitions

EDUCATIONAL LEAVE

Educational leave refers to leave from duty on a part- or full-time basis for the purpose of taking advanced or supplementary training, where the duration of the leave in total exceeds 30 working days per year.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance refers to money paid to or on behalf of an employee for the purpose of participating in an educational program. It may include all or some portion of the employee's salary and/or course-related costs, including:

- tuition
- travel expenses
- books and other required materials
- laboratory fees
- registration fees
- any other related, legitimate expenses.

Roles and Responsibilities

THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

The Public Service Commission will:

- assist managers in identifying suitable educational programs to meet training/development needs
- prepare periodic reports on the service-wide utilization of educational leave/assistance and related financial implications.

DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

The department or agency concerned will:

- ensure that all reasonable requests by employees for educational leave/assistance are considered fairly and equitably
- ensure that training/development needs referred to in submitted applications are consistent with overall departmental objectives, priorities, and plans
- submit recommendations for educational leave and financial assistance to the Deputy Minister of their department
- ensure that educational leave and related financial assistance are granted in accordance with the terms and conditions established by this policy
- monitor compliance with the conditions established by the policy by maintaining an educational leave information system.

Administrative Guidelines

ELIGIBILITY FOR LEAVE AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Any civil service employee who is recommended by his/her department as a candidate for staff training and development in order to more effectively carry out his/her present or planned future responsibilities is considered eligible to receive leave and financial assistance.

AMOUNT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Educational leave may be fully subsidized, partially subsidized, or granted with no financial assistance. The amount of financial assistance granted to an employee for educational leave is proportional to the benefit that the department can reasonably expect to derive from its investment. Financial assistance should therefore be determined according to the following guidelines:

Full salary plus full tuition and any other agreed-upon expenses

Fully subsidized educational leave may be granted when the educational program:

- meets a knowledge/skill requirement that is essential for the efficient and effective operation of a departmental program
- relates specifically to the employee's present or planned work requirements
- primarily benefits the department.

Partial salary and/or agreed-upon expenses

Partially subsidized educational leave may be granted when the educational program:

- contributes significantly to the department's operations but is not essential

- is generally related to the employee's present or planned work requirements
- mutually benefits the department and employee.

No financial assistance

Leave for educational purposes may be granted without pay or other financial assistance when the educational program:

- is not required by the department
- is not related to the employee's present or planned work requirements
- primarily benefits the employee.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM ANOTHER SOURCE

If an employee receives financial assistance for educational purposes from a source other than the Nova Scotia government (for example: scholarships, bursaries, etc.), the government financial assistance for which he/she is eligible will be reduced by the total amount received from other sources.

AUTHORIZATION OF LEAVE/FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Educational leave, with or without financial assistance, is authorized by the Deputy Minister of the employee's department.

RETURN SERVICE COMMITMENT

Financial assistance is provided to employees on educational leave as a loan that is repayable through service to the government for a prescribed period upon completion of the educational program.

An employee who is granted educational leave with financial assistance is, therefore, required to sign a non-interest-bearing demand note for the amount of financial assistance received as well as a return service agreement stating the length of service that he/she is required to provide in return for the assistance received.

No return service commitment is required on non-financially assisted leave.

CALCULATION OF RETURN SERVICE COMMITMENT

The minimum return service commitment is calculated at the rate of one month return service per \$1,000 financial assistance on amounts exceeding \$6,000. A minimum return service commitment of six months is applied on any amount of financial assistance between \$1,000 and \$6,000. A maximum return service commitment of 36 months applies to financial assistance exceeding \$36,000.

FAILURE TO FULFIL RETURN SERVICE COMMITMENT

Should an employee fail to complete the required return service commitment, the demand note will be credited with an amount that bears the same ratio to the financial assistance paid by the government as the completed service bears the total return service commitment. The balance of the demand note will be processed for collection.

PROOF OF SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

Employees are required to submit to the deputy head of their department proof of successful completion of the educational program or confirmation of unsuccessful standing.

Employees who do not successfully complete their program of study or fail to fulfil the requirements of the course attended will cease to be entitled for financial assistance, but are still obligated to fulfil the return service or repayment commitment on a proportional basis.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS DURING EDUCATIONAL LEAVE

Educational leave with full or partial pay

- Regular premiums for group medical and life insurance continue to be paid by payroll deductions, and normal coverage is maintained.
- Superannuation contributions continue to be paid by payroll deductions, and the period of leave is regarded as service for superannuation purposes.
- Sick leave, vacation leave, and Public Service Award entitlements continue to be earned at the regular rate in accordance with provisions of the regulations under the *Civil Service Act* or the employee's collective agreement.
- Employees shall receive salary increases brought about by a negotiated increase or cyclical review.
- An employee may be granted a merit increment during leave. The employee's increment review date remains unchanged.

Educational leave without pay

- The government continues to pay its share of group medical and life insurance premiums on behalf of employees on educational leave without pay only if the employee's contributions are maintained. Employees must arrange with the Department of Finance to pay their share of insurance premiums so that coverage is maintained during leave.

- The government continues to make superannuation contributions on behalf of employees on leave without pay only if employee contributions are maintained. Employees must arrange with the Department of Finance for payment of their share of superannuation contributions.
- Sick leave, vacation leave, and Public Service Award credits are not earned during each calendar month of leave in which the employee does not receive salary for more than eight days.
- The employee's increment review date is deferred by the number of months of leave.

Short Course Leave, Course Subsidization

Many knowledge/skill requirements can be met by educational programs that do not require educational leave. For example:

- short courses (courses of less than 30 working days duration)
- study outside of working hours (correspondence courses, evening courses).

Granting of leave and/or financial assistance for such activities is authorized by each department.

The guidelines provided on pages 8-9 to 8-12 for determining amount of financial assistance may be applied to these categories of educational activity as well.

Enquiries

General Enquiries, Public Service Commission (902) 424-7660

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