

# College/Technical School Assistance

## POLICY

The Texas General Land Office encourages employees to further their professional and vocational development through college and technical school education. The GLO may reimburse, upon successful completion, many of the required expenses for job-related courses (undergraduate only) taken from an accredited college, university, or technical school. Requests for this assistance will be considered on a course-by-course basis. Approval for reimbursement may be partial and is always contingent upon availability of funds at the time reimbursement is to occur.

Reimbursement may be made for required, non-refundable, course expenses, such as tuition, and mandatory fees only. Reimbursement may not be made for:

- Expenses related to obtaining acceptance or reinstatement to the institution,
- Voluntary expenses;
- Transportation and lodging expenses;
- Fees assessed due to lateness or changes (such as late registration fees and schedule or course change fees) or payment options; or
- Books or other course related requirements.

## ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for reimbursement:

- The cost of the tuition and expenses for which reimbursement is sought must not be covered by any other financial assistance (however, if the employee is receiving partial assistance from other sources, the GLO will consider partial reimbursement);
- The planned course work must relate to the employee's duties;
- The employee must not be on disciplinary probation;
- All objectives in the employee's most recent performance appraisal must have received at least a "Satisfactory Performance" rating;
- The employee must be actively employed by the GLO at the time of the request, during the entirety of the course(s), and at the time of the reimbursement;
- The employee must have been employed by GLO for at least 6 continuous months at the time the request is submitted; and
- The employee must successfully complete the course, making at least a "C" in any undergraduate college course. A grade of "I" (Incomplete) will disqualify the employee's request for reimbursement. A grade of "pass" for a "pass/fail" course is acceptable.

## PROCEDURES

### BEFORE REQUEST FORM SUBMISSION

**An employee interested in participating in this assistance program must discuss plans for taking the course(s) with the employee's supervisor PRIOR to submitting a formal request.** If time off to attend classes is required during the workday, arrangements must be made for any lost time to be made up, or personal leave must be taken. These arrangements must be fully planned with, and approved by, the employee's chain of management, including the employee's Deputy.

Course work is expected to result in only short-term absences from work. A Director may approve longer-term absences, but may not approve a request if during the training period the employee will not perform the employee's regular duties for three or more months as a result of the course work.

As soon as a manager learns that an FLSA non-exempt employee plans to take classes, the manager must contact Human Resources to discuss possible overtime implications. Failure to do so could jeopardize reimbursement and result in overtime liability.

### REQUEST FORM SUBMISSION

An employee desiring to use this policy must submit a completed **College/Technical School Assistance Reimbursement Purchase Request** form (downloadable from the Forms page on the GLO Intranet at <http://myglo.glo.texas.gov>) through the employee's chain of command to the employee's Director. All material needed to support the request and demonstrate compliance with this policy should be attached to the requisition. (University websites are usually a good source for documentation of mandatory fees.)

**To maximize the chances of approval and the availability of funds, an employee interested in participating in this assistance program should submit a request as far ahead of the start of the requested course as possible.** Employees who register for a course before obtaining formal approval of their request must understand that their request may not be approved and that they do so **at their own risk**.

**It is strongly recommended that an employee interested in participating in this assistance program in a fiscal year (September through August) discuss this with the employee's supervisor prior to May of the previous fiscal year so that this request can be considered as part of the budget request process.**

The employee's chain of management, including the Director, is responsible for ensuring that the employee's requested education assistance complies with this policy and for ensuring available funds before approving a request. Upon approval by the Director, the program area will route the requisition to Budget for approval of funds availability and processing.

A copy of the approved requisition will be forwarded or emailed to the employee. A requisition that is not approved (in whole or in part) will be returned to the Director. Employees must not assume that the GLO will reimburse any costs until the requisition has been approved by the Director and Budget.

### **AFTER COURSE COMPLETION**

Once the requisition is routed and approved, it will be held in Financial Services. To receive reimbursement, an employee, through the employee's chain of command, must submit to Financial Services:

- Receipts (copy of cancelled check, bank statement, credit/debit card receipt) of allowable expenses;
- Appropriate documentation of successful course completion (as defined above); and
- Written certification that the employee was employed by the GLO during the entirety of the course(s) and at the time of this request for reimbursement.

After reviewing the documentation and verifying compliance with the terms of this policy, Financial Services will process the reimbursement for the employee.

### **REIMBURSEMENT LIMITATION**

Enrollment in public institutions instead of more expensive private institutions is advised, when feasible. If an employee enrolls in a private institution, reimbursement will be based on tuition and expenses at a public institution for the same or similar course(s). For example, if the tuition and fees are \$2000 at the private institution and \$500 at the public institution, the eligible reimbursement will be limited to \$500. When submitting a request for a course at a private institution, the employee must provide documentation to show comparable costs at a public institution. Financial Services has the discretion to use other comparable costs for approval limitation purposes.

### **CANCELLATION OF BENEFIT, REPAYMENT TO AGENCY**

The employee must fully repay the GLO any amounts reimbursed for college/technical school assistance if the employee voluntarily terminates employment with GLO within one year after completion of the course(s). The employee must agree to this repayment condition in writing as part of the **College/Technical School Assistance Reimbursement Purchase Request** form (downloadable from the Forms page on the GLO Intranet at <http://myglo.glo.texas.gov>)

### **TRAINING CREDIT, RECORDS, AND MATERIALS**

Courses taken and completed under the College/Technical School Assistance Program will be eligible for professional development credit in the GLO Employee Training program.

All materials related to reimbursement under this assistance program will be maintained in the GLO expenditure files in accordance with state record

requirements. Employees may submit course and degree completion documentation to be included in their personnel file in Human Resources.

## **EFFECT OF PARTICIPATION**

Approval to participate in the College/Technical School Assistance Program, shall not in any way affect an employee's at-will status and is not a guarantee or indication that approval will be granted for subsequent courses. Approval to participate in this program shall in no way constitute a guarantee of indication of continued employment, nor shall it constitute a guarantee or indication of future employment in a current or prospective position.