



Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

EDUCATION ASSISTANCE POLICY

CSG016

BACKGROUND

Education Assistance supports staff undertaking educational studies relating to a field of current employment within Lachlan Shire Council (LSC) by providing a range of benefits that makes studying easier and reduces or eliminates the financial burden.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of education assistance is to support studies that are related to both LSC's business needs and the development needs of staff.

APPLICATION

Staff can apply for Education Assistance if they meet the following requirements:

- Full time or part time permanent employees of LSC, excluding temporary staff on contracts of 12 months **or less**, who have satisfactorily completed 12 months service. Permanent part time staff will generally receive benefits on a pro-rata basis, except for exam leave for which they will receive full benefits
- Employees on parental leave who have already started a course of study before commencing leave, will continue to receive benefits while on leave except for leave for exams and residential schools.

Exceptions to this policy are:

- Apprentices/trainees and those staff required by LSC to undertake further education as a condition of their employment. If an employee is required by LSC to undertake a course of study as a condition of their employment, such requirement will be stipulated, in writing, in their offer of employment. Where an employee is required by LSC to undertake a course relevant to the current and future needs of the LSC and the industry and is consistent with LSC's training plan, the Local Government (State) Award shall apply. Wherein LSC will pay course fees (except where the employee is repeating a stage of the course), grant paid leave to attend classes, provide or pay for reasonable transport expenses and provide or pay for reasonable accommodation expenses as needed.

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- Trainees where the salary of the employee is paid for the full year though the employee may be attending university on more than a correspondence basis, e.g. a sandwich course or the likes. In such cases any additional assistance shall be by agreement but normally no assistance, other than payment of salary, will be provided.

APPRENTICESHIPS/TRAINEESHIPS

The primary objective of LSC’s apprenticeship/traineeship system is to train competent tradespeople to meet LSC’s present and future needs. Apprentices/Trainees will participate in a training program that includes both work and educational components. Apprentices/Trainees will be released to attend classes in accordance with Technical College requirements. All course fees will be paid up front at the beginning of the academic year. Apprentices/Trainees must maintain satisfactory work and educational performance.

APPLYING FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Employees should:

- discuss study plans with their supervisor and Director
- apply to the educational institution to attend selected course
- complete a form for educational assistance and form for payroll deductions for course fees and send to Director for approval.

Directors should:-

1. assess the relevance of the course in relation to the:
 - needs of LSC
 - employee’s current position
 - employee’s length of service
 - employee’s previous academic record
 - employee’s work performance
 - employee’s career path with LSC
 - work demands of the department.
2. approve or not approve the application with reasons for their decision

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3. forward application form to the Manager People and Organisational Development.

The Manager People and Organisational Development should:-

- assess the application and forward it to General Manager for approval
- advise the applicant in writing of the outcome of their application and detail applicable benefits.

In providing advice and guidance to staff, supervisors and directors will need to carefully assess the balance between maintaining productivity within the workplace in the short term, and the longer term benefits to LSC of better trained and educated staff. The key issues to consider are the performance and potential of the staff member and the relevance of the course of study for which approval has been sought. Educational Assistance needs to be viewed by staff as special support for LSC’s high potential staff rather than an ‘entitlement’ for everyone.

ELIGIBLE COURSES OF STUDY

A course will not be automatically approved, as studies must be related to LSC’s business needs as assessed by the employee’s Director and General Manager, and that for the purposes of education outside the scope of the employee’s current position, the determination of ‘in need/skills shortages positions will also be made. All courses must be approved prior to commencement of studies.

Levels of tertiary education study and entry requirements are as set out:

- **Certificates**, such as a Certificate in Computing Studies, are generally conducted at a TAFE college and require a Higher School Certificate or equivalent as an entry requirement.
- **Diplomas**, such as an Associate Diploma of Accounting, are generally conducted at a TAFE college and require a Higher School Certificate or equivalent as an entry requirement.
- **Bachelor Degree**, such as a Bachelor of Business Studies, is generally conducted at a university and requires a Higher School Certificate, trade qualifications or relevant work experience as an entry requirement.

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- **Postgraduate Degree/Diploma**, such as a Diploma of Education or Master of Commerce, are generally conducted at a university upon the successful completion of a Bachelor Degree.

Study can be undertaken as either:

- **Part time**, where a student is generally required to attend regular classes usually held in the evening. As LSC does not provide time off to attend day lectures, employees must check that the course they want to study by this mode, has evening classes.
- **Distance Learning**, where a student accomplishes their course of study by completing assignments and attending residential schools, rather than by attending regular classes. This mode of study is best suited to persons who cannot attend lectures due to time, distance or other circumstances.

BENEFITS

If a course of study is approved under the Educational Assistance Policy, the following benefits may apply, depending on the course of study. Benefits will not be granted unless the employee is undertaking the full curriculum for each year of study, unless exceptional circumstances exist and prior approval is granted by the relevant Director.

Leave with pay will be granted to a maximum of four (4) hours per week to attend lectures and classes for approved courses of study, where classes are only available during working hours, subject to the following conditions:

- a) Where options for class times exist, employees will select times outside normal working hours, where possible. LSC may require the submission of class timetables issued by the educational institution as part of the application and approval process
- b) Any time required over and above the maximum four (4) hours per week will need to be made up by the employee. Employees may also use their vari-leave day for any extra time required

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- c) Examination study leave may be granted as annual leave or leave without pay, on application to the relevant Director
- d) Leave **will not** be granted for repeat subjects.

Leave with pay will be granted to a maximum of two (2) hours per week or 1 day per month for study for approved courses (other than to attend lectures and classes) subject to the following conditions:

- a) Study must be undertaken during work hours at the student’s place of work
- b) This arrangement will be granted on application to the relevant Director.

Examination leave is time away from work on full pay for the purpose of attending examinations scheduled during normal working hours. LSC will grant up to one day of paid leave for each examination attended during normal working hours, provided that the examination was not failed at a previous attempt. Employees are expected to return to work following a morning examination.

Council will provide up to ten (10) working days paid leave each year for staff to attend **residential or daytime school** as part of their course. This leave cannot be accumulated, year to year, if it is not taken.

Except where an employee is repeating a stage of the course and subject to continuing satisfactory work performance LSC may loan to employees up to 100% of the following and placed into an Education Assistance Sundry Debtor Account;

The cost of **compulsory enrolment fees, course fees and textbook expenses** at the end of each academic year when notified of the results, provided academic progress for that year has been satisfactory and the subjects attempted have been passed.

Staff who have the use of LSC vehicles on the lease back scheme will not be reimbursed for travelling expenses as this will be considered personal use.

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Subject to continuing satisfactory performance LSC will write off the expense/s accrued from the employee’s Education Assistance sundry debtor account, referred to in clause 6.5, one (1) year after LSC has received a statement of satisfactory results of completion of study i.e. at the end of the educational year, LSC will write off the debt at the end of the second subsequent year and so on (e.g. a 2015 year debt will be written off at the end of 2016 subject to receiving satisfactory completion results). Any amounts owing in this account upon termination shall be settled from the employee’s final pay from Council.

Reimbursement/finalisation shall not be on a pro-rata basis.

For employees who apply for support of **Higher Education Contribution Scheme** (HECS) payments, LSC reminds staff that the procedure outlined below, will allow significant savings, particularly where they may have to pay later through the taxation system, where the 20% discount does not apply. For LSC assistance the following conditions apply:

- a) HECS fee/s must be paid up front and at the time of enrolment in order to take advantage of the discount and prior to census date;
- b) staff are to advise LSC and either arrange for a reimbursement of their own outlay or for payment by LSC to cover the expense related to clause a) above
- c) LSC will not provide assistance for HECS debts incurred in repeating subjects.

Employees will be required to provide the original invoices for any reimbursements. Employees should also be wary not to claim expenses that have been reimbursed by LSC as a tax deduction and should seek financial advice.

CONTINUING ASSISTANCE

LSC will continue support for an employee’s study, year to year, provided that they have passed all subjects and maintained a satisfactory work performance. LSC, however, reserves the right to review the progress of each employee and withdraw its support should the progress of the employee in the course not be satisfactory, or if their work performance is not satisfactory.

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At the end of each semester, to obtain continuing support, the employee should:

- a) submit a copy of their course record for the year to their Director
- b) submit a request for continuing support from LSC into the next year, to their Director
- c) request reimbursement of any outstanding expenses LSC has agreed to pay
- d) discuss their progress with their Director.

At the end of each semester, the director should:

- a) discuss the progress and direction of studies with their employee
- b) approve/not approve (with reasons) document and requests from employee and forward to Manager People and Organisational Development.

At the end of each semester, the Manager People and Organisational Development should:

- a) monitor the employee’s performance,
- b) check and file all documentation in the employees staff file
- c) forward any forms for processing.

RELATED FORM:

Request for Education Assistance Form

GENERAL MANAGER

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