Professional Development Support Program for Academic Specialists

FAQ

1. **Who is eligible for this program?**
   Any academic specialist who has at least 24 full-time equivalent service months and is currently employed with a 50% time or greater appointment can apply for support. This includes fixed-term, probationary, and continuing appointment academic specialists. For part-time academic specialists (those with less than 100% time appointments), support is provided on a basis proportional to the appointment percentage. For example, if a full-time academic specialist is eligible for a maximum of 12 credits per academic year, a 50% time specialist is eligible for a maximum of 6 credits per academic year.

   **Note:** FTE service months are available by calling the Benefits Office at 353-4434.

2. **What is the application deadline date?**
   Submit the original completed application to Human Resources 30 days prior to the first day of class. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis as long as funds are available. They will be reviewed in the order received.

3. **What period of time is covered by this application?**
   Applications may be submitted for support of MSU credit courses that take place during the period August 16 through August 15 for each academic year.

4. **What needs to be included with the application?**
   An application from an eligible academic specialist must include a statement indicating the benefit of the professional development to the academic specialist and the unit, including arrangements for release time if applicable, and signatures of the specialist and unit administrator.

5. **Why is the statement of professional benefit required?**
   The statement of professional benefit will be used as the primary means for evaluating applications.

6. **What kinds of development opportunities are covered by this program?**
   The application for professional development support must be job, degree and/or career/professional development-related and covers credit courses taken at MSU. A waiver for MSU tuition will be provided; fees and taxes are not covered.

7. **Are my spouse and children covered by this program?**
   No. This program is available only to the academic specialist employee.

8. **What is the maximum dollar amount in support I may receive in one year?**
   Support may not exceed the amount of tuition for twelve (12) credits per academic year at the MSU resident Lifelong Education rate. There is a limit of four credits per semester.

9. **What if my course(s) require release time?**
   This is between the academic specialist and their Unit Supervisor, and is one of the considerations necessitating Unit support and approval of your application (see Section 7.6.1 at http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/facacadhandbooks/academicspecialist/profDev.htm#continuing).
10. **Is the benefit I receive through this program taxable?**
Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 127 allows tax-exemption for graduate-level, degree related courses reimbursed/waived through employer education assistance programs up to $5250 per calendar year. Undergraduate courses are tax-exempt.

11. **How long after I submit my proposal will I get a response?**
It is anticipated that a response will be received within 15 days of Human Resources receipt of a completed application, indicating if the course was approved or denied.

12. **What if my development program costs more than this benefit will cover?**
If your application is approved, this program will cover only up to the maximum benefit allowed. Any difference must be paid by other means, which may include unit funding or by your personal funds.

13. **How is the tuition waiver received?**
A tuition waiver will be provided for MSU credit courses approved for support from this program. If an approved application is processed after the billing, a credit/reimbursement for the MSU tuition will be made to your student account. Please note that the tuition waiver does not cover taxes or programs fees; these amounts, if any, will be billed to the student account.

If a class is dropped after enrollment, the waiver account is credited and you will be billed for any balance that may be due. This program will not pay fees assessed as a result of dropping a course.

If an "Incomplete" is received for an MSU course taken through tuition waiver, you must successfully complete the course within 90 days of receipt of the Incomplete or pay back the original waiver amount (normally through payroll deduction).

If a non-dissertation MSU credit course is deferred, you must successfully complete the course within 6 months or pay back the original waiver amount (normally through payroll deduction).

14. **I applied for funding and was approved, but circumstances now prevent me from attending. What shall I do now?**
Notify Human Resources at 884-0177 or email Julie Rorick at Rorick@hr.msu.edu as soon as you are aware of the changed circumstances, so that another academic specialist might be able to utilize the resources. This will not prevent you from applying in the future. (Refer to question #13 regarding dropping an MSU credit course taken through tuition waiver.)

15. **I need a copy of the application form.**
Program information, FAQs, and the application form are available on the Human Resources website at http://www.hr.msu.edu/prodev/ss_prodev/tuitionAssist.htm

16. **Additional questions?**
Contact Human Resources at 884-0177 or email Rorick@hr.msu.edu.