

**Princeton University**  
**Staff Educational Assistance Plan Information**

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## Highlights

The Staff Educational Assistance Plan includes the following features:

Assistance for	Assistance Provided
You	<p>Reimbursement of 85% of tuition and mandatory educational fees (effective July 1, 2020, textbooks and/or mandatory online course materials for online courses are included as covered expenses) for up to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• two courses per term and up to six courses per plan year (July 1 - June 30)</li><li>• \$5,250 per plan year (July 1 – June 30)</li></ul> <p>Reimbursement is applied to the plan year (July 1 - June 30) in which a <b>course</b> begins.</p> <p>Courses may be taken at any educational institution that is accredited by agencies recognized by the U. S. Department of Education.</p> <p>Courses may be taken as part of a degree program or to enhance your professional skills. You must receive college credit; or, if course credit is earned, it must be eligible for transfer toward a future degree program. A grade of C or better, or Pass in a Pass/Fail course must be received.</p>

## **STAFF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PLAN**

The University provides tuition reimbursement to help University faculty and staff members pay for the cost of their own undergraduate and/or graduate courses. The University will reimburse 85% of the cost for tuition and mandatory fees up to \$5,250 per plan year (July 1 – June 30) for a maximum of two courses per term and up to six courses per plan year. Effective July 1, 2020, textbooks and mandatory course materials for online courses are included as covered expenses eligible for reimbursement.

### **Eligibility**

You become eligible for educational assistance on the first of the month coincident with or next following one year of benefits-eligible employment. In order to be benefits-eligible, a regular faculty or staff members must be appointed or scheduled to work at least 4.5 months of the year at 50% duty time or greater. You must be employed by the University on the day the course begins and the day the course ends in order to be eligible for reimbursement.

Rehires may be able to waive part of the one year waiting period depending upon their break-in-service. If your break-in-service is 12 month or less, your prior benefits-eligible service and the time you were gone counts towards credited service. If you leave and come back within five years (but greater than one year), your prior benefits-eligible service is counted but the time you were gone is not counted as credited service. If you leave and are gone more than five years, your prior service is not counted.

Casual employees and employees on Long Term Disability are not eligible to participate in the plan. Service at the University as a casual employee does not count toward the one year service requirement. Employees on Short-Term Disability are able to participate in the program.

If courses are held during regular working hours, you must obtain your supervisor's *prior* approval to take the time off to attend classes. If approved by your supervisor, you will need to determine how you will make up the time you miss and how your job will be covered while you are out of the office.

### **What Is Covered**

If you are enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program or a credit bearing certificate program—at an accredited institution—you may be reimbursed for all courses except those

involving sports, games, or hobbies (unless such courses are required as part of your degree or certificate program). If you are enrolled in a doctoral program, you may be reimbursed for dissertation fees (up to annual plan limits) incurred during two plan years (July 1 - June 30), and there is no grade requirement. Reimbursement of dissertation fees may be extended for one plan year if approved by the institution an individual is attending.

If you are taking an individual course that is not part of a degree or credit bearing certificate program, the course must provide you with skills, knowledge, and credentials needed in your present position or that will qualify you for other positions at the University. You must receive college credit, or course credit earned must be eligible for transfer toward a future degree program. You must successfully complete your course with a grade of C or better or Pass in a Pass/Fail course. Employees working toward either a career or technical certificate must provide documentation confirming that courses would be eligible for transfer toward a future degree program at a college or university.

You may also be reimbursed for standardized test fees if you receive college-level credit by completing a standardized test for which you receive a grade and course credit (e.g., those through Thomas Edison State College). Portfolio assessment fees (fees for evaluating college-level knowledge and competencies resulting from your experiences) and credit transfer evaluation fees are not covered. You must successfully complete your course with a grade of C or better or Pass in a Pass/Fail course in order to be reimbursed. Continuing education courses where CEUs are earned, and professional development courses where PDUs are earned, do not qualify for the program. Grades must be reported on an official transcript or official grade report—a letter from the instructor is not acceptable.

If you wish to take a course offered by Princeton University, you must apply through the Continuing Education Program. You will not be reimbursed for these courses through the Staff Educational Assistance Plan, as the University already subsidizes the Continuing Education Program.

### **How to Apply**

To participate in the Staff Educational Assistance Plan, you must apply for course approval within 31 days of the start date of the course through HR Self Service. You are limited to two courses per term and no more than six courses in a plan year (July 1 – June 30).

## **Receiving Reimbursement**

Within 90 days of completing a course, you must submit for reimbursement through HR Self Service by uploading your official transcript or grade report and the tuition bill. If you are requesting reimbursement for textbooks and/or online course materials not listed on the itemized bill, receipts must also be uploaded at this time since we are unable to reimburse for these items separately. Canceled checks or payment receipts are not valid proof of the cost of tuition, and statements from the instructor will not be accepted as proof of your grade.

NOTE: Per IRS Guidelines, educational expenses do not include the cost of tools, equipment or supplies (other than textbooks) an employee is allowed to keep at the end of the course. Nor do they include the cost of lodging, meals, or transportation. An employee must be able to provide substantiation that the educational assistance provided was used for qualifying educational expenses.

Reimbursements for Staff Educational Assistance will be included in your paycheck. You will be notified by e-mail when the reimbursement has been processed. Please allow approximately four weeks (six weeks if you are paid monthly) to receive your reimbursement.

If you are receiving financial aid from another source (e.g., scholarships, grants, or similar aid from other organizations), the reimbursement by Princeton will not exceed the remaining eligible costs, if any.

## **Taxation of Benefits**

Reimbursements up to \$5,250 in a calendar year (January 1–December 31) are treated as nontaxable income by the IRS. Because the Plan is administered based on the University's fiscal year (July 1–June 30), it may be possible to receive more than \$5,250 in a calendar year. When this occurs, any reimbursements exceeding \$5,250 in the calendar year will be taxable income.

<b>When Coverage Ends</b>
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Your coverage under the Staff Educational Assistance Plan ends on the earliest of the date:

- you are no longer eligible to participate in the Plan;
- your employment with the University ends; or
- the Staff Educational Assistance Plan terminates.

## **Statement of Limitations**

1. The maximum reimbursement per plan year (July 1- June 30) is \$5,250.
2. A limit of two courses per term, with up to a maximum of six courses per plan year are eligible for reimbursement.
3. Courses taken at Princeton University under the auspices of the Continuing Education Program are not eligible for reimbursement under the Staff Educational Assistance Plan.
4. If you are receiving financial aid from another source, the reimbursement by Princeton will not exceed the remaining eligible costs, if any.
5. A letter from your instructor noting your grade is not valid as proof of your grade.
6. Canceled checks or cash or credit card receipts are not valid as proof of the cost of tuition.
7. If the IRS disputes Princeton's interpretation of federal tax regulations at any time in the future, you may be liable for taxes on the cash value of any benefits you have received plus any penalty and interest assessed.

The University reserves the right to amend, suspend or terminate its tuition assistance benefit programs in whole or in part, at any time and for any reason. The University has full authority and discretion to construe, interpret and administer its programs. The programs are unfunded, and no employee or dependent shall have any right to, or interest in, any assets of the University which may be applied by the University to the payment of benefits. Neither the establishment of the programs, nor the provision of benefits to any person, shall be construed as giving an employee the right to be retained in the service of the University. The programs will be construed and enforced according to New Jersey law.