

# Study Assistance Procedure

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## **Part 1 PURPOSE**

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- 1.1 The purpose of education assistance is to support studies that are related to both Council's business needs and the development needs of employees. Council encourages its employees to pursue further studies where appropriate in order to facilitate personal and career development, as well as to enhance the skill and qualification levels of the workforce. Further education represents a significant investment for Council as well as the individual employee, therefore the intention of this policy is to provide a range of options to make studying easier and to share the financial burden of further education.

## **Part 2 OBJECTIVES**

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- 2.1 Kempsey Shire Council is committed to providing education assistance to employees, to support studies that are related to both Council's business needs, to enhance the skill and qualification levels of its employees and to facilitate employee professional development.

## **Part 3 SCOPE**

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- 3.1 This procedure applies to all permanent employees of Council. It does not apply to Apprentices, Trainees, Cadets or other students, as their training is defined under the Local Government (State) Award or within their contract of employment.

## **Part 4 PROVISIONS**

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- 4.1 Council may, at its discretion, provide assistance to employees to complete education where:
- i. the completion of the proposed education is beneficial to both the employee's role and Council; and,
  - ii. the employee has consistently demonstrated a satisfactory or above average job performance.
- 4.2 The successful acquisition of a qualification will not automatically entitle an employee to a higher rate of pay or higher classification or grading of their currently held position.
- 4.3 Employees who have successfully completed assisted study and are seeking new career opportunities are still expected to apply for other roles through Council's merit-based selection process.
- 4.4 An employee will normally receive support, in accordance with this policy, for only one qualification at a time.

## **Part 5 APPROVAL FOR SUPPORT**

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- 5.1 Approval for all applications is dependent on budget availability and needs of the organisation.



- 5.2 Each application will be considered on its merits with highest priority to those qualifications which will provide the employee with enhanced skills/knowledge to contribute within their positions.
- 5.3 Employees must apply for Study Assistance to be approved by the:
- i. employee's manager;
  - ii. employee's director;
  - iii. Manager People and Culture; and
  - iv. ELT, if the application for assistance exceeds the recommended fee reimbursement
- 5.4 If the employee does not enrol for two semesters or two trimesters per annum, then the approval lapses and a new Study Assistance application must be submitted for approval.
- 5.5 Council may decline approval for assistance if the qualifications are not considered appropriate to Council's needs *or* for such reasons as budgetary constraints and/or changes in its business operations.
- 5.6 Council may withdraw its support to employees subject to:
- i. the educational requirements and conditions of the educational institution not being met;
  - ii. repeated subject failures in the course involved;
  - iii. the employee's continued employment with Council;
  - iv. the employee's performance and conduct in their role; and/or
  - v. a change in an employee's classification or duties such that the course is no longer relevant to their employment as deemed by Council.

## **Part 6 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

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- 6.1 Payment may be made by KSC of up to 50% of the total education fee (up to the level documented in the table below) by way of reimbursement to the employee less the FBT percentage as per ATO guidelines. This means that the employee must pay upfront the relevant fee/s in the first instance. Reimbursement will only be processed after the employee supplies copies of the payment receipts. Where qualifications meet a skill shortage the Director may submit an application to the ELT for higher level support.
- 6.2 Reimbursement of fees will be paid as Study Assistance and payments will be made at the end of the semester/trimester of study via accounts payable.
- 6.3 The Study Assistance Application will include an agreement where the reimbursement received for Study Assistance across the current study program will have to be refunded to Kempsey Shire Council, if the employee resigns within the study program timeframe or within 12 months of the completion of the study program.
- 6.4 If an employee withdraws from a subject/course, they must notify People and Culture and repay any financial assistance afforded for that course to Council within two weeks of withdrawing. If an employee fails to notify of a withdrawal no further Study Assistance will be provided. Council may take disciplinary action and this may lead to termination.



- 6.5 Where a staff member commences a new role impacting the Study Assistance approval, the staff member's application must be reassessed in consideration of the new role. Reassessment may result in a cessation of the Study Assistance.
- 6.6 All receipts must be forwarded to People and Culture on enrolment. Course results must be provided to the People and Culture office, and any new fees are dependent on receiving the last semester/trimester results.
- 6.7 Council will reimburse fees paid for approved courses as follows:

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>AQF Level</b>	<b>Fee Reimbursement (including FBT payment made to ATO by Council)</b>
<i>Eg: Certificate III in Local Government</i>	<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Reimbursement applied for \$1000 - Council will reimburse directly to staff member \$600 and pay Fringe Benefits Tax directly to ATO of \$400 ( % are example only)</i>
Certificate I/II/III (or equivalent)	Level 1 – 3	Full fees up to \$4,500 per annum
Certificate IV (or equivalent)	Level 4	50% of fees up to \$4,500 per annum
Diploma/Advanced Diploma (or equivalent)	Level 5 – 6	50% of fees up to \$5,000 per annum
Bachelor Degree (or equivalent)	Level 7	50% of fees up to \$8,000 per annum
Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma (or equivalent)	Level 8	50% of fees up to \$8,000 per annum
Masters Degree (or equivalent)	Level 9	50% of fees up to \$8,000 per annum
Professional qualifications	Non-AQF	50% of fees up to \$4,500 per annum

- 6.8 Council will not reimburse Commonwealth Supported Placements – HECs placement (as this will incur a 89% Fringe Benefits Tax), HELP fees, student union fees, administration fees or late fees. However, this does not preclude staff from accessing HELP or other financial study opportunities such as scholarships.
- 6.9 No travelling/accommodation expenses are paid for attendance at classes/lectures, examinations or graduation ceremonies.
- 6.10 Employees are expected to source required texts and other reference material through their education institution/provider. Costs are not covered by council.
- 6.11 Any other tax incurred as a result of participation in Study Assistance is the responsibility of the staff member. It is recommended the staff member seek their own tax/financial advice in relation to this matter especially in regard to child support or Centrelink payments.

## Part 7 LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS

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- 7.1 Staff may apply for up to 10 days of unpaid study leave per annum (financial year) to attend examinations and intensive schools. This leave is not cumulative and applies only within the actual period of study.
- 7.2 Staff may apply for 1 day of additional unpaid study leave to attend the graduation ceremony.
- 7.3 Staff may request the use of Annual Leave, Rostered Days off and time-in-Lieu to increase their availability to compete study programs.
- 7.3 In balancing the needs of work and study, in all cases work duties will take priority. Prior to utilising release provisions details must be submitted via the People and Culture payroll system for approval by the appropriate manager outlining lecture timetables and release times required with documented evidence, eg: university examination notice.

## Part 8 RESPONSIBILITY

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### People and Culture

- providing advice to employees (managers and staff) of the provisions of the Study Assistance Procedure
- informing all applicants for Study Assistance whether their application has been approved
- maintaining records of staff receiving Educational Assistance
- identifying if there are adequate funds within the Training Budget to cover approved applications
- collating applications for Study Assistance for review, if necessary, by ELT (if application for fees exceeds budget)
- arranging for the net amount of the Study Assistance received in the semester that the resignation is received to be billed to the exiting employee

### Manager and Director

- recommending whether the qualifications, that the employee wishes to acquire, meet the needs of Council
- planning who/which positions, the Department requires to obtain qualifications
- monitoring the progress of those employees who are receiving financial assistance
- documenting the employees' progression in their studies in their Personal Development Plan (within the development comments)

### Employees

- applying for Study Assistance using the People and Culture electronic platform
- lodging claims for the Study Assistance in a timely manner.



- providing receipts for fees paid and transcripts of results to People and Culture
- informing both their Manager/Supervisor and People and Culture if they discontinue studies for any reason, within two weeks of the withdrawal date and repaying any monies owing.
- repaying any Study Assistance on resignation.

#### ELT

- is responsible for approving/declining applications for Study Assistance where the number of applications exceeds the budgetary allocation.
- approval of a higher than recommended fee reimbursement based on the needs of the Council.

## Document Control

<b>Title</b>	Study Assistance Procedure
<b>Policy Number</b>	5.5.19
<b>Version</b>	2
<b>Document Number</b>	
<b>Audience</b>	Internal
<b>Policy Type</b>	Management
<b>Category</b>	Conditions of Employment
<b>Subcategory</b>	
<b>Date First Approved</b>	24/10/2024
<b>Date Effective</b>	
<b>Date Last Amended</b>	
<b>Date of Next Review</b>	
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Manager People and Culture
<b>Approval Body</b>	Executive Leadership Team
<b>Consultation Requirements</b>	SLT/ELT/Consultative Committee
<b>Public Participation Requirements</b>	Nil

## Version Control

Version	Date Effective	Approval	Amendment
1			New Policy
2	24/10/2024	Consultative Committee & ELT approval	Revised

