



POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT

NUMBER: 4.6501

DIVISION: Finance and Administration

TITLE: Tuition Waiver Program for Employees

DATE: July 1, 1998

REVISED: April 5, 2010; May 15, 2014; February 23, 2017, April 29, 2019

Policy for: All Eligible Employees

Authorized by: Director, Human Resources

I. Purpose and Scope

As an institution of higher learning, WKU subscribes to the values of educational attainment for enriching the quality of life and equipping individuals to be productive, engaged and socially responsible. The intent of this policy is to encourage and support educational achievement across the WKU workforce. This policy describes the benefits and options whereby eligible employees are able to take courses at WKU and certain provisions where courses may be taken at another public institution in Kentucky.

II. Policy

A. Eligibility and Procedures for Courses at Western Kentucky University

1. Regular full-time employees are eligible to have tuition and mandatory fees remitted for up to six (6) credit hours per semester (fall and spring) and up to six (6) credit hours during the Winter and Summer (May included) terms combined (total of 18 credit hours per academic year). For purposes of this policy, the employee, to whom a tuition waiver is granted, must be employed on or before January 15 for the Spring semester or August 15 for the Fall semester. For the May and Summer terms, individuals must be employed on or before May 1 in order to be eligible. For the Winter term, individuals must have been employed on or before December 15 of the preceding calendar year.
2. Individuals who have gained official retirement status with the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) or the Kentucky Employees' Retirement System (KERS) are eligible for tuition waivers under the same provisions as regular full-time employees. Individuals who participate in the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) are recognized as "retirees" and are eligible for benefits

under this policy if age and years of full-time employment equal 60 or greater, with a minimum of ten (10) years of full-time employment at WKU.

3. Currently active part-time employees are eligible to have tuition and mandatory fees remitted for up to three (3) credit hours per semester (Fall and Spring) and up to three (3) total credit hours during the Winter and Summer terms (May included) for a total of nine (9) credit hours per academic year. Part-time staff must have been employed for a period of six (6) months prior to becoming eligible for benefits under this policy. Part-time faculty must have been employed for one (1) full semester (Fall or Spring) in order to be eligible for benefits under this policy. (Note: please contact Academic Affairs for special rules applicable to part-time faculty.) No part-time employee may exercise this benefit by attending or participating in course work during scheduled work hours.
4. In order to participate in the tuition waiver program, the employee must meet general admission requirements and any specific program requirements of the University.
5. Employees must maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.0. If the GPA falls below 2.0, the employee will be ineligible to participate in the tuition waiver program until the GPA improves to the required level. (Note: Employees/students who are classified as "graduate" must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 in order to remain in good standing per WKU Graduate School policy. This Tuition Waiver Program should not to be viewed as conflicting with this Graduate School academic standard.)

B. General

1. The Tuition Waiver Program for Employees includes the full tuition and mandatory fees for courses taken but does not include course fees, student teaching fees and other similar fees.
2. This program applies to all courses offered for credit or audit, but does not include non-credit continuing or community education courses and courses offered through overseas or Study Away programs. WKU On Demand courses are included in this policy.
3. With the approval of the applicable supervisor/department head, an employee may take one course during the employee's normal working hours, without being required to use vacation time or lunch time to make up for time spent in class (except for classes during May, Summer and Winter terms). Although supervisors/department heads are encouraged to approve an employee's request to take a class during regular working hours unless the taking of a class would adversely affect the work unit, it is expressly provided herein that divisions/departments of the University may implement additional and/or more specific provisions relating to taking a course during normal working hours. When a particular course is offered both during regular working hours and outside regular working hours, employees are encouraged to take the course outside of the regular work day unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise.
4. An employee requesting to take a class during his/her regular working hours should submit such a request in writing to his/her department head or immediate supervisor no later than thirty (30) days prior to the first meeting date of the class. It is the employee's responsibility, in conjunction with his/her supervisor, to ensure that productivity in the performance of the employee's duties is not diminished. If as a result of taking a class/course during normal working hours, tasks are insufficiently addressed or productivity is diminished, then the employee, with the supervisor's consent, must be willing to perform those tasks or related

duties in a manner and at a time convenient to the employee and the department.

5. This policy is intended to encourage the educational advancement of Western Kentucky University employees without infringing upon earned leave benefits. If, however, an employee chooses to claim/use vacation time or use the lunch time period to take a course, then he/she may do so without retribution. The satisfactory performance of duties shall be paramount at all times. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure continuous productivity in the performance of his/her duties regardless of the time spent in personal or professional endeavors.

This benefit program is not transferable to a spouse or dependents. Any tax liability incurred through participation in this program is the responsibility of the employee.

C. Eligibility and Procedures for Courses Taken at Another Post-Secondary Public Institution

Employees who meet the general eligibility requirements as stated in Section II above may be eligible for tuition benefits at another post-secondary public institution under certain conditions.

WKU may enter into reciprocal agreements with other institutions wherein tuition benefits are prescribed. The Department of Human Resources shall maintain a listing of official inter-institutional agreements.

1. For WKU employees who are currently enrolled (Spring 2019) in a degree program at another qualifying institution and where no reciprocal agreement is in place, affected employees will be allowed to complete the pending degree under the same provisions as if enrolled at WKU.
2. Effective, July 1, 2019, WKU employees who are newly enrolled students are not eligible for tuition waiver benefits associated with attending another institution, except where WKU has a reciprocal agreement in place with another institution(s) whereby an affected employee may attend at no cost or at a discounted rate.
3. In cases where an employee's desired degree program is not offered by WKU, the employee may be approved for tuition benefits at another institution, but only if the desired program is considered to be related to (value added) the employee's current job responsibilities. The interpretation and application of this policy provision shall be made by the Department of Human Resources in consultation with the affected employee's supervisor/unit head.
4. The benefit provisions of this section are not available to employees classified as part-time or individuals classified as retirees.

D. Eligibility and Specific Procedures Applicable to the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS)

1. Tuition waiver benefits are available to WKU employees who take courses through the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) as specified below:
 - a. Must have been enrolled in an academic program and in good standing as of April 26, 2018

- b. Tuition waiver benefits are limited to three (3) credit hours per semester or term and not to exceed nine (9) per academic year and until program completion.
2. Effective July 1, 2019, tuition waiver benefits are available at a fifty (50) percent discount and through completion of one (1) associate's degree.

III. Procedure

1. Employees who wish to take courses under the provisions of this policy should first seek verbal approval by their supervisor or department head. Once approval is granted, the employee should proceed to register for the desired course(s) and then complete the Employee Tuition Waiver Program e-signature form located at <https://www.wku.edu/hr/benefits/education.php>. A new form is required for each semester during which a course is taken.
2. Tax Reporting and Withholding Requirements
Under U.S. Internal Revenue Code, WKU is permitted to provide educational benefits to employees, but with different limitations and tax implications depending on the level of study. (For tax implications pertaining to "dependent spouses" please refer to HR Policy #60-160).
 - a. All undergraduate course work is allowed to be considered tax-free and excluded from an employee's taxable wages.
 - b. For graduate course work, WKU is allowed to provide tuition waivers to employees on a tax-free basis, up to \$5,250 per calendar year. The value of tuition cost in excess of \$5,250 per calendar year will be added to employee taxable wages.
 - c. The applicable portion of taxable tuition waiver benefits will be added to employee taxable wages in February, May, September, and November for the Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall terms respectively. This increase in taxable wages will result in an increase of tax withholdings and a reduction in net pay. All employees are encouraged to track their education-related benefits for each calendar year and the payroll impact of such.
 - d. Taxable educational benefits provided to eligible retirees beyond their last year of employment with WKU will be reported on IRS Form 1099.

IV. Exclusions

V. Related Policies

See also: University Policy; 4.6601 *Tuition Discount Program for Dependent Children and Spouses*

VI. Reason for Revision

May 15, 2014

Language change for consistency with Graduate School Policy.

February 23, 2017

Language change to clarify graduate student eligibility when GPA is below 3.0.

April 29, 2019

Policy change based on implications of HB 592 by the Kentucky General Assembly during the 2018 legislative session.

Appendices: