



## **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

Policy for: All Employees

Authorized by: Director, Human Resources

### **I. Purpose and Scope**

Employees are eligible to receive a tuition waiver for courses taken at Western Kentucky University, any of the other public universities in Kentucky, or any institution in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. The intent of this policy is to enhance the benefits available to Western Kentucky University employees and to encourage employee development and the pursuit of higher levels of education by all employees.

### **II. Policy**

#### **A. WKU Employees Who Take 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 calendar 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. NOTE: Tuition waived under this policy is limited to six hours per semester/summer term at WKU or any combination of institutions. (Refer to Section II)
2. Regular full-time employees who are on an approved medical or professional leave of absence may continue to be eligible for the tuition waiver for the duration of the approved absence, not to exceed one (1) year. Individuals who have gained official retirement status

with the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System (KTRS) 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 calendar 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 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, but does not include non-credit continuing or community education courses and courses offered through overseas programs. Audit, independent study and bi-term courses are included in this policy.
3. With the approval of the 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. WKU Employees Who Take Courses at Another Public Kentucky University or Any Institution in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System

1. Regular full-time employees are eligible to have tuition and mandatory fees remitted for up to six (6) credit hours per semester (six hours in each of the fall and spring semesters and six hours during the summer which includes May session). NOTE: Tuition waived under this policy is limited to six (6) hours per semester from WKU or any combination of institutions.
2. Regular full-time employees who are on approved leave of absence may continue to be eligible for the tuition waiver for the duration of the approved absence.
3. In order to participate in the tuition waiver program at another institution, a WKU employee must meet the general admission requirements and any specific program requirements of the relevant institution.
4. Under the Tuition Waiver Program for Employees, a participating institution may elect to waive only tuition or both tuition and fees.
5. A participating institution may elect to exclude from this program independent study courses, short courses, workshops, and courses offered by a continuing education program.
6. Employees may not take courses at another institution during their regular working hours unless specific approval is granted by the supervisor and department head.
7. This benefit program is not transferable to a spouse or dependents.
8. Any tax liability incurred through participation in this program is the responsibility of the employee. The employing institution will be responsible for any appropriate tax withholdings and reporting.
9. WKU employees who wish to take courses at another institution should contact the Department of Human Resources for an employment certification and eligibility form. A new form is required each semester. The approved form should be submitted to the institution where the course is to be taken.

### **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 Form. A new form is required for each semester during which a course is taken and should be submitted to the Office of Finance and Administration. The Department of Human Resources and the Office of Billings and Receivables are responsible for verifying eligibility and accounting for benefits received under this program.
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*; University and Council on Postsecondary Education Policy

### **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.

Appendices: