

### III. Tuition Assistance Program

**A.** The City of Lynchburg offers the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) to eligible employees for coursework toward a college degree, professional certification, or developmental training, to support the City’s goal of attracting and retaining a qualified workforce. TAP encourages and enables employees to increase their knowledge and skill as it relates to their work. The City encourages learning and development for employees in order to maintain a workforce that is capable of meeting the changing needs of each department to accomplish its goals.

**B.** Employee Eligibility:

1. Full-time classified employees who have completed one year of continuous satisfactory service with the City may apply for tuition assistance. Part-time classified employees who have completed either two years of continuous service or have worked the equivalent hours of a full-time position (2080 hours) whichever occurs first, may also request tuition assistance.
2. Any employee that receives less than a “C” in associate or undergraduate courses, “B” in graduate courses, or “Pass” in certifications or developmental training will be ineligible for tuition assistance for a period of one semester, unless:
  - a. The Human Resources Department determines that the grade resulted from circumstances beyond the employee’s control.
  - b. The employee received no reimbursement or has reimbursed the City the amount that the City spent on the course.
3. Members of the Tuition Assistance Program Committee are ineligible for tuition assistance in a degree program.

**C.** Course Eligibility:

1. Coursework toward a college degree from an accredited college or university, professional certification, or developmental training, including nontraditional programs such as accelerated courses and accredited correspondence and on-line courses may be eligible for tuition assistance.
2. Courses must be taken on the employee’s own time unless prior supervisory approval is obtained.
3. Payments for graduate courses may be subject to federal tax withholding in accordance with the “Small Business Job Protection Bill of 1996.”
4. Coursework offered through a Continuing Education Program such as a K-12 Public School System or Community Center does not qualify for tuition assistance.

**D. Application Procedures:**

1. To apply, the Tuition Assistance Application and Agreement must be completed by the employee and submitted to his/her supervisor and department director (or designee) for their recommendation. The application and agreement must then be submitted with a copy of the course registration to the Human Resources Department for review.
2. Applications are accepted throughout the fiscal year upon registration and acceptance by the college, university or course provider. Applications must be submitted prior to the start of any class and must include costs for the course(s).
3. Tuition Assistance application forms are available on the City's Intranet under "On-line Forms" or from the Human Resources Department.

**E. Decision Guidelines:**

1. The Human Resources Director or designated staff shall review and approve applications. Guidelines for decisions include, but are not limited to: value of the program to the organization, relevance to job, funding availability, program completion status; length of continuous service; performance level; attendance record; date application was received; number of applications received. Applications will be accepted throughout the fiscal year and will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. The Director of Human Resources shall make final decisions regarding approval.
2. If the application is approved, the Human Resources Department will notify the employee by letter or e-mail.
3. Tuition assistance decisions are not grievable.

**F. Funding:**

1. Funds for the tuition assistance program are determined annually as a part of the budget approval process. Typically, seventy percent (70%) of the appropriated resources will be allocated to degree programs and thirty percent (30%) will be allocated to professional certifications or developmental training.
2. When approved, tuition assistance will pay or reimburse up to seventy-five percent (75%) of the cost of tuition, registration and required laboratory fees provided the payment or reimbursement is at least \$50. The payment or reimbursement will not exceed \$400 per course. Other fees and costs such as books and study materials are not covered.
3. No more than four (4) courses may be approved during one fiscal year.
4. Employees, who are eligible for tuition assistance from other sources, such as Veteran benefits, grants, scholarships, etc., must exhaust those sources before applying for tuition assistance through the City program.

**G. Methods of Payment:**

The City of Lynchburg provides two payment methods for the Tuition Assistance Program:

1. Tuition Direct Payment provides prepayment of approved course costs directly to the educational institution.
2. Tuition Reimbursement provides reimbursement of approved course costs directly to the employee after he/she provides a receipt for payment and evidence of a satisfactory grade for the course as defined above.

**H. Employee Obligation:**

When the employee requests and receives approval for tuition assistance, he/she agrees to:

1. Complete the course(s) approved.
2. Provide the City with proof of a satisfactory grade for each course approved.
3. Provide original receipts for approved costs.
4. Continue to work for the City for one year after completing the course(s).
5. Authorize the City to recover through payroll deduction, or some other means, all or part of the tuition assistance monies expended if any of the following conditions exist:
  - a. The employee does not provide the City, within 30 working days after completing the course, evidence that he/she received a grade of a “C” or above in associate or undergraduate courses, “B” or above in graduate courses or “Pass” in certifications or developmental training programs.
  - b. The employee resigns, retires or is dismissed for cause, before fulfilling the obligations of the Tuition Assistance Agreement.
  - c. The employee drops an approved course for which payment has been made, regardless of reason, without prior approval from the Human Resources Department.
  - d. The employee receives duplicate payment for the same course from any other source (e.g., scholarships, Pell grants, Veterans’ educational payments, etc.).