**Professional Development and UPPS No. 04.04.35
Educational Opportunities Issue No. 4**

**Revised: 11/05/2020**
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**Next Review: 10/01/2023 (E5Y)**
**Sr. Reviewer: Assistant Vice President for Human Resources**

1. **POLICY STATEMENTS**
	1. This document establishes the policies and procedures for four Texas State University-sponsored opportunity programs for faculty and staff education and training.

a. academic professional development activities;

b. non-academic professional development activities;

\*c. the Staff Educational Development Leave Program; and

d. university support for General Education Development (GED) certification attainment.

01.02 Texas State is committed to supporting and providing professional training and development opportunities under these programs to update the skills and knowledge of its faculty and staff to better prepare them to meet the teaching and workplace challenges of the future.

01.03 The purpose of providing professional training and development opportunities and supporting the achievement of educational goals is to:

a. serve as both recruitment and retention tools to prospective and current staff and faculty;

b. create training opportunities that enhance performance, foster engagement, strengthen leadership, and nurture growth at Texas State;

c. carry out the university's commitment to increase and keep current the skills of the university workforce;

d. provide additional academic opportunities for employees that will foster their professional and personal growth;

e. develop a pool of skilled applicants for potential promotion; and

f. better prepare employees for current and future workplace environments and job requirements.

01.04 The provisions of this policy meet the requirements of the [State Employees Training Act of 1969](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/GV/htm/GV.656.htm), as amended.

**02. DEFINITIONS**

02.01 Academic Professional Development Activities – college or university credit courses taken at Texas State or other accredited institution of higher education.

02.02 Non-Academic Professional Development Activities – professional development activities that are not college or university credit courses.

\*02.03 Staff Educational Development Leave Program – special program for staff employees that allows up to 20 hours per week of release time for college or university credit courses taken at Texas State or other accredited institution of higher education.

02.04 General Educational Development (GED) – a program for staff employees that supports the registration, assessment, and completion of the GED.

**03. PROCEDURES FOR ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

03.01 Fees and Designated Tuition Waiver for Texas State Credit Courses

a. Texas State will waive certain fees, defined below, and charge $0 for designated tuition for faculty and staff employees provided:

1) the employee is employed full-time in a benefits-eligible position at the university by the twelfth-class day for long semesters and fourth-class day for summer; and

2) remains in good academic standing by meeting the Texas State grade point average (GPA) qualifications of satisfactory academic progress (must have a Texas State GPA of 2.0 for undergraduates and 3.0 for graduates) for continued awards, per [Texas Education Code 54.2001](https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.54.htm).

b. Courses provided by the Office of Distance Education and Learning, which include Education Abroad, Correspondence, Texas State Intensive English (TSIE), and Continuing Education courses are not eligible to receive fee waivers described below.

c. Texas State employees are responsible for paying statutory tuition, graduate increment, McCoy Program fees, and any other fees not specified below.

d. Fee waivers are only applicable to courses taken at Texas State. These fees include:

1) ID Service fee;

2) International education fee;

3) Recreational sports fee;

4) Computer service fee;

5) LBJ Student Center fee;

6) Environmental service fee;

7) Bus fee;

8) Medical service fee;

9) Athletics fee;

10) Designated tuition fee

11) Student service fee;

12) Library fee;

13) Off-campus course fee;

14) Electronic course fee; and

15) Student publication fee.

 03.02 Release Time for Enrollment in College or University Credit Courses

Release time may be granted for Texas State eligible employees to attend Texas State or other accredited institutions of higher education, college, or university credit courses. Release time is allowed only for courses with meeting times during an employee’s normally assigned working hours. Self-paced, online, distance learning, night, and other classes at other accredited institutions that do not have regular meeting times during the employee’s normally assigned working hours are not eligible for release time.

a. The university may release full-time, benefits-eligible staff to take coursework during regular work hours if the employee’s department head determines that the release will not materially affect department operations and approves the release time. Such approval will be documented on the [Academic Release and Tuition Support](https://www.hr.txstate.edu/odc/employee-education/academic-release-tuition-support.html) form. The form must be submitted to Human Resources (HR) by the twelfth-class day for the fall or spring semesters and the fourth-class day for the summer term, as appropriate. If the department head denies a request, they will provide the staff member with written reasons for the denial.

 b. Under this provision, the department may release a full-time, benefits-eligible staff member for up to three hours per week to attend class.

c. The employee must make up any time taken in excess of the allotted release time limits, including travel time to and from the classroom, by working additional hours in the same week or taking leave from an appropriate leave category. In addition, the supervisor may require the employee to make up any class release time taken.

d. The university considers this time away from work during regular working hours to attend academic professional development activities as training time if the activities are:

 1) directly related to the employee’s current or prospective job duties in the department; or

2) part of a formal degree program for a bachelor’s or graduate degree.

The employee should record this time as class release time on the employee’s timesheet and not as personal leave.

03.03 Other Tuition and Fees

Department funds may be used to pay tuition and fees not covered by the policy (but not travel costs) for college or university credit courses at Texas State or other accredited institutions of higher education if all the following criteria are met:

a. the course relates directly to the employee’s current or prospective job
 duties in the department;

b. the employee’s department head or other appropriate approval authority approves both the enrollment and the payment as documented with department account information on the [Academic Release and Tuition Support](https://www.hr.txstate.edu/odc/employee-education/academic-release-tuition-support.html) form. The employee’s tuition and fees will then be charged to the designated department. This form must be submitted to HR by the twelfth-class day for the fall or spring semesters and the fourth-class day for the summer term; and

c. the employee remains in good academic standing by meeting the Texas State GPA qualification of satisfactory academic progress for continued awards, per [Texas Education Code 54.2001](https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.54.htm). For courses taken at another institution, a grade of D or higher is required.

\*03.04Academic Release and Tuition Support Form

All faculty and staff employees taking academic courses at Texas State or other accredited institutions of higher education under the fee or designated tuition waiver, release time, or other tuition and fees payment provisions of this policy must complete and submit the [Academic Release and Tuition Support form](https://www.hr.txstate.edu/odc/employee-education/academic-release-tuition-support.html). Once submitted by the employee, the form will then route to their supervisor and department head for approval. Approved forms will also be forwarded to HR and Student Business Services if employees opt-out of the fee waiver.

a. The completed [Academic Release and Tuition Support form](https://www.hr.txstate.edu/odc/employee-education/academic-release-tuition-support.html) must be received by HR by the twelfth-class day of the fall or spring semester or the fourth-class day of the summer term.

b. Student Business Services will identify eligible employees and apply the waiver to the employees’ student account after grades have posted for the previous semester.

Employees should monitor their Texas State account for the applied waiver prior to the established due dates and monitor their Texas State email for any messages that may require action to be taken.

03.05 Opt-Out Requests – If employees wish to opt-out of the fee and designated tuition waivers, they must either:

a. notify Student Business Services via email request at tuiassist@txstate.edu; or

b. select opt-out on the [Academic Release and Tuition Support form](https://www.hr.txstate.edu/odc/employee-education/academic-release-tuition-support.html) by the twelfth-class day of the fall or spring semester or the fourth-class day of the summer term. Student Business Services will notify all applicable parties if an employee chooses to opt-out of the waiver.

**\*04. PROCEDURES FOR NON-ACADEMIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

04.01 Non-academic professional development activities include the enrollment and participation in courses that are not for college or university credit. Department funds may be used to pay registration and other similar fees, as well as appropriate travel costs, if the activity relates to the employee’s current or prospective job duties in the department and the employee’s department head approves both the enrollment in the activity and the payment.

a. The university considers time away from work during regular work hours to attend non-academic professional development activities that are directly related to employee’s current or prospective job duties as training time. Supervisors are encouraged to allow staff employees the opportunity to enroll in non-academic professional development activities that are related to the employee’s current or prospective job duties. For such activities, time away from the office should be recorded as regular work time.

b. The university supports the enrollment of staff and faculty employees in non-academic training and professional development opportunities offered on campus by Organizational Development & Communications, IT Assistance Center, and Faculty Development, as well as other campus resource areas. The supervisor has final authority to grant time for employees to attend such workshops and courses, dependent on adequate duty coverage.

c. Faculty members may also enroll in non-academic professional development courses at Texas State or elsewhere for personal development provided that attendance does not interfere with the completion of assigned duties.

d. Supervisors are reminded that planning for annual training and development opportunities should be incorporated into an employee’s annual performance plan.

**05. PROCEDURES FOR STAFF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAVE PROGRAM**

\*05.01 The Staff Educational Development Leave Program allows a maximum of seven staff members selected as undergraduate participants to earn from nine up to a maximum of 12 credit hours per fall or spring semester, and from six up to a maximum of nine credit hours for graduate participants. In addition, the staff members’ work hours will be adjusted accordingly, but to no less than 20 hours per week.

Participants will be compensated at their full-time pay rate during their enrollment in the program. Participants will arrange their work schedules with their respective supervisor.

\*05.02 Eligibility Criteria for the Staff Educational Development Leave Program

Full-time, benefits-eligible staff employees, who are and who have been employed at the university at least one year, are eligible to participate in this program.

05.03 Program Requirements

a. Each undergraduate participant is expected to enroll for a minimum of nine with a maximum of 12 credit hours per fall or spring semester. Graduate student participants are expected to enroll for a minimum of six with a maximum of nine credit hours per fall or spring semester.

b. Participants who drop below the approved minimum required semester credit hours prior to the end of the semester will be identified by Organizational Development & Communications and reported to the appropriate divisional vice president. The corresponding vice president will determine eligibility to continue in the program, including adjustment of workload and waiver of tuition and fees not covered by Section 03.01.

c. If employees take nine undergraduate credit hours or six graduate credit hours, their work hours may be reduced by 10 hours per week. If enrollment is for 10 to 11 undergraduate credit hours or seven to eight graduate credit hours, their work hours may be reduced by 15 hours per week. If enrollment is for 12 undergraduate credit hours or nine graduate credit hours, their work hours may be reduced by 20 hours per week.

NOTE: Employees are authorized to take the maximum reduction of work hours indicated above. However, if employees feel that they will not require the entire allocation, this reduction could be negotiated with their supervisor. Any such reduction must be initiated by the employees and not the supervisor.

d. Participants

One participant per division will be chosen within the university to participate each semester. If a divisional vice president makes no selection for a particular semester, that appointment may be filled by a divisional vice president with more than one qualified applicant.

Participants may be selected for one semester or two consecutive semesters, with a maximum of four semesters during their employment
with Texas State.

1) For Courses Taken at Texas State – The university will waive the tuition and fees for up to 12 credit hours for undergraduate participants and up to nine credit hours for graduate participants for employees as long as they remain in good academic standing by meeting the Texas State GPA qualifications of satisfactory academic progress for continued awards, per [Texas Education Code 54.2001](https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.54.htm). All adjustments to employee student accounts will be applied after grades have posted for the previous term. Participants who enroll in additional courses beyond the 12 credit hours for undergraduate and nine credit hours for graduate will be responsible to pay the statutory tuition, graduate increment, McCoy Program fees, and any other fees not specified in Section 03.01 for the additional hours.

2) For Courses Taken at Other Accredited Institutions of Higher Education – Participants seeking course offerings not provided by Texas State will have those requests reviewed on a case-by-case basis by their respective divisional vice president who will make the final determination.

(a) For courses taken at other accredited institutions of higher education, the participant must remain in good academic standing by meeting an equivalent GPA to the Texas State GPA qualifications of satisfactory academic progress for continues awards, per [Texas Education Code 54.2001](https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/ED/htm/ED.54.htm).

\*(b)The university will reimburse the employee the cost of tuition and fees equal to the cost of enrolling in courses at Texas State. Employees will be required to provide receipts from other institutions for reimbursement. The university has 30 business days to process the reimbursement.

\*(c)Participants pursuing a post-master’s degree at another institution will arrange their schedules with their respective supervisor. The university will reimburse the cost of tuition and fees equal to the cost of enrolling in a graduate program at Texas State. The university has 30 business days to process the reimbursement.

e. All courses are subject to approval by the divisional vice president. Changes in courses requested on the original application should be submitted through channels to the appropriate divisional vice president.

05.04 Selection and Notification

a. Applicants may seek staff educational development leave to satisfy the requirements for a graduate or undergraduate degree.

b. Individuals will be selected from a pool of applicants within their respective division.

c. Each divisional vice president will solicit applications from their respective division in February for participation during the following fall semester and in August for the following spring semester.

d. Each prospective participant will complete an [Application for Staff Educational Development Leave](https://www.hr.txstate.edu/odc/employee-education/staff-ed-development-leave) and submit it to the appropriate department head.

e. The department head will provide comments and forward them through administrative channels to the appropriate divisional vice president by March 1 for the fall semester and September 1 for the spring semester.

f. The divisional vice president will review the applications and determine if any of the applicants are to be selected. Consideration will be given to the applicant's current academic standing, previous academic achievements, length of service to Texas State, past and current job performance, and potential to succeed in the courses requested. Each divisional vice president will notify the selected applicant, as well as their department head, of their selection prior to registration for the upcoming semester.

g. The divisional vice president will submit the name of the division's participant to Organizational Development & Communications by June 15 for the fall semester and October 15 for spring semester.

h. Appropriate paperwork will be sent by Organizational Development & Communications to the vice president for Finance and Support Services for account signature and then forwarded to Student Business Services for processing.

i. Once the paperwork is approved, Organizational Development & Communications will notify Financial Aid and Scholarships of the students selected to receive the reimbursement. The notification will allow Financial Aid and Scholarships to adjust the potential recipient’s federal and other financial aid as required by applicable regulation.

j. Books and any costs other than tuition and fees are not covered under this program.

k. Participants must sign the [Application for Staff Educational Development Leave form](https://www.hr.txstate.edu/odc/employee-education/staff-ed-development-leave) prior to beginning classes. By signing this form, the participant enters into a contractual agreement to remain at Texas State for 12 months after completing the last approved staff educational development leave.

1) Selected applicants who are unable to participate in the semester for which they are approved may seek re-admittance to the program for another semester without penalty. An alternate may be selected by the divisional vice president for a semester when a selected applicant from their division is unable to participate.

2) Participants terminating employment prior to completing 12 months will be required to reimburse salary, tuition, and fees according to a reasonable reimbursement schedule. If the account should go to an agency for collection, any associated agency fees, which may be up to an additional 30 percent, will be charged to the terminating employee as well. Exceptions due to unusual circumstances will be considered by the appropriate divisional vice president.

05.05 Support Services

a. Career Services will provide assessment of career planning needs at the request of interested participants.

b. Upon request, Organizational Development & Communications will provide additional information about program expectations and requirements to participants and their supervisors.

c. Organizational Development & Communications will review the academic standing of each participant to determine eligibility and the need for additional academic resources or support services. Organizational Development & Communications will verify semester credit hours completed and GPA attained by participants each semester and report to the appropriate divisional vice president.

**06. PROCEDURES FOR UNIVERSITY SUPPORT FOR GENERAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT (GED) CERTIFICATION ATTAINMENT**

06.01 Texas State encourages access to the education and job training necessary for career advancement and lifelong learning. Therefore, attainment of a GED certificate by any full-time, benefits-eligible employee is supported through the GED Attainment Program. The GED certificate is earned after passing four subtests:

1. Language Arts—Reading;
2. Mathematics;
3. Science; and
4. Social Studies.

06.02 Detailed information about registration, assessment, and test completion is outlined at [University Support of GED Attainment](https://www.hr.txstate.edu/odc/employee-education/ged-reimbursement-process.html).

06.03 With supervisory approval, employees may be granted release time from work to attend registration and assessment if those time periods are during their regular work hours.

06.04 Employees will be reimbursed the cost of the test fee upon successful completion of each subtest. Upon completion of all four subtests, employees will receive a one-time payment of $500 to help cover costs involved in travel for study sessions as well as testing.

**07. TAX LIABILITY**

07.01Texas State must comply with Internal Review Services (IRS) Guidelines for Educational Assistance Benefits, defined in [IRS Publication 970](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p970.pdf). If Texas State reimburses more than $5,250 per employee in student educational assistance benefits during a calendar year, participants must pay tax on the amount over $5,250. This amount will be included in the employee wages (Form W-2, box 1).

**08. REVIEWERS OF THIS UPPS**

08.01 Reviewers of this UPPS include the following:

Position Date

 Assistant Vice President for Human October 1 E5Y
Resources

 Treasurer October 1 E5Y

 Chair, Staff Council October 1 E5Y

Chair, Faculty Senate October 1 E5Y

**09. CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

This UPPS has been approved by the following individuals in their official capacities and represents Texas State policy and procedure from the date of this document until superseded.

Assistant Vice President for Human Resources; senior reviewer of this UPPS

Vice President for Finance and Support Services

President