University of Pittsburgh | School of Law

TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

A Guide to Requesting Academic Financial Assistance From Your Employer

A survey of U.S.-based companies revealed that 48% of organizations offer tuition assistance to employees.[1] Is your employer one of them? Whether your company offers tuition reimbursement benefits or not, speaking to your management team about helping you finance your degree can be a bit nerve-wracking. Follow the guidelines below to ensure you're prepared for this important conversation.

1. Understand Your Benefits

Check your employee handbook, employee benefits portal, or connect with an HR representative to find out if your organization has an established program or history of providing tuition reimbursement. If educational support is available, review the agreement details, including the payment protocol. Some organizations may require you to pay upfront and reimburse you later, while others pay the academic institution directly. If no program exists, you can make a proposal to your employer to fund your studies in whole or in part. Take a look at any other types of employee assistance your employer may offer, making note of the applicable situations and eligible employees; that information will help you build a persuasive funding proposal.

Common conditions for employer education assistance include:

- **Satisfactorily completing coursework:** You may need to earn a minimum grade in each of your courses to be eligible for assistance or reimbursement
- **Tenure with the company:** Your company might require that you be employed for a certain amount of time before you can use an education assistance benefit
- **A commitment to stay with the company:** You may need to stay on at the company for one to two years after the last support payment
- **Pursuing an applicable course of study:** Your company may only pay for courses relevant to the business or your role

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2. Call on Your Network

Ask around at your workplace to find out if any of your co-workers have been successful in applying for employer assistance with financing their education and find out how they went about the process. You can also reach out to connections you know at other organizations to find out how their management handles education financing.

Discuss the following topics with your contacts:

- What arguments did they feel were most convincing?
- Did they make any missteps during the conversation?
- What would they have done differently?
- Do they have any advice about how your boss might respond on the topic?
- Is there an ideal approach to get support for your request?

1. Retrieved on May 2, 2024, from shrm.org/topics-tools/research/employee-benefits-survey

3. Know Your Program Details

Ahead of the conversation with your employer, ensure you have complete information about the program you're interested in and answers to all the questions you anticipate receiving from your management team. How will earning your Master of Studies in Law or your law certificate improve your skills and make you a better employee? Being prepared with this information will not only help ease any concerns your employer may have but also will present you in the best possible light.

You should have all of the essential information about the graduate school/program to which you are applying:

- What school or schools are you applying to?
- Are you applying to a full-time or part-time program?
- Is it online, on campus or a hybrid program?
- What is the tuition for the program?
- How long do you expect it will take you to complete the degree?
- How much time per week do you expect to spend on coursework?

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4. Emphasize How You Will Grow—And What That Means for the Organization

While your employer may believe in the value of continuing education and understand your desire to grow as a professional, they will still want to hear how they will benefit from offering you graduate school tuition reimbursement. You should be ready to clearly list how your program will contribute to your professional development, and more importantly, how it will make you even more valuable to the organization. Speak with confidence and pull together a presentation or handout if you think it would help make your case.

Be ready to discuss how you will be able to:

- Understand core legal concepts and how to read legislation and regulations
- Make critical decisions with clarity and foresight, backed by legal know-how
- Advocate for ethical practices and sound standards—compliance or otherwise—within your organization
- Lead conversations on legal issues, offer informed opinions, and make decisions from a solid legal foundation
- Communicate effectively with legal counsel, colleagues, and peers on legal issues

Whatever you want to get out of your law program, provide specific examples of projects and organizational goals at work that will benefit from your growth in the degree or certificate program.

Practice Makes Perfect

Once you have all your information together, practice your pitch and even do a trial run with a co-worker or other trusted professional who can come up with questions that your management team might ask. If you think you're missing any information about the Online Master of Studies in Law program or your chosen Online Graduate Certificate program, schedule a call with an admissions outreach advisor. **Good luck with your presentation!**

Schedule a Call **Start Your Application**