

Further Education Policy

1. Introduction and policy statement

The ICO wishes to encourage staff to further their education by undertaking courses which lead to a recognised educational or professional qualification. The ICO may provide financial or other support this will be dependant on sufficient budget and be reviewed against set criteria.

All staff are eligible to make an application for assistance under our Further Education Policy. We will ensure that all applications are consistently and fairly considered in line with our Equal Opportunities Policy using the criteria set out below. Priority will be given to further education requests which meet the criteria in section A and B.

Each application will be reviewed against the following criteria:

A. If the course is an express requirement or directly related to your current job role.

If approved the ICO will provide the following assistance:

- 100% of registration fees, course fees, professional body subscription fees and examination costs;
- time off to attend examinations;
- half day revision leave for each exam
- time off to attend course if day release (pro rated for part-time staff);
- up to £75.00 contribution towards purchase of books and relevant library services;
- reasonable travel expenses in line with the ICO expenses claim guide, subject to approval from HR Director;
- up to three days leave per year to attend mandatory residentials and educational visits (Monday to Friday) at the standard full time working day (pro rated for part-time staff). A letter of confirmation from the FE establishment will be required; and
- reasonable expenses to attend mandatory residential elements of the course, subject to approval from HR Director.

B. The course adds value to the ICO, departmental or individual objectives.

If approved the ICO will provide the following assistance:

- 80% of registration fees, course fees and examination costs;
- 80% of professional body subscriptions fees unless required for the job role where it will be 100%;
- time off to attend exams;

- half day revision leave for each exam;
- up to five days study leave per year dependant on the course (pro rated for part-time staff);
- up to £75.00 contribution towards purchase of books and relevant library services; and
- reasonable travel expenses in line with the ICO expenses claim guide, subject to approval from HR Director.

C. The course is required for future career development and related to the work of the ICO.

If approved the ICO will provide the following assistance:

- 80% of registration fees, course fees and examination costs;
- 80% of professional body subscriptions fees unless required for the job role where it will be 100%;
- time off to attend exams;
- half day revision leave for each exam;
- up to five days study leave per year dependant on the course (pro rated for part-time staff);
- up to £75.00 contribution towards purchase of books and relevant library services; and
- reasonable travel expenses in line with the ICO expenses claim guide, subject to approval from HR Director.

D. The course is for required for future development but is not related to the work of the ICO.

If approved the ICO will provide the following assistance:

- time off to attend exams up to a maximum of two days per year (pro-rated for part-time staff) subject to approval from departmental manager.

Staff are required to make a business case for all courses over £500 stating:

- how the course relates to your current or future job role;
- the organisational, departmental and individual benefits;
- if the course leads to a recognised educational or professional qualification, certificate or diploma; and
- estimate of the all costs, including expenses, to complete the total course.

All applications will need to have a supporting statement from your Department Head.

2. Conduct and capability

To be eligible to apply for assistance your record of attendance, efficiency and conduct must be satisfactory. This will be evidenced through your probationary and development review completed by your line manager.

3. Gaining approval for assistance

Applications for assistance should be submitted by the end June and the end December of each year.

These are made by completing form FE1 available on ICON and submitted to Learning and Development in the first instance.

Human Resources will notify staff in writing as to whether or not their request for assistance has been approved. Where approval is given the written notification will confirm details of the assistance which will be provided by the ICO.

When HR notify that assistance has been approved you will also be asked to sign and return an Agreement for re-payment of training fees. (Appendix A).

Due to funding restrictions a separate application should be submitted for each year of study. Wherever possible, priority will be given to applications where part of the course has already been successfully completed in the previous year.

You must ensure that your request has been approved by the HR Director before you enrol on your course.

4. Overall budget

Further Education expenditure is funded from the Learning and Development budget, which is held by the Human Resources Director. A set budget will be made available for further education courses in each financial year.

5. Claiming for further education expenses

Fees

There are three options which can be selected to pay for course fees:

- 5.1. Staff pay the full cost of fees personally and claims for reimbursement of the ICO's contribution. Where this method is used receipts must be submitted with form FE2 available on ICON.
- 5.2. Staff can request that a letter is sent to the confirming that the ICO is supporting the course authorising them to invoice the ICO for their proportion of the fees.

This letter can then be submitted at enrolment. The individual will be responsible for paying their proportion of the fees only, if applicable.

- 5.3. Staff can request that the ICO pays the total fees to educational establishment and then pay back their proportion of the fees in three equal monthly instalments to the ICO. Staff will be required to sign an agreement stating amount and dates payable and authorise salary deductions before this option can be taken up.

Books and learning materials

Claims for books/learning materials which are listed as essential by the educational establishment, up to a maximum of £75 per course, should be made using the FE3 form.

Travelling expenses

Travelling expenses at public transport rate should be claimed by completing the normal travelling and subsistence claim form which is available on ICON.

6. Review of progress

Your line manager will hold a meeting with you every six months to review progress and the effectiveness of learning to date. It is your responsibility to attend the course regularly, complete work and submit assignments within agreed timescales.

Continued support for your course will be dependant on satisfactory progress.

Funding for the re-sitting of examinations will be at the discretion of the Human Resources Director.

7. Repayment of fees

If you choose to leave the course before completion and are still employed by the ICO you will be liable to pay back 100% of the fees paid by the ICO.

If you leave the employment of the ICO whilst still undertaking your course you will be liable to pay back 100% of total fees paid by the ICO.

If you leave the employment of the ICO within one year of completing your course you will be liable to pay back 75% of the total fees paid by the ICO.

If you leave the employment of the ICO within two years of completing your course you will be liable to pay back 50% of the total fees paid by the ICO.

Agreement for the re-payment of Further Education fees

In the event that you discontinue any part of the course for which we have paid the fee, either because:

- a) you opt not to continue;
- b) due to unsatisfactory progress or attendance you are not allowed to continue; or
- c) you leave the employment of the ICO.

We will require you to refund a proportion of the fee paid by the ICO.

- If you choose to leave the course before completion you will be liable to pay back 100% of the fees paid by the ICO.
- If you leave the employment of the ICO whilst still undertaking your course then you will be liable to pay back 100% of total fees paid by the ICO.
- If you leave the employment of the ICO within one year of completing your course then you will be liable to pay back 75% of the total fees paid by the ICO.
- If you leave the employment of the ICO within two years of completing your course then you will be liable to pay back 50% of the total fees paid by the ICO.

Should you be unable to complete the course because of illness or some other factor over which you have no control, this the refund provision would not apply.

I understand and agree the terms and conditions as set out above in regards to the re-payment of further education fees.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Name:

Department:

Course:

Establishment: