

## **DLA Enterprise Tuition Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

1. What is tuition assistance?

- Tuition assistance encourages employees to actively pursue self-development by providing financial support for continued education courses at the undergraduate or graduate level. Subject to the availability of funds, tuition assistance is available for approved, mission-related courses taken through an accredited college or university.

2. What is DLA's policy on tuition assistance?

- The DLA Enterprise Tuition Assistance Program took effect on November 14, 2006. The implementing memorandum, policy, and training agreement may be read at:

<http://www.hr.dla.mil/downloads/laborrelations/TAPmemo.pdf>

3. Why do we need an Enterprise-wide policy?

- Prior to consolidating tuition assistance into a single DLA program, many Field Activities and Headquarters elements had their own separate procedures and funding ceilings. By implementing Enterprise-wide policy, we are better able to ensure consistency for all DLA employees.

4. What courses are considered to be mission related?

- A mission-related course is one that improves the individual's job and organizational performance and assists in achieving the Agency's mission and performance goals.

5. How do I know if a college or university is accredited?

- Properly accredited institutions are those accredited by a United States Department of Education sanctioned accrediting agency. A list of those accrediting agencies may be found at

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html?src=qc>.

6. What does "subject to availability of funds" mean?

- Most tuition assistance is categorized as Priority 3 training because it is "Useful" for career broadening rather than "Essential" or "Needed" (Priorities 1 and 2 respectively). In evaluating the best investment for training dollars, mission considerations may require that funds be dedicated to training with the highest priority.

7. Who is eligible to receive tuition assistance?

- Permanent, full-time civilian employees of DLA who have successfully completed an initial one year probationary/trial period in Federal civilian service are eligible. Additionally, employees must be performing at the fully successful level or better. As an exception to this policy, employees appointed under the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) may be granted tuition assistance without the initial one year probationary/trail period in Federal civilian service but the SCEP has to comply with all other components of the DLA Tuition Assistance Program policy.

8. Does this mean that new employees are not eligible for tuition assistance during their first year of employment?

- Yes, unless they previously served at least one year of a trial or probationary period in Federal civilian service with a Federal agency.

9. Must my tuition assistance requests be listed on my LMS Learning Plan or Individual Development Plan (IDP)?

- Generally speaking, yes. Un-programmed or out-of-cycle requests may be approved on a case-by-case basis, depending upon availability of funds.

10. May I take college courses funded through the DLA Tuition Assistance Program during duty time?

- No. DLA Tuition Assistance Program funded courses must be taken during non-duty hours.

11. What expenses does the tuition assistance program cover?

- Only tuition is covered. No laboratory fees, administrative fees, or general fees (i.e. registration fees, technology fees, student-activity fees, etc.) are paid. Additionally, textbooks, supplies, computers and travel/transportation costs are the personal responsibility of the employee.

12. What level of funding is available under the tuition assistance program?

- There is an annual cumulative limit of \$4,700 for undergraduate courses and \$7,000 for graduate courses. This limit is administered on a fiscal-year basis and contingent on the availability of funds. Other than the annual dollar limit, there is no limit on the number of courses one may take during the fiscal year.

13. What if I switch from undergraduate courses to graduate courses during a fiscal year?

- In that event, your annual limit will be increased to \$7,000, less any monies you had used previously during the fiscal year.

14. May I use tuition assistance to take postgraduate or doctoral courses?

- Funding for postgraduate/doctoral courses is not authorized; however, if a compelling mission requirement is identified, a waiver may be granted. Waiver requests must be endorsed by all the employee's supervisors to include the head of the organization (Field Activity Commander or Headquarters Staff Director) and approved by the J-1 director prior to submission of the course's SF182 through LMS.

15. May I receive tuition assistance if I am also receiving a scholarship, grant, or veteran's assistance?

- Employees may not receive dual compensation. Grants, scholarships, veteran's benefits, or other aid may be accepted only to the extent that expenses are not covered by payments under the DLA tuition assistance program. For example, if an employee is receiving an educational grant from his/her school, the grant may be used for books and fees but not for tuition expenses if they have already been funded by DLA. Conversely, upon final approval, tuition assistance may be used to cover any portion of tuition costs that are not covered by another source of funding.

16. May I use tuition assistance to work toward a degree?

- The tuition assistance program is not to be used for the sole purpose of obtaining an academic degree. The purpose is to improve individual and organizational performance in support of the DLA mission. If, in the process of taking courses under the tuition assistance program, an employee earns a degree, then that would be an incidental byproduct.

17. How do I apply for tuition assistance?

- You must submit a request according to the guidelines listed in the DLA Tuition Assistance Program Job Aid located at

<http://www.hr.dla.mil/downloads/lms/LMSTuitionAssistanceProgramJobAid.ppt>

18. What is needed before I can start attending class?

- A course is fully approved only after all four levels of approval, to include the delegated DTC Training Officer, has signed your request. DLA is not responsible for courses taken without prior signed approval at all four levels of approval. Should this occur, the employee is liable for the cost of the course. If you have not received notification of approval, check the status in LMS and your organization's point of contact before buying books or attending class.

19. How is school registration handled?

- Employees are responsible for applying to/registering with the institution of their choice. Note: If an employee/student registers for a course prior to receiving the final approval memorandum and the Memorandum for Vendor Payment from DTC the employee is committing their personal funds. The Memorandum for Vendor Payment, issued only after all four levels of approval is granted, is the only document that commits DLA funds for tuition payment.

20. May I pay for a course and receive reimbursement?

- No provisions are made for reimbursement. The Memorandum for Vendor Payment notifies you and the school that the school is to send an invoice directly to DTC. When DTC receives the invoice for the fully approved course from the school DTC will make the payment directly to the school.

21. What do I do if I have an approved course, but I want to take another course in its place?

- You must notify your organization's DTC contact immediately with any changes, and then submit a request for the new course.

22. What constitutes successful completion of a course?

- Employee must receive a grade of C or better.

23. Would a C- meet that requirement?

- Yes.

24. What if I receive less than a C or have to withdraw from a course?

- In that event, you are responsible for repaying the government for any funds that were expended on your behalf. You will have the choice of paying the debt in one payment or in installments (through payroll deduction). You also have the option of retaking the course at your personal expense and, if you successfully complete the course, the obligation will be met. If you retake the course at personal expense it must be completed within one year of the completion of the original course that DLA paid in order to meet the obligation. Your organization's DTC contact can help you with information on repayment procedures.

25. Will indebtedness affect my participation in the tuition assistance program?

- Yes; however, you may be eligible to participate in tuition assistance if you have repaid the indebtedness or have taken steps to do so (i.e., executed a payroll-deduction agreement).

26. At one time my activity had a "fellowship" program. Every year, one or more employees were selected to attend college full time. How does the Enterprise policy affect that program?

- All fellowship programs initiated by individual activities and commands have been discontinued throughout DLA.

27. Must I submit a grade as proof of course completion?

- Yes. Grades must be submitted to DTC not later than 30 days after the completion of a course or future requests may not be approved. Submit your grades by fax or e-mail to your organization's point of contact.

28. Does my attendance at a government-funded course entail any service obligation?

- Yes. There is a 3-month continued service obligation for every undergraduate course taken and a 6-month obligation for every graduate course taken. These obligations begin on the first day after a course ends. Employees who leave Federal service voluntarily or are involuntarily separated for cause during a continued service period must reimburse the government on a prorated basis for any monies expended on their behalf. This requirement does not apply in the case of retirement or involuntary separation. If in the best interest of the agency/activity/directorate, the employee's Field Activity Commander or Headquarters Staff Director has the prerogative to waive the requirement to repay.

29. How does the continued service agreement work in the case of someone taking consecutive courses?

- As mentioned in the previous question, these agreements take effect on the first day after a course ends. When courses are taken consecutively, the obligation periods may overlap, but the period of obligation is always 3 or 6 months from the completion date.

30. What is the obligation if multiple courses are taken in the same term?

- The obligation period for any given course begins the first day following the course completion, no matter how many courses are taken or when they end. As a result, when multiple courses are taken, the obligations run concurrently so long as the employee remains in a duty status.

31. Who do I contact if I have additional questions?

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