

STUDY SUPPORT POLICY

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Responsible Officer:	Coordinator Organisation Development
Owner:	People and Culture
Responsible Director:	Corporate Performance
Relevant Legislation/Authority:	Greater Bendigo City Council Enterprise Agreement 2017
DOCSETID:	2659308

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 1.1 encourage and support employees to undertake further education to enhance their skills and effectiveness in their current role;
- 1.2 prepare employees for future career opportunities with the City; and
- 1.3 provide guidance to employees when applying for Study Support.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The City values and actively encourages employee learning and development and is committed to enhancing the organisation's performance and reputation through the development of a highly skilled workforce.
- 2.2 The City recognises that developing its employees is integral to:
 - 2.2.1 promoting positive organisational culture;
 - 2.2.2 adhering to the City's organisational values and expected behaviours;
 - 2.2.3 achieving the City's vision;

- 2.2.4 enhancing business performance; and
- 2.2.5 the successful delivery of the *Greater Bendigo Community Plan*.

3. SCOPE

The policy applies to all ongoing and temporary full time or part time employees, and contracted senior officers (subject to eligibility).

Study Support will be considered for study or training with an accredited education provider which includes:

- Universities
- TAFE Institutes*
- Registered Training Organisation*
- Adult Community Education Organisations*

**This does not include traineeships*

4. DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

City means the Greater Bendigo City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the *Local Government Act 1989* (Vic).

Minimum Employment Period means the first 6 months of employment (also known as a probationary period) which is for both parties to decide whether the employee is suited to the position and/or employer's business.

Relevant Course means a course that:

- a) is directly related to an employee's current role;
- b) is related to another role that exists within the City; or
- c) will prepare the employee for future career opportunities within the City.

Study Support means study leave and/or financial assistance

Temporary Employment means employment on either a full or part time basis under a Temporary Employment Agreement for a specified period and specified reason.

5. PRINCIPLES

- 5.1 Employees receive appropriate learning and career development opportunities to support their growth.
- 5.2 The City's employee retention and succession planning needs are considered.

5.3 There is an equitable approach to learning and development.

5.4 There is a partnership approach taken by the City and the employee regarding the investment in an employee's learning and development.

6. POLICY

6.1 Study Support

Study Support is available for employees who are undertaking a Relevant Course (refer to definition in Section 4).

To be eligible for Study Support:

- (a) ongoing employees must have completed their Minimum Employment Period; and
- (b) temporary employees must be contracted for a minimum of two years and have completed their Minimum Employment Period.

Eligible employees on leave can apply for the financial assistance component of Study Support only.

6.2 Study leave

6.2.1 Study leave can be taken:

- (a) up to a maximum of four hours study time per week to attend classes, undertake research or complete written assessments; and/or
- (b) as a 'block release'.

6.2.2 Study leave additional to 6.2.1 can be used to:

- (a) enrol in an approved course (maximum two hours);
- (b) prepare for examinations (one day per subject);
- (c) attend examinations held during work hours (four hours per exam); or
- (d) attend a graduation ceremony upon completion of an approved course (one day).

6.2.3 Employees must seek approval from their people manager before taking study leave. Study leave will be managed based upon the operational needs of the Unit.

6.2.4 Study leave cannot be used for purposes other than those included in 6.2.1 and 6.2.2.

6.2.5 Study leave does not accumulate over time like other forms of leave, such as annual leave.

6.2.6 Employees will not be entitled to claim study leave for attending classes outside of normal working hours.

6.2.7 Employees will not be entitled to claim any additional payments such as overtime or time off in lieu for attending classes outside of normal working hours.

6.2.8 Study leave for part time employees may be granted on a pro rata basis.

6.3 Financial Assistance

6.3.1 Financial assistance may be provided to assist with expenses relating to:

- (a) course/tuition fees (this includes the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)) and/or;
- (b) administration/services fee and/or;
- (c) textbooks

6.3.2 Financial assistance covers 70% of the above expenses up to a maximum of \$1,000 per subject.

If study leave is declined by the Business Unit Manager for operational reasons, financial assistance may still be approved by the Manager People and Culture.

6.3.3 Reimbursement

- a) Financial assistance will be reimbursed:
 - (i) after completion of each subject; and
 - (ii) upon production of receipts and evidence of successful completion of each subject. This may include evidence of a results transcript or HELP statement.
- b) Requests for reimbursement are to be claimed within three months of completion of each subject.
- c) Where any subject counts as double credit points (equal to two subjects), this may be considered as two subjects for the purpose of reimbursements once results are received.
- d) Employees are not eligible for reimbursement:
 - (i) if a subject is failed;
 - (ii) if they withdraw from a subject or course;
 - (iii) if their employment ceases before completion of the study (ie. where evidence of successful completion is not available prior to the employee leaving the City)

6.3.4 Financial Hardship

- a) Employees experiencing financial hardship may apply to have the course/tuition fees paid 'upfront' by the City.

- b) If approved, the City will pay the full amount of the course/tuition fees to the education provider.
 - (i) The employee must repay the difference between costs incurred (payment to education provider) and reimbursement payable (70% up to a maximum of \$1000 per subject) via salary deductions
 - (ii) Repayments must be completed within the time taken to complete the subject/s (eg. semester or term)
- c) The employee will be required to repay the full amount if they fail or withdraw from subject/s.
- d) If employment with the City ceases before completion of the study, the full amount of the course/tuition fees will be recovered from the employee's final pay.

6.4 Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT)

The financial payment of study assistance may incur a fringe benefits liability for the City and a reportable benefit (declaration on payment summaries) for the employee.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.1 Business Unit Managers are responsible for approval of the study leave component according to the assessment of operational requirements.
- 7.2 The Manager People and Culture is responsible for approval of the financial assistance component according to the assessment of course relevance to the City.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Employees are encouraged to access the related internal documents which are available on the intranet and/or external resources which are available as per the below.

These include:

- Study Support Application Form ([Study Support Application](#))
- Reimbursement for Costs of Study Support ([Study Support Reimbursement Form](#))

Further information or advice on this policy should be directed to People and Culture.

9. HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY

The implications of this policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

10. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Business Unit, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be made through consultation with the staff Consultative Committee and with the approval of EMT or where required, resolution of Council.

11. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date Approved	Responsible Officer	Unit	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
Dec 2007	HR	People & Performance	Initial	1	Dec 2009
July 2014	P&P	People & Performance	Review	2	July 2018
Sept 2019	OD	People & Culture	Review	3	Sept 2023