
Subject: Educational Leave for Employees

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1. Purpose

This policy provides several options for the support of salaried employees who wish to enroll full time at an accredited institution of higher education, including Virginia Tech, in order to complete a degree: 1) educational leave with pay, 2) educational leave without pay, and 3) reimbursement for approved expenses, such as tuition. Educational leave with pay is available only to full-time salaried employees. Educational leave without pay and reimbursement of approved expenses may be made available to either full or part-time salaried employees. Options under this policy are contingent upon acceptance of the employee as a student at the institution of choice. Study-research leave and research assignment, described more fully in the [Faculty Handbook](http://www.provost.vt.edu/faculty_handbook/faculty_handbook.html) (http://www.provost.vt.edu/faculty_handbook/faculty_handbook.html) are also available to eligible faculty members to pursue approved research and professional developmental programs.

Educational aid of any type is designed to support the training or further education of employees who are expected to continue in state service for a period which would justify such aid. Such consideration should guide supervisors in determining the nature and extent of investment in degree attainment for individual employees.

2. Policy

Educational leave with or without pay is appropriate for employees who must obtain an advanced degree which is essential to their position or maintenance of institutional standards related to educational credentials. It may also be appropriate for faculty members who need to undertake research or advanced study to meet specific needs of their programs or departments. It is intended for those employees for whom full-time enrollment is necessary in order to complete the degree. Often this is because of a residency requirement typical of doctoral programs, because part-time enrollment is not practical (such as an extension agent employed away from Blacksburg but who is enrolled in a graduate program on the main campus), or because enrollment is at an institution other than Virginia Tech. [The Tuition Waiver Program](#) described in Policy 4800 is the appropriate vehicle for support of employees' enrollment in a degree program at Virginia Tech on a part-time basis.

Leaves of absence on partial salary (not to exceed one-half salary) may be granted to full-time salaried employees for educational purposes. Such leaves are granted for formal educational advancement ordinarily leading to an advanced degree that will be of demonstrable benefit to the university and to the employee. The leave will be granted only if satisfactory arrangements can be made for effective continuation of the relevant program. Educational leaves ordinarily are granted for periods of one year or less. If the program of study is completed, or if the employee ceases active participation in that program before the ending date of the approved leave, the employee shall immediately return to full employment or resign employment.

On approval of educational leave with partial pay, the employee must sign a Form P88: [Memorandum of Agreement for Research Leave or Educational Leave With Pay](http://www.apps.hr.vt.edu/hr/forms/) (<http://www.apps.hr.vt.edu/hr/forms/>) which obligates the employee to return to full employment in the university for a period twice the time of the approved leave or to repay the university the salary received plus interest. If a leave recipient returns to the university, but resigns before completing that obligation, the salary repayment will be prorated.

In many cases, financial or workload considerations will make it impossible to support an employee's request for educational leave with pay even where degree attainment is critical to maintenance of the position. In such cases, the department head may recommend leave without pay. Where departmental funds are available, and assisting the employee to complete the degree is a high priority for use of available resources, department heads may approve reimbursement of tuition, fees, and other allowable expenses, whether the employee is on leave with or without pay.

3. Procedures

3.1 Educational Leave Without Pay

Educational leave without pay is available to full- and part-time salaried employees. Upon request, the department head may recommend approval of an educational leave without pay for up to twelve months. A leave of absence without pay also requires advance approval of the dean and provost, or the vice president and president, as appropriate. The original request and administrative approvals are handled by memo. Following approval, the department should submit to the Department of Human Resources a Form P4B: [Notice of Employee Leave of Absence Without Pay](http://www.apps.hr.vt.edu/hr/forms/) (<http://www.apps.hr.vt.edu/hr/forms/>). Although leave without pay does not require an agreement to return to service at Virginia Tech, such leaves should be granted only where an employee's continued employment is fully expected.

In order to continue medical insurance during the period of educational leave without pay, the employee will be responsible for the entire portion of the health insurance premium. Health insurance can be retained for up to one year while in a leave without pay status. The Department of Human Resources will make arrangements for the billing of the medical insurance as indicated on the *Leave-Without-Pay Form*. Payment must be received within 60 days to ensure continuation of coverage.

3.2 Educational Leave With Pay

Educational leave with pay is available only to full-time salaried employees. The employee should request educational leave with pay approximately six months in advance, citing the justification for educational leave, the benefit to Virginia Tech, the period of time required, and any issues related to coverage of responsibilities while on leave. Approval is required from the department head, dean, and provost, or the vice president and president, as appropriate. Requests by faculty members also require approval by the Board of Visitors. The request and related approvals may be handled by memo. If approved, the employee may receive up to one-half salary and full benefits during the period of leave.

Upon approval, the employee should submit a Form P88: [Memorandum of Agreement for Research Leave or Educational Leave With Pay](http://www.apps.hr.vt.edu/hr/forms/) (<http://www.apps.hr.vt.edu/hr/forms/>). The note and interest will be canceled in their entirety by the return of the employee to service with Virginia Tech for a period equal to at least twice the period of absence. If the employee returns to Virginia Tech service for a lesser period, he/she must repay, on a pro-rata basis, the portion of the note and interest not fulfilled by employment. The principal will be listed at the full estimated university expenditure, later to be adjusted to the amount of salary and expenses actually paid by Virginia Tech while the employee was on Educational Leave.

If the program of study is completed, or if the employee ceases active participation in that program before the ending date of the approved leave, the employee shall immediately return to full employment or resign.

3.3 Reimbursement to the Student for Approved Expenses

Employees pursuing their degrees from Virginia Tech who seek relief from tuition charges must use the Tuition Waiver Program while on educational leave. With department head approval, tuition reimbursement at other accredited institutions of higher education may be granted while on educational leave with or without pay in accordance with [Policy 4800, Tuition Waiver and Reimbursement](http://www.policies.vt.edu/4800.pdf) (<http://www.policies.vt.edu/4800.pdf>).

3.4 Faculty Study-Research Leave and Research Assignment

Study-Research Leave and Research Assignments are available to tenured faculty or faculty members on continued appointment with rank of assistant professor or higher, holding full-time appointments and having accrued a minimum of six years of service. This is governed by the policies in the [Faculty Handbook](#).

3.5 Considerations for Approval

In determining the propriety of approving educational leave and/or tuition and fee support, approving authorities should consider the following:

- Effective continuation of departmental program
- Availability of funds
- Relevance of the educational program to current position
- Likelihood of the employee continuing in service
- Equitable application of the policy to other employees in the department.

Educational leave with or without pay is usually granted for 12 months or less. No program may extend beyond 24 months.

3.6 Employment and Benefits Considerations

3.6.1 Contributions to Retirement Plans

Employer contributions to the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) or Optional Retirement Plans and retirement credit will be continued based on full salary as long as at least half salary is received. Under VRS the employee would be eligible to purchase the retirement credit for an educational leave without pay up to a maximum of two years for each period of leave.

3.6.2 Life, Medical and (Faculty) Long Term Disability Insurance

Life insurance and faculty long term disability will be continued up to a maximum of 24 months and medical insurance up to a maximum of 12 months. If educational leave is without pay, the employee will pay the medical insurance.

3.6.3 Assistantships and Additional Wage Employment

Employees on educational leave are eligible for assistantships or wage employment. The employee's total university compensation while on leave will not exceed the compensation prior to the leave.

3.6.4 Rights Upon Return from Educational Leave

Employees on educational leave maintain a right to return to their former position unless the employer and the employee reach an alternative written agreement prior to the beginning of the leave for a return to a position of the same level. If the position is eliminated due to a reduction-in-force, the employee will maintain all rights related to reductions-in-force.

4. Definitions

5. References

[Faculty Handbook](#)

http://www.provost.vt.edu/faculty_handbook/faculty_handbook.html

[Human Resources Forms Library](#)

<http://www.apps.hr.vt.edu/hr/forms>

Policy 4800, [Tuition Waiver and Reimbursement Program for Salaried Employees](#)

<http://www.policies.vt.edu/4800.pdf>

6. Approval and Revisions

- Revision 0

Approved February 24, 2006 by the Vice President for Business Affairs, Kurt J. Krause.

- Revision 1

May 12, 2008: Updates to position titles and/or responsibilities due to university reorganization.

- Revision 2

Technical corrections to update web links and name change for Human Resources Form P88 to *Memorandum of Agreement for Leave With Pay* (formerly *Memorandum of Agreement and Promissory Note for Educational Leave With Pay*).

Approved February 19, 2010 by Vice President for Administrative Services, Sherwood G. Wilson.

- Revision 3

Technical corrections and updates to references.

Approved October 21, 2015 by Vice President for Administration, Sherwood G. Wilson.