

SECTION: 6.17

SUBJECT: Continuing Education

AUTHORITY: Executive Director; 60L-34, F.A.C., Sections 110.1099, 110.219 and 110.235, Florida Statutes.

Policy:

It is the policy of the Commission to encourage employees to further their education by attending classes at universities, colleges or other institutions of learning.

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Procedure:

6.17.1 Attendance at Colleges, Universities or other Institutions of Learning

- A. Employees who plan to attend school do not need approval if attendance does not conflict with or occur during the employee's normal work hours.
- B. Employees who would like to attend school during their normal work hours must request in writing and obtain approval from their Division/Office Director to use leave or alter their work schedule.

6.17.2 Tuition Waivers at a State University, College or Community College

- A. Career Service, Selected Exempt Service or Senior Management Service employees in full-time FTE positions are eligible to have their tuition waived for up to six credit hours per term at any State of Florida public university, college or community college. Coursework does not have to be work-related and may be at the undergraduate or graduate level.
- B. Employees are required to complete an *FWC Employee Tuition Waiver Program* form and a college/university specific tuition waiver form, if required by the institution. The form(s) must be forwarded to the Office of Human Resources for approval. The approved form(s) will be returned directly to the employee.
- C. Employees are responsible for complying with the registration procedures for tuition waiver set by the institution they plan to attend.
- D. The employee is responsible for complying with IMPP 6.17.1 when participating in the tuition waiver program.

6.17.3 Educational Leave With Pay

A. Eligibility

- 1. To be eligible for educational leave with pay the justification for approval of the leave must meet one or more of the following work-related criteria:
 - a. The leave is of clearly foreseeable benefit to the agency.

- b. The leave will develop the participating employee's knowledge, skills and ability to meet known agency needs.
- c. The leave will improve the performance level of the participating employee.
- d. The leave will enable the agency to provide improved service to the public.

B. Requests to Participate

1. FTE employees may request educational leave with pay to attend a university, college or training academy for one or more full academic periods for the purpose of receiving education or training that is of clearly foreseeable benefit to the Commission. Employees must have been employed in the State Personnel system for at least one continuous year and be able to meet the entrance requirements for the planned academic program.
2. Enrollment in short courses, seminars, conference and similar trainings are considered work time and are not educational leave.
3. To request educational leave with pay employees must submit a detailed request in writing through their chain-of-command to the Division/Office Director. The request should at the minimum include the name and location of the institution, the dates for which attendance is requested, the degree, program or coursework in which the employee will be enrolled and the benefit to the agency.

C. Selection Process

1. The Director shall establish objective criteria by which to evaluate the educational leave with pay request. The criteria shall include the eligibility criteria outlined in 6.17.3 A and any division/office specific criteria the director deems appropriate.
2. When evaluating applicants, the Director shall:
 - a. Evaluate each applicant against the established criteria.
 - b. Review each application without regard to age, race, sex, religion, national origin, handicap or political affiliation of the employee.
3. If approved by the Division/Office Director, the request will be forwarded to the Executive Director for final approval. In accordance with Section 110.1099, Florida Statutes, the Executive Director must reapprove the leave each academic year.
4. Employees approved for educational leave with pay will be required to enter into a written agreement with the agency. The agreement, at minimum, will provide for termination of the leave if the employee is not achieving a passing academic grade and an agreement by the employee to continue employment with the agency after completion of the training for a period equal to the length of leave taken. The agreement shall also state that voluntary termination of employment by the employee prior to expiration of the required period is a material breach of contract which will entitle the agency to liquidated damages as defined in Chapter 60L-34.0072, F.A.C.

5. The agency will place employees returning from educational leave with pay in the same position they held prior to commencement of the leave unless the written agreement specifically includes a provision allowing the placement in a different position.

D. Restrictions

1. Employees on educational leave with pay cannot be assigned agency vehicles. Employees on educational leave with pay may be assigned computers or other agency equipment for educational purposes related to the leave.
2. The Commission expects employees on educational leave to give their best effort on exams, projects, papers and other required assignments. Employees are required to provide a copy of their final grades to their Division/Office Director at the end of each academic term under the educational leave with pay program.
- 3 Tuition at a State of Florida public college or university is eligible for payment through the State's Tuition Waiver Program. When determined to be in the best interest of the Commission, the agency may reimburse the employee for tuition at a State of Florida public educational institution if the tuition waiver program is not available. The agency does not have authority to pay for tuition at private educational institutions in Florida or for educational institutions outside of Florida.
4. The number of participants in the program may not exceed 2% of the agency's FTEs.
5. The agency's expenditures for a participating employee's salary and benefits during any academic period shall not exceed the amount that would have been expended by the state for the employee's salary and benefits if the employee had remained on the job.
6. Expenditure of funds for education leave with pay shall be in accordance with the agency's approved budget.

History: Est: 08/17/2010; Rev: 02/05/2016

Approved:

Eric Sutton

Executive Director or Designee

February 5, 2016

Date