

Staff Development Program

- Authority** This Guide Memo was approved by the Vice President for Business Affairs and Chief Financial Officer.
- Summary** The Staff Development Program (SDP) supports employee development by providing partial or full reimbursement of the cost of courses, seminars and workshops that enable employees to improve performance in current jobs, prepare for career development, or meet requirements of degree programs related to current performance or planned career development. The SDP consists of two parts: Staff Training Assistance Program (STAP) for job related or career enhancing courses and seminars and Staff Tuition Reimbursement Program (STRP) providing partial to full tuition payment for individuals enrolled in a degree program. See <http://hreap.stanford.edu> for additional information.

Section headings for this Guide Memo:

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2. STAFF TRAINING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (STAP)
3. STAFF TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM (STRP)
4. ALLOWABLE EXPENSES
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1. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the Staff Development Program, an employee must meet all the following criteria:

- Be a continuing regular staff employee; this includes bargaining unit employees. (See Guide Memo 23.1 http://adminguide.stanford.edu/23_1.pdf for definition of regular staff employee.) STRP assistance is pro-rated for regular staff working less than full-time.
- Receive no financial assistance from other sources that would duplicate SDP assistance (scholarships, grants, and departmental funds may augment but not duplicate SDP assistance).
- Meet all admission requirements of the educational institution.

Academic Staff-Teaching – senior lecturers, lecturers, artists-in-residence – who work at least 50% time are also eligible for the Staff Training Assistance Program.

In addition, in order to qualify for STRP support, an employee must have completed one year in an ongoing position; employees working in fixed term positions are not eligible for STRP. STAP cannot be used to augment STRP.

2. STAFF TRAINING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (STAP)

STAP assistance may be requested for job-related training and career development purposes.

- a. **Job-Related Training** – Training must be directly related to performance requirements of the employee's current assignment, including training required to respond to organizational or operational need as defined by the employee's supervisor or the University. Such training may be a formal course given for academic credit or certificate of completion by an accredited college, university, technical/vocational school or institute, special skills school, or adult education school; a seminar, workshop or special emphasis short-duration program presented by an approved provider; or training obtained at a conference or professional organization. The employee's supervisor must approve the training provider.

- (1) **Release Time/Time Off with Pay** – A regular staff employee must be granted time off with pay to attend job-related training approved by the supervisor. Such time off must be compatible with the work schedule of the department and consistent with requirements of contracts and grants regarding time worked. The department funds time off with pay for training.
 - (2) **Reimbursement** – Requests for reimbursement of allowable expenses through STAP must be made upon satisfactory completion of the training and within the fiscal year when the expense is incurred (with the approval of the supervisor). Submitted requests will be charged against the STAP funds based on the class start date. When employees are reimbursed in advance of course completion, the employee must provide evidence of satisfactory completion to the supervisor (see Section 5 for procedure).
 - b. **Career Development Training** – Training must be related to an identified and planned training objective for career development. Such training may be a formal course given for academic credit or certificate of completion by an accredited college, university, technical/vocational school or institute, special skills school, or adult education school; or be a seminar, workshop or special emphasis short-duration program presented by an approved provider. The employee's supervisor must approve this training.
 - (1) **Release Time/Time Off without Pay** – A regular staff employee may be granted a maximum of twenty-four hours per month of release time without pay for approved training for career development purposes, if no comparable course is offered during non-work hours. Time off for part-time regular staff should be pro-rated based on the percent time worked. Approval of time off is at the department's discretion and must be compatible with the work schedule of the department and consistent with requirements of contracts and grants regarding time worked.
 - (2) **Reimbursement** – Requests for reimbursement of allowable expenses through STAP must be made upon satisfactory completion of the training and within the fiscal year when the expense is incurred (with the approval of the supervisor). Submitted requests will be charged against the STAP funds based on the class start date. When employees are reimbursed in advance of course completion, the employee must provide evidence of satisfactory completion to the supervisor (see Section 5 for procedure).
3. **STAFF TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM (STRP)**
- Eligible employees may request STRP support for courses that fulfill undergraduate or graduate degree requirements at a fully accredited college, university, technical/vocational school or institute, special skills school, or adult education school when the employee is admitted to the degree program (certificate programs excluded). The employee's supervisor must approve the request.
- a. **Release Time/Time Off without Pay** – A regular staff employee may be granted a maximum of twenty-four hours per month of release time, without pay, for an approved undergraduate or graduate course, if no comparable course is offered during non-work hours. Time off for part-time regular staff should be pro-rated based on the percent time worked. Approval of time off is at the department's discretion and must be compatible with the work schedule of the department and consistent with requirements of contracts and grants regarding time worked.
 - b. **Reimbursement** – Reimbursement of allowable expenses through STRP will be made directly to the institution prior to attendance each quarter or semester.

4. ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

- a. **SDP Reimbursement** – Under STAP, costs of tuition, registration fees, and required textbooks, CDs, or tapes (exclusive of travel expenses, professional memberships, testing fees, reference books and professional subscriptions) are allowable for reimbursement up to a maximum determined each fiscal year. Under STRP, costs of tuition fees only (no books or supplies) are allowable for reimbursement up to a maximum determined for each fiscal year. STRP course textbooks and supplies are not eligible for reimbursement using STAP funds. An employee may not receive reimbursement under STAP and reimbursement under STRP for the same course or program.

For the fiscal year beginning 9/1/03, the maximum STAP reimbursement is \$800 and the maximum STRP reimbursement is \$5,250. STRP reimbursements are pro-rated for regular staff who work less than full-time. The maximum amount of SDP (STAP and STRP) reimbursement an employee can receive per calendar year is \$5,250.

- b. **Departmental Reimbursement** – When allowable costs exceed the current STAP/STRP limit, the excess cost may be partially or fully reimbursed by the employee's department. Departmental reimbursement is at the department's discretion and is determined on the basis of available departmental funds for training. Documentation of guidelines for locally funded programs should be filed in the Educational Assistance Programs office. Reimbursement for career development training may be taxable if the total exceeds \$5250 in one tax year (see Section 7a), regardless of the source of University funds. Departmental reimbursements have the same tax consequences as STAP/STRP reimbursements.

5. REIMBURSEMENT

- a. **Timing of Reimbursement** – Requests for reimbursement of allowable expenses through STAP must be made upon satisfactory completion of the training, and within the fiscal year when the expense is incurred (with the approval of the supervisor). Reimbursement must be requested within 20 days after completion of the training activity or prior to the end of the current fiscal year, whichever is sooner. Submitted requests will be charged against the STAP funds based on the class start date. Reimbursement of allowable expenses through STRP will be made directly to the institution prior to attendance each quarter or semester.
- b. **Employee Obligation** – When the University reimburses an employee for training costs through STAP prior to completion of the activity, the employee assumes an obligation to complete the supported training in a satisfactory manner. An employee who does not complete training for which the University has provided reimbursement must repay the University the total amount of the reimbursement.
- c. **Evidence of Satisfactory Completion** – Employees utilizing funds for training expenses through STAP must provide the supervisor with evidence of satisfactory completion as soon as possible--but no later than four weeks after the training activity is completed. For STRP, evidence of satisfactory completion must be provided to both their supervisor and to the administrative program assistant in the Educational Assistance Programs office as soon as possible. Such evidence may be an official grade card, or transcript from the institution or provider of the course. If that is not possible, written confirmation of course completion from the instructor or institution will be accepted. For academic courses using STRP funds, a grade C or better, or pass grade in a pass/fail course is required.

6. APPLICATION PROCESS

- a. **Prior Discussion** – An employee planning a training or development activity should discuss development and performance objectives with his or her supervisor before registering for the course or program. Decisions regarding applicability of training and issues regarding release time should be made at this time. The employee and the supervisor should review career development plans before registration.

- b. **Departmental Review** – The supervisor should review the staff training assistance reimbursement request and evidence of satisfactory completion, confirming the following:
 - Employee eligibility (see Section 1)
 - Program Applicability (see Section 2 and 3)
 - Allowable Expenses (see Section 4)
 - Course completion (see Section 5c)
- c. **Procedure** – Visit <http://hreap.stanford.edu> for application information.
- d. **Educational Assistance Programs Review** – The Educational Assistance Programs office monitors and periodically audits all applications for conformance with standards of eligibility, applicability and allowability as outlined in this Guide Memo. The Educational Assistance Programs office has final approval of reimbursements for approved applications. A decision by the Educational Assistance Programs office concerning approval or disapproval of reimbursements is not subject to review under any grievance procedure. Appeal of a decision by the Educational Assistance Programs office may be made in writing to the Manager of Human Resources Data Services.

7. TAX IMPLICATIONS

SDP is intended to provide benefits that are, to the extent possible, excluded from taxation under federal and state laws. Accordingly, this Guide Memo constitutes a separate written plan for the exclusive benefit of employees, under section 127 of the Code and the regulations thereunder, to provide such employees with educational assistance.

- a. **General Rule** – In general, an employee may exclude up to \$5,250 received for graduate or undergraduate education from his/her gross income each tax year (including costs of tuition, registration fees, and required textbooks).
- b. **Tax Year** – Employees should note that STRP provides reimbursements of up to \$5,250 for each Stanford fiscal year. Because the fiscal year runs from September 1 through August 31, an employee could be eligible to receive reimbursements in excess of \$5,250 for the employee's tax year.
- c. **Other Situations** – Amounts paid to an employee in excess of \$5,250 may also be excluded if they are payments for certain job-related training, when such training maintains or improves the skills of an employee. However, if the training is necessary for the employee to meet the minimum educational requirements for employment, or if the training will qualify the employee for a new trade or business, the payments will not qualify for this additional exclusion.
- d. **Getting Help** – Employees should consult their personal tax advisor with any questions.

8. STATUS AND DURATION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

- a. **Administration** – SDP is administered by the University. The University has the discretionary authority to determine all matters with respect to SDP, including, without limitation, eligibility issues, benefit amounts, evidentiary matters and tax treatment. Its decisions shall be final and binding on all persons.
- b. **Amendment and Termination** – The University reserves the right to modify SDP in any respect, or to discontinue SDP, at any time.