

FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY
Human Resources Office

SUBJECT: Tuition Assistance Policy and Procedures

Revised: 10/26/11

TUITION (GENERAL UNIVERSITY FEES) ASSISTANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The language used in this policy is not intended to create a binding employee contract between the employee and the University. The University reserves the right to revise the contents of this policy, in whole or in part, with or without notice.

Section 59-111-15 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina as Amended, authorizes state-supported colleges and universities to provide tuition assistance for faculty and staff who are in full-time-equivalent (FTE) positions. As a result of this legislation, the following policy and procedures are established.

I. POLICY

- A. In most instances, all coursework will be taken at Francis Marion. A faculty or staff member may, however, petition the President to provide preliminary approval for tuition assistance, at institutions other than Francis Marion, when the following conditions are met:
 - 1. The completion of coursework will result in demonstrable benefit to Francis Marion.
 - 2. The Vice President of the division in which the individual works supports the request.
 - 3. The individual meets eligibility requirements described in Section C.1 and 2 of this document.
 - 4. The individual will attend a program at an accredited institution in South Carolina, which is specified in the request.
 - 5. The requested fee reimbursement does not exceed \$2000 per semester or \$5000 per year.Final approval will be given when the individual is accepted at the specified institution. Approval must be requested for each semester that tuition assistance is requested.
- B. Francis Marion FTE faculty and staff, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or veteran status will be allowed to take up to six (6) credit hours each semester at Francis Marion at no cost to the employee. However, the employee will be responsible for all costs associated with books, supplies, etc.
- C. Eligibility
 - 1. Faculty - To be eligible to apply for tuition assistance, faculty must be employed in a "slotted" position, have successfully completed six months of employment, and have been admitted to FMU, or other accredited SC institution, through the appropriate admissions process.
 - 2. Staff - To be eligible to apply for tuition assistance, staff must be employed for at least thirty (30) hours per week in a permanent "slotted" position, have satisfactorily completed six months of employment, and have been admitted to FMU, or other accredited SC institution, through the appropriate admissions process.
- D. Program Provisions
 - 1. Eligible faculty and staff may apply to take up to 6 hours for academic credit at Francis Marion (audit courses are not allowed under this policy) per semester at no charge, on a space available basis. Employees taking additional courses will pay the regular fee rate in effect at the time of enrollment.
 - 2. Employees must pay all application fees, undergraduate and graduate, as well as all expenses incurred for textbooks, field trips, laboratory fees, etc.

3. Employees who drop a course prior to the end of the semester must pay for the next course for which he/she enrolls unless there were extenuating circumstances for dropping the course; i.e., death in family, serious illness of employee, etc.
 4. Employees who terminate employment prior to the end of the semester must pay for the entire cost of the course or drop the course prior to the final paycheck being released.
 5. Employees must pass the course for which Tuition Assistance is supplied or the employee must pay for the next course for which he/she enrolls.
 6. Employees must use other available educational or scholarship funds prior to applying for Tuition Assistance. Student loans or other programs, which require that money be paid back, will not disqualify employees from being eligible for this program.
- E. Class Scheduling
1. Whenever possible, faculty and staff should enroll in class during hours, which do not conflict with normal working hours. However, when an approved class cannot be scheduled during non-work hours, the Department Head may elect to adjust the work schedule. The Department Head may deny participation in the Tuition Assistance Program if the scheduled time of the course would interfere with the academic or business needs of the department.
 2. When an approved class cannot be scheduled during non-work hours and it is not feasible to adjust work schedules, participants who earn annual leave may be allowed to take leave for the purpose of attending class. The employee must either take annual leave, make up the time, or take leave without pay if the course is taken during normal work hours. Both annual leave and authorized leave without pay must be approved in advance.
- II. PROCEDURES: Courses at Francis Marion
- A. Employee - The employee electing to take a Tuition Assistance course must complete the Application Form (For Course/s to be Taken by Employee) at least two weeks prior to registration. Application forms are available from Human Resources.
 - B. Supervisor/Department Head - The form is then given to the Department Head for his/her signature, indicating approval for the employee to take the course. He/she forwards the form to the appropriate Vice President.
 - C. Either the Department Head or the Vice President forwards the completed form to the Vice President for Administration.
 - D. Vice President for Administration - Once the form is approved by the VP-A, she notifies the employee that the course has been approved or disapproved. The VP-A will maintain records of employees taking courses. Final approval of the Tuition Assistance Application does not register or enroll a participant in the requested course nor does it guarantee admission as a student to FMU. Faculty and staff are responsible for applying for admission to FMU and for receiving academic advisement.
 - E. Employee - At the end of each semester, the employee will submit documentation to Human Resources certifying that he/she completed the course with a passing grade. If he/she did not complete and pass the course, he/she will be required to pay for the next course taken (unless there were extenuating circumstances; i.e., death in family, serious illness of employee, etc.) Documentation must also be submitted showing that the next course has been paid for before consideration for an additional course under this policy will be considered.
- III. PROCEDURES: Courses at other accredited SC institutions
- A. The faculty or staff member will submit a written request to the President which details the: (a) benefits that will be derived by the University; (b) support of his/her Vice President ; (c) location and schedule of the proposed courses; and (c) cost of the courses.
 - B. The President will report his decision to the applicant, the Vice President for Business Affairs, and the Vice President for Administration.
 - C. The individual registers for the coursework and pays all fees to the other institution.
 - D. At the end of the semester, the individual submits a grade report, which becomes part of the personnel record, to the Vice President for Administration. If the course was successfully completed, a schedule of registration fees should accompany the grade report. Tuition fees, not to exceed \$2000 for the semester or \$5000 for the year, will be reimbursed.