A STUDENT GUIDE TO EMPLOYER SPONSORSHIP

From the Business Engagement Team
A student guide to employer sponsorship

For most organisations, supporting staff to learn and develop is key to their retention and growth of talent. Investment in staff training can take many forms and sponsorship for a degree or masters’ programme is one option.

As an employee, it is important to approach your employer with a clear understanding of why you are asking for sponsorship, how you would use the sponsorship and how your new skills could be applied to the workplace.

To start, it would be useful to carry out some informal research within your organisation to gain an understanding of their commitment to staff development. For example, is there an education policy? Are you aware of colleagues who have been sponsored? Is there a separate training function and/or budget? Are there any formal procedures or guidelines about applying for sponsorship, or any particular time of the year when you need to apply? In addition, you should research your organisation’s objectives so that you can outline how you can develop your skills and knowledge to support the achievement of these objectives.

Clearly, if some or all of these elements are in place, you should follow your company guidelines to make your business case. However, if there isn’t a formal process and you’ve simply been advised to “have a chat with your boss”, here is a suggested template and plan for structuring your case.

Section 1: What do you want to study?
Unsurprisingly, most employers look more favourably on studies which are directly connected to development in your role. Think about your development needs and your aspirations and how your choice of subject supports these areas. If you are not sure what you want to study, come along to a Birkbeck Open Evening where you will be able to chat to our academics and ask detailed questions about the content of the course. Failing that, visit our website WWW.BBK.AC.UK/BUSINESS

Section 2: How will it help you as an individual?
Think about the benefits of the programme and how it will develop your knowledge and skills. For example: improving your skills in specific areas such as accountancy, economic forecasting, marketing techniques or employment law. Remember to mention what you expect to achieve in terms of development of soft skills. For example: improved confidence, team collaboration,
debating in groups, time management. There will be two elements to your programme – the academic teaching and the wrap-around options to support your personal development and broaden your networks. Additionally, many of our students report on the benefits of sitting alongside working Londoners during lectures and learning from their experience.

Section 3: How will it benefit your employer?
This is critical. Your employer is going to be spending money and will be aware of the extra time commitment that will be required of you if you undertake part-time study. Your employer must believe it is worth it! You need to set out the benefits to the organisation which will include your increased skill and confidence levels and ability to take on more responsibility; your commitment to the organisation to follow a career path; the identification of innovative ideas and processes through mixing with students and academics and finally, the reputational value of being an employer who is committed to training and developing staff.

Section 4: How will you transfer the learning to work?
It would be unrealistic to think that all your new knowledge and learning can be neatly applied to your role. However, it is important to identify areas of the course which will have a direct impact on what you do. For example, depending on your role and what you are studying, there may be particular models or activities which will enable you to manage budgetary decisions or apply a change management technique to a particular project. Students report back to us that what they learned on a Tuesday evening can be applied on the following day! Remember to discuss your learning at your performance appraisal and your future academic plans. You need to continue to prove your commitment and funding in one year may not necessarily mean funding for the next.

Section 5: What will the practicalities be?
As a specialist provider of evening higher education, we are very experienced in working with students who are juggling other commitments. We are also versatile with the length of the programme, and in some cases, the structure. Exams are held in the evening so there is no reason to disrupt the working day. However, clearly your employer will want to know how you will manage the additional commitment so you need to think this through and look at a study schedule which is realistic for you.

Programme costs vary and if your employer is planning to sponsor a number of students, a discount may apply. Similarly if you are a member of a particular union, a discount may be on offer. It is important to include the cost in your proposal and let your employer know that fees can be paid incrementally.
What next......

Can my employer discuss the study at Birkbeck?
Your employer might like to visit Birkbeck or chat to one of our academic tutors who will be able to discuss the content of the course in more detail and give an idea of the professional background of other students.

And finally, why Birkbeck?

- We rank as amongst the top 1% research intensive universities in the world
- The School of Business, Economics and Informatics offer approximately 150 courses to more than 4,000 students, most of whom manage work alongside their studies
- We have a community of academics, many of whom are themselves working professionals alongside a flourishing network of Alumni, the majority of which are based in London

An example template follows and for further support with your choices, your sponsorship application or to meet with one of our tutors, please contact Rose Devaney, Business Engagement Manager on R.DEVANEY@BBK.AC.UK
Employer Sponsorship Request

Name:

Course and Qualification:

Section 1: What do you plan to study? Tell your employer a little about the course you have selected and its content

Section 2: How will it help you as an individual? Tell your employer about the benefits of the programme and how it can enhance your performance

Section 3: How will it benefit your employer? State the benefits and impact to the organisation about training and developing you

Section 4: How will you transfer the learning to work? How does the course fit with your aspirations? Give some practical examples of how you might translate your new levels of knowledge, skills and confidence to your role

Section 5: How much will it cost? Be clear about the annual cost of the programme and how the cost can be spread throughout the term of your studies