Study Assistance Scheme for Birkbeck Staff

(1) Introduction

The College is committed to developing an inclusive working and learning environment for its staff to enable them to achieve their full potential. The Study Assistance scheme is one of the key approaches for supporting achievement of this aim.

The Study Assistance scheme is available to Birkbeck employees who have been accepted on part-time and in exception circumstances full-time credit-bearing Birkbeck courses and modules (with the exception of Masters by Research in Science and PhDs), subject to application and eligibility. The scheme offers a substantial contribution towards the cost of the tuition fees and together with study leave and book allowance, provides a comprehensive support package for those undertaking Birkbeck courses. Study Assistance is a staff benefit to help recruit, retain and motivate staff.

(2) Eligible Courses and fee rates

Study Assistance is available for credit-bearing modules offered at Birkbeck; which include Certificates of Higher Education, and undergraduate and postgraduate awards. Masters by Research in Science and PhDs are excluded from this scheme.

The contribution will be based on Home and EU fee rates.

(3) Financial Contribution towards tuition fees

Under Study Assistance tuition fees will be supported in three ways:

- **Organisational Development Contribution**
  Successful applications will receive 50% towards the Home / EU tuition fees (for part-time employees, this will be based pro-rata on their full time equivalent (FTE)).

- **Individual Contribution**
  The individual will make a minimum contribution of 5% to demonstrate personal commitment to study.

- **Sponsor Contribution (School, Professional Services Department or Individual)**
  There is also the opportunity for the School, or Professional Services department, to make a contribution towards the fees. The contribution will be up to 45% (pro-rata for part-time employees) and it will be at the discretion of the budget holder for the School or Professional Services department.

Employees who are undertaking an undergraduate programme or Certificate of Higher Education for the first time will be able to apply for the Government Student loans. Staff who are undertaking postgraduate programmes will also be able to apply for postgraduate loans.

Applicants for Study Assistance are not eligible to also receive, or apply for, additional Birkbeck tuition fee discounts from other schemes that are advertised from time to time. It is recommended that employees who wish to receive support with tuition fees on Birkbeck courses apply for Study Assistance.
(4) Employee Eligibility

The Study Assistance Scheme is open to Birkbeck employees who:

- Have successfully completed their probation by the start of the autumn term. Applications can be lodged prior to completion of probation; however, OD will require evidence from the line manager that probation has been successfully completed before Study Assistance is confirmed.

- At the start of their study, has a contract of employment issued by the College. Applicants whose contract does not cover the whole of the programme will receive Study Assistance for the academic term, or module, that the contract covers.

Part-time and hourly paid employees will receive Study Assistance on a pro-rata basis, based on the FTE of their contracted hours at the time of application.

(5) Application process and confirmation of support

Timescale

The scheme will normally be advertised in the summer term by OD inviting applications to be lodged with a deadline set annually by OD for the next academic year.

Applicants missing any deadlines will need to reapply for the next academic year.

Application

To apply, an application form (SA) must be completed and sent to the OD Administrator before the annual deadline.

The initial interest in doing a course and subsequent progress should be discussed and recorded in the Development Plan of the Progress and Development Review or in Part B of the Academic Review form.

Line Manager Approval

The line manager will consider approving the application having discussed with the applicant:

- the course or module and being undertaken;
- the amount of Study Leave to be granted in line with the policy;
- the impact on the wellbeing of the individual
- the operational impact (if any) on the team / department (examples could include the impact of the intensity of undertaking study on an individual’s performance, or leave arrangements within the team);
- any conflict of interest that may arise from the course of study; and
- for continuing students (see 6 below), progress being made on the course or module.
- where the course involves any daytime study, this will be on the agreement of the line manager.
- where the course is full-time, the reason should be discussed with the applicant and any agreement recorded in the additional comments box of the application form by the line
manager and for agreement by the budget holder. The discussion should cover areas such as impact on role performance / team and wellbeing.

**Budget Holder Approval (Executive Dean, Director of Professional Services or Director of Operations)**

The budget holder for the School or Professional Services department will be required to sign form SA to approve:

- the individual’s participation in the scheme; and
- the amount of financial contribution (if any) towards the tuition fees made by the School or Professional Services department.

**Enrolment**

Applicants whose programmes start in the autumn will need to enrol by the end of October, in line with the usual student enrolment. Failure to do so may result in funding being withdrawn.

(6) **Continuing Students**

Employees who wish to continue to receive Study Assistance for their course of study must complete an application form SA for each academic year and send it to the OD Administrator by the 31st May. Failure to do so may result in removal from the scheme.

(7) **Deferrals, re-taking, re-sitting and re-submitting**

Under the scheme, studies can be deferred in line with the course guidelines. There will be occasions when an employee will choose to defer study for the next year. The OD Administrator will need to be informed by 31st May of the deferral to prevent removal from the scheme. Details on the implications for future fees and the likely return date to study will be required.

If, during the year or term of study an employee wishes to defer, then they will need to inform the OD Administrator as soon as possible.

The College does not provide support for employees re-taking modules / courses, re-sitting examinations or resubmitting summative coursework.

(8) **General Information**

**Book Allowance**

On confirmation of Study Assistance, an employee will be entitled to claim a maximum of £30 per annum for course books. Please use a staff expense claims form, attach receipts and send it to the OD Administrator.

**Leaving Birkbeck**

Please be aware that applicants, who receive Study Assistance support and do not complete the course or leave the College before they complete the course, may be asked to pay the contributions back.

**Attendance**

Once tuition fees have been paid, employees are expected to attend and complete the programme, or module.
Future Funding

If a situation arises whereby total financial support is limited by Finance and General Purposes Committee, priority will be given to continuing applicants and then to those staff who have not received support through Study Assistance, or Remission of Fees, before. In such circumstances, first come, first served will not operate; OD will advise and confirm the process.

The College reserves the right to withdraw or suspend the scheme at any time.

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