



**ACT**  
Government

Environment, Planning and  
Sustainable Development

# EPSD Policy Studies Assistance

## 1.1 Purpose

This Studies Assistance Policy outlines to all employees of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSD) the availability of, and decision-making parameters for determining applications for Studies Assistance.

## 1.2 Scope

The Studies Assistance Policy applies to all employees in EPSD covered by an ACT Public Service Enterprise Agreement.

## 1.3 Introduction

Studies Assistance is one of a range of options available to employees to assist with their professional development needs. It is designed to complement the key training priorities of the Directorate, the business units and individuals. It encourages employees to develop their capabilities, become more skilled and knowledgeable in areas that will be of mutual benefit to the individual and the workplace.

Studies Assistance fosters a valuable investment in EPSD employees and aims to achieve the following:

- Increase competencies of employees to meet the department's business and corporate goals; and
- Improve current and future job performance.

Approval for Studies Assistance is discretionary and is **not an employee entitlement**. Each application for Study Assistance is assessed each semester/study period on a case-by-case basis and requires the recommendation of the appropriate Manager with final approval made at the discretion of an appropriately delegated officer.

## 2. Eligibility

Permanent officers with twelve months service in EPSD may make an application for Studies Assistance for approved courses of study. An approved course is one that is offered by a University or Registered Training Organisation. Special consideration may be given to employees with less than 12 months' service at the discretion of the Director-General.

Temporary employees are ineligible for approval of Studies Assistance unless the delegate determines that the course of study is imperative for the strategic and operational needs of the business unit and the Directorate. Temporary employees who wish to undertake study may utilise flex or other approved leave provided they have the agreement of their manager. However, financial assistance is not available to temporary employees who have a contract for 12 months or less.

Certain categories of employment are **not eligible** for studies assistance. These include cadets, trainees, contract staff, apprentices and employees on probation.

When employees move to another Directorate within the ACTPS, they must discuss their study arrangements with the new Directorate prior to commencement. The new Directorate has no obligation to continue any arrangements made with EPD, nor to approve study assistance at all. An application will need to be made to the new Directorate for consideration and approval.

If there are any changes to approved studies assistance due to a change of role or course, the EPSDD Performance and Capability team must be advised of the new arrangements as soon as is practically possible. To do this, the affected employee must complete the [Study Assistance Amendment Form](#) and send it to [EPSDDTraining@act.gov.au](mailto:EPSDDTraining@act.gov.au).

### Eligibility for part-time employees

Part-time employees are eligible for studies assistance with allowances determined on a pro-rata basis.

## **2.1 Approved courses of study**

Study that is eligible under this policy may be a course or program of study; a single subject; research as part of a course of study and/or instruction or training arranged or conducted by a university, distance education provider, TAFE, technical school, or other Registered Training Organisations.

Employees considering study should discuss their area of study with their manager. The manager will determine if the proposed area of study addresses individual development needs and the strategic and operational needs of the business unit in conjunction with an employee's Performance Management Plan.

## **3.1 Types of Studies Assistance available**

The Directorate offers a range of support options to employees undertaking study in one or more of the following ways:

- Approval as a student;
- Study leave (paid and/or unpaid);
- Block release;
- Financial assistance.

### **3.1 Approval as a Student**

Approval as a student is the first level of support and must be obtained before study leave or financial assistance can be approved. Approval as a student entitles staff to:

- Undertake a course of study provided by a public or private tertiary institution;
- Take paid leave to sit examinations (including travel time);
- Be considered for Study Leave and financial assistance; and
- Be covered by Worker's Compensation while attending classes or examinations, as well as for travel between work and the place of study.

### **3.2 Study Leave**

Approval for paid or unpaid study leave is at the discretion of the delegate.

Study leave may be granted for attendance at classes such as lectures, tutorials and laboratories that are only scheduled during standard working hours. Standard working hours for non-shift staff or non-rostered staff are 8:30am to 12:30pm and 1:30pm to 4:51pm.

Delegates may grant up to a maximum of five hours leave to attend classes and three hours travel per week. The total allocation approved is at the discretion of the delegate and would not normally exceed eight hours per week, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The distribution of time may be altered to six hours study time and two hours travel time.

### **3.3 Block Release**

Leave with pay for block release must be recommended by the Manager and is normally only available to students who have not taken advantage of leave with pay for part-time studies. It is designed for use for study activities other than compulsory classes. Such study activities include external studies, completion of assignments, preparation for examinations or attendance at compulsory residential courses/seminars or other study activities, which are essential to the successful completion of the course.

The total allocation of block release approved is at the discretion of the delegate and will not exceed 50 hours per semester unless there are exceptional circumstances. Requests for both study leave and block release within a semester will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

### **3.4 Financial Assistance**

Approval as a student entitles employees to apply for full or part financial reimbursement, upon successful completion of their course. It is intended to support employees completing studies that are directly related to their work. The decision of whether or not to provide financial assistance will be based on the submission of the applicant and consideration of the current job, likely career path and desirability of the study. The amount of support may vary, with priority given to those planning study which is highly relevant to the applicant's current role and the needs of the Directorate.

Financial assistance is only applicable for compulsory course and enrolment fees. It does not include:

- books, journals and newspapers;
- late fees or disciplinary fines;
- fees for subjects not successfully completed (except in extenuating circumstances);
- study costs once an employee leaves EPSD to work in another directorate;
- travel and accommodation expenses incurred while attending residential components;
- local travel expenses;
- postage and telephone calls;
- child care expenses;
- library joining fees;
- graduation fees; and
- parking fees and fines

#### **3.4.1 Fringe Benefits Tax**

Please note that the reimbursement of study expenditure may incur Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT). Generally, FBT is payable by the directorate when the reimbursement relates to a Commonwealth subsidised course.

As a guide, CIT courses and CPA modules are not subsidised by the Commonwealth and therefore would not attract FBT. Only university courses can be subsidised by the Commonwealth. Reimbursements of employees' HECS-HELP charges are subject to FBT. The university invoice will include such words as "HECS-HELP", "COMSUPPORT" or "COM-xx", where xx is the financial year.

If the payment attracts FBT, it will be at the current of 47 % of the grossed-up amount (where the statutory gross-up rate is 1.8868). For example, the reimbursement of a Commonwealth subsidised course costing \$1,000, will attract FBT of an additional \$915.90 ( $\$1,000 \times 1.8868 \times 47\%$ ). If you are unsure whether the reimbursement will attract FBT or how to calculate it, contact the EPSD Finance section.

## **4. Approval Process**

The applicant's immediate manager or team leader will consider the application in line with the eligibility criteria set out in directorates Studies Assistance Policy and make a recommendation to an appropriately delegated officer.

The Delegate will consider the application, the supervisor's recommendation and these guidelines, before making a decision.

In assessing a course of study for approval, the supervisor and delegate will consider:

- The strategic and operational needs and priorities of the Directorate and the resources available;
- The capabilities required to enable the Directorate to meet its current and future goals;
- The applicant's work performance and learning and career development needs as detailed in their Personal Development Plan;
- The applicant's study history, and what assistance has previously been provided. Applications from employees who have had a long history of support in more than one area of study should be closely scrutinised to identify the benefits of study;
- Any relevant workplace equity and diversity issues; and
- Any other benefits accruing from the course.

In addition to the factors detailed above when assessing a claim for study leave, the supervisor and delegate will consider:

- The day to day operational requirements of the work area;
- The number of hours face-to-face tuition in the course;
- The time required to travel to the place of study; and
- The study load for the employee (eg. the number of units being studied).

## **5. Recording Approved Study Leave**

Approved Study Leave should be recorded on time sheets in the leave column. If there are two absences in one day (within standard working hours), the total amount of approved leave must be recorded.

It is the managers responsibility to ensure that staff leave entitlements do not exceed the approved amount of study leave.

### **5.1 Leave Options Available For Full-Time Study**

Approved full-time students may be granted leave without pay for an agreed period. This period of leave counts for service for all purposes except Annual Leave. While Personal Leave continues to accrue, credits are reduced on an assumed usage basis. Employees on study leave without pay for more than 12 weeks may elect not to pay superannuation, but must do so by advising the Shared Services Payroll team in writing.

Full time students are encouraged to consult with Payroll regarding the effect of leave without pay on their entitlements. Employees may be unattached from their position when undertaking full time study without pay for one academic year or more. The delegate may initiate this action and both the employee and delegate may enter into an Unattachment Agreement.

The delegate should plan for the placement of unattached officers by monitoring vacancies and the date the employee is expected to return to duty. However, excess officer provisions may apply to employees returning from leave without pay for full time studies, where an employee cannot be permanently placed.

## **6. How to apply for Studies Assistance**

Prior to applying for studies assistance, the applicant should first discuss the proposed course of study with their manager.

Applications for Studies Assistance must be made using the Study Assistance Application Form and submitted and approved before the commencement of studies in each study period. A new application is required for each enrolment/study period.

All relevant documents from the learning institution (e.g. proof of enrolment and course costs; times and dates of compulsory attendance; semester dates; and previous academic results) must be attached to the application. The application form should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the commencement of study, this allows adequate time to process an application. It is the applicant's responsibility to supply complete and correct information.

Once completed, applications should be forwarded to the employee's relevant Senior Manager. If supported by the appropriate manager, the application form will be forwarded to the appropriate delegate (director level) for final approval. Director-General approval is only required when the Executive Director is unavailable, or other eligibility criteria outlined in this policy have not been met.

If approved, the completed application must be forwarded to [EPSDDTraining@act.gov.au](mailto:EPSDDTraining@act.gov.au). The EPSDD Performance and Capability team will maintain records and produce reporting for all approved applications. The team will also notify approved applicants of the status of their application via email.