



Jeffrey R. Gahler,  
Sheriff

# HARFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PERSONNEL POLICY

## Tuition Reimbursement

<b>Distribution:</b>	<b>All Employees</b>	<b>Index:</b>	<b>PER 1003</b>
<b>Responsible Unit:</b>	<b>Human Resources</b>	<b>Rescinds:</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>DLI Program:</b>		<b>MD Code:</b>	

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### 1. Purpose

To provide members of the Harford County Sheriff's Office with guidelines and procedures for participation in the employee Tuition Reimbursement Program.

### 2. Policy

The Harford County Sheriff's Office supports the efforts of individual employees to improve their job-related skills and knowledge by acquiring the education necessary to enhance their skills or prepare for career-related promotional opportunities. Therefore, eligible employees will be reimbursed for educational courses related to the advancement of their education in pursuit of a Harford County Sheriff's Office work-related degree, contingent upon the availability of funds for the program. This program represents one element of the Office's investment in its workforce.

### 3. Procedures

#### A. Eligibility

1. All non-temporary, full-time classified employees who have successfully completed one year of service, preceding the first day of class for which reimbursement is requested, are eligible for benefits under this policy.
2. Approved employees may request financial assistance for job related courses taken in pursuit of a degree, at an approved and accredited post-secondary educational institution as defined by the United States Department of Education. Employees may request reimbursement for a course of study that is related to their current position or another career path within Harford County Sheriff's Office.
  - a. Determination if the course of study is related to the employee's current position or another career path within the HCSO will be made by the employee's Division Commander.
  - b. If reimbursement is denied, appeals and supporting documentation may be submitted to the employee's Bureau Chief, via memorandum.

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3. An employee will be denied tuition reimbursement while suspended, assigned to an altered duty status as a result of an internal investigation, or on extended sick leave. Denial based on these difficulties will be made at the time of pre-approval; however could also be made at the time of a reimbursement request.
4. Any employee who receives an unsatisfactory performance evaluation will be ineligible for tuition reimbursement. He will regain eligibility upon receiving a satisfactory evaluation.
5. Any employee on an approved leave of absence without pay will be ineligible for tuition reimbursement.

**B. Limitations**

1. Fiscal Year Limit – On a fiscal basis, a maximum compensation amount is allocated per degree program. Currently, contingent upon availability of funds in the program; full time employees may receive up to the following maximum amounts for approved educational expenses:
  - a. Undergraduate – Eligible Associate Degree .....\$2500 Maximum
  - b. Undergraduate – Eligible Bachelor Degree .....\$4500 Maximum
  - c. Graduate – Eligible Master’s or Doctorate .....\$6500 Maximum
2. The available tuition reimbursement funding for the fiscal year will be divided equally between the fall and spring semesters. The allotment for each semester will be equally disbursed among the employees pre-approved, not exceeding the maximums outlined above.

**C. Covered Expenses**

1. Expenses eligible for reimbursement include college-level tuition, required lab fees and required books.
  - a. NOTE: Colleges or universities may grant credit hours for prior training or experience, e.g. military service, lifetime learning. Similarly, college credit hours can be obtained through a prior learning assessment (Test-Out). Credit hours attained as described above do not meet the criteria for tuition reimbursement.
2. Other miscellaneous expenses such as parking, supplies, athletic fees, computer access charges, etc. are not reimbursable under this policy.
3. Employees who receive application based sources of financial aid such as grants, scholarships or benefits under the GI Bill, which do not require repayment, may not seek reimbursement under this policy for said course work or expenses paid by such financial aid.
  - a. In the event that other financial aid does not fully cover such expenses, the employee may seek reimbursement under this policy for the amount not covered by the financial aid.
  - b. Employees are obligated to disclose any financial aid information that does not have to be repaid on the pre-approval form.

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- c. Providing false information or failure to provide financial aid information may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
4. Reimbursement under HCSO Tuition Reimbursement Program is non-taxable, up to the maximum allowed, pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code, Section 127. Tuition Reimbursements paid by the Agency should be reflected during the employee's income tax preparation.

**D. Reimbursement Scale**

1. Employees will be reimbursed based on the grade scale listed below:
  - a. A = 100% reimbursement
  - b. B = 100% reimbursement
  - c. C = 50% reimbursement (Undergraduate only)
  - d. D, F, or Incomplete = No reimbursement
2. Should the educational institution offer a pass/fail grading system which may be selected at the student's option, the Agency will pay 50% for a pass and 0% for a fail.
3. Should the educational institution's grading method be only a pass/fail system, the Agency will pay 100% for a pass and 0% for a fail.

**E. Pre-approval**

1. Employees must apply for funding a minimum of 30 days prior to term starting using the HCSO Tuition Reimbursement Pre-Approval Form (SO-176A); applications for previous terms will not be considered.
2. All Employees must submit their request for pre-approval to their Division Commander.
3. A copy of the course description from the college catalog must be attached to the Tuition Reimbursement Pre-Approval Form.
4. Upon receipt of a Tuition Reimbursement Pre-Approval Form (SO-176A), the Division Commander will confirm that the employee is eligible by verifying employment time with the Agency, satisfactory evaluation, and also determine if the course description is career oriented.
5. If approved by the employee's Division Commander the Tuition Reimbursement Pre-Approval Form (SO-176A) will be forwarded to the Human Resources Manager.
6. The Human Resources Manager will confirm that the employee is eligible for the program by employment time with the Agency, satisfactory evaluation, and also by way of a review of the course description. Any discrepancies observed by the Human Resources Manager will be discussed with the employee's Division Commander.
7. If approved by the employee's Division Commander and the Human Resources Manager, the Tuition Reimbursement Pre-Approval Form (SO-176A) will be forwarded to the Budget Manager for final approval.

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8. The Budget Manager will approve the Tuition Reimbursement Pre-Approval Form (SO-176A) based on the availability of allotted funding. If funding is not available, the form will be denied and sent back to the employee's Division Commander.
9. Applicants will be notified by the Budget Manager via Agency email of their pre-approval acceptance. They will also be notified by the Budget Manager of the available reimbursement amount. The available reimbursement amount will be dependent upon the semester allotment and the number of employees requesting assistance.
10. The employee's Division Commander will notify the employee if the pre-approval is denied for any reason.

**F. Tuition Reimbursement**

1. Employees with authorized pre-approval must pre-pay for all courses and the Agency will reimburse employees as follows:
  - a. Upon completion of the course, the employee will complete a Tuition Reimbursement Form (SO-176B).
  - b. The Tuition Reimbursement Form (SO-176B) must be submitted to the Human Resources Manager no later than 30 days following the completion of the course. This form must be submitted with the following supplemental documentation:
    - i. A copy of the employee's official report card with final grade.
    - ii. Itemized original receipts with the college name on each document (credit card receipts are not acceptable).
2. The Human Resources Manager will review the Tuition Reimbursement Form (SO-176B) and documentation provided by the employee. Any discrepancies will be discussed with the employee and his Division Commander if necessary.
3. If approved, the Tuition Reimbursement Form (SO-176B) will be forwarded to the Budget Manager for approval.
4. The Budget Manager will review the Tuition Reimbursement Form (SO-176B) and documentation. Any discrepancies will be discussed with the employee and his Division Commander if necessary.
5. Once the Tuition Reimbursement Form (SO-176B) is approved, the Budget Manager will submit the request for disbursement of funds through the Harford County Government.
6. The Budget Manager will forward the approved Tuition Reimbursement Form (SO-176B) to the Human Resources Manager for retention in the employee's personnel file.

**G. Employee Repayment Obligation**

1. An Employee who requests to participate in the Tuition Reimbursement Program is required to use reasonable efforts to complete their course of study.

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2. Employees who wish to receive funding through the Tuition Reimbursement Program are obligated to repay the Agency if the following commitments are not met:
  - a. A two year employment commitment, from the date of the last reimbursement payment, is required for participation in the Tuition Reimbursement Program.
  - b. The Employee's repayment obligation will be satisfied two years after the date of the most recent tuition reimbursement payment. This means that an employee will have no obligation to pay Harford County Sheriff's Office for monies received toward tuition assistance if, on the second annual anniversary of that tuition reimbursement payment, the employee has remained employed with HCSO.
  - c. In the event the employee retires, voluntarily resigns his employment with Harford County Sheriff's Office or said employment is terminated "for cause" within two years after any reimbursement is made, the employee shall immediately pay an amount equal to the monies received within the most recent twenty-four months of the date of separation.
3. Repayment will be made by the employee by use of a personal check or cashier's check made payable to the Harford County Sheriff's Office. This payment will be made directly to the Budget Manager.
4. If repayment has not been made within 45 days after separation, the nonpayment issues will be turned over to the Harford County Law Department for possible civil litigation.

*Approved*  
  
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**JEFFREY R. GAHLER**  
**SHERIFF**  
**DATE** 9-9-16