

# Get Help Paying for Graduate School

## Tips on how to ask your employer for tuition reimbursement

Nearly half of U.S.-based companies offer educational support programs to employees<sup>1</sup>, so your organization might already have a system to help pay for your graduate education. If there isn't an educational support program, you may still be able to convince the management team to grant your request. Either way, these guidelines can help you secure tuition support from your employer.

### FIND OUT WHAT'S AVAILABLE

Start by investigating any existing programs. Check your employee handbook, employee benefits portal, or talk with your HR representative to determine if your organization has an established program. If so, carefully review the agreement details, including any deadlines and the payment protocol. Some organizations may require you to pay upfront and reimburse you later, while others pay the academic institution directly.

If no program exists, work to develop a clear picture of your employer's potential response to your request. Review the organization's mission and values statements, along with relevant internal communications. Ask colleagues if they or anyone they know has sought tuition reimbursement and whether they were successful.

### DEVELOP YOUR CASE FOR SUPPORT

Whether or not there is an existing educational support program, you can use the information gathered from your inquiries to shape a successful proposal. Co-workers, and even contacts at other companies who have received tuition support, can provide first-hand insights on successfully navigating the process.

### Common employer tuition support conditions include:

- **Satisfactory completion of coursework.** Some programs offer different levels of support based on your grades
- **Tenure with the company.** Assistance programs are often available only after you've been with the organization for a certain amount of time
- **A commitment to stay with the organization.** You may be required to repay the support if you leave before a specified amount of time
- **An applicable course of study.** Some companies only pay for courses relevant to the business or the employee's role

### Ask your contacts about the following topics:

- What did they feel were convincing arguments?
- Did they make any missteps during the conversation?
- Do they have any advice about how your boss might respond?
- Would they suggest a particular approach to making your request?

## **BUILD YOUR CASE ON A SOLID FOUNDATION**

When you make your proposal, you want to show your employer that you're serious about the undertaking and will successfully manage your job and graduate school responsibilities. Arm yourself with all the relevant details about your chosen program. Consider giving your boss a copy of the information sheet for your chosen Kent State online program to show how it will improve your skills and make you a better employee. You can access the file here:

[MS in Clinical Epidemiology](#)

[MPH in Epidemiology](#)

[MPH in Health Policy and Management](#)

[MPH in Social and Behavioral Sciences](#)

## **SPEAK CONFIDENTLY ABOUT YOUR POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH**

While your employer may believe in the value of continuing education and understand your desire to grow as a professional, they will still want to hear how they'll benefit from offering you graduate school tuition reimbursement. You should be ready to list areas in which your program of choice will contribute to your professional development and, more importantly, how it will boost your performance at work. Speak confidently and put together a presentation or handout if you think it would help make your case

### **Be ready to share this information about your educational plans:**

- What school or schools are you applying to?
- Are you applying to a full-time or part-time program?
- Is it online, on campus, or a hybrid program?
- What is the tuition for the program?
- How long do you expect it will take you to complete the degree?
- How much time per week do you expect to spend on coursework?

### **Be ready to discuss how you will:**

- Gain a broader theoretical framework
- Master the use of new tools and techniques
- Enhance your strategic and communication skills
- Apply your new skills in your work

Whatever you want to get out of your graduate education, provide specific examples of projects and organizational goals at work that will benefit from your growth in the degree program.

## SHOW THE BOTTOM-LINE BENEFIT

Whether you work in a for-profit or a non-profit organization, what matters most to management is how supporting your education helps them meet the organization's goals. They might not initially see the organizational benefits of offering tuition reimbursement and may question the value of an activity that could divert some attention from your job. Prepare a compelling argument about the potential return on their investment, along with responses to likely questions. Approach your presentation with data in hand to show how supporting your education benefits the organization.

## Use data like this to show your employer how it pays to invest in developing skilled, productive and loyal members of the organization:

- The insurance company Cigna found that it got a 129% return on investment for its education reimbursement program<sup>2</sup>
- 51% of workers are passively or actively looking for a new job<sup>3</sup>
- 45% of millennials say they would change jobs to gain access to tuition reimbursement benefits<sup>4</sup>
- 80% of employees say tuition support programs make them more likely to stay with an organization<sup>5</sup>

Once you have your presentation ready, ask a co-worker or other trusted professional to play the role of your manager and critique it. If you need more information about your chosen program, contact an admissions outreach advisor.

Seeking your organization's support for your continued education is a positive step toward your future that can also provide real benefits for your employer. Keep going and you will soon reach your goal.

Take the next step toward realizing your goal.

**SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION →**

1. Retrieved on January 12, 2024, from <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/benefits-compensation/employers-leveraging-tuition-assistance-to-attract-retain-employees>
2. Retrieved on January 12, 2024, from [luminafoundation.org/news-and-views/2016-04-22-cigna-education-reimbursement-program](https://luminafoundation.org/news-and-views/2016-04-22-cigna-education-reimbursement-program)
3. Retrieved on January 12, 2024, from [gallup.com/workplace/513491/worrying-workplace-numbers.aspx](https://gallup.com/workplace/513491/worrying-workplace-numbers.aspx)
4. Retrieved on January 12, 2024, from [gallup.com/workplace/238085/state-american-workplace-report-2017.aspx](https://gallup.com/workplace/238085/state-american-workplace-report-2017.aspx)
5. Retrieved on January 12, 2024, from [fool.com/the-ascent/small-business/human-resources/articles/tuition-reimbursement/](https://fool.com/the-ascent/small-business/human-resources/articles/tuition-reimbursement/)