



# Employee Continuing Education and Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

## CITATION REFERENCE

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## Policy Statement

The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia is committed to creating a more educated Georgia. As part of its desire to achieve that goal and meet evolving employee needs, the University System of Georgia (USG) has established an educational assistance program, the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).

The purpose of TAP is to foster the professional growth and development of eligible employees. The policy also ensures institutions are consistent in their application of the policy. See BOR Policy Manual regarding [Career Development\( 8.2.15\)](#) and [Tuition Assistance Program Policy \(8.2.19\)](#).

## Applicability

All units of the USG are covered by this policy.

## Who Should Read This Policy

All Human Resources staff and employees within the USG should be aware of this policy.

## Definitions

These definitions apply to these terms as they are used in this policy:

- **Credential Seeking:** means a student who has been accepted for enrollment at a USG institution and who has formally indicated on their application the intent to complete an Associate degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's, Doctorate degree or Academic Certificate program.
- **Academic Certificate Program:** A program where a student takes academic courses and received academic credit and a letter grade towards an academic certificate program which does not include a professional certification or continuing education certification.
- **Eligible Employee:** An individual employed full-time in a regular, benefits-eligible position that has satisfactorily completed their six (6) month provisional period as of the date of the Tuition Assistance Application deadline.
- **Executive Total Cost Programs:** These programs are typically cohort structured and there is one set fee for the program, not per credit hour.
- **Full Time Employee:** A full time employee is an active employee who has a 1.0 FTE (full time equivalent) work commitment.
- **Home Institution:** The location where the employee conducts the major portion of his/her work and/or research is considered the "home institution." The "home institution" must be located within the State of Georgia. Exceptions: The home institution for an out-of-state employee is the employing institution located within the State of Georgia.
- **Limited-Slot Enrollment Program:** A limited-slot enrollment program is a degree program for which there are a limited number of spaces allowed in the program, and, for which there may be additional criteria required (such as work experience in a related field).
- **Student Fees:** TAP participants are identified as faculty or staff, and their status as a student is secondary in all considerations, including student fee waivers. The following fees are waived by all USG institutions for TAP attendees: tuition, student late registration fee, student technology fee, student health insurance fee, student activity fee, and student athletic/recreation fee. TAP attendees, whose student health fee, student activity fee, and athletic fee are waived, are ineligible for the services sponsored by these fees unless the fees are paid separately. Other student fees and charges, as defined by the "teaching institution," are not waived for TAP attendees. Such student fees must be paid as required by the course or institution (e.g., transcript, graduation, exam and testing fees, and lab fees).
- **Teaching Institution:** The "teaching institution" is the University System of Georgia institution at which a TAP participant has met the admissions requirements and is approved for enrollment in an academic credit course(s).

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- **Tuition Assistance:** Tuition assistance is the waiver of tuition and the waiver of certain fees (Please see Student Fees above). Tuition assistance requires an approved TAP application and space availability within the course(s) and/or degree program of the institution.
- **Tuition Waiver:** When an employee is allowed to take classes at a USG institution without payment of tuition and certain fees.

## **Process and Procedures**

### **TAP Program Guidelines**

The Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is an employee supplemental educational assistance program which results in the waiver of tuition and fees when an employee attends any University System of Georgia (USG) institution. Tuition assistance requires TAP application approval for each semester and is based upon space availability within the academic course(s) and/or degree program of the institution attended. A maximum of nine (9) credit hours may be requested for approval under the Tuition Assistance Program each semester for credential seeking participants.

Participation in the Tuition Assistance Program shall be available to full-time, credential seeking, benefits-eligible employees who have successfully completed at least six (6) months of employment in a benefits-eligible position as of the date of the Tuition Assistance Program application deadline for the desired academic semester. Full-time employees (who meet the applicable admissions standards and who have received appropriate prior authorization from their institution) may enroll in up to nine (9) academic semester credit hours for each of the three (3) designated semester periods: fall semester, spring semester, and summer semester.

Student status will be secondary to employee status in all considerations, including student fee waivers. Tuition assistance is the waiver of tuition and the waiver of certain fees. Tuition Assistance Program participation will be granted on a space-available basis. For limited-slot enrollment programs, approval must be granted by the teaching institution. An employee must receive a grade of C or better in each approved Tuition Assistance Program academic course.

Employees may not enroll in the following professional schools: dental, medical, pharmacy, veterinary, law, or executive total cost programs. (BR Minutes, September 2004)

The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia reserves the right to change this program, with or without notice.

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- **Employee Eligibility.**

The tuition assistance program is available to active full time (1.0 FTE) benefits-eligible employees of the USG who have successfully completed at least six (6) months of employment in a benefits-eligible position, as of the date of the TAP application deadline for the desired academic semester.

- **Part-Time Nursing Faculty Members.** Due to the current shortage of nursing faculty in the state of Georgia, the Tuition Assistance Program is available to Part-Time Nursing Faculty members seeking a graduate degree in Nursing. Any part-time nursing faculty member taking advantage of this program shall be required to work full time within the University System at least two (2) years following receipt of the graduate degree in Nursing (or Education if such would allow one to teach Nursing at the University level).

Participation in the Tuition Assistance Program for Nursing Faculty shall be available to part-time nursing faculty who have successfully completed at least six (6) months of employment, as of the date of the Tuition Assistance Program application deadline for the desired academic semester.

To ensure effective and smooth progression of nursing faculty recently hired by a USG nursing program and enrolled in a graduate level nursing program within the USG, the board will waive the requirement for 6 months previous employment in the USG for nursing faculty seeking to use the Tuition Assistance Program or Nursing Tuition Assistance Program to take graduate level nursing courses within the USG. This waiver will apply only for nursing faculty hired prior to October 1, 2012, to ensure students can enroll in classes with TAP support for Spring Semester (January 2013). The employment requirement will be in effect for accessing the TAP after enrollment January 2013.

- **Ineligible Programs.** Employees may not enroll in certain programs or courses of study under the TAP policy. Those ineligible programs, or courses of study, include academic courses in the following professional schools: dental, law, medical, pharmacy, veterinary, or executive total cost programs. Other ineligible programs, or courses of study, include: workshops, seminars, continuing education courses (e.g. Certified Public Accountant (C.P.A.) exam preparation courses, management development programs, special examinations for admissions to degree programs, or private consultant refresher courses to take examinations such as a professional certification (e.g. SHRM, Project Management, etc.) , non-academic certificate programs, admissions examinations, and other similar types of programs or classes. Support for these types of programs may be provided by departmental policies.

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- **Admissions Process.** An employee will be required to go through the regular student admissions process, prior to applying for TAP; and an employee must complete a TAP application for each semester in attendance.
- **Maximum Credits.** An employee may seek approval to enroll in up to nine (9) academic semester credit hours for each of the three designated semester periods: Fall Semester, Spring Semester, and Summer Semester (includes Maymester).
- **Work Schedule Arrangements.** To the extent possible, no employee should take a course(s) that would require him/her to be absent from work during regularly scheduled work hours. If attendance in an approved TAP course requires that an employee be absent from his/her assigned workstation during normal work hours, various accommodations may be possible, depending upon the needs of the unit/department and of the employee. The supervisor must certify that the employee's participation in TAP will not adversely affect departmental services or result in undue hardship for other employees. Alternate work arrangements will only be granted at the discretion of the TAP Participant's immediate supervisor. Supervisors are encouraged to make a reasonable effort to find an appropriate work schedule accommodation.
- **University System of Georgia TAP Coordinators.** The name, title, address, e-mail address, telephone number, and FAX number for each institutional TAP Coordinator may be found on the University System of Georgia TAP Coordinators [website](#).
- **University System of Georgia (USG) Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) Application Form.** There is a single University System of Georgia TAP application form. The TAP application form can be found by clicking this Systemwide TAP Application Form link on the TAP [website](#).
- **TAP Application Deadlines.** The following University System of Georgia TAP application deadlines will apply to all University System of Georgia institutions: (If any of these dates fall on a holiday or on a weekend, the application deadline will be the last business day prior to the dates identified.)
  - **Fall Semester** – July 15<sup>th</sup>
  - **Spring Semester** – November 15<sup>th</sup>
  - **Summer Semester** – April 15<sup>th</sup> (includes Maymester)

TAP Application Process Flow. Reference Section II and III below for detailed application process.



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- **Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) Registration.** Each teaching institution will establish its TAP employee registration period. The TAP employee registration period will begin at least three (3) days prior to the first day of classes, but not on the same day or prior to the beginning of the student registration period(s). The dates for the employee registration period at each teaching institution are listed on the TAP Employee Registration Dates website. TAP enrollment is granted on a space-available basis.
- **Grade Requirements.** An employee must receive a grade of “C,” or better, in each approved TAP course. The Teaching Institution TAP Coordinator will validate grades during application process.

An employee who receives a grade of “D,” or below, in an approved TAP course will be ineligible to participate in the TAP program for the next academic semester. However, the TAP participant will not be personally responsible for repayment/reimbursement for the course.

An employee, who receives an “Incomplete” in an approved TAP course, will have until the end of the following semester to complete the coursework and submit his/her final course grade to the TAP Coordinator of the “home institution.” An employee must do this to participate in the TAP program the next academic semester.

- **Other Restrictions and/or Conditions**
  - **Grants.** TAP is a supplemental educational assistance employee program. An employee who is eligible for Pell any type of grants or scholarship must apply their money toward tuition and fees before receiving a TAP waiver.
  - **Withdrawals.** If an employee withdraws from an approved TAP course prior to its completion, the employee will be ineligible to participate in TAP for the next academic semester.
  - **Eligibility for TAP participation does not guarantee admission into all University System of Georgia degree or academic certification programs:** \* Employees must follow the policies and procedures of the “teaching institution” in which they enroll to be formally accepted as a TAP participant for limited-slot enrollment programs. Upon receiving approval to participate in a limited-slot enrollment program from the “teaching institution,” the course(s) should be listed by the employee on the TAP application and the employee should communicate to the teaching institution’s program administrator that you are a TAP participant.
  - **Participation in the TAP program does not guarantee continued employment with the University System of Georgia.**

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- **Appeals.** An employee may not appeal any institutional decision regarding the TAP program to the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Each USG institution will utilize its internal review process to review TAP application denials.

**Tax implications for Participants**

Undergraduate educational assistance benefits are generally excluded from tax reporting or withholdings. Graduate educational assistance benefits are excludable from tax reporting and withholding up to \$5,250 annually. Graduate educational assistance in excess of \$5,250 will generally be subject to tax reporting and withholdings except under certain circumstances. Any employee who believes that they are eligible to exclude graduate education costs in excess of \$5,250 must apply by completing the Graduate Student Tax Waiver Application.

**TAP Application Process**

Employee

- Completes and signs either the [Systemwide TAP Application Form](#) or the [Systemwide Part-Time Nursing TAP Application Form](#) (See process for Part time Nursing Faculty below)
- Submits the TAP application to their immediate supervisor for review

Immediate Supervisor

- Promptly reviews the TAP application and advises the employee if their request is approved or denied
- Advises the employee if their work hours must be rescheduled; or if the employee's class hours must be reported as annual leave (if available). This occurs if an approved TAP course(s) is scheduled to meet during an employee's regularly scheduled work hours.
- Keeps record of alternate work arrangement, if applicable
- Signs the approved TAP application, if applicable
  - If denied, signature is not required.
- Retains a copy of the approved TAP application for departmental and personnel files

Employee

- Forwards the original application with supervisor approval to the TAP Coordinator of the home institution by semester deadlines:
  - **Fall Semester** – July 15th
  - **Spring Semester** – November 15th
  - **Summer Semester** – April 15th (which includes Maymester)
- Retains a copy of the approved TAP application for personal record
  - Once approved to participate, registers for TAP course(s) during the designated employee registration period of the "teaching institution "Please see [www.usg.edu/employment/benefits/tuition/](http://www.usg.edu/employment/benefits/tuition/). If a desired course(s) is filled before the

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employee registration period, the employee must receive approval from his/her immediate supervisor to enroll in an alternate course(s) if it impacts the employee's work schedule in any way.

TAP Coordinator of the Home Institution

- Will send email to confirm receipt and then a separate one within 30 days of the application deadline to confirm participant eligibility and participation in the program each semester.

TAP Coordinator of the Teaching Institution

- Will verify previous semester grades and send decision to Home Institution TAP coordinator within 30 days of application deadline each semester.

### **TAP Application Process for Part-Time Nursing Faculty**

Part time nursing faculty not currently enrolled in a graduate level nursing education program must apply for and be admitted into chosen program of study (i.e., MSN, DNS, DNP, EdD) at USG institution of choice. Coverage for pre-requisites will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- Complete the Part-Time Nursing Faculty TAP application and obtain the appropriate institution level signatures in accordance with posted TAP deadlines
- Submit Part-Time Nursing TAP Application to USG Nursing TAP Coordinator at fax number 404-962-3094 no later than the deadline date for each semester (Fall July 15, Spring November 15, Summer April 15) for final approval.
- Upon approval, The USG Nursing TAP Coordinator will submit to Teaching Institution TAP Coordinator, no later than eight (8) business days after posted TAP deadline date, part time faculty have been approved to enter into the TAP, or of any other changes to individual eligibility status for beneficiaries of the nursing TAP.
- The Institutional TAP coordinator will submit the names of approved TAP Nursing participants along with other approved TAP participants for tuition waivers to be applied.
- In accordance with existing TAP policy, nursing programs educating Nursing TAP beneficiaries will submit grades to the USG Nursing TAP coordinator. The USG Nursing TAP coordinator will then submit this information to appropriate leadership with the nursing program employing the part time nursing faculty.
- TAP Applications must be completed every semester for which part time nursing faculty would like to take classes and access the benefit of the Nursing TAP.



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Responsible Parties and Contact Information

<b>Party</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Phone/Email/URL</b>
<b>Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, USG</b>	Ensure compliance with policy.	404-962-3235 <a href="mailto:usg-hr@usg.edu">usg-hr@usg.edu</a>
<b>Institution Chief Human Resources Officers</b>	Ensure compliance with policy.	See University System <a href="#">HR Officer Listing</a>
<b>Institution TAP Coordinator Home Institution</b>	Ensure appropriate campus communications regarding policy, deadlines, etc., Receive and evaluate applications for approval in compliance with policy; notify applicants of decision. Serve as liaison to the TAP Coordinator at Teaching Institution.	See University System Tap Coordinator Listing  <a href="#">University System of Georgia TAP Coordinators</a>
<b>USG Nursing TAP Coordinator</b>	Review Part-Time Nursing Tap applications	USG Nursing TAP Coordinator Fax. 404-962-3094
<b>Institution TAP Coordinator Teaching Institution</b>	Serve as liaison to Home Institution TAP Coordinator; Evaluate applications for approval in compliance with policy; notify Home institution of decision.	

Appendices (Internal Documents, Forms and Web Links)

- [Board Policy on Tuition Assistance](#)
- [Board Policy on Career Development](#)
- [Employee Benefits Webpage on Tuition Assistance](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Graduate Student Tax Waiver Application](#)
- [Systemwide TAP Application Form](#)
- [Systemwide Part-Time Nursing TAP Application Form](#)
- [TAP Employee Registration Dates](#)

Related Documents and Resources (External)

- None

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