

Tuition reimbursement

How to request academic financial assistance from your employer

More than half of U.S.-based companies offer educational support programs to employees¹, so there's a decent chance your organization already has a system in place to help pay for your academic endeavors. Whether the practice exists already or not, it can be a bit nerve-racking to speak to your management team about helping you finance your degree. Follow our guidelines below to make sure you're ready for this important conversation.

1. Understand your options

Check your employee handbook, employee benefits portal, or talk with a colleague or your HR representative to find out if your organization has an established program or history of providing (or denying) tuition reimbursement. If educational support is available, make sure to review the agreement details, including 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, keep those considerations in mind when preparing your proposal seeking support.

2. Work your network

Ask around at your workplace to find out if any of your co-workers have been successful in appealing for employer assistance with financing their education and find out how they went about the process. You can also reach out to connections you know at other organizations to find out how their management handles education financing.

3. Be ready with the details

When the time comes for your actual face-to-face conversation with your employer, make sure you have complete information about the program you're interested in and answers to all the questions you anticipate receiving from your management team. Consider giving your boss a copy of the [Marquette University online M.S. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling](#) to show how the program will improve your skills and make you a better employee. Being prepared with this information will not only help ease any concerns your employer may have, but also will present you in the best possible light as someone very serious about the magnitude of your educational undertaking.

Common conditions for employer education assistance include:

- **Satisfactory completion of course work.** Some programs offer different levels of support based on your grades
- **Tenure with the company.** Some companies require that you work at the company for a certain amount of time before you can take advantage of education assistance
- **A commitment to stay with the company for a certain amount of time.** One to two years after the last support payment is typical
- **An applicable course of study.** Some companies only pay for courses relevant to the business or the employee's role

Check in with your contacts on 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 on the topic or an approach that might work to get support for your request?

You should have all of the essential information about the graduate school or schools to which you are applying:

- 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 course work?

1.) Retrieved on February 8, 2022, from shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/documents/shrm%20employee%20benefits%202019%20executive%20summary.pdf

4. 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 what they will get out of their decision to offer you graduate school tuition reimbursement. You should be ready to clearly list areas in which your program of choice will contribute to your professional development, and more importantly, how it will elevate your skills as a counselor. Speak with confidence and pull together a presentation or handout if you think it would help make your case.

Be ready to discuss how you will:

- Learn the foundations of behavior through biological, psychological, social and cultural lenses and evidence-based approaches to individuals and groups
- Serve as an advocate for the mental healthcare of underserved individuals and communities
- Build critical practices, such as self-awareness and reflection, into your role as a counselor
- Develop clinical mental health counseling skills in prevention and treatment for individuals as well as groups
- Gain the knowledge and experience to better serve young clients (if you're pursuing the child and adolescent specialization)

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

5. Show the Impact on Their Bottom Line

At the end of the day, the bottom line is likely what matters most to your employer. They may not be prepared initially to see the quantifiable benefits of offering graduate school tuition reimbursement, and they may even question the value of investing in an activity that may divert some of your attention from work. Direct their focus to the positive return on investment of helping you pay for school by approaching your conversation with data in hand.

Use this information and provide other data to show your employer that it pays to spend smartly on training a capable, productive workforce:

- Cite specific examples such as a 2016 study by health insurance company Cigna which found that every dollar invested in employee education resulted in \$1.29 in savings, or a 129% return on investment²
- 45% of millennials say they would change jobs to gain access to tuition reimbursement benefits³
- 76% of employees said they are more likely to stay with their employer because of its tuition reimbursement options⁴

Once you have all your information together, practice your pitch and even do a trial run with a co-worker or other trusted professional who can come up with questions that your management team might ask. If you think you're missing any information about the [online M.S. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling](#), [contact an admissions outreach advisor](#).

Good luck on your presentation!

Submit your application.

2.) Retrieved on May 17, 2022, from luminafoundation.org/news-and-views/2016-04-22-cigna-education-reimbursement-program

3.) Retrieved on May 17, 2022, from gallup.com/workplace/238085/state-american-workplace-report-2017.aspx

4.) Retrieved on May 17, 2022, from instride.com/insights/tuition-reimbursement-statistics/#:~:text=Data%20reveals%20that%20while%2080,actually%20participate%20in%20these%20programs.