

Policy Statement on Sponsoring Further Education for Employees of the CC

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The CC's training priority is to give all employees full induction into the work of the CC and to ensure that all employees have the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to carry out their current role effectively.
- 1.2. In addition, the CC has set aside some funding to sponsor employees in studying towards formal qualifications if they are relevant to the broad objectives of the CC.
- 1.3. This Policy Statement covers the process for handling such applications. The CC is particularly keen to encourage employees who have no formal qualifications or have not been involved in academic study for a long while, to return to study. For this reason, employees meeting this criteria will be given priority, although all applications will be carefully considered.
- 1.4. The decision to study should not be taken lightly. Working and studying is a heavy burden. Anyone deciding to undertake a course sponsored by the CC should understand that their priority must be to maintain and strive to continuously improve their job performance.
- 1.5. If a CC employee is required to attend an extended course of study that is essential to their current role at the CC they do not need to apply for sponsorship under this Policy Statement (see the Training Request Form on the CCIntranet). However, to ensure fair and equal treatment, the rates given here for set course materials, study leave and other costs still apply. The CC would recommend that line managers also use this Policy Statement to inform discussion with the employee on the CC's expectations when funding extended courses of study.

2. Objectives

2.1. By sponsoring eligible employees for training towards qualifications, the CC hopes to:

- encourage employees with the potential, drive and interest to develop their skills and knowledge to support the CC's work;
- attract talented people to work in the CC;
- ensure that employees have the skills and knowledge they need for their current role, and in areas the CC has identified it will find useful in the future;
- help prepare employees for future career opportunities.

3. Criteria

3.1. The CC will consider further education or professional development courses which lead to a recognised qualification or accreditation. As a guide, priority will be given to courses that enable the student to:

- help the CC to meet its stated goals and objectives in the short and long term;
- develop new skills which, although they may not be directly related to the applicant's current role, would contribute to his or her ability to fulfil a useful role in the CC.

3.2. Examples of the type of courses which the CC would encourage are:

- GCSEs, AS and A levels,
- First degrees
- NVQs, post-graduate diplomas and professional qualifications in areas related to the work of the CC.

4. Tuition fees

4.1. If the CC agrees to sponsor a student, a sliding scale of support will be considered. Normally, the CC will pay up to 80% of the total fees of a suitable course. If the applicant wishes to study for GCSEs, AS or A levels or a first degree, then the CC may consider financing 100% of the course fees.

4.2. The decision on the level of support will be based on how useful the course is considered to be: to the CC; to the student's role now and in the future; the overall cost of the course; and the funding available.

- 4.3. The CC will pay the proportion of fees they agree to cover direct to the institution on the submission of an invoice. The student will be expected to organise payment of the balance.

5. Examination fees

- 5.1. The CC will pay all first attempt examination fees for courses it has sponsored. If the student fails all or part of an examination he or she will be responsible for paying the fees for any resits. The CC will reimburse the fee for a resit-examination which is passed by the student.

6. Membership fees

- 6.1. The CC will pay, from the Learning and Development budget, membership fees to a professional organisation which is compulsory for a student studying for a course sponsored by the CC. This will not normally be more than one organisation. The membership should be paid first, and the student will be reimbursed on the production of an original receipt.
- 6.2. Other requests for reimbursement of membership fees for professional organisations from employees not undertaking study should be made through the Finance department.

7. Set course materials

- 7.1. On CC sponsored courses, the CC will pay up to £100 for set course materials. Materials (books, CD-roms, etc.) must be purchased first, and the student will be reimbursed on the production of an original receipt and a copy of the course list of materials. Students will be responsible for covering all other resource costs.
- 7.2. Some modes of study include course materials in the overall fees (e.g. distance learning courses). In these cases, no extra support will be given.
- 7.3. All materials purchased under this policy will belong to the student.

8. Other costs

- 8.1. The CC will pay travel, accommodation and subsistence at its usual rates for employees attending courses (for details of the rates, please refer to the Office Notice 01/02 on CCInfo or ask the Finance department).

9. Study leave

9.1. CC sponsored students are expected to use their free time to study and attend contact sessions at the institution where they study (unless an alternative mode of study, such as day release, is agreed by the line manager at the application stage). The CC will add its support to such endeavours by granting special study leave as shown below.

GCSE or equivalent level	Two days over the duration of the course
AS or A level or equivalent level	Four days over the duration of the course
Degree or equivalent level	Six days over the duration of the course (four days if some contact time is during working hours; two days if all contact time is during work hours)
Post-graduate qualifications diplomas	Four days over the duration of the course (two days if some contact time is during working hours; one day if all contact time is during work hours)
Day release	One day per year (12 months) of the course.
Distance learning (target completion date must be agreed in advance)	Two days per year (12 months) of the course (one day per year of the course if any or all contact time is during work hours)

In addition, all CC sponsored students may take special leave to attend examinations.

10. Reimbursement

10.1. All CC sponsored students will be required to sign a learning contract and this will include an undertaking in relation to reimbursement of fees. The following is a summary of the reimbursement provisions, but for the actual terms see the Learning Contract attached.

10.2. The CC will require its sponsored students to reimburse it for course fees, books, examination costs and membership fees, under the following circumstances:

- (a) the student fails to pass the course and the CC is satisfied that this was owing to a lack of effort, or failure to pay the portion of the fees for which the student is responsible, or because of misconduct such as cheating;
- (b) the student's employment with the CC is terminated at a time when the student has not completed the course;
- (c) the student passes the course, but the student's employment with the CC is terminated within the period of 12 months beginning with the date of completion of the course.

- 10.3. The exceptions to this will be if the student is made redundant from the CC or is retired on medical grounds. Other similar circumstances will also be considered.
- 10.4. At each new stage of a course (i.e. each time payment is due), the CC may decide not to continue sponsorship. The decision will be taken by the Head of Human Resources after discussion with the HR Manager (L&D), the student and his or her line manager. The reason for this will normally be that the line manager has substantiated concerns that the employee's work performance is being adversely affected or that the student is not putting any effort into the course. The reason for this decision will be given in writing and the student will not be asked to reimburse any earlier costs.
- 10.5. Reimbursement will be in full in the circumstances described in paragraph 10.2(a) or (b). In the circumstances described in paragraph 10.2(c), reimbursement will be on a sliding scale. The CC will give credit to the student for any money they recover. These conditions are set out in detail in Section 4 of the Learning Contract attached.

11. Learning contract

- 11.1. All CC sponsored students will be expected to sign a learning contract showing that they understand and agree to this Policy Statement. The contract is between the CC, represented by the HR Manager (L&D), the student and his or her line manager. The contract will be signed after discussion between the three parties on the level of commitment needed and the adjustments that may be needed to work patterns, etc. to support the student in successfully completing his or her chosen course.
- 11.2. The CC expects sponsored students to make a reasonable effort to achieve a good pass in their examinations and assignments (usually above grade C, merit, or equivalent).
- 11.3. The student will be asked to submit the training provider's assessment of his or her performance in assignments and examinations at the end of each stage of a course.
- 11.4. Students who draw on the work they undertake at the CC in written or oral submissions as part of their course work must take care that they do not reveal any information that could be damaging to the CCs reputation or compromise its independence and the need for confidentiality in any way. Current inquiries under investigation or not-yet published should never be referred to in a student's work.
- 11.5. If a student has any concerns about the suitability of a topic being considered as course work in this respect, he or she should discuss these concerns with the HR Manager (L&D), or, in her absence, the Head of Human Resources.

11.6. Students may be asked to have written assignments cleared by the CC before submitting them to ensure they do not contain any information which might compromise the CC.

12. Application for sponsorship

12.1. Students who wish to be sponsored on a course, will need to demonstrate that they understand the need to put in the necessary effort to gain a reasonable level of attainment as a result of attending.

12.2. The application should be in the form of a letter to the HR Manager (L&D) and needs to include the following:

- Name and eligibility (e.g. length of service, length and type of contract, etc.).
- Course details (cost, duration, level, subject, course outline, book list, provider, number of assignments/examinations, number of training days, anticipated time away from work, start date of course, etc.).
- Deadline for enrolment.
- How the course will benefit you and your performance in your current role.
- How the course will benefit the CC in the context of the CC's aims and objectives.
- A letter or email of support from your line manager (*see Section 13 below for more detail*).

13. Line manager support

13.1. The student's line manager must support the application for sponsorship and confirm that he or she believes the student has the ability, drive and commitment to complete the course successfully.

13.2. The line manager must have a reasonable expectation that the student will remain in the employ of the CC for 12 months after completing the course.

13.3. The student will need to work with his or her line manager to make sure that their job performance will not suffer as a result of this extra activity (and agree action to be taken to avoid this).

13.4. The line manager should consider CC sponsored study as an area for which SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) targets should be set and monitored.

14. Decision

14.1. The decision on whether to sponsor an employee on a course is made by the HR Manager (L&D) in consultation with the Head of Human Resources

taking into account the criteria set out in Section 4.2 of this Policy Statement.

14.2. If an applicant for a job at the CC has already started a course there is no guarantee that an application for financial support will be approved. The terms under which the CC might be willing to sponsor studies should be discussed with the HR Manager (Recruitment & Employee Relations) before the appointment is confirmed.

15. Appeal procedure

15.1. If an application for sponsorship is declined the student will be informed of the reasons at a meeting and then in writing. The student may appeal against the decision, in writing. Appeals will be referred either to the Director of Resources and Planning or the Chief Executive. The decision at this stage will be final.

16. Timetable

16.1. There will usually be two meetings held each year to discuss sponsorship. The meetings will be held in November for January/February enrolment, and in July for September/October enrolment. *Ad hoc* meetings will be arranged to consider training commencing outside these periods.

17. Evaluation

17.1. Learning and Development are committed to evaluating all their learning activities to assess how well they are helping the CC deliver its objectives. Students who are sponsored by the CC will be asked to participate in evaluation exercises, against objectives set out in the learning contract, to assess the learning outcomes from their course. Evaluation will continue throughout the duration of the course and after its completion.

18. Policy review

18.1. This policy should be reviewed by the CC Executive Group every two years. The next review should take place in March 2005.

Learning Contract

To support the Policy Statement on Sponsoring Further Education for Employees of the CC

The agreements below should be signed only after a meeting between the student, his or her line manager and a member of the Human Resources (L&D) team. A note of this meeting, recording any action points and assurances made by the participants, should be attached to the agreement.

Agreement from the CC

The CC agrees to contribute to the costs of my taking the course described in the Schedule at the end of this document in accordance with sections 4 to 8 of the attached Policy Statement. The period of the course and the proportion of fees payable by the CC for the purposes of those sections are also set out in the Schedule.

However:

- (a) the CC reserves the right to discontinue payments in accordance with section 10(4) of the Policy Statement;
- (b) the CC reserves the right to discontinue payments upon the termination of the student's employment with the CC;
- (c) the agreement is subject to the student signing the Learning and the Reimbursement agreements set out below.

Signed by representative of Human Resources (L&D) _____

Print name _____

Date _____

Learning agreement and acknowledgments from the student

I understand that that by accepting sponsorship from the CC, I am committing myself to a difficult challenge of reaching an acceptable standard of achievement in my studies whilst not allowing my job performance to suffer.

I agree to submit assessments of my performance in assignments and examinations to the HR Manager (L&D) and my line manager at the end of each stage of the course.

I have taken particular note of sections 11.4 to 11.6 of the Policy which state the following:

Students who draw on the work they undertake at the CC in written or oral submissions as part of their course work must take care that they do not reveal any information that could be damaging to the CCs reputation or compromise its independence and the need for confidentiality in any way. Current inquiries under investigation or not-yet published should never be referred to in a student's work.

If a student has any concerns about the suitability of a topic being considered as course work in this respect, he or she should discuss these concerns with the HR Manager (L&D), or, in her absence, the Head of Human Resources.

Students may be asked to have written assignments cleared by the CC before submitting them to ensure they do not contain any information which might compromise the CC.

Signed by the student _____

Print name _____

Date _____

Reimbursement undertaking and authority from the student

1. In consideration of the CC agreeing to contribute to the costs of my taking the course described in the Schedule at the end of this document, I give the following undertakings and acknowledgments.

2. I undertake to reimburse the CC in respect of its payments if:

- (a) I fail to pass the course and the CC is satisfied that this was owing to a lack of effort, or my failure to pay the portion of the fees for which I am responsible, or because of misconduct such as cheating;
- (b) my employment with the CC is terminated at a time when I have not completed the course;

- (c) I pass the course but my employment with the CC is terminated within the period of 12 months beginning with the date that I completed the course.
3. The amount I undertake to reimburse the CC in the circumstances described in paragraph 2(a) or (b) shall be the full amount it has paid in accordance with sections 4 and 8 of the Policy Statement.
4. The amount I undertake to reimburse the CC in the circumstances described in paragraph 2(c) shall be the full amount it has paid in accordance with sections 4 and 8 of the Policy Statement less 1/365 of that amount for each day that my employment continues after the date that I complete the course (1/366 if the 12 month period comprises 366 days).
5. Paragraphs 2 shall cease to apply if the CC, in accordance with section 10.4 of the Policy Statement, decides not to continue my sponsorship.
6. Paragraph 2(b) and (c) above shall not apply if my employment with the CC terminates —
- (a) upon my being retired on medical grounds;
 - (b) upon my being dismissed by reason of redundancy (within the meaning of the Employment Protection Act 1996); or
 - (c) upon death.
7. I understand that the CC will give me credit for any of its expenditure it recovers from the course provider, but acknowledge that it is under no obligation to seek to recover its expenditure in that way and that failure by the CC to seek to do so shall not affect my liability under the above undertakings.
8. (1) The circumstances in which I shall be regarded as failing to pass the course are set out in the Schedule at the end of this document.
- (2) The above references to my employment being terminated are references to my employment being terminated in any circumstances whatsoever, including resignation or dismissal with or without notice.
9. I hereby authorise the CC (without prejudice to its right to recover such sum by any other means) to recover any sum due to me under this undertaking by making one or more deductions from my salary as it in its absolute discretion it thinks fit.

Agreement from the line manager

I confirm that I have discussed the course and commitments with **{name}** and that I believe that **{he/she}** is capable of completing the course to a satisfactory level with no detrimental impact on **{his/her}** job performance.

I am willing to encourage and give all reasonable support to **{name}** to help **{him/her}** achieve the qualification and expect **{him/her}** to approach me with any difficulties so we can jointly negotiate appropriate solutions.

Signed by the line manager _____

Print name _____

Date _____

THE SCHEDULE

The course/learning institution:

The period of the course:

Target completion date:

The proportion of fees payable by the CC:

The circumstances in which the student will be regarded as having failed to pass the course:

The number of special leave days agreed: