
FURTHER EDUCATION SPONSORSHIP POLICY

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1. Policy Statement

Individual sponsorship for further education courses or other external professional qualifications will be considered by the Company as a part of the commitment to help employees maximize their full potential, as outlined in the general Training & Development policy.

The Further Education Sponsorship Policy defines the procedure by which employees wishing to attend academic/vocational courses of study can apply for financial and non-financial assistance from the Company, and establishes the criteria for determining whether support should be given and to what extent.

By sponsoring eligible employees for training towards further education or professional qualifications, the Company seeks to:

- encourage employees with the potential, drive and interest to develop their skills and knowledge to support the aims of the business;
- attract and retain talented people within the Company;
- ensure employees have the skills and knowledge they need in their current role;
- help prepare employees for future career opportunities;
- aid effective succession planning within the Company.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all permanent and fixed term employees of SGS United Kingdom Ltd (the "Company"). However, sponsorship of a course of study that extends beyond the term of a fixed term contract will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances.

The policy applies to all courses of study that are taken in the employee's own time or on a day release basis, typically involving enrolment on a course with an academic/professional body, completion of coursework/examinations and culminating in a recognized qualification. Short external courses or any other training/seminars requested by the Company are not covered by this policy.

Financial assistance will not be offered for courses of study that bear little or no relevance to an individual's current or planned future role with the Company.

Financial assistance will not normally exceed £1,500 per person for each year of study. Any fees in excess of this will need prior approval from the Managing Director.

Finally, assistance will only be offered for a single course of study at any one time.

3. Authorisation Procedure

Employees wishing to embark on a Company-sponsored further education course must apply in writing using the Application for Further Education Funding form (Appendix 1), providing details of the proposed course, the relevant college or professional body, study duration, required attendance, fees, etc. A detailed justification should also be given in support of the application, outlining why this type of training programme is appropriate, reasons for the chosen course and perceived benefits to both the individual and Company.

Forms should then be submitted to the relevant line manager for initial discussions at least 2 months before the course is due to commence and, if approved in principle, forwarded to the head of the business or function for their consideration. If the application is supported,

completed forms should be forwarded to the Human Resources department for final approval by the UK HR Manager.

4. Criteria for Sponsorship

Company sponsorship of further education training is a sizable commitment both in terms of actual costs (course fees, registrations, etc,) as well as the time that is allowed away from the workplace to undertake studies. As such, sponsorship cannot always be guaranteed and applications will be scrutinised rigorously by operational management and Human Resources before funding is approved.

Any managers involved in assessing a Further Education application should do so by reference to the following criteria:-

- How relevant is the proposed course of study to the employee's current role in the Company?
- Will successful completion of the proposed studies,
 - ⇒ benefit the Company, and in which ways?
 - ⇒ give the individual new skills, knowledge or behaviours that he/she will utilise to enable improved performance and delivery in the role?
 - ⇒ lead to a wider understanding and knowledge of the business activity in which the employee is operating?
 - ⇒ increase expertise and professionalism that enhances the reputation and perception of people delivering services for SGS?
 - ⇒ create readily transferable skills?
- Does the course,
 - ⇒ provide the most appropriate and effective method of meeting the individual's development needs?
 - ⇒ involve examinations and/or heavy attendance and study requirements that could impact on operational service delivery?
 - ⇒ appear appropriate to the employee's personal circumstances and their potential to complete further education training?
 - ⇒ take longer than one year to complete?*
- Are relative cost and benefits appropriate to the needs and performance of the business?
- Finally, does the course form part of a long term career development programme whereby the individual will require enhanced behavioural and managerial skills in a specified future role?

**Note: For courses lasting more than one year, sponsorship is subject to regular review and satisfactory progress by the individual.*

If there is any doubt on whether the course satisfies the relevant criterion, advice of the HR department should be sought and alternative training solutions considered.

5. Financial Assistance

The degree of financial support will be influenced by reference to the criteria outlined in Section 4 above. It is the intention that employees on a sponsored course of study will be fully-funded whenever there is a high level of relevance and benefit to the business. However, fees may be part-paid by the Company if it is agreed that the appropriate criteria are only partially met.

Course fees will be paid in part or in full by the Company, subject to prior approval and official invoice submitted to SGS by the relevant college or professional body. Financial assistance will

normally include registration (enrolment) fees, tuition fees and any amount due for the completion of examinations.

In the event that the course of study extends beyond one year, financial support will normally be committed to on an annual basis rather than for the whole duration. Therefore, original application forms should be re-submitted to management for approval in advance of the 2nd, 3rd year of study, etc.

Certain further education programmes include a requirement to attend residential courses or summer schools. In these circumstances, any additional tuition and accommodation fees may also be paid at the discretion of the Company. Furthermore, a maximum of one week's paid leave may be permitted at management discretion. Any further time off must be taken as annual leave.

Employees on sponsored courses may claim up to £70 per academic year for textbooks. Such material should remain the property of the Company and must be returned for the use of others at the end of the course, or if the individual leaves our employment before completion.

6. Non-Financial Support

The Company will consider allowing employees reasonable time away from work in order to complete a sponsored further education course. Time off will need to be agreed as part of the approval process and typically will take the form of a number of days, or part days, to attend lectures and sit examinations.

Time off to complete coursework material will not normally be granted, however managers may agree a maximum of 5 working days 'study leave' to prepare for examinations. Except in exceptional circumstances, time off will not be given to re-sit examinations and the employee will be expected to use their annual leave as necessary.

7. Conditions of Sponsorship

Where the Company has agreed to sponsor an employee to study for a qualification over a period of time and has agreed to financial and non-financial support, this will typically involve setting up a Sponsorship Agreement. The agreement sets conditions upon the sponsorship and, in order to protect the business' investment, aims to encourage employees to remain with the Company for a period of two years after gaining the qualification. *Sponsorship Agreements are not normally required for short training courses or in cases where the requested assistance costs less than a total of £500.*

No fees will be paid by the Company until the Sponsorship Agreement is completed in full and authorised by all relevant parties.

For courses that exceed one year in length, continuation of sponsorship is dependent on satisfactory progress being maintained at every stage of the course. Furthermore, at management discretion, funding for subsequent years may be cancelled or postponed if it is considered that prevailing business performance/circumstances cannot justify continued investment.

Fees will become repayable by the employee immediately and in full should the employee not complete a course. Similarly, monies will be reclaimed if an individual fails to meet the academic, attendance or other requirements of the college at any stage. Where circumstances outside an individual's control (such as ill-health) dictate that study commitments cannot be fulfilled, the Company may take a sympathetic view and waive all or part of any fees due to be repaid.

If the employee leaves the Company's employ for any reason other than compulsory redundancy, the fees become repayable on the following basis:-

- If the employee leaves during the course the fees will be repayable in full.
- If the employee leaves within one year of completing the course, 75% of the total fees will be payable.
- If the employee leaves after one year and within two years of completing the course, 50% of the total fees will be repayable.
- Once the employee has achieved two years service with the Company from the date of completing the course, the Company will not require any fees to be repaid.

The application of this provision will be at the entire discretion of the Company and will be determined by the Human Resources department in conjunction with the relevant senior manager concerned.

8. Roles & Responsibilities

Employees

- Implicit in any sponsored programme of study will be an expectation that the individual concerned will need to make personal sacrifices in order to meet both the demands of the course and their day-to-day job.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant, at the outset, to inquire into the proposed course of study and to establish what will be involved. In particular, they must consider the amount of work to be undertaken and the fact that a large proportion of the studies will be completed in their own time.
- Applicants must follow the authorisation procedures detailed in Section 3 and submit completed forms for approval at least two months before the course is due to start.
- During the period of study, the individual should be prepared to update their line manager with regard to their progress and produce evidence of learning, coursework, etc, upon request.
- Lectures, seminars, etc, should be attended and coursework submitted within the required timescales.
- In the event that an individual wishes to postpone any stage of the course or take a break in study, they must gain the approval of their manager and the UK Human Resources Manager. Failure to agree a delay or postponement may lead the Company, at its discretion, to terminate the agreement and reclaim course fees.

Line Managers

- Managers have a crucial role in ensuring that the proposed course and learning method is appropriate in the first instance and then offer support and encouragement to their employee throughout the period he/she is studying.
- Prior to submitting an approved Sponsorship Agreement, managers should engage in pre-course discussions to confirm details of the course, benefits to the business and the level of commitment required.
- Managers should monitor progress periodically and ensure that any necessary support is available with regards to course completion and the individual's work requirements.

- Finally, managers are required to evaluate the eventual outcome of the course and ensure the Company's investment sees a return in terms of enhanced performance, taking greater responsibility, etc.

Human Resources

The Human Resources team will administer and monitor sponsorship arrangements and report progress to the UK HR Manager. The team will also act as a point of contact offering general advice and support for managers and sponsored employees.

9. Re-Sitting Assessed Modules

If an employee is required to re-submit coursework, re-sit any examinations or undertake additional study in order to fulfil course requirements, he/she will be expected to pay any additional fees incurred. If such circumstances lead to a significant delay in the employee's ability to complete the course, the Company reserves the right to terminate the Sponsorship Agreement and may require the fees to be repaid in full or part.

10. Other Conditions & Further Enquiries

The Company reserves the right to amend or cancel its policy at any time.

The Company's willingness to sponsor voluntary further education activities should not be regarded as conferring on employees any automatic right or entitlement to sponsorship. Neither does it imply any condition of service. Moreover, employees should note that success in a course of study will not automatically lead to promotion or transfer within the business.

All enquiries relating to this policy should be directed to:-

UK HR Manager
Human Resources Dept
Ellesmere Port
0151 350 6605
