

UW Tacoma Administrative Directive 60.0

Use of Release Time and Flex Time for Staff Taking Tuition Exempt Classes

Approved by the Vice Chancellor of Administrative Services, June 10, 2011

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of this Administrative Directive is to clarify the use of release time and flex time for staff taking tuition exempt classes under existing UW policies to promote a shared understanding of the policies and to achieve a consistent, equitable application of those policies across the UW Tacoma campus while acknowledging that some positions and employment programs allow for more flexibility than others in the use of release or flex time.
2. **Background:**
 - a. UW Tacoma is a learning community that values higher education, not only for our students, but for our employees, as well. In support of this value, the University, under certain conditions and at the discretion of the Supervisor, may allow employees to use either flex time or release time if courses must be taken during regular work hours.
 - b. In consultation with Human Resources, the Chancellor, the Chancellor's Management Team and the Staff Association, and in accordance with the UW APS 22.1, Executive Order No. 52, UW statement on Flexible Work Arrangements and SEIU Contract section 22.1, the following clarification is provided regarding the use of flex time and release time to support staff who seek continuing educational growth using the tuition exemption benefit.
3. **Overview**
 - a. **Flextime**
 - i. At the discretion of the department head, flex time is appropriately used to encourage the pursuit of a degree or a professional/personal development opportunity through a program of study that does not directly apply to the job.
 - ii. The use of flex time does not require a determination that the content of the tuition exempt class is job related.
 - iii. The granting of flex time is based solely on the operational needs of the unit and the requirements of the position.
 - iv. While flex time is not an employee entitlement, department heads are encouraged to make a good faith effort to approve flex time when it is reasonable to do so.
 - b. **Release time**
 - i. Release time is for the stated purpose of developing and improving job skills, primarily by attending Professional and Organizational Development programs.
 - ii. Release time for taking a class during regular working hours toward the pursuit of a degree may be approved at the discretion of the department

head for a maximum of 24 hours per quarter (pro-rated for part time employees) *if* the specific class content is specifically job related.

- iii. "Job related" means that the class develops specific skills or knowledge identified in the job description. The granting of release time, then, is based on three factors: 1) the content of the tuition exempt class being clearly job related, 2) the operational needs of the unit being met, and 3) the position's requirements allowing for the employee to be away for up to 24 hours per quarter.
- iv. Even with this allowance, for a typical 5 credit class during regular working hours, both release time and flex time will be needed to cover the time away from the job.
- c. Flextime and/or release time may be used solely to support class attendance during regular working hours, and it is not considered an appropriate use of state funds to use work time for the purpose of study or completion of assignments outside of class. These activities must be completed outside of the individual's normal work hours.

4. Citations and Links for Applicable State Law, University of Washington Policies and Union Contracts.

- a. [RCW 28B.15.558](#)
 - i. The University of Washington Tuition Exemption Program, established under the authority of RCW 28B.15.558, enables University of Washington employees and state of Washington employees who have been admitted to the University of Washington to have tuition waived for up to six credits when enrollment is on a "space-available" basis.
 - ii. The Tuition Exemption Program is available at the University of Washington Seattle, Bothell and Tacoma campuses.
 - iii. Those who enroll at the UW on a "space-available" basis for more than six credits will receive the tuition waiver for the first six credits, and will pay a per credit charge for the credits taken over six.
- b. [Administrative Policy Statement 22.1](#), Specifically Section 4. Release Time to Attend Classes.
 - i. "Release time is time during which an employee is released from normal work duties and compensated at the regular rate of pay. Release time for participation in the Tuition Exemption Program is at the discretion of the department head or designee."
- c. [Executive Order No. 52](#)
 - i. Section 1. Tuition Exemption Program. "...The University also offers full-time [\[and 50% or more monthly part-time\]](#) professional and classified staff employees the opportunity to participate in a [tuition exemption program](#) whereby regular University classes may be taken for credit. Release time for participation in the tuition exemption program is at the discretion of the department head."
 - ii. Section 3. Definition and Use of Release Time. "Release time is defined as that time during which an employee is released from normal work duties and compensated at the regular rate of pay to attend staff Professional & Organizational Development programs designed to assist in developing and/or improving job skills. Employees accepted for one of these programs will be provided release time necessary to participate in the training program up to a maximum of 24 hours per quarter plus the

travel time to and from class. Regular part-time employees are eligible to participate in staff Professional & Organizational Development classes with release time prorated according to their work schedules (e.g., an employee working a 50% schedule is eligible for a maximum of 12 hours of release time per quarter). Employees who are not scheduled to work during the time a course is offered may participate in the course; however, no compensatory time off or additional compensation will be allowed. Management-directed training is not included in this limitation on release time.”

- d. UW Statement on [Flexible Work Arrangements](#)
 - i. Alternative and flexible work arrangements are alternatives to the traditional 8 to 5 workday and can accommodate employee preference or unique job requirements. Examples include [telecommuting](#) (telework), [alternative work schedules](#), and reduced work schedules.
 - ii. Job flexibility is important for many employees. Flexible work arrangements can have significant organizational and individual benefits that help morale and allow employees to meet their personal needs while contributing to the organization. Offering flexible work arrangements can also help with employee retention and recruiting. While flexible work arrangements are not an employee entitlement, the UW supports the development of flexible work arrangements when a manager determines that such an arrangement meets the needs of the unit and the employee.
 - iii. Typically an employee will propose a flexible work arrangement, though supervisors may also assign a position to an alternative or flexible schedule to accommodate unit work requirements.
- e. [SEIU Contract UW/SEIU 925 University-wide Supervisory Contract](#), (Effective 7/1/09 - 6/30/11), Article 21. Tuition Exemption Program.
 - i. 21.1 In addition to those noncredit programs offered by the Training and Development Office, eligible employees may participate in the University's tuition exemption program as authorized by applicable state law and University policy set forth in the Administrative Policy Statements 22.1. Subject to operational needs and management discretion, supervisors will make a good faith effort to allow the use of flex time for employees who wish to take a class during their scheduled shift.
 - ii. 21.2 Release Time and Fees. When an employee is required to take a tuition exempt class by the Employer, associated expenses and release time will be provided per Article 20.8.
- f. [WFSE Contract UW/WFSE Master Contract](#), (Effective 7/1/09 – 6/30/11), Article 18. Tuition Exemption Program.
 - i. A18.1 In addition to those noncredit programs offered by the Training and Development Office, eligible employees may participate in the University's tuition exemption program as authorized by applicable state law and University policy set forth in the Administrative Policy Statements 22.1. Subject to the supervisor's discretion, employees may be permitted to use a flexible work arrangement to attend classes held during their scheduled work shift.
 - ii. A18.2 Release Time and Fees. When an employee is required to take a tuition exempt class by the Employer, associated expenses and release time will be provided.

5. Limitations: This administrative directive applies only to UW Tacoma staff.
6. Procedures
 - a. UW Tacoma procedures for use of Tuition Exemption can be found at: <http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/current-students/tuition-exemption-state-employees>
 - b. Employees wishing to request release time for tuition exempt courses during their regular working hours will complete the [Release Time Request Form](#) and submit it to their supervisor for review and approval. (Link to Form)
7. For more information please contact the Director of Human Resources:
 - a. Phone: 253.692.5864
 - b. Campus mail: Box 358431
 - c. Email: tfiacchi@uw.edu