

Study Leave

What qualifications does this apply to?

Medway Council actively seeks to support you to achieve qualifications relevant to your post or to support your career progression within the council. This policy relates to ALL training qualifications that lead to a recognised qualification or part of a qualification. The policy also applies to all National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and to courses which enable staff to implement/use registered systems as well as relevant professional training. For approved social work qualifications please see [Guidance on details for social work study](#).

How is the need for qualification training identified?

All qualification training courses are identified as a **need** through discussions between you and your line manager and should be identified through the performance and development review (PDR). The training need is then recorded on your personal development plan.

What methods of study are supported?

The method of study may be one of the following:

- Day release
- Evening classes
- Correspondence/distance learning courses
- Sandwich courses - see section below

How is a place of study chosen?

You are expected to attend the centre nearest to your home or place of work, subject to its suitability and availability.

If you start working for Medway Council during an academic year and are already studying for a course you may, where it is practicable, be able to complete the year of your existing course at your current centre. Any further attendance must be at a centre agreed by Medway Council.

Are Open University courses supported?

Open University Courses are supported if they are the most appropriate and suitable course to meet your identified need and are appropriate to your learning style.

Are courses which include attending short residential sessions supported?

For some courses, you may need to attend short residential blocks and these will be supported as part of your course. If your course includes a residential element, discuss this with your manager and include this information on your application form.

The accommodation element is not paid for by the Centralised training budget and must come from your departmental budget code.

Are sandwich or block release courses supported?

Sandwich or block release courses, where the total amount of block absence from work is more than six weeks, are only considered if you are on trainee, career-graded or apprentice posts. This method is only considered when this is the best available course of study. Consider day release courses as a first alternative.

How is progress monitored?

Your qualification training must be carefully monitored and evaluated to ensure it is meeting your needs and to review your performance. This is an excellent opportunity for you to discuss with your manager how you can apply what you have learned on your course to your work. Course evaluation takes place between you and your manager, or another nominated person at regular intervals. It is suggested that these reviews take place at intervals of no less than six months. An evaluation session takes place when you receive your end of year results or when you receive your qualification.

What financial assistance and other support is given?

When attending approved qualification training you are entitled to payment of normal earnings, all fees and other relevant expenses arising from these activities. These entitlements will also apply if you are undertaking assessments for National Vocational Qualifications.

Salary/wages – attendance

Course attendance out of normal working hours is in your own time and no time off in lieu or other allowances are made for such time. If you work part-time and attend an approved training qualification course outside your contracted daily hours you are paid on the same basis as full-time staff i.e. plain rate during normal working hours, any attendance outside of normal working hours is in your own time. If on flexi time, credit hours can be given.

Course fees

Your tuition, registration, examination (for first attempt only), exemption fees and professional interview costs are paid for all approved courses. This does not include the payment of residential fees where they form part of the requirement of your course. The cost of the residential element is not met by the centralised Learning and Development training budget and is met by your departmental budget code.

Annual subscriptions

The annual membership subscription of a technical or professional organisation is paid only where it is a requirement to hold membership in order to take any qualifying examinations and is only paid for the length of your course. Your subscriptions will not be paid after you have achieved your qualification or where you need to gain practical experience before you can achieve full corporate membership.

Subscriptions are not paid if you have to repeat a year of study in full in order to re-sit an examination unless prior agreement has been given by your head of service. Subscriptions are not paid if you choose to undertake a qualification as a method of upgrading your membership.

The cost of an annual subscription is not met by the centralised Learning and Development training budget and must be met by your departmental budget code.

Travel

You can get travel warrants from creditors and these are the preferred method of paying for travel. You need to use and claim the cheapest method of transport. This includes using any special rail fares that have been negotiated by course organisers. Where practicable you should share transport with colleagues. Before making a journey make your manager aware of your travel arrangements. Your manager can then make any necessary authorisation.

If you choose to use your own transport even though cheaper alternatives are available, you **MUST** claim in accordance with Medway Council's travel and subsistence policy. The cost of travel is not met by the centralised Learning and Development training budget and must be met by your departmental budget code.

Block release/course of more than one week

Either:

Financial assistance will be given for one return journey which you make between your normal place of work and the accommodation where you claim residential expenses for seven nights a week.

or

Financial assistance will be given to you for one return journey for each week of attendance where residential expenses are being claimed for no more than five nights a week.

Subsistence expenses

Subsistence expenses are paid on the basis of expenditure that you have necessarily incurred. The maximum amount payable is set within Medway Council's travel and subsistence policy. You can find further details within HR section on the intranet.

When you attend an approved training course on a residential basis, you are entitled, for each night of absence from home, to claim an out-of-pocket allowance in accordance with Medway Council's travel and subsistence policy. The allowance does not exceed four nights per week except where you have to arrive for a course on the preceding night.

This provision is limited to six weeks in respect of any one course.

The cost of subsistence is not met by the centralised Learning and Development training budget and must be met by your departmental budget code.

Textbooks

It is expected that you have access to recommended textbooks via our public libraries, college libraries or service area libraries. If you wish to purchase textbooks for personal ownership it will be at your own cost.

No financial assistance is given to you for the purchase of textbooks or stationery.

Examination expenses: re-sits

Your examination fees and expenses are paid for the first attempt only at each stage. Reimbursement of fees are only made after approval of your Assistant Director.

Open University courses

Where you receive approval to take an Open University course with financial assistance and/or time off, the following conditions apply.

The expenses which you may claim for each year are:

- Tuition/registration fees
- Summer school fees
- Examination fees (first attempt only)
- Travelling and subsistence expenses (with receipts). These may only be claimed for examination attendance and summer school attendance.

Any additional expenditure must be paid for by the individual, including:

- Attendance at tutorials.
- Weekend residential.
- Special course materials
- Degree award ceremony

Staff who are undertaking sandwich courses should take their annual leave within the college vacation periods.

Attendance at summer school

If you attend an approved course which involves attending a summer school you are given a maximum of five days leave per annum with pay. This leave is subject to the approval of your head of service. N.B. This is additional leave and applies only to the duration of the course.

Correspondence/distance learning courses

Paid time off work for study is given if you study an approved correspondence/distance learning course. Paid time off work for study must be agreed with your head of service before commencing the course.

Your time-off MUST be agreed with your head of service and must not exceed 36 days per year, (this is equivalent to an academic year day-release course).

What revision leave can be taken?

The granting of paid leave of absence applies to those employees who are studying for a professional qualification or taking exams for the first time, the criteria being as follows:

- Total of 3 days paid leave of absence where the course is of one year or less in duration.
- Total of 5 days paid leave of absence where the course is longer than one year in duration.
- Up to 3 additional days may be granted prior to intermediate examinations by your Assistant Director.

What examination leave can be taken?

Leave with pay is granted to enable you to sit approved examinations. This includes the day of the examination and any necessary travelling time.

Where it is unreasonable for you to travel on the day of your examination, an overnight stay can be approved. This also applies if you have to make a return journey between your examinations that take place on consecutive days.

This also applies if you are sitting professional interviews/tests of competence or associated final examination in order to gain full membership of a recognised professional/technical body.

What if a course of study needs to be repeated?

If a course of study is being repeated for any reason then financial support in full or in part is only given if it is justified and after approval by your Assistant Director.

What is the application procedure?

Qualification training is dependent on financial support being available for you to complete your course. Before applying for your course for which you need either financial assistance and/or study leave you should discuss the proposed training with your manager and gain their support and approval.

Once you have gained support from your manager complete the [Service Desk Request](#) for that qualification. In signing the form you are confirming that you have read and understood the terms and conditions.

What happens if you feel your application for financial assistance has been unreasonably refused?

If you feel that you have been unreasonably refused financial assistance, discuss this with your manager. Your manager will discuss the refusal with your directorate management team. If you are still not satisfied with the outcome you can pursue the matter through the Council's grievance procedure.

What records are kept about staff attending qualification training and who maintains these records?

Your line manager is responsible for recording and maintaining accurate records through your PDR. All qualifications will be entered onto ResourceLink, the Council's personnel system.

What happens at the end of each academic year?

At the end of the academic year notify your head of service, or other nominated person, of the outcome of your year of study and give a copy of your results to them plus any additional paperwork that you will need to continue your studies.

How are expenses claimed?

All of your expense claims are made through the payroll system using the normal expense claims form attaching all receipts. The form should be signed by the person normally responsible for signing the form.

What happens if I withdraw from a course or fail to show satisfactory progress?

If you fail to complete all the required aspects of your course, discontinue your course, or fail to complete the whole course then your financial assistance will be withdrawn and your service area will be required to repay monies associated with the course.

What happens if I want to defer my course?

If you wish to defer continuation of your course for any period of time you need to gain approval from your head of service.

What happens if I fail the course and then re-sit?

If you fail your course and then re-sit the following year, you will be expected to pay any fees yourself.

What happens if I transfer between directorates?

Your course of study would have been identified as a development need for you to increase your effectiveness within your current post, or to meet an identified need to enable your career progression within the council. If you are already taking qualification training and then transfer to another service area it is the responsibility of your new service area to ensure that the qualification training is still an identified need for your new post, or for your career development. If it is not then you will no longer be supported to continue the qualification training. If this situation arises then no reclaim of monies will be made from you.

Who is responsible for paying for my course if I have started the course while I work in one service area but I have then transferred to another service area and my new service area has agreed that I should continue my course?

If you move to another service area or a different budget area within a service area your new employing service area will be responsible for any payments from the date the transfer is made. The original employing service area will make no reclaim for your course fees or other expenses.