

RELEASE TIME TO ATTEND COLLEGE CLASSES

SOURCE: OHIO ADMINISTRATIVE CODE 123: 1-39-07, OCSEA/AFSME BARGAINING UNIT AGREEMENT & OHIO EPA ADMINISTRATION

CONTACT: AGENCY TRAINING SUPERVISOR

Release Time Policy:

Release time is paid time away from work for both exempt and bargaining-unit employees to attend classes at accredited two- and four-year colleges and universities. The Release Time Program is a benefit that chiefs may offer their employees to enhance their opportunities for professional development.

1. Chiefs have full discretion in deciding whether to approve requests for release time. Chiefs may grant permanent employees release time to attend, and travel to, college or university classes that are related to current or forecasted agency services and are included in individual professional development plans. Chiefs may refuse release time requests for many reasons, including requests to attend classes when the course is offered outside the employee's work schedule. Reasonable efforts will be made to equitably distribute release time opportunities among employees.
2. The maximum release time that employees may receive for attendance and travel is 10 percent of their work week, each week for the full academic term. Chiefs may approve release time (1) at regular intervals (for example, every Tuesday & Thursday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.) or (2) all at once (one full week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.).
3. Employees may use release time to attend classes on days they have received pre-approved leave (vacation, compensatory time or personal leave). They shall not use release time on days they are using sick leave or while they are on disability. Chiefs may require employees to provide them with verification of class attendance.
4. Employees must complete the Release Time Application form and get approval for release time from their immediate supervisor, chief and the agency training supervisor before registering for the class. For district employees this means district chiefs, and for central office employees it means division or office chiefs. The training supervisor will process the application based on the criteria in this policy.
5. After the class is completed, employees must provide their training coordinator and the training supervisor with documentation that they completed the class. When employees drop a class, they must notify their supervisor, training coordinator and the training supervisor, immediately upon withdrawal. Future release time requests will not be approved until these are done.
6. Employees who fail to maintain an acceptable standard (for example, grade of "C" or higher) may be required to demonstrate to their managers why they should be permitted to continue in the release time program.

Factors to Consider

Some of the factors that managers may consider when reviewing release time requests are listed below:

- How will taking this course benefit the Agency?
- How will taking this course benefit the employee?
- How will the employee manage his or her work load while taking release time?
- Is the class offered outside the employee's work time?
- Would a change in the employee's flex schedule enable him or her to take the class outside work time?

Release Time Procedures

1. The employee completes a Release Time Application, which is available from training coordinators and the Agency training supervisor (copy attached).
2. Before registering for the class, the employee gets approval for and signatures on the application from his or her immediate supervisor and chief.
3. Before registering for the class, the employee delivers the release time application to his or her training coordinator, who delivers it to the Agency training supervisor at least four days before the class begins.
4. Within four days of receiving the release time application, the training supervisor will tell the employee and training coordinator (including the corresponding division or district coordinator) whether the application is approved or disapproved.
5. The employee will code approved release time in TAS as "Leave" then "Tuition Reimbursement/Release Time."
6. After completing the class, the employee will give the training coordinator documentation of completing the course, consisting of either a copy of the grade slip or a letter of completion from the instructor on college letterhead. The training coordinator will send the documentation to the Agency training supervisor.

Review

After a decision about the application is made, the employee may contact the chief to discuss reasons for the decision and to provide additional information.



RELEASE TIME APPLICATION For College Classes

Please provide the information requested below, obtain signatures from your immediate supervisor and chief, and deliver this form to your training coordinator at least four days before the first class begins. Your training coordinator will send it to the Agency training supervisor.

Name

LAST	FIRST	MIDDLE
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Title

Location

	DIVISION & DISTRICT Or OFFICE
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Are you a permanent full time or part time employee?

If part time, how many hours a week do you usually work at Ohio EPA? _____ Hours

Course Code

Class Name

Days/Times class meets

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How many hours of release time are you requesting? What days/times are you requesting to use release time?

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When does the school term start and end?

START	END
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What college or university do you plan to attend?

NAME	CITY, STATE
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Does the school grant 2- or 4-year postsecondary degrees? Yes No

Is the school accredited by North Central Association? Yes No

FOR CONSIDERATION

How will taking this course benefit the Agency?

How will taking this course benefit you?

How will you manage your work load while taking release time?

Is the class offered outside your work schedule? Yes No

If not, would it be possible to change your flex schedule so you can take the class outside your work time? Yes No

APPLICANT'S NAME (PRINT)	SCHOOL TERM START DATE
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APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE	DATE
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Signatures below designate approval of the applicant's release time request.

IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR	DATE
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CHIEF	DATE
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TRAINING SUPERVISOR	DATE
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