

Education Support Policy, Study and Examination Leave Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

These FAQ's are developed as a support to the Policy, however, the Policy takes precedence to the answers below.

Please refer to both the Education Support Policy and the Study and Examination leave Policy available on the HR website (<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/human-resources/policies>).

Part 1: Education Support FAQ's

Q.1 What are the criteria for approval for Education Support?

A.1 The criteria are outlined in the Education Support Policy. They include:

The staff member must:

- have completed a minimum of 12 months continuous employment
- have successfully completed their probationary period
- have a contract of employment that extends beyond the course of study
- apply and participate in the full knowledge and understanding that the course is likely to require a high degree of commitment of their own time.

The course must:

- be part-time.
- be considered, by the Head of Department or their nominee, to be directly relevant to their current role or will support their career development in the University; normally be outside of assigned working hours.
- In the case of a relevant course being within assigned working hours, the suitability to attend this course must be agreed in advance between the Head of Department or their nominee and the staff member, taking into account the workload of the staff member and the operational requirements of the department.

If the Head of Department or their nominee decides it is suitable to attend and workload can be managed by the staff member and the department, the staff member may apply for support under this policy.

In this instance where workload cannot be managed, it may be investigated whether flexibility in the staff member's working arrangements would be possible. If it is decided

by the Head of Department/Manager and the staff member, that workload can only be managed through the staff member being flexible and taking time to attend the course from their own time, this should be decided locally, before an application is put forward.

- be a course level 6 - 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).
- In exceptional circumstances, and on a case-by-case basis, the University may approve a course of study at level 10.

Q.2 How do I apply for Education Support?

A.2 The Education Support Application Form must be completed in full and signed by the staff member and their Head of Department or their nominee. The form is submitted to People Development, Human Resources and must be accompanied by a letter/email of support from the Head of Department or their nominee.

The policy and application form are available at <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/human-resources/policies>

Q.3 Where will I find the Education Support Application Form?

A.3 The form is available at <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/human-resources/policies>

Q.4 What type of course can I apply for?

A.4 The Education Support Policy applies to part-time academic programmes from level 6 to level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or equivalent

[https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-\(NFQ\).aspx](https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx).

In exceptional circumstances, and on a case-by-case basis, the University may approve a course of study at level 10.

Q.5 When can I apply for Education Support?

A.5 Applications for funding must be received in Human Resources by either 1st July (for course start date September to November) or 1st of November (for course start date January to May). If your course falls outside of these timelines, please let people.development@mu.ie know and email your application at least 6 weeks before the programme start date.

Q.6 Where do I send my application for Education Support?

A.6 Email your Education Support Application Form along with your Head of Department and/or nominee support letter to people.development@mu.ie

Q.7 I work part-time, do I qualify for Education Support?

A.7 Yes, on a pro-rata basis, based on hours of employment, if you meet the criteria of the policy.

Q.8 I am a Job-Sharer, do I qualify for Education Support?

A.8 Yes, on a pro-rata basis, based on hours of employment, if you meet the criteria of the policy.

Q.9 I am a current staff member of MU, I have already started my course and paid my fees. Can I apply for Education Support?

A.9 Retrospective applications under this policy will not be permitted. However, you may apply for approval for future years from the start of your next academic year.

Q.10 I started an accredited qualification in my previous job (outside of MU), which is relevant to my new role in Maynooth University. Can I apply for funding under this policy?

A.10 Yes, you can apply for funding for the duration of your course, when you have completed a minimum of 12 months continuous employment with Maynooth University and the course meets the criteria in the policy. Retrospective applications under this policy will not be permitted. However, you may apply for approval for future years from the start of your next academic year.

Q.11 What are exemption fees?

A.11 As part of some courses you may be entitled to apply for an exemption for a module that you have previously covered at that level as part of another course. Many Institutions charge a fee for being exempt from a module. This fee is covered by the Education Support policy.

Q.12 I failed to complete a course of study I commenced which was supported under the Education Support Policy, can I complete another course.

A.12 A staff member who fails to complete an approved course of study will not be permitted to undertake an alternative course of study under this policy or be supported in case of deferral unless there are personal extenuating circumstances or medical circumstances.

Q.13 If I leave my employment with MU in the middle of my course which is being funded under Education Support, will I have to refund MU?

A.13 Yes. Terms and Conditions of fee reimbursement will be sent to you to sign prior to payment of course fees.

Where a staff member resigns during their studies, they will be liable to pay the balance of fees due from the date of cessation of employment and reimburse monies paid by Maynooth University to date.

Staff members who resign within 12 months of receiving the last financial support payment under this policy will refund all monies (100%) received under this policy. Staff members who resign between 12 and 24 months of receiving the last financial support payment under this policy will refund 50% of all monies received under this policy.

Q.14 If I take a Career Break during a course funded under the Education Support Policy, will I need to refund the fees paid to date?

A.14 No not on the commencement of your career break. However, if you decide not to return to Maynooth University following your career break you will refund all fees paid to date.

On return from your career break you must reapply for Education Support for the remaining years of the course. Re-approval is not guaranteed on your return.

Q.15 I am currently on a Career Break, can I apply for support under the Education Support Policy?

A.15 No. Funding does not apply to staff members currently on a career-break.

Q.16 If I do not have the money to cover the initial payment can my department cover the cost and be reimbursed through the Education Support Policy?

A.16 No, the department cannot cover the initial payment on behalf of the staff member.

If you are taking a course at Maynooth University you will not be required to pay fees upfront. Course payments will be processed internally between People Development, HR and the Fees office. However, recipients will be obliged to submit evidence of satisfactory completion of studies annually. Funding will be awarded on a pro-rata basis. Recipients will also be bound to the terms of fee reimbursement.

Many 3rd level Institutions allow payment plans where payments can be spread out. You should enquire of the Institution you intend to complete the course through if this is permitted.

For courses outside Maynooth University, where 100% funding is granted, the University will reimburse 50% of the fee paid by the staff member post registration, on provision of a receipt of payment of fees. The University will reimburse the remaining 50% of the fee paid by the staff member on evidence of successful completion of the course, each academic year.

In the case where the fee is paid in more than one instalment, the staff member will be refunded 50% of each payment on provision of a receipt of payment of fees and the remaining monies on evidence of successful completion of the course, each academic year.

Q.17 If any of the criteria or terms and conditions which are required to be met under the policy change at the staff member's end after they have been approved under Education Support, what should they do?

A.17 Any changes to your circumstances or the course applicable to this policy should be communicated in writing to your Head of Department and Human Resources (learning.development@mu.ie) as soon as the change occurs.

Q.18 What do I need to supply as evidence of payment to facilitate reimbursement of fees from the University.

- A.18 A receipt from the Institution you are studying at which includes your details (name, address) , student number and the amount and date paid, should be provided for reimbursement of payment to people.development@mu.ie.

For the remaining 50% of payment each year, evidence of successful completion of the course, at the end of each academic year will also be required. This must be an official document from the Institution you are studying with which includes your details, the Institutions details, the details of the course you are studying and demonstrate you have successfully completed the year you are looking for a final refund for.

Q.19 Where do I send my receipts for reimbursement of fees under Education Support?

- A.19 Email the relevant receipts to people.development@mu.ie

Q.20 If my substantive post is located within one department, but I am currently seconded to another department, who should approve my application?

- A.20 In the event that your course duration is longer than your planned secondment, then you will require Head of Department approval, as outlined in the policy, from both departments. This requirement is on the basis the current department will provide funding for that initial period; and the department that holds your substantive post will provide funding from the time that you return to that department.

If your course ends during the period of your secondment, then only your current Head of Department would be required to provide approval. However, you should inform the department holding your substantive post that you are completing a course if the timeframe for your secondment changes.

Please note: Twenty-five per cent (25%) of the total approved fees are charged to the relevant departmental non-pay budget of the staff member. The remaining amount is charged to a central University budget.

Q.21 I am starting a new role in a different department in the University. I am interested in applying for Education Support that starts after I commence my new role that will be relevant to my new role. Who should approve my Education Support application in advance of the move to the new role?

- A.21 As the course starts after your move to your new department you need your new Head of Department's approval on the application form and provide a letter of support. You can apply before your move in time for the Education Support deadline. You should make the case in your application form based on your new role and not your existing one.

Please note: Twenty-five per cent (25%) of the total approved fees are charged to the relevant departmental non-pay budget of the staff member. The remaining amount is charged to a central University budget.

Q.22 Can I complete a course in the UK under the Education Support Policy?

- A.22 The policy applies to eligible staff members who wish to pursue a part-time course of study from level 6 to level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in the Republic of Ireland. The equivalent in the UK is the FHEQ.

If Maynooth University does not offer a suitable course in the area required, and a course elsewhere in a reputable Institution, that is equivalent to level 6 -9 on the NFQ meets the policy criteria you may apply to complete this course under the Education Support policy.

Q.23 My recent application for Education Support was successful. However, after starting my approved course of study I decided that I would like to change to a different course. Can I still receive Education Support if I change my course of study?

A.23 A staff member who fails to complete an approved course of study will not be permitted to undertake an alternative course of study unless there are personal extenuating circumstances or medical circumstances. When a course of study is supported under Education Support, it is important that your Head of Department, Dean and Human Resources are immediately notified of any intended change to the approved course. Any money refunded for the course should also be refunded to the University.

If you wish to change from a course that was approved under Education Support to another course, then a new application must be submitted under the Education Support Policy.

Q.24 If I wish to defer a year during my course, which is being funded under Education Support, is this possible?

A.24 When a course of study is supported under Education Support, it is important that your Head of Department, Dean and Human Resources are immediately notified of any intended change to the approved course. You must first inform your Head of Department/Manager as they have supported the application. If the decision to defer is approved by the Head of Department, you should inform Human Resources (people.development@mu.ie) of the deferral in writing. You must state the reason for the deferral (if this is personal reasons, then indicating this is sufficient).

The request for a deferral will be subject to a further review and in some cases, a deferral may need to be raised with Education Support Committee, if for instance the course was approved for a contract purpose.

Q.25 If I wish to withdraw from/defer my course before the course has started, which is being funded under Education Support, is this possible?

A.25 When a course of study is supported under Education Support, it is important that your Head of Department, Dean and Human Resources are immediately notified of any intended change to the approved course. If the course has not started before you wish to withdraw/defer, you may re-apply for Education Support at a future date. This will be treated as a new application. If any monies have been paid on your behalf these will need to be refunded to Maynooth University.

Q.26 I am applying for a three-year MSc (NFQ 9). There is an option to leave the programme after one year with a Professional Diploma (also NFQ 9). Is it permitted to exit a course at an earlier stage than what was initially approved?

A.26 In this case you should consider whether you may choose to exit at an earlier stage before you apply for Education Support. If you want to keep this as an option, you should mention this in your application and provide the costs for each stage, duration of each stage and your intention to complete the entire MSc but may exit earlier and with what a different qualification.

Q.27 My application for Education Support was approved prior to the introduction to the Education Support Policy in May 2020. Do the criteria outlined in the policy apply to my course?

A.27 The Education Support Policy will also apply to all staff members that received approval for Education Support funding prior to the policy being introduced in May 2020. The only exception for those approved prior to the policy being introduced are the terms and conditions of Fee Reimbursement (see Q13 above). All other terms and conditions will apply for remaining years of study.

Q.28 Can I apply for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) under this policy?

A.28 The Education Support Policy is not for CPD courses. The non-pay budget in the department should be considered for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) type courses, to support the development of people to maintain a professional accreditation they have related to their role or a qualification.

Q.29 Can I apply for Micro-Credentials courses under this policy

A.29 The Education Support Policy applies to staff members who wish to pursue a part-time course of study from level 6 to level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). In exceptional circumstances, and on a case-by-case basis, the University may approve a course of study at level 10. If the micro-credentials course and the staff member meet the criteria of the Education Support policy they can apply for Education Support funding.

The policy and application form are available at <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/human-resources/policies>

Q.30 If partial funding is available from an alternative source, can I apply for Education Support for the remaining amount.

A.30 A staff member can apply for Education Support funding if they meet the criteria outlined in the Education Support Policy. They can receive funding for the remaining amount if their Education Support application is approved.

Q.31 What are the ‘Assigned Working Hours’ referred to in the Education Support Policy?

A.31 **Assigned Working Hours:** For the purpose of this policy are those hours the staff member is assigned by the Head of Department/Manager to work on a particular day. Some staff members who work in particular areas may be assigned hours outside the 9.00am - 5.30pm **typical** working hours. Hours of work differ across the University; the assigned hours are those that are assigned to the staff member.

Q.32 Can my manager sign off on my application for Education Support?

A.32 Education support applications must be signed by the Head of Department or may be signed by the applicant’s manager where they are also the budget holder.

Part 2: Study and Examination Leave

Q.1 If I am approved for Education Support, do I qualify for study leave?

A.1 Paid study leave will be provided for staff members who are approved under the Education Support Policy. Please refer to the [Study and Examination Leave Policy](#) for further information.

Q.2 If I am approved under the Education Support Policy, do I qualify for examination leave?

A.2 Yes. Paid examination leave will be provided for staff members who are completing an approved course of study if the examination takes place during assigned working hours. Please refer to the Study and Examination Leave Policy for further information.

Refer to your contract of employment as exam leave is defined in some contracts as available for an approved course for the duration of the exam.

Q.3 Do I receive examination leave if the exam is not during assigned working hours?

A.3 No examination leave is provided for exams outside of assigned working hours.

Q.4 If I need to travel to my exam and travel back to work after it and the exam and travel takes longer than a half day do I get time for travel, if it is required during working hours?

A.4 Paid examination leave will not normally exceed half a day per examination and will be granted only when the examination takes place during assigned working hours¹. Time for travel to and from the exam centre should be considered by the Head of Department/Manager in addition to the duration of the exam if this exceeds a half day.

Q.5 If the exam takes place outside working hours but travel to it is during working hours, is that time provided for?

A.5 Yes reasonable time should be allowed to travel to the exam in the case where the person is required to travel to the exam during their assigned working hours, in order to be able to complete any exams associated with their approved course of study.

Q.6 I failed some exams. Do I get examination leave for repeat exams?

A.6 Paid examination leave will be granted for one repeat attempt only.

Q.7 I work part-time. Do I qualify for study and exam leave?

A.7 All study leave is pro-rata based on the individual staff member's contracted hours of employment. Paid examination leave will be provided for staff members who are completing an

¹ In the event of a staff member having a written contractual entitlement greater than this policy, they will be permitted to take what is contracted to them for examination leave.

approved course of study if the examination takes place during assigned working hours. Please refer to the Study and Examination Leave Policy.

Q.8 I am a current MU staff member, and I have already started a course and paid my fees before this policy was published. Can I apply for exam and study leave?

A.8 If a course has already commenced, it is possible to apply for study leave for the remainder of the course on a proportionate basis, provided you meet the criteria of the policy. Retrospective applications for any part of the course completed will not be permitted under this policy.

Q.9 I have started in MU as a new staff member, and I am completing an academic course, not being paid for by MU, can I apply for study leave?

A.9 Yes, when you have completed a minimum of 12 months continuous employment and you have met the criteria of the Study and Examination Leave Policy, you may apply. If study leave is granted it will be provided from the beginning your next academic year.

Q.10 Prior to joining MU I have been enrolled on an NFQ course part time. I am now eligible for paid study leave following completion of my first year of employment in MU and having successfully completed my probation. How is my study leave entitlement calculated for the remainder of my course?

A.10 Total paid study leave allowance is calculated across the duration of the course. The allowance permitted for each year of study is decided in conjunction with the Head of Department/Manager. The study leave can then be granted on a pro-rata basis depending on the remaining duration of the course.

Q.11 Do I have to complete an application form to apply for paid study/examination leave?

A.11 You are not required to complete an application form to apply for paid study/examination leave. You are required to discuss your leave requirements with your Head of Department/Manager. If your Head of Department/Manager approves your leave request you apply for study leave and/or examination leave separately through the Employee Self Service (ESS) (if you have access to it).