Educational Assistance Policy

Purpose:
This policy outlines the benefits and process for educational assistance and tuition reimbursement.

Introduction:
The ABSC supports employees desire to further their education and therefore provides tuition reimbursement for approved educational programs (including degree programs, professional certifications/license education/tests, etc).

Policy
The ABSC Educational Assistance Policy is designed to assist employees in taking advantage of educational opportunities that will benefit both the employee and the ABSC. Although the ABSC may provide benefits for continuing education, it makes no commitment for job retention, promotions, transfers, or salary increases by doing so.

Eligibility
This policy applies to all ABSC employees who work at least 20 hours a week and are actively at work. Employees on leaves of absence and employees who work less than 20 hours per week are not eligible to participate. Note: employees who were approved for tuition reimbursement benefits under a previous policy (with no limits), can maintain these benefits until 12/31/10 as long as they continue to attend their program without a break.

The employee should discuss any desire to pursue educational assistance with their supervisor, as applicable, in a timely manner so that budget considerations may be made. There is no waiting period before employees can become eligible for the educational assistance. An employee’s eligibility starts on his/her hire date.

Qualification
An employee can qualify for benefits if he/she takes approved courses and an exam on his/her own time from an accredited educational institution, receives a passing grade, and follows the guidelines in this policy. Additionally, in order to receive any reimbursement, an employee must obtain approval from his/her team lead/manager before registering for a course.

Accredited Educational Institutions
Accredited educational institutions include schools, colleges, universities, trade schools, associations, vocational schools, and professional societies—all of which offer coursework at a post high school level.

If application is made for approval of courses offered by an educational institution not readily recognized as accredited, the employee may be required to provide information concerning the institution. The ABSC reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to make a final and binding determination of whether an educational institution is approved and accredited for purposes of the ABSC Educational Assistance Policy.

Approved Courses
Courses and exams may be approved if:

- they add to the employee’s effectiveness on the employee’s present job assignment;
they contribute to the employee’s overall development in a way that is beneficial to both employee and the ABSC; or

they are required for the employee to obtain a degree—provided the degree satisfies either of the first two requirements above; 

and

the cost of such courses is within the ABSC’s budget; and

they have been approved by the employee’s team leader/manager.

Correspondence Classes and Self-Study Programs
Correspondence courses, including web-based courses that would otherwise qualify as approved courses from accredited educational institutions, may be approved.

Review Courses
One review course of each type described here may be approved for reimbursement under this policy. Review courses may be approved when taken for the purpose of passing an examination to be licensed or certified.

Another type of review course that may be approved is one taken for the purpose of achieving improved scores on enrollment tests, for example, the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) or the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).

Proficiency Examinations
Proficiency examinations such as the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) are covered expenses under the policy. The employee must pass an examination and receive credit for a course not taken.

Professional Certifications/Licenses and Certification Testing
The policy will reimburse the cost of a Professional Certification, license, certification test and/or education required to maintain a professional certification. Note: certification tests will only be reimbursed if the employee successfully completes (passes) the test.

Courses That Exceed One Quarter or Semester
When a course requires more than one semester or one quarter for completion, the application will cover the first year or any lesser period in which a definite part of the course will be completed. A separate application must be submitted for each subsequent part of the course. The estimated completion date for the part of the course to be covered by the application must be shown on the application.

Maximum Benefit
Covered expenses will be reimbursed up to a maximum of $5,250 on an annual basis.

Benefits
An employee will be reimbursed 90% of the cost of tuition, books and certain other fees up to the policy maximum of $5,250 as long as:

• the employee is actively at work at the time an approved course is completed, or the employee is terminated in conjunction with an ABSC action (relocation or termination due to re-organization) while participating in an approved course; or the employee must go on an unforeseeable leave of absence while participating in an approved course, or the employee’s status changes from full-time to part-time after a course has been approved and the coursework begun but not yet completed (all other policy requirements still apply);

• the course is completed with a passing grade of a “C” or higher or a “Pass” grade for a pass/fail course as proven by a transcript or grade report;
itemized receipts for all reimbursable items are submitted;

• the application for reimbursement—with supporting documentation—is made within 60 days after completion of the course;

• funds are not duplicated through a federal or state government program or educational institution such as scholarships, fellowships, incentive awards, grants, benefits under the G.I. Bill of Rights, etc.; and

• applicable procedures and approval processes of the ABSC Educational Assistance Policy have been followed.

Deferred Payment Plans
If a deferred payment plan is made available by the institution and the employee is required to pay the deferred expenses upon completion of the course, the employee may submit an itemized statement of expense in lieu of a paid receipt so that he/she may receive reimbursement from the ABSC that can be used toward paying the deferred expenses. Fees associated with using the deferred payment plan are not reimbursable.

Courses That Exceed One Year
In the case of a course that requires more than one year to complete, a receipt of the cost and statement of grades or verification of passing status must be provided during each calendar year to obtain reimbursement. Reimbursement will be calculated by proration of the total cost of the course.

Expenses
The following expenses are considered eligible for reimbursement through the policy:

• tuition;
• required books;
• required software;
• printed course materials in lieu of textbooks;
• registration, laboratory and other fees which the institution requires the student to pay, unless otherwise excluded below;
• nonresident fees;
• matriculation fees;
• examination and certification fees (as defined in the policy); and

If any of these fees are not required by the institution and the employee elects to pay for them, they will not be reimbursed. An employee will not be reimbursed for expenses which may be waived or for which he/she is not responsible.

Non-Reimbursable Items
Expenses for which reimbursement will not be made include:

• equipment such as radio parts, drafting equipment and special laboratory equipment, calculators and computers;
• application for entrance into college;
• class ring or pin;
• deferred payment or installment charges, including cash discount forfeited by late payment;
• interest charged on loans from banks or credit associations to pay tuition;
• late registration fees;
• parking permit or parking fees;
• travel-related expenses including those related to course work taken abroad;
• program changes at the employee’s request;
• room and board;
• transfer of credits from one institution to another;
• transcript of credits; and
• fees associated with coursework credit that does not require a proficiency examination, such as credit given for work experience.

Submitting Initial Application
Before an employee starts a course, an Education Assistance Application must be submitted to their team lead/manager. The application must be reviewed with the Director for approval. The Director will review the applicability of the coursework to the employee’s job and/or career with the ABSC, and will review the availability of funds within the budget. The Director may deny benefits for expenses that would otherwise qualify under this policy due to budget or other work-related constraints.

An application may be approved for a course that began prior to the employee’s hire date with the ABSC as long as the course work meets the requirements of the policy and the individual is actively at work at the time the course is completed.

How Payment Is Made
Upon completion of the course, the employee must submit all required documentation within 60 days including the Education Assistance Reimbursement form, to their team lead/manager. The team lead/manager will review the documentation for completeness, and process the reimbursement for eligible expenses using the People Portal.

Taxability of Payments
Taxes will be withheld only from reimbursement amounts that exceed $5,250 in a calendar year. Amounts payable under this policy will generally not exceed that amount.

Timely Submission of Documentation
If an employee fails to submit required reimbursement documentation within 60 days after completion of a course, the initial application may be treated as though the course was not completed. If a delay in providing the required documentation cannot be avoided, the employee must notify his/her team lead/manager within the 60 days and obtain an extension to submit documentation.

An employee will be reimbursed for any out-of-pocket eligible expenses if the employee withdraws from or fails to complete the course successfully, or is unable to complete the course while an employee of the ABSC, as the result of:

• incurring a documented illness or injury;
• induction into military service;
• a Company action such as relocation;
• the employee’s team lead/manager’s request to drop due to a work schedule conflict; or
• Termination associated with a re-organization.

Repayment
The employee will also be required to repay any amounts duplicated by a federal, state or institutional program. If the employee fails to inform the ABSC of financial aid normally used to offset the benefits payable under this policy, the course will be considered ineligible for reimbursement under this policy and the employee may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

The ABSC, at its discretion, may require an employee to repay all or any portion thereof of the funds an employee receives through the ABSC Tuition Assistance Policy if, within one year of completing the coursework, the employee resigns or is terminated for cause.

Legal notice Please refer to the US Policy Legal disclaimer.
**Process**

**Application**
1. Employee submits Education Assistance Application and Reimbursement form to Team lead/Manager before enrolling in any course including registration and course description.
2. Team lead/Manager reviews with Director and make determination to approves or decline the application
   a. If approved, Director signs approval, gives copy to employee and forwards Education Assistance application to HR
   b. If declined, Team lead/Manager discusses reason for denial of application with employee
3. Employee retains Education Assistance Application and Reimbursement form to complete after passing course.

**Reimbursement**
1. Employee completes class with passing grade
2. Employee submits original Education Assistance Application and Reimbursement form to Team lead/Manager with:
   a. expenses itemized (grayed part of form);
   b. receipts included not to exceed $5,250 in one calendar year;
   c. evidence of passing grade and any other appropriate documentation.
3. Team lead/Manager completes review of form and all documentation: fills out Team Lead/Manager grayed portion; processes payment in People Portal and forwards copy of Reimbursement form to HR.