

NEVIS ISLAND ADMINISTRATION

Financial Assistance and Study Leave Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework within which decisions about Financial Assistance and/or Study Leave are made, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the applicant and the relevant authorities.

Definitions

1. **Financial Assistance** - means a total amount of funds approved by the relevant authorities to be given to an applicant in order to financially support their higher education studies.
2. **Study Leave** - means a period of leave to allow for academic activities which develop and enhance knowledge and achieve greater excellence in areas of responsibility.
3. **Relevant Authorities** – refers to the Ministry of Human Resources, Higher Education Committee and Cabinet.

Principles

1. Financial assistance or Study leave is **neither a right nor an entitlement**; approval is at the discretion of the relevant authorities.
2. Government Officers applying for financial assistance may receive a portion of their salary as well as other allowances at the discretion of the relevant authorities.
3. The significance of financial assistance and/or study leave is measured by Government's priorities; the individual's professional development; the strategic objectives of the country; and the contribution their education will make to the wider community.

The following underpins the process by which applications are considered:

1. The needs of the Nevis Island Administration (NIA) are of paramount importance.
2. A Ministry/Department should not suffer an unreasonable burden as a result of an officer's leave.
3. An officer is required to return from leave in good time to prepare for resumption of his/her regular duties.
4. Any contractual obligations must be met.

Eligibility

1. A government officer is eligible to apply for study leave after he/she has completed a minimum of five (5) appointed years in the service; he/she can apply for leave earlier but only in exceptional circumstances.
2. An individual may apply for financial assistance, whether or not the individual is employed by the Nevis Island Administration.

Approval of Financial Assistance and/or Study Leave applications

In considering an application for financial assistance or study leave, the relevant authorities will take into account the overall purpose of higher education and also:

- a) The individual's employment record as well as an evaluation of the staff member's delivery of duties outlined in job description.
- b) Whether satisfactory arrangements can be made by the relevant Ministry for supervision and administrative functions, during the proposed absence of the officer.
- c) Whether the higher learning objectives will enable the officer to extend significantly their capabilities and/or any other specific responsibilities.

Administration of Financial Assistance and/or Study Leave

1. All applications must be made through the Ministry of Human Resources.
2. The Permanent Secretary, Human Resources, will inform the applicant of the decision, in writing.

If approved, the correspondence will:

- a. Stipulate any terms, including dates of absence and reporting deadlines.
 - b. Advise the individual of the applicable allowances.
 - c. Advise the individual that he/she has to sign a bond prior to leaving.
 - d. Advise the individual of their contractual duties.
 - e. Advise the individual that funds may be paid out in two (2) installments, within the financial year.
3. An individual who wishes to make changes to an approved plan must notify the Ministry of Human Resources at the earliest possible opportunity. Any change(s) must receive approval from the Ministry of Human Resources before the individual takes a decision. The matter will be discussed with the individual and their comments will be taken into consideration, and discussed with the Minister of Human Resources, before a final decision is made.

Individual Accountability for Financial Assistance and/or Study Leave

An individual whose application was approved is accountable to the Ministry of Human Resources for the fulfillment of the approved plan objectives, as follows:

- a. Submit annual original transcript from institution at the end of each academic year.
- b. Submit written notice, two (2) months before date of completion of studies.
- c. Within three (3) months of return to the country or to government duties, the individual must provide proof/certificate to the Ministry of Human Resources confirming that course of study has been successfully completed.

Provision for the Ministry of Human Resources to require salaries and financial assistance to be repaid

1. Salary and/or financial assistance are paid by the Government to an individual in good faith on the basis that their higher education programme will be undertaken as agreed (*unless unforeseeable circumstances prevents completion of studies*).
2. An individual who, at the end of a period of study, does not return to the federation; return to government duties; or resigns from the public service, with effect from a date within one (1) year from resumption of duties, will be required to refund salary and financial assistance paid in respect of that period of leave.
3. An individual who resigns from the service after one (1) year from resumption of duties, will be required to refund a proportion (*to be decided by relevant authorities*) of salary and financial assistance paid in respect of that period of leave.

Financial Assistance for Online Studies

Approval for financial assistance to complete online studies would be considered using the following stipulations:

1. In accordance with government's priority areas.
2. Time off to prepare for examination(s) would be at the discretion of the Ministry of Human Resources but will not exceed five (5) days per year.
3. The institution chosen by the applicant in order to complete studies, must be recognized by a certified higher education accreditation body.
4. Study leave with pay will not be granted.