Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Award
Policies and Procedures

The Cowlitz Tribe views trade/vocational training and college or university degrees as an investment in both the Tribal member and the future of our Tribal community.

The Education Committee and staff administer the Tuition Assistance Award program and will use these Policies and Procedures as guidelines. These Policies and Procedures are effective on the date they are approved by the Tribal Council.

By accepting Tribal funds from the Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Award program, the applicant/award recipient agrees to comply with these Policies and Procedures.

Cowlitz Tribal Tuition Assistance Defined

The Cowlitz Tribe will support tribal members who meet the eligibility requirements and are progressing toward a certificate or degree. While Tribal funding is considerable, it is not all encompassing. The amount of funding available is dependent on the Tribe’s ability to fund and the Tribal Council’s annual budget approval. The Cowlitz Tribe does not guarantee the amount of funding beyond the current budgeted year.

Tribal funding will support one of each of the following certificates/degrees:

- Trade/Vocational/Professional Certificate
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor Degree
- Master Degree
- Doctorate Degree

All students may proceed at their own pace toward their certificate or degree. Payment of the award is based on an invoice/statement from the school. Beginning June 1, 2018, assistance from this award is limited to:

- Trade/Vocational/Professional Certificate – Funding up to $11,000 per year, with a maximum lifetime award not to exceed $22,000.
- Associate Degree – Funding up to $6,000 per year, with a maximum lifetime award not to exceed $15,000.
- Bachelor Degree – Funding up to $11,000 per year, with a maximum lifetime award not to exceed $50,000.
- Master Degree – Funding up to $16,500 per year, with a maximum lifetime award not to exceed $35,000.
- Doctorate Degree – Funding up to $16,500 per year, with a maximum lifetime award not to exceed $35,000.

Students must be enrolled in a course of study leading to a certificate or degree from an accredited trade/vocational/professional certificate program or an accredited college or university.

Study Abroad

In selecting a study abroad program for support by Cowlitz Tuition Assistance, the program choice must meet major or minor requirements that will result in course credits earned toward the student’s degree. A letter stating the study abroad experience and credits will be applied to the student’s major or minor from an academic advisor or other school official must accompany the funding request.

Study abroad and study at stateside schools will be funded at the same level and under the same rules. All deposits and fees are the student’s responsibility. Only deposits of tuition and tuition related fees are eligible for reimbursement. Reimbursement will be made at the time final payment for tuition and tuition related fees of the study abroad program is made.
Application Process

Applications will be accepted beginning January 1 of each year until funds are exhausted. Applications will then be accepted for a waiting list. If additional funding becomes available, assistance will be offered to those on the waiting list in the order the applications were received.

In the 2019-20 academic year, academic year will be defined as June 1, 2019 through May 31, 2020.

Beginning in the 2020-21 academic year, the academic year will be defined as May 1, current year through April 30, following year. Funds must be spent for tuition and tuition related fees in the academic year they are awarded and may be drawn down for classes beginning on or after May 1. Unused award funds from the current academic year will not rollover to future academic years. Refunds of tuition and tuition related fees and unused funds will be returned to the Tribe.

An award recipient cannot benefit by adjusting the start date of their academic year. The recipient is limited to one award in a twelve-month period and not more than two awards in a twenty-four-month period. Start date of an alternate academic year is defined as the first day of classes of an academic quarter/semester/term.

Following committee approval of an application, a letter of award including a Request for Payment form and instructions on how to draw down the award will be e-mailed to the successful applicant. Reminders will be e-mailed periodically throughout the academic year.

Student Accountability

The Tribe believes each tribal member should have the opportunity to achieve his/her vocational or higher education goals. It is the student’s responsibility to determine their education plan and goal and make progress to meet their education goal. It is the Tribe’s responsibility to support the student throughout their education. The student and the Tribe succeed when the student completes their education and receives their certificate or degree.

Enrollment Status

A student will confirm their active enrollment status at the start of each academic quarter/semester/term by submitting:
- Request for Payment form.
- School transcript showing grades from the previous term.
- Invoice/statement with school name, student name, and student identification number showing tuition and tuition related fees owed.
- A list of classes the student is enrolled in for the upcoming term.

Change in Enrollment Status

Students changing enrollment status must notify the Cowlitz Education Office of the change and the reason for the change via e-mail within two weeks of the change in enrollment. Examples of change in enrollment status are: a change of school, a delay in start date, withdrawal from one or more classes. Future awards may be reduced by the amount of loss as a result of withdrawing from classes.
Failure to Make Progress

Failure to make progress is defined as a student who failed classes or withdrew from classes resulting in a delay in meeting the student's education goal.

An ongoing pattern (two or more consecutive terms) of failed classes or withdrawal from classes would result in the student being placed on probation for the next academic term. The student will be notified of their probation status and that continued failed classes or withdrawal from classes will result in the student not being eligible for payment of their Tuition Assistance Award in the next academic term.

If award funding is withdrawn, the student will be responsible for funding the next term. Following a successful term, funded by the student, the student would again be eligible for payment of their Tuition Assistance Award. Payment of the award would be based on their status, full-time or part-time, during the self-funded term.

Failure to Complete

Failure to complete is defined as a student who withdrew from all enrolled classes or failed all classes resulting in a 0.00 GPA or 0 credits earned in a quarter/semester/term.

The student would not be eligible for payment of their Tuition Assistance Award in the next academic term. If award funding is withdrawn, the student will be responsible for funding the next term. Following a successful term, funded by the student, the student would again be eligible for payment of their Tuition Assistance Award. Payment of the award would be based on their status, full-time or part-time, during the self-funded term.

Appeal Process

A student may appeal Education Committee actions within 30 days of notification of that action. All appeals requesting reconsideration must be submitted via e-mail to the Cowlitz Education Office at education@cowlitz.org.

On receipt of the appeal, the Education Committee will review the reasons for reconsideration and determine if the appeal should be rejected or upheld. The appellant will be notified within 30 days of the result of their appeal.

Issues not covered in these Policies and Procedures will be addressed by the Education Committee on a case-by-case basis.

The Education Committee may amend Policies and Procedures from time to time.

These Policies and Procedures will be included in the Tuition Assistance Award application packet.

Approved by Education Committee: August 20, 2019
Approved by Cowlitz Tribal Council: September 7, 2019