

Requesting Work Time for Coursework and/or Professional Development

A Quick Guide to Gaining Your Manager's Support

Overview

Penn supports your ongoing development and offers a variety of resources for you to learn and grow, including Penn's Tuition Benefit and HR Learning & Education professional development programs. This quick guide will help you gain your manager's support for participating in these activities. For more in-depth information about professional development and career planning, visit www.hr.upenn.edu/PennHR/learn-grow/career-resources.

Create a Plan

As you choose development activities to enhance success in your current role and further your career opportunities, ask yourself:

- Which academic programs/coursework will help you develop your professional skills and gain new knowledge and abilities? For more information on available academic programs, visit www.sas.upenn.edu/lps/students/penn-employees.
- Which HR Learning & Education resources will help you master your current role and advance your career?
 - To view scheduled offerings, visit www.hr.upenn.edu/PennHR/learn-grow/trainings-courses-and-webinars or [KnowledgeLink](#).
 - Consider participation in HR's Career Coaching program. For information, visit www.hr.upenn.edu/PennHR/learn-grow/career-coaching.

Discuss with Your Manager

It is important to talk about your development plans with your manager. He or she can provide suggestions and resources for completing your plan. At the same time, it is crucial that your department's work continues and that your tasks are covered for any time you are away from the office. Your planning ensures that this is accomplished. Follow these four steps for a productive discussion with your manager:

STEP 1: Prepare for the conversation. Before meeting with your manager, you should:

- **List the benefits of participation for you *and* your department.** Here are two examples:

Coursework

Completing this required course gets me closer to earning my degree. This will help me perform my current role more effectively and open future opportunities at Penn.

Training

Completing this training program will enhance my customer service skills. This will help me interact with students more effectively and create a more positive impression of our department.

- **Evaluate how your time out of the office will impact operations.** For example:

While I am out of the office, phone calls must be answered and someone will need to greet students.

- **Determine how you will avoid interruptions in operations.** For example:

To ensure phone coverage, I will ask ____ to work at the front desk.

- **Identify how you will be able to share what you learned so others in your department can benefit.** For example:

After I complete this development activity, I will present key learning points as a part of a staff meeting.

- **Identify any costs associated with participation, if any.**

Note: Non-exempt (weekly-paid) employees must be compensated for work-related training programs such as HR Learning & Education programs. Coursework is not compensated though managers may allow flexible scheduling so that staff can attend class and still work a 40-hour week.

STEP 2: Schedule 15-20 minutes of uninterrupted time with your manager. Prepare a brief agenda and send it in advance so your manager can prepare for the conversation. Consider saying something like, “I would like to take a course required to complete my degree and have some ideas that I would like to review with you in-person.”

STEP 3: Have the conversation with your manager. Consider the following approach:

- Present your reason(s) for wanting to take time away from your department and provide the list of benefits.
- Describe how your participation may affect business operations and your plan for closing any potential gaps in coverage.
- Discuss how you can apply what you learn on the job and how you can share this learning with others.
- If applicable, review costs associated with participation and ask your manager to invest in your professional growth.

A two-way discussion with your manager will be most productive. Be sure to listen to your manager’s concerns and be prepared to address them and offer suggestions. If necessary, ask questions to understand your manager’s point of view. Ideally, you and your manager will devise a plan that supports your learning and professional growth *and* maintains effective operations.

STEP 4: Share information with colleagues. After attending the program be sure to follow through on any promises you made to share information. Also, be sure to demonstrate your career growth by applying what you learned to your job.