

Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Award Program

Policies and Procedures

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

Policies and Procedures

The Cowlitz Education Committee and staff administer the Tuition Assistance Award Program using these Policies and Procedures as guidelines. They are effective the date of Tribal Council approval. Issues not covered in these Policies and Procedures will be addressed by the Education Committee on a case-by-case basis.

By accepting Tribal funds from the Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Award Program, the student agrees to comply with these Policies and Procedures.

Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Program Offerings — One per academic year as defined on page 2.

- **Vocational Certificate** – Funding up to \$12,000 per academic year, with a maximum lifetime limit not to exceed \$30,000.
- **Associate Degree** – Funding up to \$6,500 per academic year, with a maximum lifetime limit not to exceed \$16,000.
- **Bachelor Degree** – Funding up to \$13,000 per academic year, with a maximum lifetime limit not to exceed \$60,000.
- **Graduate Degree** – There are three pathways to a graduate degree. In no case will a student's total maximum lifetime limit exceed \$85,000.
 - **Master Degree** – Funding up to \$19,500 per academic year, with a maximum lifetime limit not to exceed \$41,000.
 - **Doctorate Degree following a Master Degree** – Funding up to \$19,500 per academic year, with a maximum lifetime limit not to exceed \$41,000.
 - **Doctorate Degree Bypassing a Master Degree** – If a student bypasses a Master Degree and moves from a Bachelor Degree to a Doctorate Degree program, funding will be up to \$19,500 per academic year with a maximum lifetime limit not to exceed \$85,000.
- **Vocational Certificate and College/University Degree Student Educational Costs GWE Benefit** – \$2,500 per academic year.
- **Continuing Education Credentials Cost Benefit** – Funding up to \$3,000 per academic year, with a maximum lifetime limit not to exceed \$6,000.
- **High School/College Dual Enrollment and Dual Credit Educational Costs Benefit** – \$500 per academic year.
- **GED Educational Testing Costs Benefit (General Educational Development Test also known as a High School Equivalency Test)** – One time funding of \$400.

Details specific to each offering are on the following pages of these Policies and Procedures.

Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Award

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe provides tuition and educational cost GWE benefits to Tribal members who meet the program eligibility requirements.

- Students must be enrolled in a course of study leading to a certificate or degree from an accredited/licensed vocational school, college, or university.
- A complete application must be submitted by the student and approved by the Education Committee before the first day of the student's academic term.

Payment of tuition and tuition-related fees is based on an invoice/statement from the school and is made directly to the school. Educational costs benefit payments are made to the student or parent if the student is under the age of 18. While Tribal funding is considerable, it is not all encompassing. Education debt and loans from previous terms are not paid by the Tuition Assistance Award Program.

Application/Payment Process

Applications are accepted beginning January 31 of each year until the end of the academic year or funds are exhausted. The amount of funding available is dependent on the Tribe's ability to fund and the Tribal Council's annual budget approval. The Cowlitz Indian Tribe does not guarantee the amount of funding beyond the current budgeted year. After review by staff for completeness, applications are forwarded to the Education Committee for approval. To be eligible for tuition assistance in an academic term, **a complete application must be submitted by the student and approved by the Education Committee before the first day of the 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.

Payment of tuition and tuition-related fees is based on an invoice/statement from the school and is made directly to the school. Educational costs benefit payments are made to the student or parent if the student is under the age of 18. Reminders to request payment of tuition and tuition-related fees will be emailed periodically throughout the academic year. Three weeks are required for processing of award payments. It is the student's responsibility to submit the Request for Payment form and supporting documents in a timely manner. All past due payment fees are the student's responsibility.

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. After the Education Committee's approval of the student's complete application, funds will be available for payment of tuition and tuition-related fees to the school prior to the first day of the academic term. Unused award funds from the current academic year will not rollover to future academic years.

Students may proceed at their own pace toward their certificate or degree. If a balance remains in the lifetime limit of an award after the student has completed a certificate or degree program, the student may use the balance to enroll in a second certificate or degree program. At no time will the student receive more than the lifetime limit of the award for the certificate or degree.

Refunds of Cowlitz payments of tuition and tuition related fees must be returned to the Tribe by the student or school. Upon receipt, the refund will be credited to the student's annual award balance and lifetime limit.

Academic Year

Academic year is defined as a 12-month period beginning on or after May 1/Summer Term, current year through April 30/Spring Term, following year. A student cannot benefit by adjusting the start date of an academic year. The student is limited to one tuition and fees award in each academic year.

A school may define the academic year as quarters, semesters, or number of months beginning any month throughout the year. In some programs, the student is required to attend year-round, without interruption, until the program is complete. Award payments for these non-traditional academic years are limited to the Tuition Assistance Award Program academic year definition, award amount, and lifetime limit rules.

Enrollment Status

The student must confirm their active enrollment status at the start of each academic quarter, semester, or term by submitting a:

- Request for Payment form.
- Statement/invoice with the school's name, student name, and student identification number showing tuition and tuition related fees owed.
- Class list for the upcoming term.
- School transcript, when available, showing grades from the previous Cowlitz funded term.

Change in Enrollment Status

Students changing enrollment status must notify the Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Office by email within two weeks of the change in enrollment. Examples of change in enrollment status are as follows:

- A change of school.
- A delay in the start date of an academic year.
- Withdrawal from one or more classes if withdrawal results in a refund of Cowlitz funded tuition.

Study Abroad

To receive funding, the Study Abroad program must meet the student's major or minor requirements and result in course credits earned toward the student's degree. A letter from an academic advisor or other school official must accompany the funding request confirming the credits of the study- abroad experience will be applied to the student's major or minor.

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 for eligible deposits will be made to the student at the time payment for tuition and tuition-related fees is made to the school.

Student Accountability

The Tribe believes each tribal member should have the opportunity to achieve his/her vocational or higher education goals. The Tribe helps, but the student must make it happen.

- It is the student's responsibility to determine their education plans and goals and bring the commitment and drive to achieve their goals.
- It is student's responsibility to submit a complete application for approval before the first day of the academic term for which they are requesting assistance.
- It is the Tribe's responsibility to provide the financial support for the student's education goals. While Tribal funding is considerable, it is not all encompassing.

The student and the Tribe succeed when the student earns their certificate or degree.

Failure to Complete/Probation/Suspension of the Tuition Assistance Award

Failure to complete is failure of or withdrawal from more than half of all enrolled courses.

If this occurs, the student will immediately be placed on probation. Cowlitz will continue to pay tuition and tuition related fees while the student is on probation.

If the student fails or withdraws from courses in a second consecutive term, the student's Tuition Assistance Award will be suspended. If award funding is suspended, the student will be responsible for self-funding their education.

Following completion of a successful self-funded term, the student may request reinstatement of the award. A successfully completed term is defined as a term without failures or withdrawals.

Future payment of the award will be based on the student's status, full-time or part-time, during the self-funded term.

Procedures for Reinstatement of a Suspended Award

The student must request reinstatement of their Tuition Assistance Award by email to the Education Committee at tuitionassistance@cowlitz.org. The student must include a copy of their transcript providing proof of a successfully completed self-funded term with the request.

Appeal Process

A student may appeal Education Committee actions within 30 days of notification of that action. All appeals requesting reconsideration must be submitted by email to the Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Office at tuitionassistance@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 student will be notified within 30 days of the result of the appeal.

\$2,500 Vocational Certificate and College/University Degree Student Educational Costs Benefit

High school/college dual enrolled students or students receiving assistance for GED Testing Costs and Continuing Education Credentials Costs are not eligible for this benefit.

This benefit will be available to all vocational, college, or university Tuition Assistance Award recipients. The student will receive this annual benefit in the student's first education term of an academic year following payment of tuition and tuition related fees.

This annual payment for educational costs may be used for, but is not limited to, books, computers, calculators, musical instruments, sports equipment, supplies for studies, tutors, clothing, room and board, and transportation to and from school.

A Cowlitz student not receiving tuition assistance and enrolled in a certificate or degree program at an accredited/licensed vocational school, college, or university, may receive this GWE Educational Costs Benefit. This student should contact the Tuition Assistance Office to request this benefit.

If a student withdraws from school after receiving this GWE Educational Costs Benefit payment but before completing the term, future GWE Educational Costs Benefit payments will be made at the end of the term.

\$500 High School/College Dual Enrollment and Dual Credit Educational Costs Benefit

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe recognizes that Cowlitz high school students (Freshman, Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors) who choose to get a jump start on an Associate's or Bachelor's degree or a Career and Technical Education Certificate (CTE) while earning a high school diploma are reducing their post-secondary education costs that would be paid by the Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Award Program.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe will support these high school/college dual-enrolled and dual-credit students by providing a \$500 GWE Educational Costs Benefit. This benefit may be used for, but is not limited to, tuition, class-based fees, lab fees, books, computers, calculators, and transportation to and from school.

To be eligible for the Cowlitz \$500 GWE Educational Costs Benefit, a student must be taking college classes while enrolled in high school. The classes must count for both high school and college credit.

These programs and the costs of these programs vary from state to state and school district to school district. The high school student must contact their local school district to enroll in a dual enrollment/dual credit program.

After completing the enrollment process in the local school district, the student must contact the Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Award Office and request an application for this Cowlitz GWE Educational Costs Benefit. The application will require both the student's and parent's signature. Payment of this benefit will be made to the parent of all students under the age of 18.

\$400 GED (General Educational Development Test also known as a High School Equivalency Test.) Educational Testing Costs Benefit

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe will support tribal members who do not currently possess a high school diploma by providing a one-time GWE Educational Cost Benefit for GED Testing Costs. The benefit would help cover the expenses associated with taking the GED tests, including any re-takes.

Tribal members should contact the Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Award office and request an application for this Cowlitz GWE Educational Testing Costs Benefit.

A copy of your GED Certificate will be required after completion.

Up to \$3,000 Continuing Education Credentials Cost Benefit

A pilot program - Educational Credentials Cost Benefit is being offered in the 2025-26 academic year. The continuation of the program beyond the 2025-26 academic year will depend on memberships demonstrated need for tribal support.

Credentials are generally seen as documentation that indicates an individual's ability and qualification to perform a certain task or job. Credentials are required to work in a particular field. They may be professional licenses, endorsements, or certifications issued by industry groups or career related organizations.

Costs associated with obtaining professional credentials may include but are not limited to study materials, trainings, workshops, and testing.

One or more of the following criteria must be met to qualify for this GWE assistance:

- The credentials obtained enhance the student's current certificate or degree.
- The credentials obtained provide opportunity for career advancement.
- The training is recognized by related professional organizations.
- Courses provided meet the accreditation standard.

Tribal members should contact the Cowlitz Tuition Assistance Award office for additional information about this 2025-26 academic year pilot program.

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 these 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: March 25, 2025

Approved by Cowlitz Tribal Council: April 5, 2025