



# Policy on Education Upgrades

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## Office of the President

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**Policy Purpose:** To formalize processes around raises or bonuses for an employee who has upgraded their professional training with a new degree..

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## POLICY STATEMENT

New Mexico Tech (NMT) is committed to fostering lifelong learning and supporting the educational advancement of its employees. Achieving higher educational credentials represents a significant accomplishment that deserves recognition and celebration. When an educational upgrade directly enhances an employee's ability to better or more effectively fulfill their job responsibilities or contributes to organizational success, NMT is committed to providing a defined financial reward as part of that recognition.

This policy outlines the framework for implementing rewards for educational upgrades, detailing the responsibilities of employees and managers in planning and supporting these endeavors. By promoting education and professional development, this policy aligns with and supports the mission of New Mexico Tech.

## GENERAL POLICY

An **Educational Upgrade** is defined as the completion of a formal degree from an accredited institution, undertaken by personal choice, completed primarily outside work hours, and funded independently by the employee (including through NMT's employee benefits).

While all educational achievements should be celebrated, not all upgrades will directly impact an employee's current job responsibilities. As such, this policy differentiates between rewards for upgrades that are **Impactful**—degrees enhancing the employee's ability to fulfill their role—and **Non-Impactful**—degrees that, while significant, do not directly impact the employee's current job responsibilities.

Educational programs meeting the following criteria are **ineligible** for rewards:

- Required as a condition of the position,
- Paid for by NMT (except for courses taken through NMT's employee benefits program), or
- Pursued during working hours (provided work was not made up after hours and documented).

## RESPONSIBILITIES

### Employee Responsibilities

- Notify their Direct Supervisor of their educational plans by submitting a formal request as early as possible—ideally before starting the program and no later than one year before completing the degree.
- Delayed notification may result in delays or denial of recompense.
- Upgrades completed prior to the policy's enactment or without notifying the supervisor may not qualify for rewards, subject to the Cognizant Head's discretion.

- If an employee changes jobs during their pursuit of a degree, they must inform their new supervisor and update their reimbursement application accordingly.

### **Management Responsibilities**

- The Direct Supervisor must assess whether the educational plan is Impactful or Non-Impactful and formalize the request using the **Educational Upgrade Plan** form.
- If disagreement arises, the Cognizant Head will provide the final determination.
- Supervisors must ensure completed plans are submitted to Human Resources for processing.

## **EDUCATIONAL UPGRADE PLAN**

The **Educational Upgrade Plan** is a formal document created using the Human Resources template. It must include:

- Employee name, job title, and current pay rate,
- The degree being pursued,
- The institution providing the program, and
- Whether the upgrade is deemed Impactful or Non-Impactful.
- A copy of the employee's current job description.

The plan requires signatures from the Employee, Direct Supervisor, and Cognizant Head before submission to Human Resources. Employees may maintain only one active plan at a time.

## **QUALIFIED EDUCATIONAL UPGRADES**

### **Degrees:**

- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Ph.D.

Second degrees are not permitted and only a higher degree than what an individual has will be considered. Ineligible upgrades include short courses, professional certifications, and any training not resulting in a formal degree.

## **REWARDS FOR QUALIFIED EDUCATIONAL UPGRADES**

### **Impactful Educational Upgrades (Degrees):**

- **Associate's or Bachelor's Degree:** An increase in base pay of 9%, with a minimum increase of \$3,000 and a maximum increase of \$5,000.

- **Master's Degree:** An increase in base pay of 7%, with a minimum increase of \$5,000 and a maximum increase of \$7,500.
- **Ph.D.:** An increase in base pay of 5%, with a minimum increase of \$7,000 and a maximum increase of \$10,000.

**Non-Impactful Educational Upgrades (Degrees):**

- One-time bonus equivalent to the higher of \$2,000 or 3% of base pay.

**DEFINITIONS**

- **Cognizant Head:** A member of the President's Executive Cabinet or their designee.
- **Direct Supervisor:** The employee's immediate supervisor responsible for performance evaluations.
- **Impactful Educational Upgrade:** A degree directly enhancing an employee's ability to perform their current job responsibilities.
- **Non-Impactful Educational Upgrade:** A degree with no direct relevance to the employee's current role.
- **Educational Raise:** A permanent salary increase tied to an Impactful Educational Upgrade.
- **Educational Reward:** A one-time bonus for a Non-Impactful Educational Upgrade.
- **Qualified Educational Upgrade:** A degree meeting the eligibility requirements outlined in this policy.