

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN
MISSISSIPPI

**Human Resources
Policy/Procedure**

Retrieval No. 3102
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Date July 1, 1995
Supersedes July 1, 1993

FRINGE BENEFITS

SUBJECT: FACULTY/STAFF ACADEMIC POLICY

In order to participate in the free course benefit, the University employee must first complete admissions requirements (be admitted or re-admitted to the University) prior to registering for the free course.

Eligibility

- All full-time University faculty, staff, and Military Science and Aerospace personnel are eligible for the free course benefit.
- All part-time University employees on University benefits are eligible for one-half benefit up to three semester hours. Part-time employees will not be eligible to take their free course during their normal work schedule.
- Retired faculty and staff are eligible for the free course benefit up to six semester hours per term. The Department of Human Resources will be responsible for approving retired participants.
- If a University employee is seeking a degree, he or she must maintain an "overall" 2.0 GPA to continue the free course benefit. An employee who fails to maintain the required overall GPA will not receive the free course until such time as his or her overall GPA meets the 2.0 minimum.
- In accordance with Internal Revenue Service Code, Section 132, all graduate level course work must be job-related or taken on a space-available basis.
- For newly hired employees to receive this benefit they must be employed prior to the last official day of late registration of the semester.
- Employees are expected to enroll in evening classes whenever possible. A full-time employee may take up to six (6) semester hours per term, but only one course may be taken during normal working hours. Employees taking week-long intensive courses must take annual leave while they are away from the office taking these courses. Also, only on S or SS course may qualify for day classes, not both during the same semester. Normal working hours are defined as 8 am – 5 pm. The department chair or manager must approve all courses taken during normal working hours. The nature of the employee's job and the workload of the area will be the determining factors in approving class attendance during working hours.
- An employee will also be permitted to take their free courses during the noon hour. The noon hour is from 12 noon to 1 pm. The following policies and procedures will be used in allowing the additional class to be taken during the lunch hour:
 1. The faculty/staff member must have approval of his or her immediate supervisor.

2. The faculty/staff member may not take longer than one hour to complete the class and return to work.
 3. The faculty/staff member may not take additional time for a lunch break since he or she forfeits this time to attend a class.
 4. The faculty/staff member may not work through the noon hour and take a class at later time during the day and charge this absence to the lunch break.
 5. The immediate supervisor is in charge with the responsibility of enforcing this policy and will allow no exceptions.
- All full-time faculty and staff employed at Gulf Coast campuses are eligible to enroll in a maximum of eighteen (18) semester hours per academic year (maximum of six (6) hours per semester or term) at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. The courses must be taken toward a degree. The University will pay the registration tuition fees. All part-time employees are eligible to take nine (9) semester hours per academic year (maximum of three (3) hours per semester or term). The employee must complete a Course Benefit Request Form obtained from the Assistant Dean for Support Services, Gulf Coast campus. The employee may be away from the office for a maximum of three hours per week. Additional time must be charged to annual leave.
 - Courses taken through the Division of Continuing Education will be credit only. Pass/fail, letter grade, and audit are allowed. No non-credit activity and no correspondence courses are allowed.
 - There may be a point in time during the final year of study, before attaining a degree, whereby more than one required course is taught during a semester. When an employee is required to take both courses during work hours, a letter of request will be submitted to the Department of Human Resources. Attached to this letter of request will be a copy of the employee's Application for Degree. The employee will be given three (3) hours toward the free course scholarship and will be required to pay the additional tuition fees for the second course. The employee will also be charged personal leave for all absences during normal working hours to attend the second course.

Fees

- Employees maintaining out-of-state residence must pay out-of-state tuition fees.
- Employees are responsible for paying late fees attached to registration or drop-add.
- Employees who are enrolled in a free course and terminate employment with the University prior to mid-term, but continue the class, will be required to pay tuition. Reimbursement of tuition fees, paid by the department, will be in accordance with established refund policies.
- Employees are responsible for paying laboratory fees and buying textbooks.
- If an employee drops a course, but continues employment at the University, the employing department's budget will be reimbursed at the established refund percentage.
- All faculty and staff scholarships are now being audited each semester. Employees who take more than three (3) semester hours during normal working hours will be identified and proper disciplinary action will be taken. Individuals who violate these policies will also be denied the free course benefit.

Procedures

- The employee must first complete admission requirements of the University. The employee may then pick up a permit form to register for a free course from the Department of Human Resources.

- The employee must have the permit approved by his or her budget authority. The budget director will check for full-time employment status, overall GPA, and work schedule flexibility at this time.
- The Free Course Permit, once it is obtained from the Department of Human Resources, and signed by the area Budget Authority, is taken to Financial Aid before registration can begin.
- The employee then takes his or her Registration Appointment Form to registration or uses STARS (Southern's Telephone-Assisted Registrations System). Instructions and procedures for use of the STARS are contained in the Class Schedule Guide.