Human Resources

Employee Degree Program

Earn a Cornell degree while you work.

The EDP provides benefits-eligible employees with full tuition toward both undergraduate and graduate degree programs at Cornell University after one year of full-time employment.

You need to be accepted into a degree program at Cornell and have your supervisor’s approval to be considered for funding. See complete details below.

- Undergraduate application(pdf)
- Graduate application(pdf)
- FAQs

Meet our recent proud graduates!

Limitations:

Second or multiple bachelor’s degrees: the university does not confer a second bachelor’s degree in order to accommodate more first-time applicants.

Ongoing supervisory approval: You must have your supervisor’s permission to register each semester.

Stipends & fellowships: Graduate EDP participants are not permitted to accept stipends or fellowships.

EDP Exclusions: The Cornell Law School, the Sloan Program in Human Ecology and the DVM Program in the Vet School do not accept EDP participants.

Tuition Aid Benefit: You cannot use Tuition Aid reimbursement while participating in the Employee Degree Program.

Job or Career Related: Your degree should be related to your job or career at Cornell.
Additional Coursework Costs: EDP does not cover any costs associated with books, labs, supplies, etc.

SAT & GRE/GMAT Prerequisites: It is up to the college or grad school to which you apply to decide whether entrance exams are required.

Credit Transfer: It is up to the college to which you apply whether prior credits from another school will transfer toward your Cornell degree. In general, undergraduate degree programs will accept a maximum of 60 credits; graduate credits are considered on an individual basis.

Completion Deadline: The EDP does not mandate a deadline for degree completion; graduation date is open-ended. (with the exception of certain MBA programs at Johnson)

Class Registration Requirements: You are not required to register for classes every semester while participating in the EDP.

Benefits: If you enroll for more than eight (8) credits during a semester, and you reduce your work status to part-time (between 20-35 hours), your benefits continue in full except for salary-dependent programs (e.g., basic life, retirement contributions and, possibly, TDA contributions). Vacation and health and personal leave accrue on a prorated basis and you remain eligible for regular paid holidays. Reduction of hours is permitted from the first day of classes to the last day of classes. Employees should confirm their benefit status with Benefit Services.

Commitment Clause: There is no requirement for employees to remain at Cornell upon completion of a degree.

Tax Liability: See section below.

Eligibility

Cornell University employees who have completed one year of regular, full-time work (35 hours or more per week), whose employment status is one of the following:

Full-time Status: Nonacademic employees and non-professorial academic staff members who do not hold voting status on any college, university, or graduate faculty; ROTC military personnel; Employees who have completed a year of full-time work during prior employment with the university¹.

Part-time Status: Benefits-eligible part-time employees who have previously completed one year of full-time service¹.

Ineligible Employees: The following university statuses are not eligible for this benefit
Layoff Status: EDP participants who are placed on layoff status may continue participation in EDP or apply to be admitted to the university and receive funding during their one year layoff period if eligibility was established prior to the effective date of their layoff status.

Disability or Family Medical Leave Status: Employees who are approved for family medical leave, short or long term disability leave, or workers’ compensation, may continue participation in EDP or apply to be admitted to the university if eligibility was established prior to the effective date of the disability.

1Employee may be responsible for providing proof of prior service.

How to apply:

- Supervisory Approval: Your first step is to discuss your goals with your immediate supervisor. Then you will need the endorsement of your immediate supervisor, your supervisor’s manager, and the dean or executive officer.
- Acceptance by School or College: You must apply to and be accepted by a school or college as a regular degree candidate (special student status does not apply).
- Submit EDP Application: After being accepted to a college, submit the completed degree application form to Benefit Services at least three (3) weeks prior to the beginning of the semester.

Undergraduate: Participants receive a tuition waiver to enroll in up to eight (8) credits per semester. Participants also have the option to enroll in over eight (8) credits two times while in the EDP. During those two semesters, you may reduce your work status to below full-time (35 hours), but no less than part-time (20 hours). This reduction in hours is from the first day of classes to the last day of classes during that semester.

Graduate: The same credit limits apply as described above for undergrads. Note that graduate EDP is taxable, and the taxable tuition value is calculated using the number of registered credits per semester. See detailed tax information below.

Release time from work:

Your immediate supervisor has the responsibility to schedule release time for your coursework. Consideration will be given to ensure the effective operation of the department. Release time for coursework is recorded as leave with pay; however, homework must be done outside of scheduled work hours.

Tax information:

Employee Tax Liability: Undergraduate EDP is not taxable. Graduate EDP over $5,250 is taxable under section 127 of the IRC. In order to calculate your tuition value, EDP uses the full-time semester tuition for your program and divides it by 12. This value is multiplied by
the number of credits you register for during that semester. Amounts that exceed the $5,250 tuition value will be forwarded to Payroll and additional tax withholdings will apply based on your tax-withholding card (W-4 Federal; IT 2104 New York State) on file in Payroll. Contact Payroll with general tax withholding questions. Keep in mind that the per-credit charge usually increases with the onset of each new academic year, but you will never be taxed on a tuition value that is higher than the semester tuition. Note: This tuition calculation does not apply to those in Executive or Queens MBA Programs through the Johnson School. If you are interested in applying to the Cornell Executive MBA, Metro NY or EMBA Americas Program in the Johnson, there may be special tax handling regarding this program. Please visit the Division of Financial Affairs website to learn more, or contact tax@cornell.edu. Although the university applies spring tuition values to bursar bills in December of each year, due to the taxation issues, the EDP credit is not applied until January. Should you need to declare your tuition and taxes that you paid in any given calendar year, it is suggested that you use your W2 as issued by the university.

[/accordion]