

Financial Support for Obtaining Higher Qualifications

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Review Cycle:	3 years		
Applies From:	Immediately		

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support colleagues that are required to

- a Upgrade their qualifications to meet the requirements of the programme in which they teach,
- b Become research active or
- c Change/enhance the services they perform.

1.2 Scope and Application

- a This policy applies to colleagues whose role and position requires a higher-level qualification, as detailed in their Valuable Conversation Professional Development plan, and whose application has been approved to complete that higher-level qualification (by course work, thesis, or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)). For master's or PhD, approval from the colleague's Director or the Chief Executive is required.
- b The most common situations are where a colleague is required to obtain a higher qualification to teach in a degree/higher level programme or is part of an approved professional development plan relevant to their role. The Director must confirm that completion of the qualification contributes directly to the achievement of the Division objectives and/or to the Ara Functional Research Plan and effectively meets NZQA requirements including research for degrees and above and expert discipline knowledge.
- c Priority is given to supporting tenured full-time colleagues, but applications by proportional colleagues may be considered. A central fund, to which colleagues may apply for a standard level of financial support, is managed through People and Culture (P&C).
- d This policy does not apply in circumstances where a colleague wishes to pursue training or further study that does not lead to a recognised higher qualification or enrolls in a higher qualification that is not required by their position or the objectives of the Division/Department.

1.3 Formal Delegations

- a Delegations related to financial budgeting, monitoring and expenditure are set out in the *Delegations Register*. For the purpose of this policy, the Director P&C will manage the central fund.
- b The Director P&C is responsible for ensuring the process as set out in this policy is implemented. This includes-providing information on, setting up review panels as needed, and requesting supervision reports.
- c Colleagues who have been directed to upgrade their qualifications and who want to be considered for financial support under this policy are responsible for providing full and accurate information to their Director. If the applicant anticipates applying for funding from the Ara Central Research Fund refer to section 3.5.
- d Directors are responsible for ensuring the required information is forwarded to P&C, including their endorsement and/or prioritising of colleague applications.

1.4 Definitions

- a **Higher qualifications:** Qualifications at a level higher than the colleague has already achieved in the relevant discipline/role.
- b **Approved professional development plan:** Annual plan for an individual colleagues, signed by the appropriate Executive Director or respective delegate, and completed according to stated Ara policy.
- c **CTA (Canterbury Tertiary Alliance):** An agreement of co-operation signed by Ara, University of Canterbury and Lincoln University.
- d **‘Required by Ara’:** A colleague must achieve the relevant qualification, usually within a specified timeframe and/or when an accreditation panel or similar body requires colleagues to complete higher qualifications as a condition of ongoing accreditation, or the Executive Director has identified a need within the role.
- e **Responsible Executive Director:** The Executive Director with responsibility for the area in which the employee is employed.
- f **Standard course/paper:** one-quarter of a full-time year of study (with ‘full time year’ equivalent to 120 credits or 1.0 EFT).
- g **RPL:** Recognition/assessment of prior learning.

Related Ara Procedures

- Procedure and application form from People & Culture or Waituhi
- Support for Gaining Higher Qualification ER19
- Valuable Conversation Growth Plan
- Workload Plan
- [APP803i Supervision for Higher Qualification Grant application](#)
- [APP803o Annual Individual Research Plan](#)

Related Ara Policies

- [CPP205 Board/Staff Discounted Fees](#)
- [CPP214 People & Culture Management](#)
- [APP803 Research and Knowledge Transfer](#)

Related Legislation or Other Documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree Approval, Accreditation and Monitoring NZQA Canterbury Tertiary Alliance application form 	Good Practice Guidelines
References http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Providers-and-partners/Registration-and-accreditation/guidelines-degree-approval-and-accreditation.pdf	
Notes The first version of this policy was entitled “Financial Support for Staff Required to Obtain Degrees” replaced under new title in 2002.	

2 Principles

- 2.1 Ara will work with colleagues to clearly state any requirement that colleagues upgrade their qualifications and will agree a personal development plan to outline the details of any such requirement.
- 2.2 Ara will support colleagues who are required to upgrade their qualifications as part of their employment.
- 2.3 There is a benefit to colleagues of upgrading their qualifications.

3 Associated procedures for Ara Corporate Policy on: Financial Support for Obtaining Higher Qualifications

Contents:	3.1	Funding Mechanism
	3.2	Financial Support
	3.3	Bonding & Reporting Requirements
	3.4	Time Allocation
	3.5	Support from the Academic Research Fund

3.1 Funding Mechanism

- a A central budget will be set by TKM the year prior and administered by P&C. In the case the budget is exhausted, this scheme will not be available until the following year. In extraordinary circumstances whereby financial support for obtaining higher qualifications is required for critical business reasons, a colleague may be permitted to enter the scheme. This circumstance can only be approved by the Chief Executive.
- b The Responsible Director, or the Chief Executive will consider applications at division level and then forward them, with endorsement and priority ranking, to P&C. This usually will be in the year prior to study commencing, so that budget implications can be addressed, and colleagues informed of the decision well in advance of enrolment deadlines. P&C will notify applicants of the decisions made.
- c In any year where the number of applications exceeds the amount of money available, priority will be as follows:
 - i Applications that are required to meet a compliance requirement e.g., degree/master’s level teaching.
 - ii Applications which support specific Ara strategic objectives or enhance the profile of Ara.
 - iii Applications which support specific objectives in the division.

- d To enable prioritisation of applications as outlined above the following application periods shall apply each year. Colleagues are required to submit their applications within these timeframes and indicate their intention to enrol in the programme/qualification, but do not necessarily need have already enrolled.
 - i Applications open 15 January and close 1 February.
 - ii Applications open 15 June and close 1 July.

3.2 Financial Support

- a Colleagues are eligible for financial support to subsidise course fees and RPL, **up to the following maxima**. Note that in most cases, in recognition of the benefits of obtaining higher qualifications to the individual as well as to Ara, the cost of obtaining a higher qualification is not paid in full by the institution.
- b For applications for enrolments and attendance on courses –
 - i Maximum \$1,000 per standard course/paper or proportion thereof (refer Definitions in Section 1) for bachelor's degrees, other level 6 or 7 qualifications, and master's degrees. This equates to a maximum of \$4,000 for a full-time study/year. The allocation may be used to cover RPL fees but does not cover additional costs such as Students' Association fees or texts.
 - ii Maximum \$3,000 per year for a maximum of six years for doctorate level qualifications, excluding additional costs such as Students' Association fees, texts, and related expenditure.
 - iii The total amount paid towards any qualification will not exceed what would be allocated had the colleague completed the qualification within the minimum timeframe, based on the equivalent full-time study.
 - iv Support for the payment of RPL assessment fees will not exceed the amount that would have been paid for enrolment fees and will be allocated on a case-by-case basis.
 - v A successful application in one year does not guarantee the same amount will be allocated to that colleague in following year/s, although an indication of the likelihood of further funding will be given wherever possible. Successful completion of annual goals/outputs will be taken into account when allocating funds in subsequent years.
- c If the relevant qualification is offered by Ara or another provider offering discounts or scholarships to Ara colleagues (e.g., the CTA reciprocal discount scheme), colleagues are expected to enrol with that institution. Colleagues are required to agree with their Dean of Faculty on the institute at which the qualification is to be studied.
- d Payment of fees will be reimbursed on receipt of evidence of having passed the particular paper/s. In cases of financial hardship, the fee may be reimbursed immediately. A statement must be signed by the colleague agreeing to repay Ara if they withdraw from or do not pass the course/s.
- e For applications related to RPL fees for higher qualifications, colleagues will require a statement of support from their line manager before they begin work. RPL processes are limited to no more than 33% of any qualification. Applications will be approved by the relevant Director or the Chief Executive.

3.3 Bonding and Reporting Requirements

- a Upon receipt of reimbursed fees colleagues will be bonded: for qualifications up to master's the period will be for one year; for PhDs the period will be for two years.
- b Acknowledgement of this stipulation is required before any payment will be made.
- c During this period, if a colleague's position becomes surplus to requirements and they are made redundant, the colleague is not required to pay back any of the fees.
- d Colleagues who leave for any reason other than redundancy will be required to refund the financial support received as follows –
 - i For qualifications up to masters – the last year's reimbursement
 - ii For the qualification of PhD – the last two year's reimbursement
- e There is a reporting requirement for master's or doctorate theses/dissertations, so that Ara can track progress towards completion of the qualification. For the first year, a six-monthly report from the colleague's research supervisor is required, followed by an annual report until the work is completed. The provision of such reports is a pre-requisite for the payment of the reimbursement. The progress report will be copied to P&C, the Dean of Faculty and the relevant Director. The Dean of Faculty will assess progress against milestones attached to the project through the Ara research approval process and address any issues raised. Any issues regarding completion of a qualification must be raised as soon as possible. A grant for a PhD is expected to be over six years (part time basis) and for a master's three years (part time basis). If the tertiary institution allows a longer period for completion, this must be identified as part of the approval process with the Director and P&C.

3.4 Time Allocation

- a Academic colleagues with research time as detailed in their Annual Individual Research Plan may, with approval from their director, use their allocated research time to upgrade their qualifications to master or doctorate level. Colleagues are expected to complete research outputs as well, e.g., publication, exhibition, conference presentation. Other time releases from normal duties must be negotiated with the Dean of Faculty and/or Director, as appropriate.

3.5 Support from the Ara Central Research Fund

- a In addition to the cost of course fees covered by P&C, the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee may provide additional financial support. The terms and conditions of these grants are set out in APP803 Research & Knowledge Transfer Policy and, procedures and forms are on Waituhi.