

Financial Support for Obtaining Higher Qualifications

First Produced:	25/02/92 (different title)	Authorisation:	Te Kāhui Manukura
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Review Cycle:	3 years		
Applies From:	Immediately		

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Ara is committed to supporting staff that are required to:

- a Upgrade their qualifications in order to meet the requirements of the programme in which they teach
- b Contribute to and potentially lead high quality research activity
- c And/or add value to the services they perform
- d Complete an approved professional development plan that contributes directly to Ara's strategic direction.

1.2 Scope and Application

- a This policy applies to staff whose role and position requires a higher level qualification, and whose application is approved to complete that higher-level qualification (by course work, thesis or RPL application). For Masters or PhD, approval from the Director of Education and Applied Research is required.
- b The most common situations are where a staff member is required to obtain a higher qualification to teach in a degree/higher level programme and as part of an approved professional development plan relevant to his/her role. The Division Director must confirm that completion of the qualification contributes directly to the achievement of the Division objectives and to the Research & Knowledge Transfer functional plan. The recipient will be required to prepare a Performance Based Research Funding portfolio, if eligible.
- c Priority is given to supporting tenured full time staff, but applications by proportional staff may be considered. A central fund, to which staff may apply for a standard level of financial support, is managed through the Human Resources Division.
- d This policy does **not** apply in circumstances where a staff member 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.

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 Human Resources (in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer as needed) will manage the central fund.

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- b The Director, Human Resources is responsible for ensuring the process as set out in this policy is implemented. This includes setting and publicising the timeline for applications each year, providing information on criteria for approval, setting up review panels as needed, and requesting supervision reports.
- c Staff who want to be considered for financial support under this policy are responsible for providing full and accurate information to their Director, within the stated timeframe. If the applicant anticipates applying for funding from the Research & Knowledge Transfer Committee (RKTC) refer to section 3.5.
- d Division Directors are responsible for ensuring the required information is forwarded to the Human Resources Division, within the stated timeframe, including their endorsement and/or prioritising of staff applications.

1.4 Definitions

- a **Higher qualifications:** Qualifications at a level higher than the staff member has already achieved in the relevant discipline/role.
- b **Approved professional development plan:** Annual plan for an individual staff member, signed by the appropriate Division 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 (now merged with Christchurch College of Education, also an original partner) and Lincoln University.
- d **'Required by Ara':** A staff member must achieve the relevant qualification, usually within a specified timeframe and/or when an accreditation panel or similar body requires staff to complete higher qualifications as a condition of ongoing accreditation, or the Director has identified a need within the role.
- e **Standard course/paper:** one-quarter of a full time year of study (with 'full time year' equivalent to 120 credits or 1.0 EFT).
- f **RPL:** Recognition/assessment of prior learning.

Related Ara Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Related Ara Policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP205 Council/Staff Discounted Fees • CPP214 Human Resources Management
Related Legislation or Other Documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedure and application form from HR Division 	Good Practice Guidelines
References <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	
Notes <p>The first version of this policy was entitled "Financial Support for Staff Required to Obtain Degrees" replaced under new title in 2002.</p>	

2 Principles

- 2.1 Ara will work with staff to clearly state any requirement that staff upgrade their qualifications, and will agree a specific development plan to outline the details of any such requirement.
- 2.2 Ara will support staff who are required to upgrade their qualifications as part of their employment.

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- 2.3 There is a benefit to staff of upgrading their qualifications, and therefore staff are also expected to make a personal contribution.

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 contestable central fund will be administered by the Human Resources Division (HR).
- b Each year, HR will publicise the timeframe for lodging applications and for notifying applicants of the decisions made. The Director EAR, or in the case of division directors, the Chief Executive must receive applications with sufficient time to consider them at division level and then forward them, with endorsement and priority ranking, by the deadline set by HR. This usually will be in the year prior to study commencing, so that budget implications can be addressed and staff informed of the decision well in advance of enrolment deadlines.
- c In any year where the number of applications exceeds the amount of money available, priority will be as follows:
 - i Applications which support specific Ara strategic objectives or enhance Ara's profile.
 - ii Applications which support specific objectives in the particular division.

3.2 Financial Support

- a Staff are eligible for financial support to subsidise course fees and RPL, **up to** the following maxima. The allocation includes the staff member's usual Professional Development entitlement. 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.

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 staff member completed the qualification within the minimum timeframe, based on the equivalent full-time study.

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- 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 staff member 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.
- b If the relevant qualification is offered by Ara or another provider offering discounts or scholarships to Ara staff (eg the CTA reciprocal discount scheme), staff are expected to enrol with that institution. If there are reasons why this is not appropriate, an application for 'dispensation' may be submitted to the HR Division.
- c 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 staff member agreeing to repay Ara if he/she withdraws from or does not pass the course/s.
- d Staff may use any or all of their formal Professional Development entitlement to support their study, with the agreement of their Division Director, Executive or respective delegate, regardless of whether they are eligible for, or receive financial support under this policy.
- e For applications related to RPL fees for higher qualifications, staff will need to include the details of costs for the individual applications plus a statement of support from the manager. The Panel will consider each application on its own merit.

3.3 Bonding & Reporting Requirements

- a Staff members who leave for any reason other than redundancy will be required to refund the financial support received as follows:
 - For qualifications up to Masters – the last year's reimbursement
 - For the qualification of PhD – the last two year's reimbursement
- b Acknowledgement of this stipulation is required before any payment will be made.
- c A staff member made redundant during this period is not required to pay back any of the fees.
- d Upon receipt of reimbursed fees staff will be bonded: for qualifications up to Masters the period will be for one year; for PhDs the period will be for two years.
- e There is a reporting requirement for Master's or Doctorate thesis/dissertation, so that Ara can track progress towards completion of the qualification. For the first year, a six monthly report from the staff member's research supervisor is required, followed by an annual report until the work is completed. HR is responsible for sending out the requests for these reports directly to the supervisor and for monitoring progress. The progress report will be forwarded to HR and the relevant Director and the staff member who will 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 Masters 3 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 Division Director and HR.

3.4 Time Allocation

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Academic staff on research conditions may, with approval from their Director, use their allocated research time to upgrade their qualifications to Master or Doctorate level and count this as one 'research output' for a maximum of two years for Master's and three years for Doctorate study. After that time, staff are expected to complete other research outputs as well, e.g. publication, exhibition, conference presentation. Other releases from normal duties must be negotiated with the Head of Department and/or Division Director, as appropriate.

3.5 Support from the Research and Knowledge Transfer Fund

The Academic Board's Research & Knowledge Transfer Committee (R&KTC) provides financial support related to research projects, research supervision, conference presentations/exhibitions and publications. The terms and conditions of these grants are set out in the Academic Policies and Procedures Manual (available in hard copy and on InfoWeb), on the Research Website and from the Academic Division. The value of the grant(s) expected must be indicated to their Director with the initial application for the Higher Qualification Grant. Any amounts above \$3000 in a single year must be agreed with the Academic Director. The information will include how the cost will be shared between the Institution conferring the degree and Ara.

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