

A core part of CareerWise's youth apprenticeship program is the high return on investment for both the employer and student. One of the ways in which students see value in an apprenticeship is the opportunity to earn debt-free college credit relevant to the skills they are learning on the job. Employers, in turn, see an ROI in outsourcing training of certain skills to local community colleges to boost the productivity and skillsets of their apprentices.

Typically, an apprentice will have the opportunity to take college courses or earn college credit relevant to the chosen pathway. Employers can invest up to \$4,000 per apprentice, per year for community college and other training/certification/credential coursework.

Many employers have existing policies and requests when it comes to this facet of the program. See below for CareerWise's policies as it relates to employer stipulations around apprentice college coursework.

CareerWise recommends each employer review their existing tuition reimbursement policy (if applicable) with their HR or equivalent department first. Based on the existing policy, we ask that each employer consider the following factors and situations to ensure a successful apprenticeship program for both for the business and apprentices.

Can an employer require an apprentice to pay tuition upfront and have the employer reimburse?

No. Given that apprentices are 16 or 17 years old, it is highly unlikely that apprentices will be able to foot the bill for tuition up front. CareerWise requires that employers directly pay the invoice for apprentice coursework. CareerWise can assist in obtaining the invoice and any coordination involved.

Can an employer require apprentices earn a certain grade in order to pay for courses?

No. Given that tuition is paid by the employer upfront, it will be difficult to peg payment to grades and thus is not allowed.

However, a company can communicate that upon failing a course, an employer may refuse to pay for additional coursework unless an improvement in performance over time is demonstrated. The employer must rigorously communicate this to applicants for the apprenticeship and to the apprentice prior to signing up for college courses. The terms of this condition must be explicit in the apprentice job descriptions on the CareerWise marketplace and the employment agreement between employer and apprentice.

Can I require an apprentice to work for the employer for a certain number of years after the apprenticeship, also known as a retention policy, and if they leave early, pay back tuition costs?

Under the standard CareerWise model, in which businesses invest up to \$4000/year in training for credentials and college coursework, a company may not impose a retention policy on the apprentice.

If the employer is paying for an Associate's degree as part of the apprenticeship (which is not required by CareerWise) and wants to implement a retention policy, the following conditions must be met:

- The conditions must be expressed to the apprentice in the apprentice job description, employment agreement, and before the apprentice enrolls in the Associate's degree program to ensure full understanding.
- The retention period must not be onerous (e.g. requiring an employee to stay for five years in exchange for paying for a 2-year degree). A 1-year retention policy is fair in most circumstances if you do not have an existing retention policy.
- The employer should, during the retention period, pay market wages to the apprentice.
- The retention agreement, separate from the apprentice employment agreement, must be signed before the apprentice enrolls in the Associate's program and when the apprentice is at least 18 years of age.
 - Typically this will be when the apprentice has worked for the employer for at least one year, so they have a feel for the work, the degree expectations, and whether they want to continue in the program.