

# HOW TO ASK YOUR EMPLOYER TO FUND YOUR POSTGRADUATE STUDY

Securing funding for further study starts with a well-prepared case.

Use this checklist to guide your preparation, so you can approach the conversation with clarity and confidence.

We've also included some helpful conversation starters and responses to common objections to help you navigate the discussion.

## 1. Know what's in it for them

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Be clear on how your study will:

- ✓ Improve client service
- ✓ Build specialist expertise
- ✓ Address emerging skills needs
- ✓ Support staff retention and loyalty
- ✓ Strengthen the firm's reputation

## 2. Build your business case

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Align your study with business goals

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Choose the right course and be prepared to explain why it's a good fit

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Include specific examples of how your studies might:

- ✓ Enhance your practice
- ✓ Improve processes
- ✓ Bring in potential new business
- ✓ Support team development with what you share

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Plan how you'll balance study with work

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Think about alternative forms of support

### 3. Time the conversation well

☐ Plan your conversation so it aligns with:

- ✓ Your performance review
- ✓ Career development planning
- ✓ Team resourcing discussions
- ✓ Budget cycles

### 4. Frame the conversation carefully

- ☐ Lead with value, not cost
- ☐ Use outcome-focused language
- ☐ Clearly outline the level of support you're seeking
- ☐ Show openness to alternatives
- ☐ Approach it as a two-way conversation

### 5. Explore backup options

- ☐ Consider alternative options in case your employee says no:
- ✓ Look into FEE-HELP
- ✓ Explore tax deductions
- ✓ Start with a staged enrolment
- ✓ Revisit the conversation in future

## Conversation starters

Not sure how to open the conversation? Here are a few ideas:

#### 1. Link it to business goals

*'I've been thinking about how I can improve my practice in [area]. I've found a postgraduate program that would help me deepen my expertise in [specific skills/knowledge] that I think would directly benefit [clients/firm priorities].'*

#### 2. Position it as a professional development opportunity

*'I'd love to discuss how I can continue growing in my role. I've found a postgraduate program that would really help me build skills in [area], which will benefit the team and our clients in these ways.'*

#### 3. Suggest a first step

*'I've done some research and would love to get your thoughts on a postgraduate program that aligns with our priorities – and what support options might be available.'*

## Common objections – and how to respond to them

### **'It's too expensive.'**

**Response:** I understand budgets are always a factor. I genuinely believe this investment will pay off as it enables me to deliver more value for clients, drive efficiency across the business and contribute to the firm's growth.

If full funding isn't feasible right now, would you be open to exploring options like partial funding, flexible arrangements or staged enrolment?

Or, if not, perhaps we can revisit this conversation in six months?

### **'We can't afford to lose your time to study.'**

**Response:** The course is flexible, so I'm confident I could manage my studies alongside my existing workload. I've already thought through how I'd balance both and plan to schedule study time outside of core work hours where possible.

I can assure you I'd be proactive about managing deadlines and priorities to ensure my performance stays strong throughout.

### **'Is this really relevant to your role?'**

**Response:** Yes, the skills I'd develop align with our client needs and business goals, especially in areas like [specific practice area/emerging issue]. I also see opportunities to share this knowledge with the broader team.

### **'If we do this for you, everyone will ask.'**

**Response:** I completely understand that consistency and fairness are important.

I believe this request aligns with my role as well as the firm's priorities. When discussing with the wider team, I can frame it as a case-by-case decision based on business needs – not as a blanket precedent.

I'd also be open to helping define clear criteria for when study support makes sense, so it stays aligned with strategic goals and adds value for the business.

The more prepared you are for this conversation, the more confident and professional you will feel.

Think through your responses ahead of time and prepare for every eventuality to position your request in the best possible light.