2017 Flex Credits Allocation for
University of Western Ontario Police Association Members

Making the best use of your Health Care Spending Account and your Professional Expense Reimbursement Account

In addition to many other benefits, Western provides its University of Western Ontario Police Association (UWOPA) members with two accounts that can be used to cover a wide variety of expenses. It also offers “Flex Credits” – funds to put into either of the two accounts. Here are the two accounts, and an explanation of Flex Credits.

- The Health Care Spending Account (HCSA) can be used to pay for many medical and dental expenses that are not covered or only partially covered by your Extended Health and Dental plans. Your base Health Care Spending Account for 2017 is $200.

- The Professional Expense Reimbursement Account (PER) can be used to pay for professional expenses including conference registrations, travel and accommodation, membership fees for professional associations, journal subscriptions, to purchase software, internet access, and for other expenses. (See end of this document for a list of eligible expenses and restrictions). Your PER base amount for 2017 is $300.

In addition to the base amounts outlined above, you have been provided with $600 in Flex Credits that you may allocate (in $100 increments) between your HCSA and your PER.

The deadline to allocate your $600 Flex Credit allocation for the 2017 calendar year is December 2, 2016. If you do not actively choose where those funds will go, the default allocation is $600 to your PER. The allocation is irrevocable.

The following table shows what funds are available to UWOPA members, specifically in cases where no allocation decision is made for Flex Credits, leading to the default allocation being made on their behalf.

**Default Position (Member makes no allocation of flex credits)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCSA base</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCSA flex credits</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(default allocation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HCSA Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$200</strong></td>
<td><strong>$200</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER base</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PER flex credits</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(default allocation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PER Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$900</strong></td>
<td><strong>$900</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can see that, in total, a UWOPA member in the default position would have a total of $1100 in benefits from these two accounts - $200 in the HCSA and $900 in their PER account.
What is the right Flex Credit allocation decision for you?
In November of each year, you will be asked to make a decision about your Flex Credit allocations for the following year. Here are some things to consider:

Do you expect to have higher professional costs in the next calendar year? You may anticipate the need for new software, or you have plans to attend a major conference in the coming year and will incur expenses for registration, travel and accommodation. If so, you may wish to allocate more or all of your Flex Credits to your Professional Expense Reimbursement Account.

Do you foresee higher medical/dental expenses? Sometimes you are able to anticipate upcoming medical or dental expenses for the next calendar year. If you know your child will need orthodontic work, or you have experienced an injury that requires ongoing physiotherapy or massage therapy, you may choose to allocate more of your Flex Credits to your Health Care Spending Account. Your HCSA can be used to claim reimbursement for expenses above the dollar maximum for benefits such as vision care, drug dispensing fees, and to pay for the 15% co-insurance costs you may pay on some dental and medical expenses.

Making your Choice
A notice will be sent to you in November each year, letting you know it is time to make your Flex Credit allocation for the following year. At that time, you may sign into “my Human Resources”, prior to the deadline, and make your election.

Carry Forward Provisions of PER
Individuals may have a one year carry forward of any unspent amount, i.e. unspent PER from 2016 may be spent in 2017. Claims for 2016 must be submitted no later than January 31, 2017.

Carry Forward Provisions of HCSA
Unused credits in your HCSA will be carried forward and added to credits for the following calendar year. At the end of the second calendar year, tax laws require that any credits remaining from the previous year be forfeited.

Checking your Balances
To see your current balance in your PER, go to the Finance website at http://uwo.ca/finance/. Navigate to Corporate Accounting → Professional Expense Reimbursement and click on the link “Professional Expense Reimbursement Balance”. Your will need to use your Western user ID and password at the prompt to log on. You will see any carry forward from the previous year, your entitlement this year, any claims you have made in the current year, as well as the current balance in the account.

To see the current balance in your Health Care Spending Account, visit the Manulife Financial website and sign in - Manulife Financial. Once logged in, click on "My Benefits", then the link that says HCSA Balance. You will see amount deposited in current year, claims paid, and your current balance.
**Submitting an HCSA Claim**
To submit a health or dental claim to your HCSA, complete a Manulife Financial Health Care Spending Account Claim form. This is the same form you use to seek reimbursement for those items covered under your regular Manulife Financial health and dental care plans.

Here are a few tips:

- You can submit claims at any time in the year, but all claims must be received by Manulife no later than March 31st of the year following the year in which the expenses have been incurred (i.e. March 31, 2017 for expenses incurred in 2016).

- Before making claims under your HCSA, you are required to make claims under your regular benefits program – the Extended Health and Dental plans. You will see a box you can check that says “Check here to use your Health Care Spending Account (HCSA) to reimburse any unpaid portion of this claim”.

- You should also co-ordinate any available coverage from a spouse’s health or dental plan before using your HCSA credits to take advantage of the maximum coverage available to you.

**Submitting a PER Claim**
The quickest way to obtain reimbursement for your PER claim is to submit an online claim form. The following links provide step-by-step instructions on how to submit a PER claim online:

- Instructions for submitting a PER claim online
- Video on how to create an online Professional Expense Claim

Once you’ve submitted the claim online, print the PER cover page and forward along with your original receipts to your Chair/Director/Dean/Vice-President. Once the Chair/Director/Dean/Vice-President approves online, ensure the PER cover page, along with original receipts, is forwarded to Financial Services, Room 6100, Support Services Building.

As soon as the cover page and receipts are received by Financial Services, your claim will be processed the next day and fund will be directly deposited to your bank account. You will receive an e-mail notification (to your @uwo email address) when this transaction has occurred.

You can also continue to submit a paper claim for your PER by following the below instructions.

1. To submit a Professional Expense Reimbursement claim, first review the information regarding eligible expenses on the claim form. To download the form, go to the Financial Services forms page and you will find a heading called Professional Development/Expense. You will see a claims form for each eligible employee group.

2. Sign and submit the form and receipts to your Chair/Director/Dean/Vice-President
for approval. Once the claim form is signed by your Chair/Director/Dean/Vice-President, ensure the form, along with original receipts, is forwarded to Financial Services, Room 6100, Support Services Building. Claims will be processed as soon as possible and directly deposited to your bank account. You will receive an e-mail notification (to your @uwo email address) when this transaction has occurred.

**Eligible Expenses and Conditions**

The HCSA, the PER and the Flex Credits are all non-taxable benefits to you, however there are some limitations imposed by the Income Tax Act and the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) including carry-over and other provisions.

**Flex Credits**: The allocation of flex credits must be made in advance of the calendar year in which the expenses are expected to be incurred.

**HCSA Eligible Expenses**: The Canada Revenue Agency governs the expenses that can be claimed using your HCSA, as they are the same expenses that can be claimed for the medical expense tax credit on your income tax return. A list of eligible expenses can be found on the CRA website (www.cra-arc.gc.ca) by clicking here. Note that if you receive HCSA reimbursement for an expense, you cannot also claim the CRA medical expense tax credit for the same expense.

**PER Eligible Expenses**: The following expenses incurred by staff members are eligible for reimbursement:

- Memberships in professional associations;
- Registrations to conferences, course tuition;
- Computer software (related to staff member’s work);
- Travel expenses (transportation, accommodation, meals);
- Subscriptions (excluding newspapers), journals, books and Internet access.

Equipment and computer hardware are not eligible.

Want more information? You may find what you’re looking for in our FAQ.