



# TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

## Operating Policy and Procedure

### **HSCEP OP: 70.26, Insurance Coverage of Graduate Student Employees**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso Operating Policy and Procedure (HSCEP OP) is to define guidelines for handling graduate student employee insurance pursuant to the Texas Employee Uniform Group Insurance Benefits Act (Article 3.50-2, Insurance Code).

**REVIEW:** This HSCEP OP will be reviewed on June 1 of each even numbered year (ENY) by the Executive Director for Human Resources or designee, with recommendations for revisions submitted to the Chief Financial Officer or designee by June 15.

### **POLICY/PROCEDURE:**

#### **1. Eligibility.**

Employees employed in the position titles of Graduate Assistant, Teaching Assistant, or Research Assistant for 50 percent or more time for 4½ months or more will be considered eligible for participation in the Group Benefits Program (GBP).

Such employees appointed in excess of 50 percent time for a duration of less than 4½ months but who receive a reappointment which extends the employee's employment for a period of 4½ months or more will be considered eligible on the date such reappointment is effective.

Such employees who are between appointments but who have not been separated from Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso will be considered as being on leave without pay and will be eligible to continue their insurance coverage during such leaves by payment of due premiums, if any, to the Payroll Office.

Such employees will not be eligible for premium sharing contributions if the leave is between the periods of September 1 and May 31 or if the leave starts prior to May 1 and extends into June, July, or August.

Such employees on "between term leaves" will be eligible to continue their coverage during such leaves and will be eligible for premium sharing contributions. A between term leave is defined as a leave which starts after May 1 and ends on August 31.

An employee employed in a graduate student occupation status for less than one-half time who is also employed in some other status for a total FTE of 50 percent or more will be considered eligible if such appointments exceed 4½ months.

Breaks in service for the balance of a partial month of pay will not affect a graduate student's eligibility and will be counted as time worked for determining insurance eligibility.

#### **2. Identification Process.** Graduate students eligible for insurance coverage will be placed in the appropriate employee class code and benefit category.

Consistency edits will identify such coded records and print messages when such employees are not enrolled in an insurance plan and do not have an insurance transaction pending.

#### **3. Enrollment Procedure.** A graduate student meeting insurance eligibility criteria shall attend regular employee processing in the Human Resources Department to receive payroll and Group

Benefits Program information. Insurance eligible graduate students are not automatically enrolled in the basic health plan of GBP. Therefore, to be covered by health insurance, a graduate student must, within 30 days of employment, complete insurance enrollment forms.

Health insurance coverage is then effective the first day of the month following the 60<sup>th</sup> day of employment.

A graduate student who fails to enroll within the first 30 days will only have a future opportunity to enroll during the annual enrollment period or when they experience a Family Status change or Employment Status change.

Insurance eligible graduate students will receive one half of the full premium sharing under the GBP. Therefore a graduate student will have a payroll deduction for ½ of the premium for member only coverage. Graduate student employees will receive premium sharing for ¼ of the cost of any dependent health coverage. All remaining premiums will be paid by the graduate student employee through payroll deduction. All premiums are determined annually by the Employees Retirement System and will be communicated as soon as possible to graduate student employees.

Graduate students have an eligibility period of 30 days from their date of hire to enroll themselves and/or dependents in any of the optional plans available in the GBP without evidence of insurability: term life insurance, dental insurance, long and short term disability and accidental death and dismemberment. Optional plan coverage can be effective on the employee's first active duty date or the first of the next month. Any changes to the initial enrollment made in the 30-day period will be effective the first of the month after the change. After this initial period of eligibility, graduate students may enroll or change any of their optional plans only during the Summer Enrollment period and then Evidence of Insurability restrictions may apply to the plan and approval is not guaranteed. Premiums on optional coverage will be deducted from the graduate student's paycheck.

Eligible graduate students who do not need the State's health insurance now or in the future because they are enrolled in other health insurance that is as good as or better than what the State provides may receive an Opt-Out Credit of \$30.00 per month which may then be used only towards the purchase of a dental plan and/or Accidental Death and Dismemberment Plan. Any unused portion of the \$30 credit remains in the ERS fund.

Enrolled graduate students will participate in the premium conversion plan. This plan will deduct the out-of-pocket premiums for optional coverage before both federal income tax and social security tax are applied to earnings. The favorable tax treatment places certain restrictions that allow changes to insurance coverage only with a qualifying life event.

Detailed information on all plans under the Group Benefits Program is available in the Human Resources Department.

4. **Billing Procedure for Individuals on Insurance but with No Deduct.** If an individual is on leave of absence without pay (between appointments), is not entitled to a premium sharing contribution and has not paid, a notification letter will be sent from the Payroll Office to the employee's home and department.

If the individual is on leave of absence without pay (between appointments), is entitled to a premium sharing contribution and has not paid for optional coverages, a notification letter will be sent from the Payroll Office.

In accordance with Group Benefits Plan rules, if the payment is not received by the deadline, coverages will be canceled.

If the payment is not received due to a coding error during payroll processing, a notification letter will be sent from the Payroll Office.

If the payment is not received due to a canceled paycheck, a notification letter will be sent from the Payroll Office.

Copies of all of the above will also be sent to the employee's home department.

5. **Right to Change Policy.** TTUHSCEP reserved the right to interpret, change, modify, amend, or rescind this policy, in whole or in part, at any time without the consent of employees.