

<i>NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE INSTRUCTION 36-101-01 MARCH 13, 2000</i>	
<i>Human Resources Training</i>	
<i>ADVANCED STUDIES PROGRAM</i>	
NOTICE: This publication is available at: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/directives/ .	
OPR: F/ (A. Rosenberg) Type of Issuance: Renewed 07	Certified by: F/
<i>SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:</i>	

NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

ADVANCED

STUDIES

PROGRAM

(ASP)

GUIDELINES

2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	TOPIC	PAGE
1.	Purpose	3
2.	ASP Training Assignments	4
	2.1 Full -Time Assignments	4
	2.2 Part-Time Assignments	5
	2.3 On-Line Studies	6
3.	Advanced Studies Program Costs	6
4.	Advanced Studies Program Policy Guidelines & Responsibilities	6
	4.1 Employee's Responsibilities	6
	4.2 Supervisor's Responsibilities	7
5.	Prohibitions	8
6.	Selection Criteria	8
7.	Required Documents	9
8.	Review and Selection Process	9
9.	Post Selection Guidelines	9
	9.1 Schedule	10
	9.2 Multi-Year Programs	10
APPENDICES		
A.	Advanced Studies 1 st Year Program Application	
B.	Advanced Studies 2 nd Year Program Application	
C.	Continued Service and Reimbursement Agreement (CSRA)	

1. PURPOSE

The Advanced Studies Program (ASP) is a two-year program which allows employees to enroll and attend graduate level courses at an accredited academic institution of their choice while still receiving their full salary. Both full-time and part-time training assignments in job and/or career related studies are available. The two-year program runs consecutively, however, approval for the second year is dependent upon successfully completing the first year and the availability of funding.

The emphasis of this program is on coursework that allows employees to develop expertise and maintain currency in fisheries biology, fisheries management, population dynamics, habitat protection, computer science, ecosystem analyses and other disciplines related to the mission of NOAA Fisheries Service. Participating employees benefit from the knowledge of recent advances in their occupational fields, and obtain or improve skills needed in current or future positions.

All NOAA Fisheries Service, full-time permanent employees, who have at least two-years service with NOAA Fisheries Service, and who are qualified to apply for graduate level courses at a college or university, may apply to the ASP. However, all applications must have full supervisory support including an endorsement from the employee's FMC or Office Director in order to be considered. Submissions are reviewed by a Review Panel with selections made by the Deputy Assistant Administrator of Fisheries.

NOAA Fisheries Service Office of Management & Budget pays the cost of tuition, books, and related fees (up to \$11,000 per year), while the participant's home office continues to pay the employee's salary while the employee is in school. Employees will be required to sign an "Agreement to Remain in Service" for three times the length of the training period if selected for the Program.

2. **ASP TRAINING ASSIGNMENTS**. The ASP includes full-time and part-time training assignment options. All courses taken must result in development of the employee to better fulfill NOAA Fisheries Service program objectives.

2.1 **Full-Time Assignments**. The full-time ASP option usually provides training for a period of TWO academic years (two semesters and one summer session per year) in a non-Government facility that is an accredited college or university. The educational institution's ability to meet the training needs effectively and economically should be considered. All courses must be completed by the date specified on the training application, and employees must take at least the minimum full-time course load requirement as determined by the educational institution.

Those applying for full-time ASP assignments must receive approval from their Regional Director, Center Director or Office Director in addition to their supervisor's (signed justification statement) approval as detailed in Section 6.

Employees retain their full salary during the Program. Federal regulations require an employee selected for full-time training assignments to agree in writing to serve in the Government for three times the length of the training period.

Example: three years of service for one year of training.

The employee must sign a Continued Service and Reimbursement Agreement, which is Appendix C of this document.

Employees remain in their position of record while participating in the ASP and the Program must be incorporated in their Performance Management Plans.

Applicants must have completed the basic prerequisites for admission into the graduate program of their choice. The ASP does not provide financial support for courses that are prerequisites for graduate level courses. Examples of prerequisite courses not funded include:

- Calculus or general biology for graduate level studies in fisheries-related topics
- General mathematics or English for graduate level studies in business or financial fields, or
- Basic computer courses for graduate level studies in computer science.

2.2 **Part-Time Assignments.** The part-time ASP option usually provides training for a period of TWO academic years (two semesters and one summer session per year) in a non-Government facility that is an accredited college or university. The educational institution's ability to meet the training needs effectively and economically should be considered. All courses must be completed by the date specified on the training application. Part-time ASP assignments allow employees to divide their 40-hour week between work and course attendance/study assignments. For example, a 20/20 ASP option is considered a part-time assignment. This means a student spends 20 hours per week performing work duties and 20 hours per week devoted to course attendance/study assignments. This is the suggested guideline for appropriate part-time work/study ratio.

Employees applying for part-time ASP assignments must ensure they are in a part-time status at the college or university where classes will be taken. Candidates should work through their supervisor to determine the appropriate work/study ratio for their assignment.

Employees retain their full salary during the Program.

An employee on part-time training shall incur a continuing service obligation of three times the number of hours he or she spends in class, in formal computer-based training, in formal self-study programs, or with a training instructor. Federal regulations require an employee selected for part-time training assignments to agree in writing to serve in the Government for three times the length of the training period.

Example: three years of service for one year of training.

The employee must sign a Continued Service and Reimbursement Agreement, which is Appendix C of this document. Time payback will not begin until the end of the last course taken in the academic year.

Applicants must have completed the basic prerequisites for admission into the graduate program of their choice. The ASP does not provide financial support for courses that are prerequisites for graduate level courses. Examples of

prerequisites course not funded include:

- Calculus or general biology for graduate level studies in fisheries-related topics
- General mathematics or English for graduate level studies in business or financial fields, or
- Basic computer courses for graduate level studies in computer science.



2.3 **On-Line Studies**. For ASP purposes, on-line studies associated with an accredited institution or college are considered the same as conventional in-residence studies. An advantage of on-line studies is that the necessary work-study ratio may be less than for in-residence courses.

3. **ASP PROGRAM COSTS**. Employees selected for the Advanced Study Program remain in their positions of record while in training status. The salary of selectees continues during the assignment.

NOAA Fisheries Service Office of Management & Budget is responsible for tuition, fees, books, and other reasonable costs as approved by the National Personnel Management Advisory Committee (PMAC) up to \$11,000 per student per year whether participating under the full-time or part-time option. Additional costs will be the responsibility of the employee unless the employee's office has agreed to pay the additional costs exceeding the \$11,000 funded by Office of Management & Budget's Office.

4. **ASP PROGRAM POLICY GUIDELINES & RESPONSIBILITIES.**

4.1 **Employee Responsibilities:**

- a) Keeping their supervisors abreast of academic progress and any issues that may arise, as well as maintaining a grade "C" or better in all courses.
- b) Reporting to work between quarter and semester breaks while not in school unless otherwise approved by the supervisor.
- c) Submitting copies of all tuition receipts including books and other covered fees to the Office of Management & Budget at the following address:

Annette Stern, ASP Program Coordinator

NOAA Fisheries Service/Office of Management & Budget
1315 East West Highway, SSMC3
Room 14140
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
(301) 713 – 2259 x119

- d) Notifying the ASP Program Coordinator of any changes to the original training plan.
- e) Notifying the ASP Program Coordinator should he/she accept another position outside NOAA Fisheries. The Office of Management & Budget, along with the General Counsel, and the NOAA Workforce Management Office will determine the employee's responsibility for reimbursing the agency of any training expenses that may be subject to the Continued Service Agreement signed by the employee.
- f) Note - Tuition payments utilizing the Office of Management & Budget accounting codes may not exceed the \$11,000 annual cap. Expenses exceeding the \$11,000 cap are to be paid by funds within the employee's office or are the expense of the employee, whichever is agreed to by employee and supervisor.

4.2 **Supervisor's Responsibilities:**

- a) Maintaining frequent contact with their employee while in the ASP Program. Supervisors must incorporate the ASP into the employee's Performance Management Plan.
- b) Notifying the ASP Program Coordinator of any changes to the original training plan.
- c) Notifying the ASP Program Coordinator should the employee accept another position outside NOAA Fisheries. The Office of Management & Budget, along with the General Counsel, and the NOAA Workforce Management Office will determine the employee's responsibility for reimbursing the agency of any training expenses that may be subject to the Continued Service Agreement signed by the employee.
- d) Note - tuition payments utilizing the Office of Management & Budget accounting codes may not exceed the \$11,000 annual cap. Expenses exceeding the \$11,000 cap are to be paid by funds within the employee's office or are the expense of the employee, whichever is agreed to by employee and supervisor.
- e) Ensuring the success of any training assignment, and is responsible for an ongoing evaluation of both the employee's progress and the value

of the training assignment.

- f) Assisting in the coordination of any recommended changes to the original training plan with Office, Regional, or Center Director and advising Office of Management & Budget of those changes.

5. PROHIBITIONS. While the intent of the ASP is to improve employee job performance and provide enhanced skills and abilities for future positions, federal regulations prohibit the following:

- a) The selection and assignment of an employee for training (or the payment or reimbursement of training costs) to
 - obtain an academic degree in order to qualify for appointment to a particular position or
 - For the sole purpose of providing an opportunity to an employee to obtain one or more academic degrees; and
- b) The selection of educational facilities which discriminate in the admission or treatment of students.

6. SELECTION CRITERIA. The selection of employees to participate in an ASP training assignment will be based on the following factors:

- a) Applicant has received a rating of “pass” or “meets/exceeds expectations” or if under the Demonstration Project a combination of “meets or exceeds expectations” and/or “eligible” for the last two years.
- b) Relevancy of the training to current and projected assignments within National Marine Fisheries Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) program objectives;
- c) Relevance to proposed training to identified individual development needs and/or career goals.
- d) Evidence of the candidate's ability and desire to undertake and complete successfully a comprehensive long-term training program;
- e) Basic merit principles providing equal opportunity to all eligible employees;
- f) The total cost of the proposal and work/study ratio as compared to other proposals considered by the NOAA Fisheries Service Review Panel.
- g) A complete application package (described in Appendix A).

7. **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS.** All nominations must include a complete ASP application. The application must include the items listed in Appendix A.

A cover memo from the Regional Director, Science Director, or Office Director, endorsing the applicant, should accompany each nomination.

8. **REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCEDURES.** Nominations must be forwarded through and approved by local management channels (i.e., immediate supervisor, Office Director, Regional Director or Science Director) prior to the submission to Office of Management & Budget.

Review of all recommendations for Advanced Studies assignments will be conducted by a Review Panel and recommendations will be forwarded to the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Fisheries. The Deputy Assistant Administrator NOAA Fisheries Service will make final decisions.

9. **POST SELECTION GUIDELINES.**

Employees and Supervisors will be notified via e-mail of all selections and non-selections by the end of May, 2007. Employees will then be sent a Continued Service and Reimbursement Agreement (appendix D) with the period of obligated service defined. Once the employee has signed the agreement, the employee should send the original agreement to the ASP Program Coordinator and provide a copy to the employee's supervisor.

The employee selected into the ASP must also provide the ASP Coordinator with the name and phone number of their office's bankcard holder representative responsible for making payments to the educational institutions. Copies of all bankcard statements for training expenses must be sent to the ASP Coordinator, with an explanation of the course name and number.

Participants should use a government bankcard to pay for courses. If the total dollar amount exceeds the bankcard's credit limit, then a form SF-182 *Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training*, is required for payment.

To ensure the approved courses were completed satisfactorily, participants will provide

a copy of their final grades after each term to the ASP Program Coordinator.

All training involving appropriated funds must be completed successfully. A **grade of "C"** or better is considered successful completion for all college courses. Any employee who fails to complete a course successfully is personally responsible for reimbursement of all training costs associated with training.

9.1 **Schedule.** The ASP is announced via an email communication to Regional, Center, and Office Directors, from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, soliciting nominations.

- The announcement is typically released in mid- March for the upcoming academic year.
- Deadlines for applications are noted in the email, usually due by mid-April.

9.2 **Multi-Year Programs.** Employees who are enrolling in multi-year programs of study (usually two consecutive years) must reapply to the ASP each year. Application requirements can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix A
Advanced Study Program (ASP) Application
1st Year Applicants

- 1. PROPOSED COURSE WORK & RELEVENCY (applicant, please provide a detailed description of coursework and explain how training will be applied to current and/or future career goals). Please limit your description to three pages.**

2. ASP APPLICATION SUMMARY SHEET (1st year applicant)

Applicant Information

Name (Last, First, MI:

Title/Series/Grade:

Office Mailing Address:

Office Phone Number:

Alternate Contact Number:

Email:

2. ACADEMIC BACKGROUND. *Note: Please provide a copy of college transcripts or provide a list of college level courses taken with grades and attach to this application.*

College:

- School:

- Location:

- Degree:

- Major:

Other University Training:

- School:

- Credits:

- Description:

3. PROPOSED COURSES (1st year applicant)

Training Institution:

Address:

Institution Phone Number:

Advisor:

Advisor Phone Number:

If Part-time; Work/Study Ratio:

SEMESTER or QUARTER 1; or ON-LINE EQUIVALENT			
Start Date:	mm/dd/yy	Completion Date:	mm/dd/yy
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Sub-Total Course Cost		Sub-Total Books/Materials Cost	

SEMESTER or QUARTER 2; or ON-LINE EQUIVALENT			
Start Date:	mm/dd/yy	Completion Date:	mm/dd/yy
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Sub-Total Course Cost		Sub-Total Books/Materials Cost	

SEMESTER or QUARTER 3; or ON-LINE EQUIVALENT			
Start Date:	mm/dd/yy	Completion Date:	mm/dd/yy
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Sub-Total Course Cost		Sub-Total Books/Materials Cost	

SEMESTER or QUARTER 4; or ON-LINE EQUIVALENT			
Start Date:	mm/dd/yy	Completion Date:	mm/dd/yy
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Sub-Total Course Cost		Sub-Total Books/Materials Cost	

Total	Tuition \$ _____	Books/Materials \$ _____	Credits _____
--------------	----------------------------	------------------------------------	----------------------

4. SUPERVISOR:

Name (Last, First, MI):

Title:

Mailing Address:

Office Phone Number:

Email:

- 5. SUPERVISOR'S NARRATIVE & JUSTIFICATION** addressing the applicant's ability to complete a long-term training program and his/her commitment to NOAA and federal service. Also, provide a brief description of the proposed training relevancy to NOAA program needs. Please limit text to two pages.

6. OTHER REQUIRED DOCUMENTS which must accompany this application:

- Resume or OF-613
- SF-171 (optional)
- Copies of college transcripts
- Cover memo from Regional Office Director, with evidence of strong support of the nominee

The supervisor's role is important in ensuring the success of any training assignment, and the supervisor is responsible for an ongoing evaluation of both the employee's progress and the value of the training assignment.

The supervisor is also responsible for assisting in the coordination of any recommended changes to the original training plan with Region of the Center Director and advising Office of Management & Budget of those changes.

7. SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE for approval of the application (prior to signing, please ensure all application materials have been reviewed and are consistent, complete and as specified in these guidelines).

Signature

Date

8. REGIONAL / CENTER/OFFICE DIRECTOR'S approval of application

Signature

Date

Appendix B
Advanced Study Program (ASP) Application
2nd Year Applicants

1. ASP APPLICATION SUMMARY SHEET (second year applicant)

Applicant Information

Name (Last, First, MI):

Title/Series/Grade:

Office Mailing Address:

Office Phone Number:

Alternate Contact Number:

Email:

- 2. Academic Background.** *Note: Please provide a copy of previous year's college transcript, and attach to this application.*

3. Proposed Courses (Second year applicant)

Training Institution:

Address:

Institution Phone Number:

Advisor:

Advisor Phone Number:

If Part-time; Work/Study Ratio:

SEMESTER or QUARTER 1; or ON-LINE EQUIVALENT			
Start Date:	mm/dd/yy	Completion Date:	mm/dd/yy
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Sub-Total Course Cost		Sub-Total Books/Materials Cost	

SEMESTER or QUARTER 2; or ON-LINE EQUIVALENT			
Start Date:	mm/dd/yy	Completion Date:	mm/dd/yy
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Sub-Total Course Cost		Sub-Total Books/Materials Cost	

SEMESTER or QUARTER 3; or ON-LINE EQUIVALENT			
Start Date:	mm/dd/yy	Completion Date:	mm/dd/yy
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Sub-Total Course Cost		Sub-Total Books/Materials Cost	

SEMESTER or QUARTER 4; or ON-LINE EQUIVALENT			
Start Date:	mm/dd/yy	Completion Date:	mm/dd/yy
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Course Name		Credits	
Tuition Cost		Books/Materials Cost	
Sub-Total Course Cost		Sub-Total Books/Materials Cost	

Total	Tuition \$ _____	Books/Materials \$ _____	Credits _____
--------------	----------------------------	------------------------------------	-------------------------

5. SUPERVISOR:

Name (Last, First, MI):

Title:

Mailing Address:

Office Phone Number:

Email:

6. SUPERVISOR'S NARRATIVE & JUSTIFICATION addressing the applicant's performance review from the previous year.

7. **THE SUPERVISOR'S ROLE** is important in ensuring the success of any training assignment, and the supervisor is responsible for an ongoing evaluation of both the employee's progress and the value of the training assignment.

The supervisor is also responsible for assisting in the coordination of any recommended changes to the original training plan with Region of the Center Director and advising Office of Management & Budget of those changes.

8. **SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE for approval of this application**

Signature

Date

9. **REGIONAL / CENTER / OFFICE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE** for approval of this application

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C:
Continued Service and Reimbursement Agreement

NOTE: This agreement must be signed by the nominee for all non-government training for which the Government approves payment of training costs prior to the commencement of such training. Nothing contained in Appendix C below shall be construed as limiting the authority of an agency to waive, in whole or in part, an obligation of an employee to pay expenses incurred by the Government in connection with the training.

1 **I AGREE** that upon completion of the Government sponsored training described in this request, if I receive salary covering the training period, I will serve in the agency three times the length of the training period. If I receive no salary during the training period, I agree to serve the agency for a period equal to the length of training, but in no case less than one month. (The length of part-time training is the number of hours spent in class, in computer-based training, in satellite training, or with the instructor. The length of full-time training is eight hours for each day of training, up to a maximum of 40 hours a week). NOTE: For the purposes of this agreement, the term "agency" refers to the employing organization (such as an Executive Department of an independent establishment), not to a segment of such an organization.

2 **If I** voluntarily leave the agency before completing the period of service agreed to in item 1 above, I AGREE to reimburse the agency for the tuition and related fees, travel and other special expenses (EXCLUDING SALARY) paid in connection with my training. However, the amount of reimbursement will be reduced on a pro-rated basis for the percentage of completion of obligated service.

3 **I FURTHER AGREE** that, if I voluntarily leave the agency to enter the service of another Federal agency or other organization in any branch of the Government before completing the period of service agreed to in item 1 above, I will give my organization written notice of at least ten work days, during which time a determination concerning reimbursement will be made. If I fail to give this advance notice, I AGREE to pay the amount of additional expenses (5 U.S.C. 4109(a) (2)) incurred by the Government in this training.

4 **FURTHER**, if I withdraw from the course due to factors within my control, or fail to earn a grade of "C" (or the institution's lowest numerical equivalent), I agree to reimburse the government for all costs of the course, excluding my salary.

5 **I UNDERSTAND** that any amounts which may be due the agency as a result of any failure on my part to meet the terms of this agreement may be withheld from any monies owed me by the Government, or may be recovered by such other methods as are approved by law.

6 **I FURTHER AGREE** to obtain approval from my organization training officer and that person responsible for authorizing non-government training requests of any proposed change in my approved training program involving course and schedule changes, withdrawals or incompletions, and increased costs.

7 **I ACKNOWLEDGE** that this agreement does not in any way commit the Government to continue my employment. I understand that, if there is a transfer of my service obligation to another Federal agency or other organization in any branch of the Government, the agreements in items 1, 2, and 3 of this section will remain in effect until I have completed my obligated service with that other agency or organization.

Period of obligated service	
Employee's signature	Date