



Procedure

Employee professional development including Study and Research Assistance Scheme (SARAS)

Audience

Department-wide

Version effective: 10/02/2021
Version: 3.7

Purpose

To outline the entitlement of all employees to targeted professional development under the [Employee performance, professional development and recognition policy](#) and to provide information on various professional and capability development options.

To provide eligible employees and their supervisors with information about the Study and Research Assistance Scheme (SARAS).

Information includes the process to be followed, forms to be completed and officers with the delegation to approve courses and reimbursement at each tier.

Overview

Individuals' performance development conversations are the primary basis for selecting development activities. The [scope of development options](#) lists many types of development activities - from formal education to on-the-job learning.

The departmental publication [Standards for professional development](#) (DoE employees only) supports planning, development and delivery of quality adult learning.

Planning for employee development includes allocation of funding.

SARAS does not apply to general employees as defined in the *Public Service Act 2008* (Qld) s.147 (i.e. casual employees, teacher aides, cleaners and other employees covered by the [General Employees \(Queensland Government Departments\) and other employees Award – State Award 2015](#)).

SARAS is available to school teachers, school-based classified officers, public service officers, temporary employees engaged under s.148 of the *Public Service Act 2008* and employees covered by the [General](#)

[Employees \(Queensland Government Departments\) and other employees Award – State Award 2015](#). For more detailed information about eligibility refer to [SARAS guidelines](#).

Teachers

Within the framework of the [Queensland state schools Annual Performance Review process](#) (DoE employees only). Teachers are required to have ongoing professional development. The responsibility for this is shared between the individual and the department.

Other employees

Non-teaching, school based employees' individual performance and development agreements include a minimum of two paid attendance days leave per year (including student free days) for accessing approved professional development and training programs. Part-time employees will access this leave at a pro-rata rate.

Therapists are entitled to an additional three days of approved professional development for registration and continuing professional competency.

Responsibilities

Executive Directors and Senior Executive Services Officers

- Build workforce capability to enhance delivery of services
- Model, promote and support others with ongoing performance improvement through the use of leadership competencies and/or professional standards and the [performance and development process](#) (DoE employees only)
- Manage and approve course selection.

School Principals, Directors, Managers and/or Team Leaders in central and regional offices

- Provide planned induction for employees on appointment, on return after extended leave, or promotion to new positions, in line with the [Induction strategy](#)
- Promote workforce performance improvement through implementation of the [performance and development process](#) (DoE employees only)
- Receive, evaluate and, where appropriate, approve applications for SARAS
- Ensure an appropriate application for leave is completed for each period of SARAS course-related
- Ensure funds are available and payment is endorsed in the school or business unit professional development budget to meet all commitments under SARAS including payment of tax liabilities
- Maintain records of employee's approved courses of study, progress and assistance provided under SARAS (e.g. SARAS [Record of assistance template](#)).

Employees

- Take responsibility for own professional development
- Actively participate in collaborative discussion and negotiation with the team leader to initiate, action, and regularly review the individual performance and development plan in accordance with the



[performance and development process](#) and leadership competencies and/or professional standards to guide planning for continuous performance development

- Maintain records of professional development undertaken
- Where relevant, apply for course and comply with requirements under SARAS including leave and record management
- The SARAS [flowchart](#) outlines the SARAS approval and reimbursement process.

Process

Executive Directors and Senior Executive Services Officer

- Determine courses to be categorised as essential under SARAS as set out in the [Guidelines for employee professional development including SARAS](#)
- Determine the package of assistance to be provided to applicants selected for essential courses under SARAS
- Approve and implement selection procedures for applicants to essential courses under SARAS
- Nominate a cost centre and ensure funds are available to support successful applicants through essential courses under SARAS, including payment of tax liabilities. SARAS reimbursement payments to eligible employees studying Commonwealth supported programs incur fringe benefits tax and payroll tax. Approving officers in schools must include these taxes in budget calculations
- Complete relevant section of [SARAS application for course approval](#) form for selected applicants.

School Principals, Directors, Managers and/or Team Leaders in Central and Regional Offices

- Arrange for individual performance and development plans to be negotiated with all employees by a staff member who knows the employee's work, using processes from the [performance and development process](#) (DoE employees only)
- Manage professional/capability development financial, physical and human resources equitably. Employee professional development, including SARAS, is to be funded from local professional development budgets
- Schedule professional development for school teachers at times that cause the least disruption to student learning. To ensure minimum disruption to student learning, the department provides student-free days for school development activities
- Prepare and make available to staff an annual professional development plan for the workplace, with clearly defined objectives and outcomes, identified priorities and implementation plans including timelines and budget allocations
- Provide information to employee groups about specific professional development entitlements in certified agreements and take these entitlements into account in the workplace professional development plan
- The [Guidelines for employee professional development including SARAS](#) contain detailed information for decision-makers



- Receive, evaluate and, where appropriate, approve submitted [SARAS application for course approval](#) as set out in the [Guidelines for employee professional development including SARAS](#) noting that the department will not unreasonably refuse an employee's application.

Teachers

All other professional development (PD) for teachers will occur outside student contact hours except when:

- Leave for these activities is provided for within industrial instruments
- It is demonstrably more cost effective for the PD to occur during school hours
- It is necessary for students to be present for the PD to occur e.g. coaching or mentoring
- There is no additional cost to the Department and the PD is clearly aligned to Queensland Government priorities such as Commonwealth Government funded:
 - Improving Literacy and Numeracy
 - More Support for Students with Disabilities
- Teachers' participation in professional development activities that are not undertaken during rostered duty-hours (including on student free days) or done in lieu of student free day activities is voluntary in nature and is undertaken at the discretion of the teacher/s involved.

For the purposes of applying this procedure, matters forming an inherent requirement of the teaching role are not deemed to be Professional Development and thus may be undertaken during rostered duty hours, matters such as:

- Legislative compliance matters (such as Mandatory All-Staff Training, Student Protection, Workplace Health and Safety and employee induction)
- Accreditation courses mandatory to the teaching role being undertaken (such as vocational education or international Baccalaureate Studies)
- Moderation duties and other curriculum related activities.

Employees (applicants for SARAS)

- Seek course approval through the SARAS [Application for course approval form](#), providing required documentary evidence and sufficient notice as set out in the [Guidelines for employee professional development including SARAS](#)
- Retain a copy of the approved [Application for course approval form](#)
- Advise the team leader of any changes to a course of study, e.g. deferment, withdrawal, changes to course program or completion, using the [Application for course approval form](#) marked 'Update'
- Apply for leave, using the appropriate method, on each occasion when leave is required to undertake examinations, attendance at compulsory residential schools or study.

Submission of applications for leave under SARAS

- Leave necessary to meet course requirements during working hours should be identified in advance, where possible, on the SARAS Application for course approval form
- A separate leave approval form or on-line application where appropriate, as used within the work unit, must be completed and approved for each period of leave



- Leave approval forms/on-line applications should be submitted, wherever possible, four weeks prior to the leave start date to enable supervisors to make alternative staffing arrangements
- A photocopy of the approved [Application for course approval form](#) should be attached to each leave application
- For lengthy periods of leave, follow instructions for full-time leave applications below.

Submission of leave applications for full-time course of study

School teachers and school-based classified officers should, wherever possible, give two clear terms' notice so that submission of the leave application coincides with the school staffing cycle.

For example, if leave is required for term 1 of the following year, then the application should be lodged by the end of term 2; if leave is required for term 3 of the following year, then the application should be lodged by the end of term 4. The leave application should include details of the proposed course. A photocopy of the approved [Application for course approval form](#) should accompany the leave application.

For employees other than school teachers, the leave application should be submitted for approval as early as possible in the semester preceding the commencement of the proposed full-time leave. Three months' notice is recommended. A photocopy of the approved Application for course approval form should accompany the leave application.

SARAS Reimbursement process

Financial assistance is subject to the successful completion of each semester/subject/unit of study. Reimbursement is made on a proportionate basis for subjects successfully completed e.g. an employee undertaking four subjects in a semester who is successful in three subjects is reimbursed three-quarters of the determined amount.

The [SARAS Notification of course results and claim for reimbursement form](#) will automatically calculate the amount of reimbursement when all fields are completed electronically.

An employee who prepays tuition fees will submit to the responsible supervisor a completed [SARAS Notification of course results and claim for reimbursement form](#) with receipts and a statement of academic results, at the end of each semester. Reimbursement of the approved percentage of fees will be made direct to the employee or to the Australian Taxation Office through the department's financial system.

The team leader must forward an electronic copy of the approved [SARAS Notification of course results and claim for reimbursement form](#) including all original receipts, statement of student contributions for the semester and a statement of academic results and signed forms to the finance office in order for them to determine the type of course fees being paid and the payment method (if it is upfront or deferred). Team leaders must then ensure that photocopies/scans of this information, is added to on-site employee records. Team leaders may choose to use the SARAS [Record of assistance form](#) to record progress and support provided to individual employees.



An employee who elects to repay a Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) or HECS-HELP loan through the taxation system will have the approved financial assistance paid by the department directly to the Australian Taxation Office on behalf of the employee, as a voluntary payment to reduce the employee's HELP debt.

Where an employee is a part-time staff member, financial assistance for reimbursement of fees will be calculated on a pro-rata basis.

Employees can submit their SARAS reimbursement claim forms either via post or email or fax:

Post: Financial Services Branch (Central Office)

PO Box 15033, Brisbane QLD 4003

Email: payments.finance@qed.qld.gov.au

Fax: (07) 3034 5891

Definitions

Position/role description	A role description describes a specific role at a particular classification level in a particular work environment. It provides an overview of tasks performed in the role and the skills and capabilities required.
Professional development entitlements	Professional development to facilitate agreed outcomes is specified in some certified agreements. Where a certified agreement contains such a clause, the employee is entitled to access the specified professional development when all required criteria are met.
Performance and development plan	Annually recorded agreement of identified performance and development goals and actions to develop capability, and indicators for success.
Reasonable Adjustment	An adjustment made to a position, an employment practice, the workplace or work-related environment to ensure equal opportunity for people with a disability.
Head of Program	Examples include Head of Department, Head of Curriculum, Head of Special Education Services, Deputy Principal, Principal and Executive Principal.
Systemic priorities	Systemic priorities are addressed in the department's Strategic plan .
Team Leader	May be any of the following: supervisor, manager, principal, director, assistant regional director, regional director, teacher, or any officer with responsibility to undertake performance conversations with employees.
Tertiary credit	A credit given for certain units of study required in a higher education program through recognition of prior learning in professional development activities undertaken through the workplace, as a result fast-tracking completion of the higher education program.
Workplace	Any location where employees undertake work activities, such as a state schools, college, academy, school of distance education, outdoor education centre, district, regional or central office business unit.



Workplace operational plans

A business plan and school/business unit planning documents setting out goals, deliverables and accountabilities.

Legislation

- [Public Service Act 2008 \(Qld\)](#) Chapter 1, Part 3
- [Education \(Queensland College of Teachers\) Act 2005 \(Qld\)](#) Chapter 2, Part 3, s29
- [Department of Education and Training Teacher Aides' Certified Agreement 2015](#)
- [General Employees \(Queensland Government Departments\) and other employees Award - State Award 2015](#)
- [Positive Performance Management \(Directive 15/20\)](#)

Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil

Related policies

- Nil

Related procedures

- Nil

Supporting information

Forms

- [SARAS Application for course approval](#)
- [SARAS Notification of course results and application for reimbursement form](#)
- [SARAS Record of assistance template](#)

Supporting documents

- [SARAS guidelines](#)
- [Scope of development options](#)
- [SARAS flowchart](#)

Online materials

- [Induction strategy](#)
- [Performance and development process](#) (DoE employees only)
- [Strategic plan](#)



- [Professional development website](#)
- [Induction and onboarding resources](#)
- [Beyond the range - Professional experience grants](#)

Contact

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Superseded versions

- Nil

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