

# **Employee Professional Development including Study and Research Assistance Scheme (SARAS)**



## Guidelines – Study and Research Assistance Scheme

### PLEASE NOTE:

There is no central pool of funding or leave for the Study and Research Assistance Scheme (SARAS). Any funding support that is approved is paid for by the school or business unit, and/or any study leave that may be required is drawn from the employees accrued leave balance.

These Guidelines are intended to inform decisions about assistance to be offered. As with all professional development opportunities, the principles of equity and equal employment opportunity apply to employees' access to this assistance.

Refer to [Employee professional development including study and research assistance scheme](#) procedure for a summary of:

- responsibilities of Executive Directors and higher level delegates
- responsibilities of Directors/Principals/Managers
- responsibilities of employees.

## Definitions

### ATO

Accrued Time Off

Australian Tax Office

### Contract to serve

Where a salary-based allowance or a substantial amount of assistance is provided, an employee will be contracted to work for the department for a specified period as a condition of the assistance, under the [Assisted Students \(Enforcement of Obligations\) Act 1951 \(Qld\)](#).

### Course attendance leave

Leave provided where course attendance requirements cannot be satisfied outside the hours of duty, where such leave is convenient to the department.

### Course categories

- **Essential category** - a course of study or research deemed essential for completion by certain employees to meet current or future high-priority work commitments. The courses that fit into this category are usually included in programs advertised specifically by the department and applicants are required to undergo a departmental selection process. This category may also be used to approve study being undertaken by employees who successfully apply for scholarships or fellowships.

**Note:** Delegation to approve an essential course of study and the level of assistance to be provided (normally 100%) is at Executive Director



and higher levels. Information is included to guide delegates and managers of employees undertaking essential courses of study.

**Highly Desirable category** - a course of study or research that is considered directly relevant to an employee's current job and professional development plan. The suitability of the course is determined by the supervisor.

**Desirable category** - courses of study or research relevant to the employee's work or potential work in the Queensland Public Sector. The suitability of the course is determined by the supervisor.

### **Course of study**

A course undertaken through a recognised tertiary or vocational education institution leading to a recognised qualification or a specific course designed and provided by the department.

### **Crown copyright and intellectual property**

Ownership of intellectual property developed during fully-funded study or research resides with the department. Partial funding of study or research requires negotiation of ownership of intellectual property at the outset. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

### **Flexible hours**

Flexible start and finish to daily work hours. On completion of weekly/fortnightly required hours, employees accrue credit time that may be taken without loss of pay, as approved. Conditions apply.

### **School-based classified officers**

Includes Heads of Department, Heads of Curriculum and Heads of Special Education Services, Deputy Principals, Principals and Executive Principals.

### **Standard hours**

Hours to be worked per week/fortnight, as contained in industrial awards, with regular start and finish times.

### **Study leave**

Leave permitted for staff to prepare for examinations, assignments and other course assessment requirements.

### **Subject/unit**

A subject or unit is a discrete section or part of a course of study. Individuals may be supported to undertake a single subject or unit where this provides the required skills and knowledge.



## Work needs

The need to address an apparent workforce skill or knowledge deficit, or an inadequate supply of suitably qualified recruits or employees for a particular work activity.

## Employee eligibility

The Study and Research Assistance Scheme (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 [Employees of Queensland Government Departments \(Other than Public Servants\) Award - State 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 [State Government Departments Certified Agreement 2015](#).

Assistance is available from the date of appointment for:

- a permanent employee, or
- a temporary employee whose engagement is intended to cover the period of assistance and an equal period after assistance, at the discretion of the delegate,

provided that:

- the course subjects are being undertaken for the first time
- the employee's service is satisfactory
- the employee gives an undertaking to pursue the course diligently to its successful completion
- the supervisor approves and provides the assistance requested
- course progress is satisfactory.

Approval for a course of study is granted by the supervisor on an annual basis but may be reviewed during the year if the employee's circumstances change. Equity of access to professional development funding within the school/work unit provides the only limitation as to the number of courses which may be pursued consecutively. Assistance must not be granted for more than one course at a time except in special circumstances determined by the Director-General or a delegated senior officer.



## Leave assistance for approved courses of study and research

Leave to attend approved courses is subject to the business and convenience of the school/work unit and is to be determined with the supervisor. Employees may only take one form of leave at any one time irrespective of whether the leave is provided under study assistance or other administrative arrangements, awards, or acts, for example, long service leave, recreation leave, maternity leave.

Leave taken for the purpose of study and research is to be managed internally, without additional cost to schools/business units.

Approval of leave with pay for course attendance is subject to departmental convenience, irrespective of the eligibility of the employee. The supervisor will determine the amount of leave available where course attendance requirements cannot be satisfied outside the normal hours of duty.

### Leave to attend part-time or external courses

Leave to attend courses includes lectures, tutorials, practical classes, discussions with course supervisors and necessary travel time. Provisions are shown in the following table.

Course attendance leave for school teachers will only occur outside school hours.

Type of Leave	Level of Assistance	Conditions
<p><b>Course attendance leave with pay</b></p> <p>(includes lectures, tutorials, practical classes, discussions with supervisors etc. that cannot be satisfied outside the hours of duty, including where unique personal circumstances prevent attendance outside hours of duty)</p>	<p><b>Essential:</b> Maximum 8 hours per week where course is part-time or external</p> <p><b>Highly Desirable:</b> Maximum 5 hours per week for employees on flexible hours and 8 hours per week for employees on standard hours or shift work</p> <p><b>Desirable:</b> Maximum 5 hours per week for employees on flexible hours and 8 hours per week for employees on standard hours or shift work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calculation of leave excludes the minimum period allowed for lunch.</li> <li>• Each case should be considered on its merits and will be determined at the discretion of the supervisor.</li> <li>• Not available to school teachers.</li> </ul>



Type of Leave	Level of Assistance	Conditions
<p><b>Course attendance leave without pay</b></p>	<p><b>Essential:</b> Course attendance requirements must exceed 8 hours per week</p> <p><b>Highly Desirable:</b> At the discretion of the Director/Principal/Manager</p> <p><b>Desirable:</b> At the discretion of the Director/Principal/Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leave required must exceed the amount prescribed for course attendance leave with pay before further leave without pay is granted.</li> <li>• Not available to school teachers.</li> <li>• Subject to the successful completion of the course of study or research, recognition of this period of leave without pay may be granted for long service leave and the first three months for recreation leave purposes in accordance with <a href="#">Directive 01/19 Leave without salary credited as service</a>. For cash equivalent purposes, this period of leave will only be recognised when separation from employment is due to retirement, retrenchment or death.</li> </ul>



Type of Leave	Level of Assistance	Conditions
<p><b>Study leave</b> (to prepare for examinations, assignments and other assessment requirements)</p>	<p><b>Essential:</b> As determined by the approving officer</p> <p><b>Highly Desirable:</b> Maximum 20 days per annum</p> <p><b>Desirable:</b> Maximum 10 days per annum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School teachers may utilise leave without pay one day per subject to a maximum of five days per annum.</li> <li>• Other employees may utilise leave of five days per subject to a maximum of 10 or 20 days per annum, depending on the category of the course.</li> <li>• Leave with salary, including necessary travel time, is available for examinations held on work days between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm or other approved standard hours of duty, excluding the minimum period allowed for lunch (or equivalent), provided the examination requirements cannot be satisfied outside these hours.</li> <li>• At the employee's choice, study leave is <b>either</b> without pay <b>or</b> deducted from recreation leave <b>or</b> taken as ATO time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Compulsory residential school attendance with pay</b></p>	<p><b>Essential:</b> Maximum 20 days per annum</p> <p><b>Highly Desirable:</b> Maximum 20 days per annum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special leave (<a href="#">05/17 Special Leave</a>) or (<a href="#">09/18 Study and Examination Leave</a>) with pay may be granted for attendance at compulsory residential schools up to the maximum limit.</li> </ul>



Type of Leave	Level of Assistance	Conditions
	<p><b>Desirable:</b> Maximum 15 days per annum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This leave may be supplemented with up to five days' leave without pay or recreation leave.</li> <li>School teachers are normally required to attend residential schools during their vacation periods.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Non-compulsory residential school attendance without pay</b></p>	<p><b>Essential:</b> Maximum 25 days per annum or deducted from recreation leave</p> <p><b>Highly Desirable:</b> Maximum 20 days per annum or deducted from recreation leave</p> <p><b>Desirable:</b> Maximum 10 days per annum or deducted from recreation leave</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special leave (<a href="#">05/17 Special Leave</a>) or (<a href="#">09/18 Study and Examination Leave</a>) with pay may be granted for attendance at compulsory residential schools up to the maximum limit.</li> <li>School teachers are normally required to attend residential schools during their vacation periods.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Compulsory practicum with pay</b></p>	<p><b>Essential only:</b> Maximum 20 days per annum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special leave (<a href="#">05/17 Special Leave</a>) or (<a href="#">09/18 Study and Examination Leave</a>) with pay may be granted for attendance at compulsory residential schools up to the maximum limit.</li> <li>This leave may be supplemented with unpaid leave at the discretion of the supervisor.</li> <li>Secondments, where applicable, should be considered if the</li> </ul>



Type of Leave	Level of Assistance	Conditions
		employee will return to their substantive position with relevant additional knowledge and experience.
<b>Examination leave</b>	<p><b>Essential:</b> as required</p> <p><b>Highly Desirable:</b> as required</p> <p><b>Desirable:</b> as required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leave with pay, including necessary travel time, is available for examinations held on work days during designated hours of duty, excluding the minimum period allowed for lunch, provided the examination requirements cannot be satisfied outside these hours.</li> <li>• Supervisors are advised that approved examination leave must be managed internally at no cost to the school/work unit.</li> </ul>

### Highly desirable and desirable courses of study - leave assistance for full-time courses

Study leave without pay may be approved by the supervisor to a maximum of three years for any one course or research project provided that:

- the applicant can be replaced during the period of absence
- the course of study leads to a recognised qualification
- the applicant pursues a full study program so that the leave results in course completion in a minimum timeframe
- the applicant has completed at least two years of continuous satisfactory service.

### Financial assistance

The amount of financial assistance provided under SARAS is to be determined as part of the course approval process by the Executive Director/Director/Principal and paid from the branch/work unit/school



professional development budget. Course approvals and assistance are to be renegotiated on an annual basis, or whenever the employee's circumstances change.

Category of Course	Suggested Reimbursement or Voluntary Repayment Amount
<b>Essential</b>	Essential courses are determined by Executive Directors and senior executive officers with higher delegations. A specific package of assistance is provided for selected applicants on essential courses, including leave and 100% reimbursement of course fees.
<b>Highly Desirable</b>	75% of the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) or HECS-HELP student contribution or 75% of tuition fees paid. Other actual compulsory costs may also be reimbursed (e.g. travel to residential schools including meals and accommodation en route, lecture notes and other statutory fees - excluding textbooks, handbooks, periodicals and consumables).  <b>Note:</b> No reimbursement is paid to cover the fees incurred when taking up a loan from the Commonwealth Government.
<b>Desirable</b>	No HELP or HECS-HELP payments; and no tuition fees paid. Other actual compulsory costs may be reimbursed (e.g. travel to residential schools including meals and accommodation en route, lecture notes and other statutory fees - excluding textbooks, handbooks, periodicals and consumables).

### Attendance at residential schools

Reimbursement of actual vehicle expenses will be made for the employee's travel to and from the location of the residential school, but not for vehicle expenses incurred during the period of residence. Travel to a residential school can be by train, bus, private vehicle (oil and petrol only), or single return air fare (economy). Prior approval for air travel must be obtained. Receipts must be provided with claims for reimbursement.

Reimbursement of actual costs will be made for meals and accommodation whilst travelling to and from the residential school and accommodation during the residential school to a maximum of the allowance payable within the [Public Service Act 2008 \(Qld\)](#), determinations by the Governor in Council.

### Essential courses of study

For departmental priority courses identified by the responsible senior executive officer, a specifically designed package of assistance will be available to



selected applicants. Directors/Principals/Managers of employees selected to undertake an essential course of study will be guided by the package of assistance provided by the Executive Director or higher level delegate. For reference purposes, the range of assistance that may be provided is outlined below.

## **Essential course of study - range of assistance**

### **1. Leave**

Employees on essential full-time courses will either be eligible for study leave or be transferred to the location of the course of study. Employees transferred to the location of the course will accrue all leave entitlements and be eligible for transfer and other expenses as determined by the department. The combined leave and financial assistance offered is determined on a case by case basis.

Study leave without pay but with a State Living Allowance equivalent to half or full salary may be approved to a maximum of three years for any one course or research project, provided that:

- the applicant can be replaced during the period of absence
- the course of study leads to a recognised qualification
- the applicant pursues a full study program so that the leave results in course completion within a minimum timeframe
- the applicant must have completed at least two years of continuous satisfactory service.

The applicant must enter into a contract to serve should the leave exceed 12 weeks. All leave is subject to the business and convenience of the school/work unit.

### **2. Financial assistance**

#### **i) Course/research costs**

Reimbursement or payment at the discretion of the department may be provided for course/research costs, including the following:

- statutory fees (for example, tuition fees, student services fees)
- Higher Education Contribution Scheme charges.

Reimbursement may be made:

- provided the employee has produced evidence of payment of the fees
- provided the minimum course progress requirements are satisfied for each period (for example, academic year, semester, research period).

Reimbursement will not be made:



- beyond the normal completion time of the course unless special circumstances prevail, nor
- to an employee who resigns prior to the reimbursement being approved.

## ii) Attendance at residential schools

Reimbursement of actual vehicle expenses will be made for the employee's travel to and from the location of the residential school, but not for vehicle expenses incurred during the period of residence. Travel to a residential school can be by train, bus, private vehicle (oil and petrol only), or single return air fare (economy). Prior approval for air travel must be obtained. Receipts are to be provided with claims for reimbursement.

Reimbursement of actual costs will be made for meals and accommodation while travelling to and from the residential school and accommodation during the residential school to a maximum of the allowance payable within the [Public Service Act 2008 \(Qld\)](#), determinations by the Governor in Council.

## iii) Payment of Overseas Living Allowance - according to the following formula during the period of study or research overseas

An additional allowance may be granted by the Director-General (or delegate) for an employee undertaking study in an overseas location. This assistance may be combined with assistance granted by an external organisation.

Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT) may be applicable to payments made by the department as part of SARAS.

More information about FBT of Overseas Living Allowance can be viewed on [OnePortal](#) or by contacting the Finance team via email ([taxhelp.finance@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:taxhelp.finance@qed.qld.gov.au)) or phone (1300 656 380).

Employees travelling overseas to conduct research or undertake professional development must comply with the [Guidelines for international travel for official purposes – business and professional development](#).

**Please note:** Employees are advised to seek advice from a financial advisor as to their individual taxation obligations regarding reportable fringe benefits amounts.

## 3. Contract to Serve

Where a salary-based allowance or a substantial amount of assistance is provided, a contract detailing assistance and requiring the employee to serve the department or the State Government must be entered into in accordance with the [Assisted Students \(Enforcement of Obligations\) Act 1951 \(Qld\)](#).

For courses within Australia, the period of contracted service shall commence at the completion of the course or research, i.e. when official duties are recommenced, and shall equal 1.5 times the period of assistance, to a maximum of the period of assistance plus one year.

**Uncontrolled copy.** Refer to the Department of Education Policy and Procedure Register at <https://ppr.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/employee-professional-development-including-study-and-research-assistance-scheme-saras-procedure> to ensure you have the most current version of this document.



For overseas study, a period of contracted service equal to two times the period of assistance with a minimum period of contracted service of one year and a maximum period of five years applies.

The Director-General need not require a contract where leave is 12 weeks or less.

An employee who fails to satisfy contract provisions and/or to complete contracted service can have the contract terminated and be liable to repay financial assistance rendered, together with other costs and penalties defined by the contract.

A contract is normally prepared by the Solicitor-General, in terms of the approved format, at the request of the Director-General. It is signed by the employee and the Director-General or an employee authorised by the Director-General.

## Budget implications for Executive Directors/Directors/Managers approving financial assistance

Delegated officers assessing applications for study and research assistance, particularly for university courses, are advised to consider the Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT) implications for the department.

Where the department agrees to assist an employee to undertake studies in a Commonwealth-supported course, FBT will be payable by the department regardless of the means by which the financial assistance is provided.

Where the department agrees to assist an employee to undertake studies in a full-fee paying course, FBT will not be payable provided the assistance takes the form of reimbursement of course fees paid by the employee to the educational institution. If the employee decides to defer part or all of the payment of their course fees, FBT will be payable by the department as this creates a HELP loan.

Even though an employee is not liable for FBT or income tax, the payment may be reported on the employee's Payment Summary and may be included in income tests applied by the government relating to a number of benefits and obligations.

Schools, other educational facilities and business units should budget for FBT incurred through SARAS reimbursements to employees.

Please contact the Taxation team for assistance with FBT and Payroll Tax matters on Ph 1300 656 380 or email: [TaxHelp.Finance@qed.qld.gov.au](mailto:TaxHelp.Finance@qed.qld.gov.au).



## Crown copyright and intellectual property

In determining ownership of intellectual property, the circumstances of each case and the requirements of the respective parties must be considered at the outset. However, the state's position on ownership in relation to intellectual property issues involving universities and the Queensland Government would normally be as follows:

- where the state provides the full funding and/or all the resources needed, the state would require that it be the owner of intellectual property produced as a result of such research and development
- where the state provides partial funding and/or some of the resources needed, the state would require that it be a joint owner of the intellectual property produced as a result of such research and development. Such ownership would normally be directly proportional to the state's particular contribution to the project.

The position is negotiable and, as mentioned above, depends on the circumstances of each case and the requirements of both parties and any other party, such as a private firm, which may be involve

