



Procedure

Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme (LAFHAS) procedure

Version: 6.0 | **Version effective:** 13/11/2024

Audience

Applicants for the Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme (LAFHAS) and Queensland Department of Education (the department) business units that process applications.

Purpose

This procedure outlines the steps to be followed when an application for LAFHAS is received by the department.

Overview

The LAFHAS supports eligible Queensland families whose children need to live away from home to attend a state school or an accredited non-state school. This may be due to geographical isolation and/or the nearest school is a bypass school.

Eligibility for LAFHAS assistance is based on the distance from students' homes to the nearest Queensland Government state school facility with the required year level.

Applicants must apply for LAFHAS annually. Successful applicants receive benefits in two instalments aligned with school semesters. Students can attract a combination of allowances depending on their individual circumstances, which include:

- Remote Area Tuition Allowance (RATuA)—helps pay tuition fees charged by non-state boarding schools.
- Remote Area Travel Allowance (RATrA)—helps pay a student's travel costs between home and boarding location during holidays.
- Remote Area Allowance (RAA)—contributes to the cost of boarding at a state high school campus, to complete approved agricultural courses equivalent to and in lieu of Years 11 and 12.
- Remote Area Disability Supplement (RADS)—contributes towards additional costs associated with educating eligible students with disability who are required to board away from home.

The closing date for receipt of application forms is 31 December each year. Applications received after this date are not eligible for any entitlement. No retrospective payment is made for previous years.

Students who are eligible for assistance under the LAFHAS may also be eligible for the Australian Government Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme.

Students in receipt of Australian Government ABSTUDY are not eligible to receive support under the LAFHAS.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the eligibility criteria as outlined in the [LAFHAS Applicant guidelines](#) and other supporting documents.

Responsibilities

Applicants

- Must apply annually by completing the application form.
- Must notify the department as soon as possible if circumstances change.
- Must provide accurate and truthful information in the application. Penalties may apply for false or misleading statements as per Section 382 of the [Education \(General Provision\) Act 2006](#).

School Finance Resourcing (SFR)

- Assess eligibility against the criteria.
- Process application forms in the department's School Appropriation Payment Application (SAPA).
- Pay entitlements of allowances provided under the scheme to applicants and schools according to payment processes and at [rates](#) applicable for that calendar year.
- Maintain data confidentiality in line with privacy notices on application forms.
- Maintain information on the Queensland Government LAFHAS website.

Office of Non-State Education (ONSE)

- Provide support to SFR for queries relating to the LAFHAS procedure.
- Assess applications where additional special circumstances are applicable.
- Coordinate LAFHAS Special Circumstances Review Committee requirements.
- Manage and update the procedure, applicant guidelines and other related documents.

Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHAS) Special Circumstances Review Committee (LAFHAS Committee)

- Consider applications with special circumstances which do not meet the regular eligibility criteria.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR)

- Verifies the distance eligibility provided by applicants.

Process

1. Application lodged

Applicant applies for financial assistance prior to 31 December each year on the LAFHAS Annual Application Form via one of the following ways:

- [Online](#)
- By printing and completing a copy of the [application form](#)
- Requesting a paper application package by phoning 1800 248 997. Applicants completing a paper application package are required to scan and email it to LAFHAS@qed.qld.gov.au.
- Applications received by post

Applications submitted online will receive an email acknowledging receipt of application including their family number.

Applications submitted via email will receive an auto generated response acknowledging their email has been received, and another email outlining the details of their application once it has been entered into SAPA by SFR.

The department must receive the application form no later than 31 December for the year of application.

2. Eligibility assessed against distance criteria

- Applications are assessed by SFR to verify the distance criteria eligibility.
- Applications that are unable to be mapped or are identified as medium to high risk, SFR will request a distance check from TMR to determine eligibility.
- If the distance eligibility criteria are met, continue to step 6.
- If the distance eligibility criteria are not met, continue to step 3.

3. Eligibility assessed against special circumstances – Impassable roads or Itinerant occupations

- SFR assess the application to determine criteria eligibility for Special circumstances – [Impassable roads](#) or [Itinerant occupations](#).
- If the eligibility criteria are met, continue to step 6.
- If the application does not meet the eligibility criteria for distance, impassable roads or itinerant occupations, and has not requested consideration under [additional special circumstances](#), SFR send a letter to applicant advising ineligible status and recommending other services if relevant.
- The application is now considered finalised.
- If the applicant disagrees with the outcome of the LAFHAS application, the applicant may contact SFR via email at LAFHAS@qed.qld.gov.au to request an additional special circumstances form to have the claim considered based on medical or other mitigating circumstances (if not previously applied). Continue to step 4.

4. Assessment of applications with additional special circumstances (e.g., medical or other mitigating circumstances)

- Applicant must complete and return the additional special circumstances form to LAFHAS@qed.qld.gov.au.
- SFR sends an acknowledgement email to the applicant upon receipt of the form.
- SFR forwards the additional special circumstances request to ONSE, along with the original application and any relevant supporting documentation.
- ONSE assess the eligibility of the application based on the additional special circumstances criteria. ONSE request SFR to contact the applicant or the school requesting additional information if required.
- If ONSE requires specialist advice to determine eligibility, they will refer the application to the LAFHAS Committee for consideration. Continue to step 5.
- ONSE send SFR an email to advise the outcome of the additional special circumstances application.
- If the application meets the additional special circumstances criteria. Continue to step 6.
- If the application does not meet additional special circumstances criteria, SFR send a letter to the applicant advising ineligible status and recommending other services if relevant.
- The application is now considered finalised.
- If the applicant disagrees with the outcome of the additional special circumstances application, the applicant may contact SFR via email at LAFHAS@qed.qld.gov.au to request an appeal form to have the application outcome reviewed. Continue to step 7.

5. Application referred to the LAFHAS Committee

- The LAFHAS Committee assess the special circumstances application and make a final determination on eligibility, noting that:
 - Decisions are documented in meeting minutes; and
 - SFR send a letter to the applicant within 5 working days of the LAFHAS Committee meeting to advise the outcome of the additional special circumstances application.
- If the LAFHAS Committee determine that the application meets the additional special circumstances criteria, continue to step 6.
- If LAFHAS Committee determine that the application does not meet the additional special circumstances criteria, the application is now considered finalised.

6. Process eligible application

- SFR ensures all application information is complete and contacts the applicant if information is incomplete.
- SFR seeks certification from schools on student attendance.
- School completes certification form and returns form to SFR.
- SFR calculates entitlements.
- SFR processes payment file in accordance with monthly payment schedule.
- SFR transfers payment file to Accounts Payable for payment via the department's finance system (SAP ERP).

- SFR sends communication to eligible applicants.
- The application is now considered finalised.

7. Appeals process

- Applicant must complete and return the appeal form to LAFHAS@ged.qld.gov.au.
- SFR forward the appeal form to ONSE.
- ONSE prepare a summary of the application, any additional special circumstances and the appeal form to present to Executive Director, External Relations and Research, for final consideration and decision.
- ONSE send an email to SFR outlining the final outcome and the reasoning for the decision.
- SFR send a letter to the applicant within 5 working days of decision, to advise the outcome of the appeal.
- If the appeal is successful and the application is approved for LAFHAS eligibility, continue to step 6.
- If the appeal is not successful, the application is now considered finalised.

8. Management of overpayments

Should an overpayment be found, SFR will undertake recovery action. In instances where a misinterpretation by TMR or departmental officers has occurred, an overpayment is recognised from when the misinterpretation has been identified and corrected.

Annual management

Annual approval of LAFHAS rates

- SFR prepare a brief recommending that the Assistant Director-General, Finance (ADG Finance), approve the increase in LAFHAS allowance rates for the new school year, in October each year.
- ADG Finance approves brief no later than 31 October.
- SFR prepare web work request to update the rates on the LAFHAS website.

LAFHAS documents

- ONSE review and update LAFHAS documents and LAFHAS website annually, to ensure accuracy of information.

Communication with families

- SFR sends a reminder email in November to all applicants approved for LAFHAS in the current year, reminding them to re-apply for the following year if appropriate.

Monitoring and reporting

- Monthly governance meetings are held between SFR and ONSE to monitor and report on the LAFHAS program.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Additional special circumstances	For the purpose of the LAFHAS, additional special circumstances refers to applicants who do not fully meet residential distance criteria, but who could still be regarded as geographically isolated because of special circumstances and wish to apply under medical or other mitigating circumstances.
Bypass schools	A Bypass school is a Queensland state school which meets a set of conditions that enable it to be disregarded when distance criteria are considered for applications for financial support under the Queensland Government's LAFHAS.
Impassable roads	An impassable road for the purposes of the LAFHAS is where due to adverse weather conditions, daily access to school is denied for a significant portion of the school year.
Itinerant occupation	An itinerant occupation for the purposes of the LAFHAS is an occupation that is not located in the one specific location but where the nature of the type of work cannot be regarded as static. A home base is required to be identified.
Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme (LAFHAS)	Support for families in geographical isolated areas to access financial assistance to study away from home.
LAFHAS Special Circumstances Review Committee (LAFHAS Committee)	<p>The LAFHAS Committee acts as a forum to consider LAFHAS applications from families with special circumstances, where they would normally be deemed ineligible based on the current eligibility criteria. The LAFHAS Committee reviews special circumstances outlined in the application and considers whether there are grounds to make an exception to their eligibility to the LAFHAS.</p> <p>The review panel comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager, ONSE • Manager, SFR • Manager, Reviews, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning • Principal Advisor, ONSE <p>Other departmental officers or subject matter experts are consulted by the LAFHAS Committee as required.</p>
SAPA	School Appropriation Payment Application is used by the department to manage the payment of Appropriations, Grants, School invoices and recoupments.

Term	Definition
Special circumstances	<p>For the purpose of the LAFHAS, special circumstances refers to applicants who do not fully meet residential distance criteria, but who could still be regarded as geographically isolated because of special circumstances and wish to be considered for the LAFHAS. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impassable roads due to weather conditions • Itinerant lifestyle resulting from employment • Other special circumstances that will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for example but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Medical conditions ○ Domestic Violence ○ Excessive travel

Legislation

- [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#)

Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil

Policies and procedures in this group

- Nil

Supporting information for this procedure

- Nil

Other resources

- [Bypass schools procedure](#)
- [LAFHAS Applicant guidelines](#)
- [Australian Government Assistance for Isolated Children \(AIC\) Scheme](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Human Services](#)
- [Centrelink website](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Education website](#)
- [Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme](#)
- [Impassable roads fact sheet](#)

- [Itinerant occupation fact sheet](#)
- [Additional special circumstances fact sheet](#)

Contact

For further information, please contact:

School Financial Resourcing
Financial Strategy and Advice

Phone: (07) 3034 5890

Email: LAFHAS@qed.qld.gov.au

Review date

13/11/2027

Superseded versions

Previous seven years shown. Minor version updates not included.

5.0 Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme (LAFHAS)

Creative Commons licence

Attribution CC BY

Refer to the [Creative Commons Australia](#) site for further information