



Guidance

Studies Assistance Guideline

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1. Purpose and Authority

This guideline outlines the considerations and process for *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S) Act) employees to access studies assistance.

In accordance with Section 65 of the *Commonwealth Members of Parliament Staff Enterprise Agreement 2024-27 (EA)*, ongoing and non-ongoing employees are eligible for financial assistance and paid study leave for accredited courses considered relevant to the employee's employment.

These guidelines do not cover training or courses provided under the Professional Development Program (PDP) or ad hoc learning and development opportunities. Further information is available in the Learning and Professional Development Guideline.

2. Key Principles

- Studies assistance is one of a range of learning and development options available to MOP(S) Act employees to enhance employee's skills and knowledge and contribute to the support role that employees provide to their employing parliamentarian.
- Employees require the support of their employing parliamentarian and the approval of the PWSS prior to enrolling in study.
- Employees who are undertaking an approved course of study are supported with paid study leave and financial assistance on a reimbursement arrangement.
- An automatic termination trigger does not restrict an employee from seeking reimbursement on a pro-rata basis.

3. Expectations and Responsibilities

3.1 Mutual (employees and employing parliamentarians):

- Review study arrangements during the study period and address any issues as they arise.
- Recognise that study is complementary to the employee delivering required outcomes and prioritise work accordingly.

3.2 Employees:

- Discuss with the employing parliamentarian of your capability development goals and your intention to enrol in study and apply for studies assistance.
- Advise the PWSS and employing parliamentarian of changes in employment arrangements which may impact studies assistance (such as commencing part-time work or leave without pay arrangements).
- Advise the PWSS and employing parliamentarian of any changes to the approved study program (such as adding or withdrawing from a unit) within one working week of the change.
- Submit claims for financial reimbursement to PWSS promptly after completing the unit of study.
- Advise the PWSS if an automatic termination occurs under section 14 of the MOP(S) Act when an approved period of studies assistance has not been completed.

3.3 Parliamentarians and Authorised person:

- Consider applications for study assistance in line with the EA, this guideline and the employee's capability development needs.
- Provide employees with an appropriate level of support to meet their work and study commitments.
- Consider the impact of study leave on the operational environment.

- Consider whether financial assistance provides value for money and is an appropriate expenditure of funds.

3.4 Parliamentary Workplace Support Service:

- Provide guidance to employees and parliamentarians in relation to studies assistance.
- Consider applications for delegate approval and process reimbursement requests.

4. Applying for Studies Assistance

Prior to applying for studies assistance, the employee must receive endorsement from their employing parliamentarian. Popular fields of study related to the parliamentary workplace include:

- Political and social sciences
- Public policy, management and administration
- Law
- International relations
- Finance
- Communication.

Applications for studies assistance are to be submitted via the [Studies Assistance Application Form](#) prior to the commencement of study, or as soon as possible after starting employment where study has already commenced.

Applications should include parliamentary endorsement, details of the accredited course/units of study, any other factors relevant to the application (e.g. upcoming planned leave).

Upon receiving a completed application, the PWSS delegate will consider the application in accordance with the provisions outlined in the [EA](#).

The PWSS will notify the employee of the outcome in writing, including the maximum paid study leave entitlement.

5. Studies Assistance Provisions

5.1 Financial assistance

The PWSS delegate may approve financial assistance up to \$15,000 per financial year for compulsory tuition or examination fees, HELP (Higher Education Loan Program), TAFE and course fees.

The PWSS will reimburse an eligible employee who submits a claim for reimbursement after completing the unit of study and provides:

- evidence of the successful completion of the study unit (e.g. official transcript) and
- the original tax notice and proof of payment (e.g. official receipt or Commonwealth Assistance Notice).

The maximum reimbursement threshold will be pro rata for part-time employees or where an employee commences employment during the relevant study period.

Financial assistance is not available for:

- associated study costs such as administrative fees or student union fees
- textbooks, stationery, travel, car parking or childcare costs associated with the study
- periods of leave without pay which are greater than 50% of the teaching period.

Employees receiving financial help from a scholarship or sponsorship cannot claim reimbursement for the fees covered by the scholarship or sponsorship.

If an employee receives a discount for upfront or the advanced payment of fees, they may only claim reimbursement for the amount paid.

5.2 Study leave

Employees who are undertaking an approved course of study may apply for up to 5 hours of paid study leave per week of the approved study period:

- Following PWSS advice of the amount of study leave entitlement, the employee must obtain approval from their employing parliamentarian for each instance of study leave.
- Paid study leave is taken during the study period for which it was granted and cannot be carried over or used in a future study period.

6. Review of Decision

An employee who is dissatisfied with a decision made by the PWSS may request an internal review of the decision by contacting the PWSS in writing, **within 28 days** of receiving the decision.

Details of the PWSS internal review process can be found in the *Review of Decisions Factsheet*.

The PWSS is unable to review a decision made by someone external to the PWSS, such as an employing parliamentarian.

7. Modifying or Ceasing Study

An approved studies assistance application is valid during the period of MOP(S) Act employment with the endorsing parliamentarian. If an employee commences MOP(S) Act employment with a different parliamentarian during a period of study, a new application should be submitted to the PWSS. The PWSS may continue approval for the balance of a previously approved study period upon receipt of a suitable written endorsement from the new employing parliamentarian.

Any change to approval requests or new applications should be submitted by the employee to the PWSS **within 4 weeks** of the change of employing parliamentarian.

Employees must advise their employing parliamentarian and the PWSS manager, in writing, if they need to withdraw from or defer their unit of study.

8. Definitions

Term	Definition
Accredited course	A program of study undertaken for a qualification, provided by nationally accredited training authorities and registered training organisations under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) e.g. Certificate III/IV, an Undergraduate degree, a Postgraduate program.
Authorised person	An employee nominated by the parliamentarian to exercise duties on their behalf.

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Employee	Employees are staff employed under the <i>Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 (Cth)</i> . MOP(S) Act employees are employed by Parliamentarians on behalf of the Commonwealth.
Financial assistance	Financial reimbursement of approved study fees, subject to successful completion of the approved course or unit of study.
Parliamentarian	This term refers collectively to Members of the House of Representatives and Senators (or their authorised person where appropriate).
PWSS	Parliamentary Workplace Support Service
Semester or period of study	The period over which a component of a course is undertaken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o commencing on the first day of coursework (or the receipt of coursework or commencement of the component of the course, whichever is earlier) o ending on the last day of formal assessment of that component of the course (e.g. the final date for submission of assessment or of a take-home or online examination, or the date of a final examination).
Study leave	A discretionary period of paid leave of up to five (5) hours per week to provide a level of support in relation to an approved course or program of study.
Unit of study	A subject offered that can be completed without the student enrolling in the entire accredited course.

9. Further information

Further information regarding studies assistance can be sought from the PWSS Academy by emailing: Training@pwss.gov.au or calling: 1800 747 977 (option 4 – Training).