

Education Grant and Related Benefits during COVID-19

Version 2 – 28 July 2021

The below provisions will apply to Education Grant and Special Education Grant claims for the school years in effect on 1 January 2020 and 1 January 2021.

Attendance and determination of School Year

On-line attendance to classes or distance learning will be treated as full-time attendance for education grant purposes when schools made these arrangements as a substitute or an alternative to attendance on campus due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Example: Original school year 9 September 2019-19 June 2020
 School started on-line classes on 16 March through 19 June 2020
 School year remains 9 September 2019-19 June 2020
 HR partners will consider this complete period (9 September 2019-19 June 2020) for determination of full-time attendance regardless of the method of instruction.

If schools decide to end the academic year earlier than scheduled or extend beyond the normal cycle due to the COVID-19 pandemic instead of offering on-line classes or distance learning arrangements, the HR partner will shorten or lengthen the original length of the school year accordingly when processing an EG claim.

Example: Original school year 9 September 2019-19 June 2020
 School stopped classes on 16 March 2020
 School year becomes 9 September 2019-15 March 2020 (approx. 6 months)
 HR partners will consider this period (9 September 2019-15 March 2020) for determination of full-time attendance.

The period of the school year as determined by the schools in the paragraphs above will be used to calculate any necessary prorations as per the existing policy provisions.

Boarding Assistance/Capital Assessment

The flat sum of boarding assistance or capital assessment fee will not be prorated, if the child left the boarding and/or school earlier due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In accordance with existing policy, boarding is only payable for staff members in duty stations with a hardship classification of A to E when the child attends school away from the country of the duty station of staff member. Therefore, if children of these staff members

attended school remotely from the staff members' duty station for the whole school year, the staff members are not eligible to receive boarding assistance for the children.

Supporting Documentation

In the event that staff members cannot obtain original forms (P.45 or P.41) with school's seal or other supporting documents on school's official stationery, HR partners may accept the scanned copies of such documentation to process education grant claims or request for advance. However, staff members shall be required to retain scanned copies of all relevant documentation as well as e-mail communications received from schools sending the scanned copies of those documents for a period of five years from the date of submission of the claim for payment.

Timeline for submission of claims

Under staff rule 3.17, staff members may claim an allowance, grant or payment within a year of the date on which the staff member would have been entitled to such payment. Staff members may claim retroactive education grant for which education grant advance has not been paid within one year and a half following the end of the school year by exercising an exceptional six-month extension of the one-year retroactivity rule if the delay in submission is due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Example: If staff member did not receive an education grant advance and has not submitted an education grant claim for the school year of 9 September 2019 to 19 June 2020, staff member can submit such claim within one year and a half following the end of school year, i.e. until 18 December 2021 (instead of until 18 June 2021).

Staff members who received education grant advance and experience difficulties obtaining supporting documentation from the school due to school closure, the recovery of the education grant advance would be postponed for 6 months after the end of the school year (which normally takes place three months after the end of the school year).

Example: If staff member received an education grant advance for the school year of 9 September 2020 to 19 June 2021, a staff member may settle the claim without recovery by submitting the documents mentioned above through 18 December 2021 (instead of by 18 September 2021).

Education Grant Travel

Education grant travel is normally undertaken during the academic year or within three months of the beginning or the end of the academic year. When the travel was disrupted as a result of COVID-19 pandemic, HR partners may extend the time limitations for a period not exceeding three months or until the travel restrictions are lifted in the affected locations, whichever is longer.

Refunds

When schools refund part of the tuition fees or other admissible expenses (including itemized boarding expenses in the case of special education grant claims) as a result of school closure or other circumstances, these amounts should be duly reflected on the documentation certified by the school. HR partners will consider this information when processing the education grant claim.

Relation with Flexible Working Arrangements

Paragraph 5(c) of ST/IC/2019/15 on flexible working arrangements is applicable to staff members who telecommute from their home country for more than two thirds of the academic year. Accordingly, staff members who telecommute from their home country for more than two thirds of the school year will have their claim prorated on the basis of the period of time that they have spent away from their home country compared to the full academic year.