

HOW TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME FOR POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

What is Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-Secondary Students (FASP)

FASP is a means-tested scheme which provides financial assistance to needy full-time students pursuing locally-accredited, self-financing post-secondary education programmes, which will lead to a qualification at or above the levels of associate degree, higher diploma and/ or professional diploma. FASP aims to provide financial assistance to needy students so that no eligible students will be denied access to post-secondary education because of lack of means. Financial assistance is provided in the form of grant and/or loan. The grant is to cover tuition fees and academic expenses; the loan is to cover living expenses.

Level of Financial Assistance

Applicants who pass both the income test and the asset test will be offered financial assistance, the level of which is determined with regard to the financial circumstances of their family. The maximum level of assistance under FASP in 2010/11 is as follows:

- (a) annual tuition fees payable, subject to a ceiling of \$60,610;
- (b) academic expenses grant up to \$3,210; and
- (c) living expenses loan capped at \$37,250.

The above ceilings will be reviewed annually.

Who is Eligible to Apply

A student is eligible to apply for FASP if he/she:

- (a) is a registered full-time student, aged 25 or below;
- (b) is engaged in full-time locally-accredited self-financing post-secondary education programmes leading to a qualification at sub-degree (i.e. associate degree, higher diploma and/or professional diploma) level or above;

- (c)
 - (i) for students engaged in a sub-degree programme, have not obtained any qualifications at sub-degree or above; or
 - (ii) for students engaged in a top-up degree programme, have not obtained any qualifications at degree level or above, and have obtained a locally-accredited sub-degree qualification; or
 - (iii) for students engaged in a degree programme, have not obtained any qualifications at degree level or above, and if he/she is in possession of a sub-degree qualification, such qualification must be a locally-accredited sub-degree qualification.
- (d) has not accepted financial assistance under any other publicly-funded student finance assistance scheme for the programme/course covered by the application in the same academic year; and
- (e) has the right of abode in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong) or has resided or has had his/her home in Hong Kong continuously for three complete years immediately prior to the commencement of the course. This does not cover students staying in Hong Kong holding student visas.

When to Apply

For continuing students, completed applications should reach their institutions in May / June. For new students, completed applications should route through the respective institutions and reach the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) either within one calendar month from the commencement date of their programme, or within one calendar month from the date of course accreditation, whichever is later.

How to Complete the Application Form

An applicant is required to furnish the full particulars of his/her family members, including their income and assets in the financial year preceding the application year, together with the relevant copies of documentary proofs (e.g. salary statements / bank statements, etc. covering the period 1.4.2010 – 31.3.2011 when submitting his/her 2011/12 applications). Such information will form the basis for determining his/her level of financial assistance. **Any misrepresentation or omission may lead to rejection of his/her application and/or full recovery of overpaid financial assistance and court proceedings. Applicants are reminded that it is an offence to obtain pecuniary advantage by deception. Any person who does so commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for 10 years under the Theft Ordinance.**

Guidance Notes and supplementary information are attached to each application form to assist applicants in completing the forms. Students should study the notes carefully and submit the required information with their applications.

Students should submit a new application for each academic year. Their level of financial assistance will be assessed on the basis of the prevailing financial circumstances of their family.

Payment Arrangement

The notification of result will normally be issued to applicants with complete information within two months from the date of acknowledgement of receipt. Approved grant and loan will be paid in two equal instalments. The SFAA will credit the financial assistance into the applicants' bank accounts after receipt of duly-completed undertakings and deeds of indemnity.

Condition for Offering Grant

Grant is offered on the condition that the recipient can successfully complete the locally-accredited programme **and** be awarded the intended qualification¹ within six years from the first disbursement of financial assistance, failing which, the grant will have to be repaid.

A successful applicant must submit the following documents if he/she accepts the grant offer:

- (a) Undertaking (to be completed by the applicant) indicating the applicant's agreement to repay to the Government the full amount of grant plus interest if the applicant terminates his/her studies; fails to complete the locally-accredited programme and obtain the intended qualification within six years from the first disbursement of financial assistance; or fails to produce documentary proofs of his/her attainment of the intended qualification upon SFAA's request.
- (b) Deed of Indemnity (to be completed by the Indemnifier) indicating his/her agreement to indemnify the Government against any loss resulting from the applicant's failure to honour the undertaking.

Requirements for Obtaining a Loan

A successful applicant needs to submit the following loan documents and other supplementary documents before payment of loan will be arranged:

- (a) Undertaking (to be completed by the applicant) indicating the applicant's agreement to repay the Government the full amount of loan and interest upon graduation, termination of studies, or lapse of six years from the first disbursement of financial assistance, whichever is the earliest; and
- (b) Deed of Indemnity (to be completed by the indemnifier) indicating the Indemnifier's agreement to indemnify the Government against any loss resulting from the applicant's failure to honour the undertaking.

Repayment Arrangement

FASP grant

If a grant recipient fails to complete the locally-accredited programme and obtain the intended qualification within six years from the first disbursement of financial assistance for whatever reasons, the grant shall be repaid in one lump sum without interest (but should be repaid before the commencement date of repayment by instalments, i.e. three months immediately preceding the due date of the first quarterly repayment instalment), or by 40 equal quarterly instalments with interest at 2.5% per annum within a period of 10 years upon –

- (a) termination of studies; **or**
- (b) lapse of six years from the first disbursement of financial assistance,

whichever is earlier.

FASP loan

A loan recipient will be required to repay the loan and interest at 2.5% per annum in full in 20 equal quarterly instalments within a period of 5 years upon –

- (a) graduation; **or**
- (b) termination of studies; **or**
- (c) lapse of 6 years from the first disbursement of financial assistance,

¹ If the grant recipient is engaged in a sub-degree programme, the intended qualification refers to associate degree, higher diploma or professional diploma qualification or above. If the grant recipient is a sub-degree graduate who is engaged in a degree or top-up degree programme, the intended qualification refers to a degree or top-up degree qualification or above.

whichever is the earliest.

Interest will be charged from the commencement date of the loan repayment period, which normally falls on 1 October of the year of graduation. The first quarterly instalment of loan repayment will be due on 1 January of the following year.

If repayment of any instalment is overdue by 7 days or more, a 5% surcharge will be imposed on the overdue instalment.

Deferment of repayment of financial assistance may be granted on grounds of full-time studies, financial hardship or serious illness. The SFAA will consider applications for deferment of repayment on merits of individual cases.

Enquiries

All general enquiries about FASP should be directed to:

Post-secondary Students Section
Student Financial Assistance Agency
12/F, Trade and Industry Department Tower,
700 Nathan Road, Kowloon.

Students may also call the following enquiry hotlines:

24-hour enquiry hotline: 2802 2345
Enquiry hotline (office hours): 2152 9000
Homepage: <http://www.sfaa.gov.hk>

Student Financial Assistance Agency
April 2011