

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Budget Estimates

28 May 2012

**Question:** BR53  
**Topic:** Education Expenses  
**Proof Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Bushby asked:**

1. What are the department/agencies guidelines on study? Please provide details.
2. For this financial year to date, detail all education expenses (i.e. in house courses and tertiary studies) for each portfolio department and agency. Include what type of course, the total cost, cost per participant, the employment classification of each participant, how many participants and the amount of study leave granted to each participant (provide a breakdown for each employment classification). Also include the reason for the study and how it is beneficial for the department/agency.

**Answer:**

***Department***

1. The Department is committed to providing an environment in which employees are adequately equipped to achieve career and professional development needs relevant to their employment.  
  
Further information on the Department's Studies Assistance Policy is at **Attachment A**.
2. The Department's total education spend was \$215,155.99. **Attachment B** provides a breakdown of classification, costs, the type of study undertaken and study leave information.

***Tourism Australia***

1. Tourism Australia (TA) provides financial and administrative support to staff who are undertaking approved courses of study. To qualify for support, staff must be in a fulltime or part time position with a minimum of one year's service and must be able to demonstrate a consistent high level of performance as well as the ability to continue to maintain/improve their level of performance whilst undertaking the study.

The program/course must be of direct relevance to the employee's current field of work, must be aligned with development plan in the employee's performance plan and must lead to nationally recognised qualifications.

The business unit must be able to accommodate the team member's study commitments balanced against the requirements of the business. TA will reimburse sixty percent of the cost of course fees and compulsory textbooks, upon the successful completion of the subject(s).

2. In the 2011-12 financial year three staff undertook approved studies:

Location	Type of Course	Classification	Study Leave	Benefit for TA	Cost
Hong Kong	MBA course	Band 3	N/A	These studies increased the relevant employees' skills in management and governance, allowing these employees to make a better contribution to the organisation.	\$1,008
Hong Kong	MBA course	Band 4	N/A		\$1,008
Australia	Postgraduate Diploma of Management	Band 4	N/A		\$4,009
<b>Total</b>					<b>\$6,025</b>

### *Geoscience Australia*

1. Please refer to **Attachment C** for Geoscience Australia's (GA) Study Assistance Guidelines.
2. GA's education expenses was approximately \$130,787.42 for the 2011-12 financial year:

Type of course	Classification	Study Leave (hours/ wk)	Reason	Total cost (\$)
Diploma	EL1	0	Project management - training to increase GA's Project management capability	\$283.22
Bachelor degree	APS6	5	Project management - training to increase GA's Project management capability	\$1,376.65
Certificate IV	EL1	0	Management and Communication- staff development	\$1,495.00
Advanced Diploma	APS5	0	Training and assessment - enhancing GA's science capability	\$2,741.75
Diploma	APS5	5	Accounting - enhancing GA's corporate capability	\$1,74.35
Diploma	APS5	5	Structured Query Language and Procedural Language/Structured Query Language - enhancing GA's IT capability	\$1,74.35
Masters	EL1	0	Structured Query Language and Procedural Language/Structured Query Language - enhancing GA's IT capability	\$4,142.25
Bachelor	APS6	5	Business Administration - - enhancing GA's corporate capability	\$1,641.60
Masters	EL1	5	Science majoring in geology - enhancing GA's science capability	\$2,741.75
Honours	APS6	5	Natural Hazards and Disasters - enhancing GA's science capability	\$3,754.00
Diploma	APS6	0	Earth Science - enhancing GA's science capability	\$544.00
Honours	APS6	5	Spatial science - enhancing GA's science capability	\$511.20
Masters	APS6	5	Geology/Geochronology - enhancing GA's science capability	\$5,040.00
Masters	EL1	5	Earth Physics - enhancing GA's science capability	\$2,520.00
Masters	APS6	0	Natural Hazards and Disasters - enhancing GA's science capability	\$2,520.00
Masters	EL2	unknown	Earth Physics and Natural Hazards - enhancing GA's science capability	\$0.00
Masters	APS6	0	Earth Physics - enhancing GA's science capability	\$2,046.00

PhD	EL1	36.75	Geoscience - enhancing GA's science capability	\$50,000.00 (estimated)
Honours	APS6	36.75	Geology - enhancing GA's science capability	\$15,323.00 (estimated)
Honours	APS5	36.75	Sequence Stratigraphy - enhancing GA's science capability	\$18,245.00 (estimated)
PhD	EL1	unknown	Geoscience - enhancing GA's science capability	Unknown
PhD	APS5	36.75	Geoscience - enhancing GA's science capability	\$15,862.00 (estimated)
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$130,787.42</b>

## ATTACHMENT C

### Corporate - Human Resources - Study Assistance Guidelines

#### Introduction

The GA Study Assistance Program seeks to:

- Develop skills and knowledge to increase GA's capacity to achieve its corporate goals, manage change and extend organisational competence;
- form an integral part of GA's commitment to learning and development;
- provide trained staff for specific current and future workforce requirements;
- assist staff members with their career development, adaptability and mobility within GA and across the APS; and
- improve current and future job performance.

Applicants do not have an automatic entitlement to approval as an Approved Student, or to leave or financial assistance. Assistance is granted at the discretion of the Delegate.

#### Definitions

1. The term **Study Assistance** is used in these guidelines to describe the overall program.
2. The **Delegate** for the purpose of approving study assistance in GA is an applicant's Section Head or Project Leader.
3. An **Approved Student** is a person who has had their application to undertake a relevant course of study approved by the Delegate.
4. The term **Studybank** is used to describe a particular element of the Study Assistance Program. It refers to the provision that allows the accumulation of a "bank" of study leave credits.

#### Eligibility for Study Assistance

All employees covered by the GA Union Collective Agreement (2009-2011) are eligible to apply for the Study Assistance program.

Short-term employees who are engaged for specific tasks or projects for less than 12 months would not normally be granted access to Study Assistance although Delegates should balance the person's development needs with the financial resources and operational needs of the project.

#### Post Graduate Study Guidelines

The Study Assistance Guidelines, as mandated in the GA Union Collective Agreement (Clause 66.8), provides the parameters which apply where staff wish to undertake study with the support of GA. These guidelines are available to all staff and are published on the Intranet.

The general Studies Assistance Guidelines are primarily intended to assist staff undertaking undergraduate degrees and graduate diplomas in areas that are of direct use to GA and the Australian Public Service more generally.

These conditions allow the payment of:-

- compulsory fees
- HECS costs
- time off to attend lectures, tutorials, practical work; and
- travel to and from work to university.

In the case of higher degrees (primarily PhDs), there are three factors in assessing applications. The determinant factor for higher degrees is the relationship to outputs in the GA Work Plan.

The prime deciding factors are:

- whether the research topic directly contributes to a GA output;
- whether the chief considers this the best way to achieve the output; and
- whether the staff member is capable of completing it successfully;

In cases where a higher degree is being undertaken, and the topic being researched is directly relevant to the production of a GA output in our work plan, the Executive Board will consider whether it is appropriate to support the staff member to complete the research project:

- as an approved student and/or;
- on full pay and/or;
- full entitlements and/or;
- course costs

(Until now, these decisions have been made by individual divisional chiefs with the same purpose in mind.)

All other applications are to be considered under the Studies Assistance Guidelines.

## **Levels of Assistance**

There are two levels of assistance once study is approved (approved student status):-

- **Sponsored Study Assistance** - where an approved student is undertaking studies considered being highly relevant to their current and future career in GA. Sponsored students are granted study leave and financial assistance. All paid leave approved under Study Assistance is covered by Workers' Compensation.
- **Un-sponsored Study Assistance** - where an Approved Student is undertaking studies considered to be relevant to their current and future career but not relevant to GA. Un-sponsored students are granted study leave only. All paid leave approved under Study Assistance is covered by Workers' Compensation.

## **Types of Study**

- On-campus
- External studies (in Australia and overseas) .

Study may include courses taken at pre-tertiary, undergraduate and post graduate levels.

Study activities may include:

- formal tuition - eg face-to-face lectures, tutorials, practical and field work, and residential segments of external courses; and/or
- other study related activities - eg essay, thesis or examination preparation, and research.

## **Short Courses**

Non-award courses such as two or three-day workshops in areas such as computing or supervisory skills or residential management programs of four to six weeks duration; are catered for within other GA programs rather than under Study Assistance.

## **Study Leave**

Only Approved Students are eligible for study leave, but the status of Approved Student does not automatically entitle the student to this leave.

- Study leave may not be taken prior to formal approval being granted and leave cannot be granted retrospectively due to compensation considerations.
- Leave taken prior to this approval must be flex, recreation or some other form and such leave is not covered by workers compensation provisions.

## **Full Time Study**

GA may approve application for leave for Approved Students on full-time study as either:

- leave with full or part salary; or
- leave without pay.

Leave with full or part salary is usually granted in the form of a GA study award or scholarship and will count as service for all purposes. Such awards are covered in more detail under Approval of Financial Assistance.

Leave without pay for full-time study will count for long service leave purposes. This is covered in more details under Leave Without Pay (LWOP) for Study Purposes.

Approved Students on leave without pay have no workers' compensation coverage.

## **Part-Time Study**

Part-time study may involve:

- on-campus study: attendance at formal tuition on a regular basis; or
- external study (correspondence or distance education): attendance at classes, residential, summer schools etc, on an occasional or irregular basis; or
- PhD and Masters students: no formal tuition attendance requirements.

## **On-Campus Students**

Paid study leave of up to 5 hours per week may be granted to Approved Students for approved study activities during standard hours, being 8.30am to 4.51pm with a one hour lunch break, normally between 12.30pm and 1.30pm, unless specified by the employee's nominated manager. Delegates have the discretion to approve this time, based on:

- the number of face-to-face hours of tuition required;
- the time required for attendance at other formal tuition activities;
- the time required to participate in any other study activities approved by the Delegate;
- the day-to-day operations of the work area;
- in addition to the leave granted above, the Delegate may grant additional paid study leave if the student is required to take more than 5 hours of leave each week. This additional leave is only available for the student's attendance at compulsory study activities that are essential to the successful completion of the scheme of study;
- Students must provide documentary evidence in support of any applications for additional paid study leave;
- Any additional paid study leave granted and if subsequently not used, will not be credited to the student's "bank" of study leave credits.

Students undertaking classes outside standard working hours are entitled to Studybank provisions.

Additional leave of up to 3 hours per week for travel can be granted to staff undertaking a scheme of study:

- which has been identified as essential;
- when travel time between the work place and the institution is excessive; or
- when an employee, because of personal circumstances, warrants special assistance.

The amount of time allowed for travel between GA and the study centre will be set by the Delegate. In Canberra, usually 1/2 hour is acceptable for travelling to and from the study institution. Travel time is not approved for travel outside of ordinary working hours.

Where circumstances warrant, and the amount of leave granted for both study and travel is in total less than 8 hours a week, the standard five hours paid study leave per week may be extended so as to provide for 8 hours in total. When approving students under this provision, Delegates will have regard to the following criteria:

- the relevance of the study to the student's current or likely future duties;
- whether the student has a heavy study load;
- the student's intention to continue employment with the Commonwealth;
- whether study meets GA's or APS's high priority, continuing or emerging skill needs, at any level of job classification.

### **External Students, PhD and Masters Students**

In the case of external students it is recognised that special provisions should be made. External students may access study leave as follows:

- paid study leave of up to 3 hours per week may be granted for any other approved study activities;
- this approved leave may be used within the semester on a weekly basis, or in any other way approved by the Delegate, at a time agreed between the students and their managers;
- in addition to the leave granted above, paid study leave may be granted travelling to and from, and to attend compulsory residential courses, or any other study activities which are essential to the successful completion of the scheme of study.

All PhD applications taken to the Executive Board must be endorsed by the Division Chief.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Students**

For ATSI employees, up to 10 hours of paid study leave per week is available in line with Government policy as directed by APSC and DEWR. In addition, an Approved Student may be granted up to 3 hours each week to travel to undertake study activities.

### **Leave Without Pay (LWOP) for Study Purposes**

LWOP may be granted to Approved Students for up to three consecutive years to undertake full-time study but should be reviewed annually. Any extension beyond three years is at the discretion of the Delegate.

Except in extenuating circumstances- eg personal circumstances (illness, injury or bereavement) or pressure of work - leave is granted on the basis that each year of study is successfully completed

and proof of results are provided. For study undertaken in Australia, students are expected to return to work between academic years.

LWOP for full-time study counts as service for all purposes other than:

- accrual of recreation leave; and
- 1.25 days are deducted from sick leave entitlements for every 12 weeks' LWOP

Students on LWOP for more than 12 weeks may elect not to pay superannuation, but must do so in writing to Personnel, HR Services section. Students on LWOP do not have workers' compensation coverage.

An employee may be unattached from their position when undertaking full-time study on LWOP where the period of leave is not less than one academic year.

## **Examination Leave**

An Approved Student is also entitled to paid examination leave.

Applications for examination leave should be made through ESS, selecting Miscellaneous Leave With Pay and then selecting the reason for leave as "Exam for Approved Student". You should provide a copy of the examination schedule to your nominated manager.

## **Leave Provisions while Undertaking Field and Sea Duties**

For staff who are required to participate in field and sea duties, credits will accrue at the rate of 3 hours per week for the time they are away from Canberra in lieu of usual accrual rate.

## **Part Time Workers**

Part-time employees are eligible for Study Assistance, with the amount of study leave which may be granted based on a pro rata basis

In exceptional circumstances a Delegate may approve paid study leave in excess of the 3, 5, 8 or 13 hours, or pro rata equivalents, per week accessible under Study Assistance for the different categories of students.

## **Studybank**

In cases where the normal maximum approved study leave for a student is less than 5 hours per week the difference may be credited to a "bank" of study leave credits for each period of approval (semester or academic year) at the discretion of the Delegate. Travel time does not accrue in this manner.

## **Approval of Financial Assistance**

Approval for and payment of financial assistance will only be made to sponsored students.

GA will:

- pay up-front for fees that the student will incur during the course of study. A schedule of the costs needs to be provided before any payment can be made.
- reimburse students for fees they have paid.
- Approved Students will:

- repay GA either in instalments or in full, all the costs paid by GA if the course is not completed by reason of failure or withdrawal. This is acknowledged in the form.
- not include payment of any fees incurred by the student for late payments, unless it can be proven that "late payment" was due to administrative error.
- identify the level of financial assistance to be provided at the time that Approved Student status is granted.
- discuss future study with their supervisors in time for costs to be included in the budgetary process.

Depending on the type of study and the institution, a variety of fees and charges may be involved. These include for example:

- registration and administration fees;
- tuition fees (especially relevant to postgraduate studies);
- course fees;
- examination fees;
- Sports Fees;
- General Services Fee;
- Books and materials compulsory for the course of study (where GA pays for such books/materials, they will become the property of the GA Library).

The Delegate has the discretion to decide whether Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) will be paid either in full or part. The full HECS payment will be an amount equivalent to that which would have been paid in an up-front payment (eg 75% of the deferred figure).

In a claim for reimbursement, a student must produce proof:

- of the amount and type of fees and costs; and
- that the study has been successfully completed.

The claim for reimbursement on a tax invoice associated with the study should be made within one month of the receipt of results for the Semester.

In order to claim for reimbursement, a Study Expenses Claim Form: (study completed or prior to completion of study) needs to be completed.

### **Completing a Course or Unit of Study**

Satisfactory evidence of successful completion of the course or unit is to be provided eg a transcript.

### **Failure or Withdrawal**

Paid study leave to repeat a type of study or subject which has not been successfully completed due to failure or withdrawal will be granted at the discretion of the Delegate only in cases where personal circumstances (eg illness, injury, bereavement), pressure of work or other extenuating circumstances apply.

### **Study Assistance for Employees who Change Agencies**

An employee who gains approval for financial assistance for a prescribed period, but moves to another agency should be aware that:

- GA's policy may not provide for reimbursement/payment under these circumstances;
- any costs already paid for may need to be repaid by the student either in instalments or in full; and
- such assistance may not automatically be provided for that period by the new agency.

Employees taking up a position with GA, who have previously been granted financial assistance by their former agency, should be careful not to presume that GA will offer the same level of assistance. The employee should provide details of their course of study, progress and previous assistance to the Delegate as soon as possible.

### **How to Apply for Study Assistance**

Approval for study assistance must be granted prior to commencing study. Applications must be made on the appropriate form:

Study Assistance Form (External Students)

Study Assistance Form (On-Campus Students)

### **Review of Study Assistance Decisions**

This will be in accordance with Clause 13 of the GA GA Union Collective Agreement (2009-2011).