

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Budget Estimates

29 May – 31 May 2012

Question: BET 1077-1078

Topic: Education Expenses (ABS)

Hansard Page: Written (Received from Committee - 13 June 2012)

Senator BUSHBY asked:

1077. What are the department/agency's guidelines on study? Please provide details.

1078. 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:

1077.

STUDY SUPPORT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

What is the Study Support Program?

- 1 The Study Support Program (SSP) provides support for ongoing full time and part-time employees undertaking external part-time study to develop skills and knowledge that meet the corporate objectives of the ABS and the needs of the individual.

What type of support is available?

- 2 Support under the SSP is discretionary and if approved, the program provides employees undertaking part time study with:
 - a. paid Study Leave up to six hours per week to cover contact hours for two units, exams and travel time (pro rata for part time employees);
 - b. Coverage under workers' compensation whilst on approved paid study leave hours (including travelling between work and the educational institution within core hours and whilst at the educational institution, in accordance with section 6 of the *Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*).
 - c. agreed additional leave in the form of flextime, or time off, or Annual Leave or Leave Without Pay;
 - d. paid Study Leave up to ten hours per week for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with a disability, and students who meet an identified objective of the ABS Workplace Diversity program; and

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- e. financial support in some circumstances to assist students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, with some of their course fees.

Approval Delegates

- 3 Delegates for approving paid study leave applications are at the EL2 level and above. Financial assistance is considered separately once a paid study leave application has been approved.

Guidelines for approving Paid Study Leave applications

- 4 The following criteria are considered when approving an application for paid Study Leave and/or financial assistance:
- a. the operational needs and resources of the employee's workgroup;
 - b. the ABS budget position for the current financial year;
 - c. the relevance of the course of study to the employee's current position;
 - d. the application endorsement by the employee's line manager;
 - e. the satisfactory conduct and/or work performance of the employee;
 - f. if the course of study can be satisfied internally;
 - g. the number of hours required to attend study activities which are conducted during standard working hours; and
 - h. amount and results of past approved study.
- 5 A maximum of two units will be supported in any semester and proof of enrolment must be submitted with the application before approval will be given.
- 6 If an approved student's study commitment is more than the maximum amount of leave available, an employee may negotiate with their line manager about the possibility of taking additional leave including leave without pay.
- 7 The ABS has no prescribed list of courses it supports through SSP to allow flexibility in the style and method of learning. Types of study include on-campus, external and on-line study as well as courses taken at pre-tertiary, undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Who can apply for Financial Assistance?

- 8 Financial assistance will be by way of reimbursement on successful completion of the approved course of study and provision of receipts for course fee expenditures incurred.
1078. The budgeted year to date (end 30 June) 2011-12 expenditure for Education Expenses for the ABS is \$10.81m.

The ABS does not record education data in a way that would readily allow answers to be provided to these questions. To attempt to provide this level of detail would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources.