



Continuing Education Fund

Guidance Notes for Application

Importance Notes

The Office of the Continuing Education Fund (OCEF) has further streamlined the application process. Applicants are only required to submit the completed application form and required documents to the OCEF. The OCEF will verify the applicant's eligibility with the respective institution / course provider upon receiving the application.

Applicants are advised to check the status and balance of their Continuing Education Fund (CEF) accounts before enrolling in a CEF reimbursable course. For applicants who have opened a CEF account, they can check the usable balance by logging in the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA) website wfsfaa.gov.hk/en/ce/cef/overview.php or contacting the 24-hour hotline at 3142 2277 (Handled by the "1823"). A "subsidy calculator" is available on the WFSFAA website to facilitate applicants' preliminary estimation of the amount of subsidy they are eligible for and the course fee to be borne by them. Please note that the tuition fees of all CEF reimbursable courses must be collected on equal monthly instalments basis except those which have been granted exemption by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare.

1 CEF

- 1.1 The CEF subsidises adults with learning aspirations to pursue continuing education and training.
- 1.2 Eligible applicants (pursuant to section 2.3) may submit unlimited number of claims for reimbursement of fees on successful completion of CEF reimbursable courses up to a maximum sum of HK\$25,000. The co-payment ratios by learners (i.e. the percentage of fees to be borne by learners) for the first HK\$10,000 subsidy is 20% of the course fee* and that for the remaining HK\$15,000 subsidy is 40% of the course fee.
- 1.3 The CEF account for an applicant will be invalidated when the full sum of HK\$25,000 subsidy has been reimbursed.

2 ELIGIBILITY

- 2.1 *Which courses meet the application criteria?*
Continuing education and training courses registered under CEF as "reimbursable courses". The list of the reimbursable courses can be obtained from the WFSFAA website or the OCEF.
- 2.2 *What fees may be reimbursed?*
 - (a) CEF course fees; and
 - (b) Applicants studying language proficiency course can submit application for reimbursement of fees after successfully completed a CEF reimbursable course and passed a specified benchmark test / examination at the specified (or higher) level in respect of a language proficiency course (if applicable).
- 2.3 *Who is eligible?*
Persons who meet the following eligibility criteria can apply for CEF –
 - (a) are Hong Kong residents who have the right of abode or the right to land or to remain in Hong Kong without restriction, i.e. "A" (right of abode), "R" (right to land) or "U" (remain in Hong Kong without restriction) should appear below the date of birth on the HK Smart Identity Card, or holders of One-way Permit from the Mainland China. For details of the meaning of symbols, please visit the Immigration Department website immd.gov.hk; and
 - (b) are aged 18 or above at the time when the CEF reimbursable course commenced.
- 2.4 *Other conditions –*
 - (a) The application for fee reimbursement for course(s) which commenced **on or after 1 August 2022** must be **submitted within one year upon the successful completion of the course(s)**. Each eligible applicant is entitled to a maximum sum of HK\$25,000 subsidy in respect of all CEF reimbursable courses pursued.
 - (b) The application for fee reimbursement for course(s) which commenced during the period **from 1 April 2019 to 31 July 2022** must be **submitted within one year upon the successful completion of the course(s) and before reaching the age of 71**. Each eligible applicant is entitled to a maximum sum of HK\$20,000 subsidy in respect of all CEF reimbursable courses pursued.
 - (c) "**Successful completion**" of a CEF reimbursable course means that the applicant must have attended no less than 70% of the contactable hours of the CEF reimbursable course or such higher attendance requirement as prescribed for the CEF reimbursable course (whichever is higher) and attained an overall mark of either 50% or such higher percentage of assessment(s) as prescribed for the CEF reimbursable course (whichever is higher) as assessed by whichever method approved by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare (including any examination and assignment requirements with approved weighting).
 - (d) Each applicant may submit an unlimited number of reimbursement applications for CEF reimbursable courses. Each claim may

* Course fees refer to tuition fees and examination fees for taking designated benchmark tests / examinations (if applicable) in respect of language proficiency courses (pursuant to section 2.4(e)). Any other fees, such as late charges and change of course charges, etc. are not reimbursable.

include one or more than one CEF reimbursable courses. Late applications will not be accepted.

- (e) **Applicants studying language proficiency courses are required to pass a specified benchmark test (if applicable) at the specified (or higher) level to be eligible for fee reimbursement.** Benchmark tests should be taken by the applicants after the course has commenced (for applications made pursuant to section 2.4(b), the benchmark test should be taken before the applicant reaching the age of 71). Applicants can make use of the same benchmark test to support the claims for more than one CEF language proficiency course. However, the examination date of the benchmark test must fall after the course commencement date of the reimbursable course(s) used for claiming CEF. Information on the specified benchmark tests and levels of the language proficiency courses can be obtained from the Reimbursable Course List on the WFSFAA website. Benchmark test fees may be reimbursed only if the application is submitted together with a reimbursement claim for the relevant language proficiency course.
- (f) In processing the applications for fee reimbursement of courses, OCEF will calculate the subsidy amount based on the co-payment ratios by learners as stated in section 1.2 above. A “subsidy calculator” is available on the WFSFAA website to facilitate applicants’ preliminary estimation of the amount of subsidy they are eligible for and the course fee to be borne by them.
- (g) Applicants must fully meet the conditions set out in section 2.3. In respect of any courses, modules or units of study credits for which the fees are to be reimbursed, the applicant must not have obtained any other public funds or assistance under any other publicly-funded financial assistance schemes for the same course, such as pursuing courses funded by the University Grants Committee, grants or loans from the “Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students” administered by the WFSFAA, subsidy from the “Non-means-tested Subsidy Scheme for Self-financing Undergraduate Studies in Hong Kong” or “Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions / Sectors”, etc.
- (h) If an eligible applicant obtained loans from the “Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme” (ENLS) administered by WFSFAA to meet the payment of fees for a CEF reimbursable course, the CEF reimbursement would first be used to offset any outstanding ENLS loans borrowed by the applicant for paying the tuition fee in respect of the same course. Any remaining balance of the CEF reimbursement after offsetting the loan amount will be credited to the designated account of the applicant.
- (i) Applicants are required to sign a ‘Statement of Consent and Acknowledgement’ provided by the institutions / course providers upon the enrollment of CEF course. The eligibility for fee reimbursement under the CEF may be affected if the applicants failed to sign the relevant statement or confirmed not to apply for fee reimbursement under the CEF for the enrolled course and do not consent to the disclosure of their personal data to the Specified Public Authorities.

3 APPLICATION PROCEDURES

3.1 How to apply

- (a) Paper-based application form [SFO 313 (2024)] can be obtained from the OCEF or Home Affairs Enquiry Centres, or downloaded from the WFSFAA website wfsfaa.gov.hk/en/ce/cef/forms.php. The original of the completed application form together with copies of supporting documents[†] should be submitted by post or in person to the OCEF (Office of the Continuing Education Fund, Units 07-11, 25/F., CDW Building, 388 Castle Peak Road, Tsuen Wan, New Territories). Applicants may also place their applications in the drop-in boxes near the main entrance of the OCEF or on 11/F., Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices.
- (b) Complete and submit the online application form with supporting documents through “GovHK” (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/sfo017/en/). Applicants who did not use “iAM Smart+” for digital signing in the online submission of the application form are required to print out a hard copy of the form and sign the Declaration in Part D and submit the printed form with original signature to the OCEF within one month after online submission in order to be considered as a valid application. Applicants using “iAM Smart+” for digital signing are not required to submit the printed copy of application form to the OCEF.

3.2 The date of receipt of the application by OCEF will be regarded as the submission date of the application.

3.3 Applicants who wish to submit an additional CEF course for reimbursement after submitting an application are required to submit another application separately.

3.4 The OCEF will verify the eligibility of applicants with the respective institutions / course providers upon receiving the application form (i.e. whether the applicant has successfully completed the CEF courses and met all other requirements for CEF reimbursement of fees).

3.5 All supporting documents submitted to the OCEF are non-returnable. Applicants should retain copies for their own reference if deemed necessary.

4 DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS

4.1 Applications are processed subject to availability of funds from the CEF. In the event that CEF no longer has funds available when an applicant submits an application, the application will not be approved regardless of whether the applicant fulfills the eligibility requirements for claiming reimbursement from CEF. This restriction applies to all provisions in this Guidance Notes.

4.2 For the latest information of CEF, please visit the WFSFAA website.

5 NOTIFICATION OF APPLICATION RESULTS AND PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 The OCEF will acknowledge receipt of applications via SMS through applicants’ local mobile phone number. If the applicants do not provide a local mobile phone number or the local mobile phone number provided is incorrect, the OCEF will not be able to issue acknowledgement to these applicants. If applicants do not receive any acknowledgement of receipt by SMS from OCEF after 10 working days from the date of submission of their applications, please contact the OCEF at 3142 2277.

5.2 In general, application results will be issued within 6 weeks (for existing CEF account holders) or 8 weeks (for applicants who submit application for the first time) from the date of receipt of the application, subject to the provision of complete supporting documents by the applicants and the result of verification of applicants’ information by the institutions / course providers. If the information provided by applicants is incomplete or with discrepancies in the information provided, applicants will be requested to give an explanation or provide supplementary information, in which case the processing time will be longer. In case the institutions / course providers need a longer period of time for verification of the information stated in the application form, the CEF reimbursement has to be made to offset the ENLS

[†] (i) One-way Permit (if applicable); (ii) the front page of applicant’s bank passbook or bank statement showing the name, account number and bank name / bank code; (iii) result of benchmark test / examination; and (iv) the documentary proof of the benchmark test / examination fee(s) paid (if applicable, details as stated in section 2.4(e))

loans, or in other exceptional circumstances, the processing time will also be longer. If applicants do not receive any written reply from OCEF 2 weeks after the above-mentioned time, please contact the OCEF at 3142 2277.

- 5.3 Reimbursement will be made by direct credit to the saving / current account designated by the applicant for receipt of the reimbursement. The name of the applicant on the account must be exactly the same as the name on the HK Smart Identity Card. Credit card accounts, time deposit accounts, foreign currency accounts and loans accounts are not acceptable for direct credit of reimbursement.
- 5.4 Applicants should check the personal data, information of CEF reimbursable course and reimbursement amount stated in the “Notification of Application Result”. Should there be any discrepancies in information such as the name of the institution / course provider, course of study, correspondence address or the bank account number, etc., applicants should notify the OCEF in writing immediately.

6 HANDLING OF INFORMATION

- 6.1 Applicants are obliged to supply information pertaining to their personal data, as required in the application. In accordance with section 3.2.1.2 of the Code of Practice on the Identity Card Number and other Personal Identifiers issued by the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCPD), applicants are requested to furnish a copy of their Hong Kong Smart Identity Card. For the full version of the Code, please visit the PCPD website pcpd.org.hk. If an applicant fails to comply with these requirements, OCEF may not be able to process his / her application. OCEF will use the personal data provided in the applications for the following purposes –
- (a) Activities relating to the processing and counter-checking of an application under CEF, including the matching of the personal data provided against other databases as may be required for the purpose of verifying the criteria set out in sections 2.3 and 2.4 above.
 - (b) Activities relating to the recovery of payments and authentication of the applications, if any.
 - (c) Statistics and research.
- 6.2 The personal data and other supplementary information that are provided in the application may be disclosed to Government policy bureaux and departments and institutions / course providers for the purposes mentioned in section 6.1 above or where such disclosure is authorised and required by law.
- 6.3 The OCEF will contact the institutions / course providers, other government departments and organisations to verify the data provided in the application with those held by them for the purposes mentioned in section 6.1 above if necessary.
- 6.4 The personal data provided by the applicant in the CEF application and any supplementary information provided on the request of the OCEF will be used by the WFSFAA and the Education Bureau (EDB) / disclosed to the agents of the WFSFAA / EDB, the schools / institutions concerned and relevant government bureaux / departments for the following purposes:
- (a) Activities relating to the processing and counter-checking of applications / nominations listed below and notification of application result;
 - (i) Grant for School-related Expenses for Kindergarten Students (Grant-KG)
 - (ii) Kindergarten & Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme (KCFRS)
 - (iii) School Textbook Assistance Scheme (STAS)
 - (iv) Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS)
 - (v) Subsidy for Internet Access Charges (SIA)
 - (vi) Diploma of Applied Education Fee Reimbursement (DAEFR) / Diploma Yi Jin Fee Reimbursement (DYJFR)
 - (vii) Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses (FAEAEC)
 - (viii) Tertiary Student Finance Scheme – Publicly-funded Programmes (TSFS)
 - (ix) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Full-time Tertiary Students (NLSFT)
 - (x) Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students (FASP)
 - (xi) Non-means-tested Loan Scheme for Post-secondary Students (NLSPS)
 - (xii) Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme (ENLS)
 - (xiii) Student Travel Subsidy for Tertiary or Post-secondary Students
 - (xiv) Continuing Education Fund (CEF)
 - (xv) Working Family Allowance (WFA) Scheme
 - (xvi) Scholarships, grants and other loan schemes administered by Student Finance Office
 - (b) Activities relating to authentication of applications / nominations listed in section 6.4(a) against other database of the WFSFAA and the database of other relevant government bureaux / departments and schools / institutions in association with the financial assistance received by the applicant / applicant’s family members to prevent double subsidies, detect fraudulence, recover overpayment(s), overdue repayment(s) or any outstanding amount, and any cost arising therefrom;
 - (c) Activities relating to the matching of the personal data of the applicant (where applicable) with the database of EDB in association with processing and counter-checking of the applications / nominations for the financial assistance schemes listed in section 6.4(a) and the granting of other financial assistance by the WFSFAA, so as to verify / update applicant records of the WFSFAA and confirm eligibility for individual scheme;
 - (d) Activities relating to the matching of the personal data of the applicant and applicant’s family members with other database of the WFSFAA and the database of the Social Welfare Department in association with processing and counter-checking of the applications / nominations listed in section 6.4(a) and the granting of other financial assistance by the WFSFAA to prevent double subsidies (in case the applicant’s family was in receipt of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) during the relevant assessment period or is currently in receipt of CSSA) and recover overpayment(s);
 - (e) Activities relating to the matching of the personal data of the applicant and applicant’s family members with other database of the WFSFAA and the database of the Immigration Department in association with processing and counter-checking of the applications / nominations listed in section 6.4(a) and the granting of other financial assistance by the WFSFAA so as to verify / update the records of applicant and applicant’s family members and confirm their eligibility for individual scheme;
 - (f) Administration and maintenance of loan account(s) and repayment of loans;
 - (g) Statistics and research purposes;
 - (h) Activities / matters related to the communication or exchange of views with applicants for the purpose of scheme administration; and

- (i) Processing and counter-checking of applications / nominations relating to financial assistance / scholarships and/or selection of students for award of other financial assistance / scholarships administered by the WFSFAA, the EDB, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, other relevant government bureaux / departments / organisations and the schools / institutions concerned.
- 6.5 The personal data of the applicant and those of his / her family members provided by the applicant may be disclosed to government bureaux / departments / organisations and the schools / institutions concerned for the purposes stated in section 6.4 above; or where the applicant has given consent to such disclosure; or where such disclosure is authorised or required by law. The provision of personal data to WFSFAA by the applicant is voluntary, but if the applicant fails to provide the personal data required, we may not be able to process his / her application.
- 6.6 If necessary, the WFSFAA will contact your institutions / course providers, other government departments and organisations to obtain any information of you for the purposes mentioned in section 6.4 above. The applicant consents that the WFSFAA may inform institutions / course providers of the result of the application.
- 6.7 In accordance with sections 18 and 22 and Principle 6 of Schedule 1 of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Chapter 486 of the Laws of Hong Kong), applicants have the right to request access to and correction of the personal data supplied in their applications.
- 6.8 Enquiries concerning the personal data provided in the applications and requests for the correction of such data may be made in writing to the OCEF.

7 OTHER MATTERS

- 7.1 It is an applicant's responsibility to complete the application form fully and truthfully and attach all the necessary supporting documents. Any misrepresentation or omission may lead to rejection of application and / or full recovery of payments made and possibly court proceedings. Applicants are reminded that it is an offence to obtain property / 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 (Chapter 210 of the Laws of Hong Kong). It is also an offence under the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Chapter 201 of the Laws of Hong Kong) to offer any advantages (e.g. money, gift etc.) to an employee of OCEF or WFSFAA as an inducement to or reward for facilitating or expediting the processing of applications.
- 7.2 In the event that there is overpayment due to a calculation error, the amount overpaid must be refunded by the applicant in one lump sum upon request from the OCEF.
- 7.3 Applicants should retain all supporting documents related to the study of CEF reimbursable course(s) (e.g. tuition fee receipts, documentary proof of tuition fees paid, enrolment form, proof of completion, etc.) for OCEF's verification in case of need. The OCEF may invite applicants for interviews to verify relevant documents if necessary.
- 7.4 The tuition fees of all CEF reimbursable courses must be collected on equal monthly instalments basis except those which have been granted exemption by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare. For the list of exempted institutions / course providers, please visit the WFSFAA website.
- 7.5 Underpaid mail items are subject to surcharge by Hongkong Post. OCEF will not accept underpaid mail items, which will be returned to the sender (with return address) or treated as undeliverable mail (without return address) by the Hongkong Post in accordance with the laid down procedures. For proper delivery of your mail items to OCEF, and to avoid unnecessary delivery delay or unsuccessful delivery, please ensure your mail items bear sufficient postage with return address before posting.
- 7.6 To facilitate early processing of applications and reimbursement of approved fees, we appeal to all applicants to provide complete and accurate information in their applications.
- 7.7 Should there be any discrepancy between the English and Chinese versions of this Guidance Notes, the English version shall prevail.

8 ENQUIRIES AND APPEALS

- 8.1 The OCEF welcomes any feedback you may have on the scheme and the quality of the CEF reimbursable courses. Any comments may be sent to the OCEF by post or email at cef_sfo@wfsfaa.gov.hk.
- 8.2 If you feel that your application has not been dealt with fairly or that our response to your complaint is not satisfactory, you may write to the Controller, Student Finance Office at the following address –

Controller, Student Finance Office
 Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency
 12/F., Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices
 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon
 (Fax No. : 2519 3857)
 (Email : wg_sfo@wfsfaa.gov.hk)

- 8.3 We shall send acknowledgement to you within 3 working days and provide a written response within 15 working days on receipt of the complaint.
- 8.4 Contact us –

24-hr hotline	:	3142 2277 (handled by the “1823”)
Address	:	Units 07-11, 25/F., CDW Building 388 Castle Peak Road, Tsuen Wan New Territories
Opening hours	:	Mondays to Fridays (except Public Holidays) 8:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. 2:00 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.
Website	:	wfsfaa.gov.hk/en/ce/cef/overview.php
Email	:	cef_sfo@wfsfaa.gov.hk