

2023/2024

Household Application for Student Financial Assistance Schemes



Student Finance Office
Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency

“Household Application Form for Student Financial Assistance Schemes” is a family-based application form which facilitates families with child(ren) attending primary and secondary school(s) or kindergarten(s) / child care centre(s) to apply for student financial assistance.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- (i) Applicants must pass the means test and be the parent or the guardian (as recognized under Guardianship of Minors Ordinance, Cap 13) of the student-applicants. Otherwise, applicants must explain in detail with proof why this cannot be complied with in the application form;
- (ii) The student-applicants must be unmarried Hong Kong Residents, with right of abode, right to land or valid permission to remain without any condition of stay (other than the limit of stay) in Hong Kong. Students holding visitor visas, two-way exit permits, student visas only or who are dependents of student-visa / visitor-visa holders are not eligible to apply for student financial assistance;
- (iii) For student-applicants who are attending Nursery, Lower and Upper classes in Kindergartens (K1 to K3), they must be –
 - at least 2 years and 8 months old as at 31 August 2023 (i.e. born on or before 31 December 2020); and
 - attending Nursery (K1), Lower (K2) and Upper classes (K3) in kindergartens registered with the Education Bureau (EDB). The kindergarten should be a non-profit-making kindergarten, offering local curriculum under the kindergarten education scheme.
- (iv) For student-applicants who are attending Child Care Centres (group aged 0-2) and Child Care Centres (group aged 2-3), they must –
 - be receiving whole-day care services in child care centres (day crèches, day nurseries or relevant age groups in kindergarten-cum-child care centres) registered with Social Welfare Department (SWD); and
 - pass the “social needs” test within the same assessment period; and
- (v) The schools the student-applicants are attending must belong to the categories as stipulated in the following schemes:

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEMES

- The **Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission (KCFR) Scheme** provides needy families with financial assistance in the form of fee remission for their children attending Nursery, Lower and Upper classes in local non-profit-making kindergartens under the kindergarten education scheme and/or receiving whole-day child care services in child care centres.
- The **Grant for School-related Expenses for Kindergarten Students (Grant-KG)** provides an additional grant to needy kindergarten students who can pass the means test and meet the same eligibility criteria under KCFR Scheme to defray school-related expenses incurred from the students’ kindergarten education under the kindergarten education scheme.
- The **School Textbook Assistance (TA) Scheme** provides assistance to needy Primary 1 to Secondary 6 students in government, aided, per caput grant schools and local schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme for covering the costs of essential textbooks and miscellaneous school-related expenses.
- The **Student Travel Subsidy (STS) Scheme** provides travel subsidy to needy students attending primary or secondary school or a full-time day course up to first degree level in a recognised institution; residing more than 10 minutes’ walking distance away from their schools; and who need to travel to school by public transport.
- The **Subsidy Scheme for Internet Access Charges (SIA)** provides subsidy to needy families whose children are full-time students receiving education at primary or secondary level, or full-time students pursuing Diploma of Applied Education (DAE) / Diploma Yi Jin (DYJ) (known as Yi Jin Diploma (YJD) before 2016) programmes or equivalent courses of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) to meet the Internet access charges for e-learning at home for their children (for example, the charges on broadband Internet service or SIM cards provided by operators of fixed or mobile telecommunications services). The subsidy is granted on a household basis. Eligible families will receive a flat-rate cash grant on household basis, regardless of the number of children in the family.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

To facilitate application and for environmental protection, the Student Finance Office (SFO) encourages applicants to submit electronic application. If families wish to apply for student financial assistance for the 2023/24 school year, they may access “SFO E-link – My Applications (Financial Assistance Schemes at Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Levels)” (<https://ess.wfsfaa.gov.hk/espps>) to complete and submit the electronic application form on-line, or return the completed paper-based application form (SFO 106B or SFO 7B) together with all necessary supporting documents to the SFO direct by post. Applicants should read the Guidance Notes on Household Application carefully before completion. Each family should submit one application only. Multiple applications from the same applicant will be voided and lead to delay in processing the application. The application procedures are detailed below –

(i) Applicable to Applications for Financial Assistance for Primary and Secondary Students

Approximate Time	Procedures
In or before end May 2023	Applicants are required to complete the electronic application form, upload copies of all necessary documents and submit them together online, or submit the completed paper-based application form together with the supplementary form (if applicable) and copies of the relevant supporting documents to the SFO by post, using the addressed envelope provided.

For applicants who have been disbursed with School Textbook Assistance in 2022/23

Late July / August 2023	If applicants submitting applications on or before 31 May 2023 have provided all necessary information with supporting documents, met the eligibility criteria and passed the means test, the SFO will release the provisional School Textbook Assistance to eligible students and Subsidy for Internet Access Charges to eligible families by autopay in around end July / August 2023. Applicants submitting application online will receive the provisional School Textbook Assistance and the Subsidy for Internet Access Charges earlier than those applicants using paper-based forms. The SFO will also issue notification of result# to applicants in around end July / August 2023. “Notification of Ineligibility” will be issued to those families which cannot pass the means test; have failed to provide the required supplementary information by the deadline set by the SFO; or have withdrawn their applications.
Starting from end October/ early November 2023	For those students who have been disbursed with the provisional TA, the SFO will re-calculate and determine the amount of subsidies that the applicants are eligible for and release the remaining subsidy amount to the applicants or recover the overpayment from the applicants, as and when the textbook grant rates for the 2023/24 school year are available and the school information of the student-applicant has been verified with the database of EDB (in around end October/ early November 2023).

For applicants who have NOT been disbursed with School Textbook Assistance in 2022/23 or who have children attending P1 in 2023/24

August 2023	If applicants submitting applications on or before 31 May 2023 have provided all necessary information with supporting documents, the SFO will issue the “Notification of Result” #, the student-based Eligibility Certificate (EC) and the “Guidance Notes on Application for Financial Assistance Schemes” to eligible applicants starting from August 2023. “Notification of Ineligibility” will be issued to those families which cannot pass the means test; have failed to provide the required supplementary information by the deadline set by the SFO; or have withdrawn their applications.
September 2023	Applicants receiving ECs must verify carefully the personal information and selected Scheme(s) pre-printed on the ECs. Applicants should return the completed ECs to the school in which the children are attending <u>within one week after the commencement date of the school or within two weeks from the issue date of ECs (whichever is the later) for processing</u> . Schools will certify the student-applicants’ status and attendance and then forward the ECs to the SFO. In general, the SFO will not accept any ECs submitted after the deadline.

End October/ early November 2023 or beyond	After verifying the returned ECs, the SFO will release financial assistance <u>by autopay</u> to those students who are confirmed to be eligible for the respective Schemes they applied. The SFO will send SMS to inform eligible applicants of the related payment information, if the applicants have provided their local and valid mobile phone number in the application form.
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For applicants who have children applying for financial assistance for pre-primary students in 2023/24 simultaneously, the SFO will issue the “Notification of Result” together with School Certificate (SC) to the eligible families. For details, please refer to the application procedures applicable to financial assistance for pre-primary students.

(ii) Applicable to Applications for Financial Assistance for Pre-primary Students

Approximate Time	Procedures
For applicants who have been disbursed with financial assistance for pre-primary students only (not including students who will be attending P1 in the 2023/24 school year) in 2022/23	
In or before end June 2023	Applicants are required to complete the electronic application form, upload copies of all necessary documents and submit them together online, or submit the completed paper-based application form together with the “Social Needs” Assessment Form (if applicable) and copies of the relevant supporting documents to the SFO by post, using the addressed envelope provided.
August 2023 or beyond	If applicants submitting applications on or before 30 June 2023 have provided all necessary information with supporting documents, the SFO will issue the “Notification of Result” together with the student-based SC to eligible student-applicants starting from August 2023. Relevant SC are only applicable to the student-applicants who are going to transfer to another school in the 2023/24 school year, whose class and session are different from the pre-printed ones or who are applying for financial assistance for pre-primary students for the first time. In such cases, applicants must submit the SC to the attending school for 2023/24 by 31 August 2023 or within two weeks from the issue date of SC (whichever is the later) for processing.
For applicants who have NOT been disbursed with financial assistance for pre-primary students in 2022/23	
July 2023 or beyond	The SFO will distribute the “Household Application Form for Student Financial Assistance Schemes” together with the SC to the applicants concerned through the schools and receive applications starting from 1 August 2023. Applicants must return the completed paper-based application form to the SFO direct by post or submit electronic application on-line as soon as possible and submit the SC to the attending school for 2023/24 before 31 August 2023 for processing.

Notes

- (i) If families currently in receipt of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) have children studying in primary and secondary schools or kindergartens and other class levels below, they should apply direct to the SWD for school-related assistance for school fees, examination fees, expenses on textbook and stationery, transport fares, Internet access charges at home, etc. for the 2023/24 school year. They do not need to submit applications to the SFO.
- (ii) If applicants have submitted the “Electronic Household Application Form for Student Financial Assistance Schemes” for 2023/24 online, they need not submit the paper-based application form to the SFO separately.

- (iii) Under normal circumstances (except financial assistance for pre-primary students), the SFO will not accept any “Household Application for Student Financial Assistance Schemes” submitted on or after 1 March 2024. The application deadlines for individual financial assistance schemes are listed in the following table –

Financial Assistance Scheme	Application Deadline
Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission (KCFR) Scheme	Applicants should submit their application forms to the SFO before the completion of attending classes in the 2023/24 school year or not later than 15 August 2024, whichever is the earlier. Otherwise, fee remission will generally not be released even if they can pass the means test and meet the eligibility criteria. The effective month of fee remission will be the month in which the application forms are submitted by the applicants, or the month in which the student-applicants are admitted to the kindergartens / child care centres, whichever is the later.
Grant for School-related Expenses for Kindergarten Students (Grant-KG)	Applicants should submit their application forms to the SFO before the completion of attending classes in the 2023/24 school year or not later than 15 August 2024, whichever is the earlier. Otherwise, the Grant-KG will generally not be disbursed even if they can pass the means test and meet the eligibility criteria.
School Textbook Assistance (TA) Scheme	Applicants should submit their application forms to the SFO on or before 31 October 2023. Otherwise, School Textbook Assistance will generally not be released even if the applicants can pass the means test and meet the eligibility criteria.
Student Travel Subsidy (STS) Scheme	For applicants who submit their application forms on or after 1 November 2023, pass the means test and meet the eligibility criteria, payment of Student Travel Subsidy (if applicable) to the successful student-applicants may be effected from the date of receipt of application or the date of admission of the student-applicants to school (or the date of cessation of CSSA for students previously in receipt of CSSA), depending on the circumstances of individual cases.
Subsidy Scheme for Internet Access Charges (SIA)	For applicants who submit their application forms at a date on or after 1 February 2024 (i.e. in the latter half of the 2023/24 school year), partial payment of SIA may be made to the successful applicants provided that the applicants can pass the means test and meet the eligibility criteria.

- (iv) The SFO will acknowledge receipt of applications by means of SMS through applicants' Hong Kong mobile phone numbers or in writing (applicable to applicants who are unable to provide Hong Kong mobile phone number). If applicants do not receive any acknowledgement of receipt of applications by means of SMS or in writing from the SFO within 20 working days after submitting their application form, please call the SFO's enquiry hotline (2802 2345) to check whether their application has been received by the SFO to avoid delay in application due to wrong / unsuccessful delivery.
- (v) If there are substantial changes in the applicant's family particulars (e.g. family composition, financial position, etc.) after the assessment period (from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023), the applicant may inform us in writing together with relevant supporting documents. The SFO will consider each case on its individual merits.

THE MEANS TEST AND LEVELS OF ASSISTANCE

- (i) The SFO will use the “Adjusted Family Income” (AFI) mechanism as the means test to assess the eligibility of a family for student financial assistance and its assistance level. The formula is as follows:

$$\text{AFI} = \frac{\text{Gross annual income of the family}}{\text{Number of family members} + (1)}$$

- (ii) Gross annual income of the family includes the annual income of the applicant and his / her spouse; 30% of the annual income of unmarried child / children residing with the family if applicable; and the contribution from relatives / friends if applicable.
- (iii) The members of a family normally refer to the applicant, his / her spouse, unmarried child / children residing with the family and the dependent parent(s) who are supported by the applicant and / or his / her spouse.
- (iv) For single-parent families of 2 to 3 members, the “plus 1 factor” in the divisor of the AFI formula will be increased to 2.
- (v) The AFI eligibility benchmarks for various levels of assistance in the 2023/24 school year are listed in the table below. Please note that the AFI is not the average monthly income of a family.

2023 /24 school year - AFI Groups (HK\$)	Level of Assistance
0 – 43,495	Full (100%) *
43,496 – 84,105 #	Half (50%)
> 84,105	Ineligible (applications not successful)

* AFI thresholds for full level of assistance for 3-member and 4-member families are \$ 52,657 and \$ 48,445 respectively in the 2023/24 school year. For 2-member single-parent families and 3-member single-parent families, they are regarded as 3-member families and 4-member families respectively for determining the AFI thresholds for full level of assistance and calculation of AFI.

For financial assistance for pre-primary students, the level of assistance is 3/4 (75%) if the AFI of the families is between \$43,496 and \$53,280; and the level of assistance is half (50%) if the AFI is between \$53,281 and \$84,105.

RELEASE OF SUBSIDY

- For financial assistance for primary and secondary students, the SFO will disburse financial assistance by autopay to the eligible applicants. (Note: The provisional amount of TA and SIA are normally disbursed to eligible applicants starting from around end July / August whilst the STS is normally released from around end October / early November onwards. New applicants will normally be disbursed with the subsidies in or after end October / early November.)
- For financial assistance for pre-primary students, approved amount of fee remission will be paid to the kindergartens / child care centres concerned directly by the Treasury in about 10 working days after the issue of notification of result with fee remission amount. Payment to applicants will then be arranged by the kindergartens / child care centres. The Grant for School-related Expenses for Kindergarten Students will be disbursed by autopay to the eligible applicants. (Note: The SFO will disburse fee remission to the successful applicants through the schools concerned and the Grant for School-related Expenses for Kindergarten Students through autopay to the bank account of the eligible applicants by batches starting from end September 2023.)

ENQUIRY

- For enquiries relating to the financial assistance schemes and application procedures, please call our 24-hour enquiry hotline at 2802 2345. If applicants wish to enquire about application matters by using 8 languages other than Chinese and English (including Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Tagalog, Thai, Urdu and Vietnamese) when calling the hotline, please select the option of "Other Languages" by pressing '4' after the telephone line is connected. Alternatively, applicants may visit the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency website (www.wfsfaa.gov.hk) for more information.
- Applicants may contact the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents (CHEER) by phone if translation and interpretation services in English and the 8 other languages are required. CHEER's hotline numbers are listed below – Bahasa Indonesia (3755 6811); Hindi (3755 6877); Nepali (3755 6822); Punjabi (3755 6844); Tagalog (3755 6855); Thai (3755 6866); Urdu (3755 6833) and Vietnamese (3755 6888). Applicants may also visit CHEER's homepage (<http://www.hkcscheer.net>) for details of its services.