

## **Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 63/2021**

From: Permanent Secretary for Education      To: Heads of Government, Aided  
(including Special Schools),  
Caput and Direct Subsidy  
Scheme (DSS) Schools

Ref: EDB(EID/ITE)/IT/PRO/189

Date: 17 May 2021

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### **Quality Education Fund e-Learning Funding Programme— Provision of Mobile Computer Devices and Internet Services Support (2021/22 School Year)**

#### **Summary**

This circular memorandum (CM) informs schools of the details of the “Quality Education Fund e-Learning Funding Programme—Provision of Mobile Computer Devices and Internet Services Support” (Funding Programme), and invites all public sector primary and secondary schools<sup>1</sup> (including special schools) and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools to participate in the Funding Programme.

#### **Background**

2. Under the Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been promoting e-learning through the use of mobile computer devices. As there is an increasing trend for schools adopting the “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) policy, the EDB through the Community Care Fund (CCF) has implemented a 3-year Assistance Programme starting from the 2018/19 school year to subsidise needy primary and secondary students to purchase mobile computer devices, for alleviating financial burden of low-income families under the development of BYOD in schools. In view of the COVID-19 epidemic, the EDB has made flexible arrangements and accepted applications submitted by all public sector primary and secondary schools and DSS schools implementing e-learning for their eligible students to support students’ needs for e-learning at home. Besides, in order to strengthen support for financially needy primary and secondary students who are unable to acquire appropriate Internet services due to the constraints in their living environment, the EDB provided schools in need a one-off top-up grant from December 2020 for them to meet the additional expenses incurred in purchasing portable WiFi routers and/or mobile data cards.

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<sup>1</sup> Public sector schools include government, aided and caput schools.

3. Looking forward, blended mode of learning, i.e. face-to-face classes, e-learning at home or other modes of learning, may become the “new normal” in learning and teaching. To further support schools in implementing the blended mode of learning and teaching under the “new normal”, it was proposed in the 2020 Policy Address that funding would be set aside in the Quality Education Fund (QEF) to implement a three-year programme starting from the 2021/22 school year. Measures include subsidising schools to purchase mobile computer devices for loan to needy students, and to provide portable WiFi routers and / or mobile data cards for students who are unable to acquire appropriate Internet services due to their living environment constraints, so that all students have equal opportunities in accessing e-learning.

## **Details**

### *Application Requirement of Schools*

4. Public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools) and DSS schools meeting the following requirements are invited to participate in the Funding Programme:

- (i) schools implement e-learning to support the blended mode of learning and teaching under the “new normal”, and students are required to use their personal mobile computer devices for learning at schools or at home; and
- (ii) schools will arrange for the loan of mobile computer devices and related equipment to eligible students.

5. Applications under the Funding Programme will be handled separately from other QEF funding projects and will not be counted under the existing application quota of each school.

### *Student Beneficiaries*

6. During the 2021/22 school year, students meeting the following criteria are eligible to benefit from the Funding Programme:

- (i) those receiving subsidies under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) from the Social Welfare Department;
- (ii) those receiving full grant/half grant of the School Textbook Assistance Scheme (STAS) from the Student Finance Office; or
- (iii) those with limited economic means identified by schools.

Schools may establish their school-based criteria according to their school contexts and students’ family background to identify students who are with limited economic means, but are not receiving CSSA or STAS. The maximum number of students in this category is 10% of the number of student beneficiaries that meeting the criteria

of CSSA and STAS in that school year. If individual schools have genuine needs, they may apply to the Information Technology in Education (ITE) Section of the EDB for increasing the number of student beneficiaries in this category, which will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

7. Student beneficiaries should not have received similar government assistance before, including the CCF Assistance Programme mentioned above. For students who have already acquired mobile computer devices under the CCF Assistance Programme, schools could apply for the Funding Programme to purchase suitable devices for loan to them provided that their devices have been used for more than three years **and** are unable to operate / meet the schools' new learning and teaching requirements. For other special cases<sup>2</sup>, please consult the ITE Section of the EDB.

8. Schools may also apply for funding to purchase portable WiFi routers and/or mobile data cards for loan to financially needy students who are unable to acquire appropriate Internet services (e.g. through fixed broadband services) due to the constraints in their living environment (e.g. subdivided units, old buildings and remote areas). Schools should examine student information to identify students who are not receiving appropriate Internet services, and when needed, may request the students concerned to provide further information<sup>3</sup> to ensure their applications reflect the actual situation.

#### *Level and Use of Funding*

9. Schools can apply for the “Basic Funding” for each eligible student once during the three-year implementation period of the Funding Programme. The maximum amount for each student is \$4,700. Schools could use the funding for purchasing part / all of the following items for loan to the student:

- (i) a mobile computer device with product warranty for three years;
- (ii) a mobile device management system; and
- (iii) basic accessories for meeting learning needs, including screen shield, protective cover, detachable keyboard, stylus pen, mouse and headset.

10. Furthermore, for supporting financially needy students who are unable to acquire appropriate Internet services due to the constraints in their living environment, schools could

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<sup>2</sup> For example, if a student has received subsidy from the CCF to purchase a mobile computer device in the past three years but owing to change of school, the use of the operating system in the new school is different from the original school and thus the device cannot meet the e-learning needs of the new school, the new school may also apply for that student.

<sup>3</sup> Schools can refer to the reference templates and Frequently Asked Questions on the website (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/ited/qeffp>) for more information.

apply for the “Additional Funding” for purchasing portable WiFi routers for loan to students, and/or providing them with mobile data cards. The amount of funding will be calculated based on the actual need of the students concerned in each school year, and the maximum amount of funding provided to each student beneficiary over the three-year implementation period is \$1,700. In the first year, a maximum of \$800 would be provided for purchasing both portable WiFi router and mobile data cards on loan for each eligible student. In the two school years thereafter, depending on students’ actual need, schools may apply for funding to purchase mobile data cards for students’ use in each subsequent school year, at a maximum of \$450 per eligible student per year.

11. The QEF will calculate the disbursement based on the actual expenses incurred to purchase the necessary equipment for the student beneficiaries during the school year of participation. It is non-recurrent in nature and should not entail recurrent financial burden on the QEF. If schools have already received similar assistance from other Government sources, they should not apply to the QEF for repeated funding support. Schools should carefully consider the need for purchasing the equipment. If the students have already acquired some/all of the items needed through other channels or if schools could deploy existing equipment for loan to their students, there would be no need to purchase the equipment again to avoid wastage.

#### *Application and Disbursement Arrangements*

12. The ITE Section of the EDB has been entrusted to handle applications and funding disbursement, etc. For schools intending to join the Funding Programme in the 2021/22 school year, please complete the attached application form (**Annex II**) and return it to the ITE Section **on or before 31 January 2022**. The ITE Section will normally acknowledge the receipt of the application within seven working days. Upon receiving the acknowledgement, schools should undertake the procurement procedures of the related equipment as soon as possible so that students concerned could be benefitted early.

13. The QEF will calculate disbursement based on the actual expenses incurred. Upon completion of the procurement procedures, schools should submit the following electronic documents through the Communication and Delivery System (CDS) of WebSAMS for funding calculation:

- (i) “List of Device Purchased and Student Beneficiaries”; and
- (ii) copy of the invoice(s) / payment receipt(s) issued by the supplier(s).

14. The required funding will normally be disbursed within two months after schools’ return of the complete information. If schools need to revise the number of financially needy students, they may update the submitted documents and revise the amount of funding

required. All participating schools must complete the procurement process and submit the required documents on or before end-April 2022 for funding disbursement and settle payment by the end of the 2021/22 school year. The details of funding disbursement will be issued under a separate cover in due course.

### **Administrative and Accounting Arrangements of Schools**

15. Participating schools are only allowed to use the funding to pay for expenditure items covered by the Funding Programme and must strictly adhere to the “Quality Education Fund General Guidelines on Staff Administration and Procurement Matters”. Participating schools will purchase the required equipment first and receive actual expenses incurred afterwards, and thus deposit of the relevant funding into a designated bank account established for general QEF projects as well as submission of progress reports are not required. Participating schools should validate its expenditure in the Funding Programme and return a financial report covering the period from 1 September 2021 to 30 June 2022 to the ITE Section of the EDB by end-June 2022. Transfer of funding out of the Funding Programme is not allowed. Surplus, if any, could not be carried forward to the next school year. If there are any unspent funding, the EDB will claw back it at the end of the school year, based on the financial report provided by the school. For government schools, the unused funding will be lapsed at the end of the school year. In case schools consider it is necessary to provide individual student beneficiaries with equipment of cost being higher than the maximum funding level, schools could use other grants or non-government funding to cover the deficit.

16. Aided, caput and DSS schools are required to record the loan information of equipment for students in accordance with the “School Administration Guide” and / or other relevant guidelines. Government schools are required to follow the relevant EDB circulars and internal guidelines in recording the loan information. Schools must keep record of the provision of related equipment to needy students. Student beneficiaries must return all the borrowed equipment when they leave schools for various reasons (including graduation, further studies, transfer to another schools, etc.) during the implementation period of the Funding Programme. Schools should arrange to lend the returned equipment to newly eligible students and also notify the ITE Section of the EDB to update the records of the student beneficiaries.

17. Participating schools are required to compile a separate ledger account to record all income and expenditure chargeable to the Funding Programme. Aided (including special schools), caput and DSS schools should observe the requirements as stipulated in the relevant EDB circulars and letters calling for preparation and submission of audited annual accounts. For government schools, the funding will be disbursed in the form of an allocation, and the expenditure should be charged to a designated deposit account.

18. Participating schools are subject to the monitoring by the QEF. Schools can also conduct self-evaluation on the implementation of e-learning based on the spirit of school-based management. The ITE Section of the EDB will conduct a “Survey on Information Technology in Education” at an appropriate time. Schools should actively share their self-evaluation results on e-learning and the implementation of the Funding Programme.

19. A working timetable summarising the relevant tasks for schools joining the Funding Programme in the 2021/22 school year is attached at **Annex I**, for reference. Besides, schools should properly keep all official invoices, payment vouchers and ledgers related to the Funding Programme as well as record of provision of equipment to students, including name list and verification documents, for seven years after the completion of the Funding Programme for examination purpose.

20. Upon completion of the three-year Funding Programme, participating schools should handle the purchased equipment in accordance with the “School Administration Guide” and other relevant guidelines. In general, participating schools should give priority on continued deployment of the equipment for e-learning, including lending the equipment to other students in need. Participating schools are required to keep a separate “Assets Register” to record all assets purchased under the Funding Programme.

### **Submission of Application and Enquiry**

21. Schools interested in participating in the Funding Programme are required to submit the completed Application Form by mail to the following address or by fax at 2382 4403 or 2382 6551:

ITE Section, the Education Bureau  
Room E420, 4/F, East Block  
EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre  
19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon

22. ITE Section of the EDB will organise identical briefing sessions on the Funding Programme on 31 May and 7 June 2021. Schools are invited to nominate representatives to attend the briefing sessions and enroll through the Training Calendar System (TCS) [Course ID: EI0020210272]. Schools can visit the website <https://www.edb.gov.hk/ited/qeffp> to obtain more information including frequently asked questions, information leaflet, and relevant reference documents. For enquiries, please contact the ITE Section of the EDB at 3698 4149 or 3698 3670.

( Ms Wendy Au )  
for Permanent Secretary for Education

c.c. Heads of Sections – for information

**Quality Education Fund e-Learning Funding Programme—  
Provision of Mobile Computer Devices and Internet Services Support**

**Working Timetable for the 2021/22 School Year**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
(i) Returning the Application Form	From May 2021 to <b>31 January 2022</b>	The ITE Section will normally send acknowledgement to schools within seven working days upon the receipt of the application.
(ii) Conducting the procurement exercise	School-based arrangement	All procurement procedures should be completed by April 2022, and payment must be settled within the 2021/22 school year.
(iii) Returning information of devices purchased and beneficiaries	From September 2021 to <b>end-April 2022</b>	A template will be provided by the EDB for schools to input the information through CDS of WebSAMS.
(iv) Disbursing funding	Normally within two months after completion of (iii)	
(v) Returning financial report	June 2022	Based on the financial report, the EDB will claw back any unspent funding by the end of the school year.
(vi) Returning the annual audited accounts	In accordance with the requirements as stated in relevant circular memorandums issued by the EDB on requesting schools to submit annual audited accounts (2021/22 school year)	Applicable to Aided (including Special schools), Caput and DSS schools.

**Quality Education Fund e-Learning Funding Programme—  
Provision of Mobile Computer Devices and Internet Services Support**

**Application Form (2021/22 School Year)  
(Please return on or before 31 January 2022 by fax or by mail)**

Please fill in all information in block letter, put a ✓ in the appropriate box and delete whichever is inapplicable where marked with \*

**Part A: School Particulars**

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Code: \_\_\_\_\_

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School Type:     Primary                       Secondary             Special

Finance Type:     Government             Aided                     Caput

Direct Subsidy Scheme

School Contact:    Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher In-charge:    Name (English): \*Mr/Ms \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Chinese): \_\_\_\_\_ Post Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part B: Application Details**

**(1) Implementation of e-Learning**

My school will implement a blended mode of learning and teaching to meet students' learning needs under the “new normal” in the 2021/22 school year, as well as purchase mobile computer devices and related equipment for loan to financially needy students.

My school has established/will establish “Acceptable Use Policy”<sup>1</sup> and will strive to enhance students' information literacy, develop their relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can use IT effectively and responsibly for e-learning.

<sup>1</sup> “Acceptable Use Policy” is a policy for governing students' use of mobile computer device, wireless network and information, listing out acceptable and unacceptable acts.



**(2) Estimated Number of Eligible Students in the 2021/22 School Year**

*[Please provide the estimated no. of eligible students for the 2021/22 school year, for reference by the EDB. The actual subsidy would be calculated based on the finalized “List of Device Purchased and Student Beneficiaries” and proof document.]*

(i) Mobile Computer Devices

	Class Level / No. of Classes / Estimated No. of Eligible Students
• Class level for implementing e-learning	<input type="checkbox"/> P1 <input type="checkbox"/> P2 <input type="checkbox"/> P3 <input type="checkbox"/> P4 <input type="checkbox"/> P5 <input type="checkbox"/> P6 <input type="checkbox"/> S1 <input type="checkbox"/> S2 <input type="checkbox"/> S3 <input type="checkbox"/> S4 <input type="checkbox"/> S5 <input type="checkbox"/> S6
• No. of classes	
• No. of student beneficiaries meeting the eligibility criteria of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA)	
• No. of student beneficiaries meeting the eligibility criteria of Full / Half Grant of the School Textbook Assistance Scheme (STAS)	

(ii) Internet Equipment

My school **will** apply for funding for additional expenses incurred in purchasing portable WiFi routers and/or mobile data cards for needy students who are unable to acquire appropriate Internet services due to the constraints in their living environment, and the no. of students is about \_\_\_\_\_.

**Part C: Undertaking**

My school will implement the Funding Programme in accordance with the EDB Circular Memorandum No. 63/2021, and will conduct procurement to benefit students as early as possible. Also, we will submit the required documents by end-April 2022 for funding disbursement.

Signature of Principal : \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Principal (English) : \*Mr/Ms \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Principal (Chinese) : \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

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