

## **Top-up Grant for Supporting Online Learning of Financially Needy Students**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

- Q1:** Which kinds of financially needy students can benefit from the Top-up Grant for Supporting Online Learning of Financially Needy Students (top-up grant)?
- A1:** The top-up grant aims to help schools strengthen the support for the financially needy primary and secondary students who are unable to acquire appropriate Internet services due to their living environment (e.g. students living in sub-divided units, old buildings or remote areas who can only access the Internet at a slow speed or fail to connect to the Internet), including those receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) disbursed by Social Welfare Department (SWD), Full Grant or Half Grant of the School Textbook Assistance Scheme (STAS) disbursed by the Student Finance Office (SFO) under the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency (WFSFAA), as well as students from families with limited economic means identified by schools. The needy students from families receiving the above subsidies but whose residences can be connected to fixed broadband services are not covered by the top-up grant.
- Q2:** How do schools identify needy students who fail to acquire appropriate fixed broadband services?
- A2:** While adopting different extents of e-learning to support students' home learning, schools should take the initiative to understand the needs of needy students in terms of mobile computer devices and Internet connection at home. Schools can review the profile of the needy students and pay attention to addresses of non-housing estates and public housing estates (as most public housing estates can be connected to fixed broadband services), and collect further information from the parents of the needy students to determine whether their residences have appropriate Internet services and ascertain whether the support is needed. The templates of the parent notice and reply slip have been uploaded to EDB webpage at <https://www.edb.gov.hk/ited> for reference.
- Q3:** How do parents and students know whether their residences can be connected to fixed broadband services?
- A3:** Parents and students can contact the Internet service providers directly to obtain the information concerning the fixed broadband network coverage of their residential addresses. The following are the hotlines

and websites of some suppliers for reference:

<b>Internet service providers</b>	<b>Hotlines</b>	<b>Websites</b>
China Mobile Hong Kong Company Limited	2945 8888	<a href="https://1cm.hk.chinamobile.com/onlineshop/broadband-address.html?lang=en">https://1cm.hk.chinamobile.com/onlineshop/broadband-address.html?lang=en</a>
Hong Kong Cable Television Limited	183 2832	<a href="http://www.cabletv.com.hk/en/subscription_coverage.php">http://www.cabletv.com.hk/en/subscription_coverage.php</a>
Hong Kong Telecommunications (HKT) Limited	1000	<a href="https://shop.hkt.com/broadband/pcdregistration.html?lang=en">https://shop.hkt.com/broadband/pcdregistration.html?lang=en</a>
Hong Kong Broadband Network Limited	128 100	<a href="https://www.hkbn.net/personal/broadband/en/">https://www.hkbn.net/personal/broadband/en/</a>
SmarTone Communications Limited / SmarTone Mobile Communications Limited	2880 2688	<a href="https://shop.smartone.com/en/Fibre_Broadband/#/a/a1/">https://shop.smartone.com/en/Fibre_Broadband/#/a/a1/</a>
HGC Global Communications Limited	1226	<a href="https://www.hgcbroadband.com/en/broadband">https://www.hgcbroadband.com/en/broadband</a>

Q4: The amount of the top-up grant for individual schools will be calculated based on the unit rate of \$800 per needy student. Can schools directly disburse cash to students so that they can purchase portable WiFi routers and mobile data cards on their own?

A4: When deploying the top-up grant, schools must properly follow the procurement procedures and guidelines set out in the relevant regulations/circular memorandums to purchase the necessary portable WiFi routers and mobile data cards for students' e-learning at home. Schools should not directly disburse cash to students. Schools are advised to realistically assess the genuine needs of students to decide whether to lend portable WiFi routers and/or provide mobile data cards to them. In addition, schools should remind the needy students receiving Internet access subsidies (IAS) that all along they can use the IAS to purchase portable WiFi routers and mobile data cards in case their residences are not connected to appropriate Internet services.

Q5 : Will the EDB provide schools with recommendations on the reference specifications and prices of portable WiFi routers and mobile data cards

for reference?

A5 : There are different brands of portable WiFi routers and mobile data cards available in the market. Schools can purchase appropriate products according to their genuine needs in e-learning. It is understood that a portable WiFi router with an average price of about \$350 is adequate to support students to conduct e-learning at home, and the EDB has uploaded the reference specifications of the routers to the website of the Bureau at <https://www.edb.gov.hk/ited> for school's reference. Besides, schools should assess the usage of mobile data of students for e-learning at home in accordance with school circumstances, learning and teaching modes, and the needs of students at different learning stages. Generally speaking, mobile data usage (21Mbps) within 30GB per month should be adequate to meet the needs of students (per person) for e-learning at home.

Q6: The top-up grant might not be able to meet the long-term e-learning needs of needy students. How should schools continue to support students?

A6: The Government has been disbursing Internet access subsidies (IAS) via the Student Finance Office (SFO) and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) to support students in eligible needy families to acquire basic Internet services provided by fixed or mobile telecommunications services operators in the market. The full rate of IAS in the 2020/21 school year has been increased to \$1,600 per household. Applying schools should remind parents receiving IAS that they can use the IAS to meet the Internet access needs for e-learning at home for their children, for example, subscribing broadband Internet service or acquiring mobile data cards provided by operators of fixed or mobile telecommunications services. Parents can contact the Internet service providers through relevant hotlines and websites to learn about the network coverage of their residences. If mobile broadband services has to be used, but the mobile data cards acquired through IAS cannot fully meet the needs (for example, there are several children from the same family who need to use mobile data for online learning at home) and they require additional mobile data for e-learning at home, schools may also provide additional support with the top-up grant. In addition, many charities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also proactively support students' e-learning. Links to relevant webpages have been uploaded to the website of the Bureau at <https://www.edb.gov.hk/ited/eh> for school's reference. Apart from deploying various existing grants flexibly, schools can assist needy students in applying for relevant subsidies.

Q7: How can schools provide support to prevent students from abusing the use of mobile data and Internet addiction?

A7: Schools, parents and students should reach a tripartite consensus on an Acceptable Use Policy, which explicitly sets out rules about the proper use of mobile data cards. Schools should provide parents with guidance and assistance, so that they could better manage the time their children spent on home learning (including online time), and they should refrain from using the mobile data for other purposes unrelated to learning and teaching activities. In this regard, schools may make good use of the support offered by the EDB, such as seminars for parents as well as enquiry hotlines for parents, teachers and students in need, and e-safety resources provided by other government departments and NGOs, to promote parent education and prevent students from abusing the use of mobile data and Internet addiction through home-school cooperation. Details of which are available on the EDB webpage at <https://www.edb.gov.hk/il/eng>.

Q8: How does the top-up grant dovetail with other related community support?

A8: We are grateful to many charities and NGOs for their proactive support for students' e-learning during the class suspension, including providing free mobile data cards to students having difficulties in accessing the Internet so that they can conduct e-learning at home. Links to relevant webpages have been uploaded to our website for schools' reference. The EDB encourages schools to continue deploying different grants flexibly and make good use of other external resources in providing support to needy students.

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