

Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme (LAFHAS) Applicant Guidelines 2024

USE THIS INFORMATION WHEN COMPLETING A LAFHAS APPLICATION FORM

For financial assistance available to parents from the Department of Education under the Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme (LAFHAS), the following conditions apply in addition to any other specific conditions mentioned:

1. The student must board away from home to attend a government school or accredited non-state school that is eligible for government funding and must study an approved course.
2. Parents/carers or guardians of the student must reside in Queensland.
3. The student's conduct, progress and attendance must be satisfactory.
4. LAFHAS applicants must complete a new application each year on the approved form.

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Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme (LAFHAS)

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What is the Living Away from Home Allowances Scheme (LAFHAS)?

The Queensland Government, Department of Education, provides financial assistance to eligible Queensland families, who do not have reasonable daily access to a Queensland Government school with the relevant school year level.

1. Who can apply for LAFHAS benefits?

Parents or guardians who believe they are geographically isolated from local Queensland Government schools with the required year level for a student and who:

- (a) reside in Queensland;
- (b) have students enrolled in Years 1 to 12 at approved schools in Queensland or New South Wales (primary, secondary, special or agricultural colleges); and
- (c) have students who are geographically isolated and board away from home to attend approved schools with the required year levels.

2. What are the eligibility criteria?

Eligibility in terms of geographic isolation is based on meeting a distance criteria from the family home to the nearest government school with the appropriate year level.

Residential distance criteria

Students meet residential distance criteria if their home is, by the shortest trafficable route:

- at least 16 km from the nearest Queensland Government state school with required year level and at least 4.5 km from the nearest approved school or public transport service safe pickup point.

OR

- if the student's home is less than 4.5 km from the nearest approved transport service pickup point, the school must be at least 56 km away via available transport service (from home to school).

Distance and travelling times refer to any Queensland Government school within the abovementioned distance limits, irrespective of the distance to the school actually attended.

Distances stated on an application form may be subject to verification by the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Department of Education and could be physically measured by the Department of Transport and Main Roads officers.

Where an applicant is contacted and advised that a physical distance check is scheduled and the applicant chooses not to be available at the time, the distances provided by the Department of Transport and Main Roads are official and will determine eligibility.

Distance checks may be performed and/or reviewed

randomly at any time throughout the year. Distances previously considered eligible may subsequently be identified as ineligible.

The following measuring points are used when distances are measured:

- **home:** taken from where family vehicles are usually garaged (provided this is within a reasonable proximity to residence)
- **school:** closest access point that a school transport service could safely stop to collect students as determined by Department of Transport and Main Roads
- **shortest trafficable route:** can be a combination of public and private roads (not necessarily all-weather roads).

3. How do family circumstances affect eligibility?

Personal family circumstances are unable to be considered when determining eligibility for financial assistance under the LAFHAS.

Parental custody

If parents are divorced or separated the following guidelines define the parent whose address will determine eligibility for assistance:

- if the student normally lives with one parent, that parent's address is used
- if the student lives at different times with each parent, the following factors are taken into account in determining which address is used:
 - if one parent is officially recognised as having care of the student e.g. through grant of custody or through removal of custody from, or grant of a maintenance order against the other parent, that parent's address is used, or
 - if neither parent has sole responsibility for care, the address of the parent who has principal financial responsibility for the children (e.g. by paying tuition fees), is used
- if there is no legal recognition of who has care of the student, the following factors should be considered in determining the address that is used:
 - where student normally lives and has lived for the last twelve months
 - where student lives during school holidays
 - who is responsible for the care of the student e.g. providing food and shelter
 - who contributes regularly and significantly to student's living and education costs (this should not be limited to tuition costs), and/or
 - who holds a Medicare card or receives other allowances in respect of the student.

Single parent families

Single parent circumstances are unable to be considered as a means of accessing financial assistance under the LAFHAS unless distance eligibility can be determined or the occupation

of the parent can be identified as a genuine itinerant occupation.

While the Australian Government, Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme may provide boarding assistance in instances where a single parent exists, AIC policy covers a wider scope for consideration of Special Circumstances.

4. Are special circumstances considered?

Special consideration may be given to applicants who do not fully meet the residential distance criteria, but who could still be regarded as isolated, for example:

- impassable roads due to weather conditions
- lifestyles are itinerant because of employment
- other special circumstances that will be reviewed on a case by case basis for example, but not limited to medical conditions, domestic and family violence and excess travel.

Applicants who apply under special circumstances must provide detailed supporting documentation and be assessed under relevant policy guidelines before eligibility can be determined.

Special consideration may be given to applicants who do not fully meet the residential criteria, but where there are special or compassionate circumstances that place a student at risk of not succeeding or achieving learning outcomes to the best of their ability.

These special circumstances may include being exposed to factors within or outside the student's home that would place their physical, emotional, mental health and wellbeing at risk and might include domestic and family violence, other forms of harm or abuse, drug and alcohol misuse, homelessness or mental health issues.

Further information from the department may be sought from applicants to assist with making appropriate decisions.

5. Are there any approved bypassable government schools in 2024?

School	Year levels	Bypassable year levels
Alpha State School	PY-10	7 to 10
Aramac State School	PY-10	7 to 10
Aurukun State School	OP-12	7 to 12
Blackall State School	PY-12	11 & 12 only
Bwgcolman Community School	OP-12	7 to 12
Cunnamulla P-12 State School	OP-12	11 & 12 only
Dirranbandi P-10 State School	PY-10	7 to 10
Doomadgee State School	OP-10	7 to 10
Hughenden State School	PY-12	11 & 12 only
Injune P-10 State School	PY-10	7 to 10
Kowanyama State School	OP-10	7 to 10
Lockhart State School	OP-12	7 to 12

Mornington Island State School	OP-10	7 to 10
Normanton State School	PY-10	7 to 10
Quilpie State College	OP-10	7 to 10
Richmond State School	PY-10	7 to 10
Surat State School	PY-10	7 to 10
Tambo State School	OP-10	7 to 10
Winton State School	PY-12	7 to 12

For the purposes of the LAFHAS, the Department of Education recognises a number of secondary school facilities in isolated areas of the State that have limited programs.

Students who live near the listed government schools and are in the nominated year levels, may attract assistance under the LAFHAS and the Australian Government's Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme, ABSTUDY Scheme and Youth Allowance.

6. What benefits are available?

The LAFHAS has 4 components:

- Remote Area Tuition Allowance
- Remote Area Travel Allowance
- Remote Area Allowance, and
- Remote Area Disability Supplement.

No financial means test is applied to these allowances. Payments do not attract GST.

Remote Area Tuition Allowance

Remote Area Tuition Allowance is paid for students who board at approved non-state primary or secondary schools and whose parents pay fees for tuition at the school.

Students living in the family's second home, boarding privately, or in home stay arrangements, while attending non-state schools as day students are not eligible for this allowance.

Students who board in a boarding school but attend a different non-state school are not eligible for *Remote Area Tuition Allowance* unless an agreement between the boarding school and the non-state school has been approved by the Department of Education.

This allowance is paid twice a year (by semester) directly to the school. For information on the amount of allowance payable, go to the department's website <https://www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/financial/ruralremote/pages/lafhas>

School fee increases during the year do not attract increased benefits.

Scholarships: School tuition fee scholarships will not be taken into account when determining benefit levels for the *Remote Area Tuition Allowance*.

Remote Area Travel Allowance

Assistance is available to offset travelling expenses, provided the distance travelled from the primary family home to the boarding location is at least 50 km.

This allowance is paid twice a year (by semester) directly into the applicant's financial institution accounts as nominated on the application form and is based on the distance from the family home to the boarding location via the shortest practicable and trafficable route by road (and sea if necessary).

For information on the amount of allowance payable, go to the department's website <https://www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/financial/ruralremote/pages/lafhas>

Students attending one of the Queensland campuses of the Queensland Agricultural Training College (QATC) are not eligible for travel assistance.

Remote Area Allowance

Assistance is available to eligible students attending one of the Queensland campuses of the Queensland Agricultural Training College (QATC) to undertake agricultural courses equivalent to and in lieu of Years 11 and 12.

Assistance may also be available to eligible students attending a campus of a Queensland State High School and confirmed as undertaking a QATC agricultural course in lieu of Years 11 and 12.

This allowance is paid twice a year (by semester) directly into the applicant's financial institution accounts as nominated on the application form. For information on the amount of allowance payable, go to the department's website <https://www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/financial/ruralremote/pages/lafhas>

Students must not have previously completed Years 11 and 12 and must not have daily access to a Queensland Government secondary school with Years 11 and 12.

Students eligible for *Remote Area Allowance* do not qualify for *Remote Area Tuition* or *Remote Area Travel Allowances*.

Remote Area Disability Supplement (RADS)

The *Remote Area Disability Supplement* is provided in addition to any benefits payable under the *Remote Area Tuition* and *Remote Area Travel Allowances*. Benefits compensate extra costs associated with educating students with disabilities.

Benefits are paid directly into the applicant's financial institution accounts as nominated on the application form.

Eligible students:

- are identified through the Department of Education, Education Adjustment Program (EAP)
- do not have daily access to Queensland Government schools in terms of residential distance eligibility criteria

- live away from home to attend schools
- demonstrate, through documentary evidence, that travel, tuition and boarding accommodation costs are significantly greater than those of students without disabilities and are in excess of total assistance available from all government agencies. Additional tuition fee costs can only be considered if the student is a full-time boarding student at the school.

Benefits are payable on evidence of actual costs submitted during school year, based on a percentage up to a maximum.

An applicant applying for assistance under this component should contact the department for further information on freecall 1800 248 997.

7. How are benefits paid?

All payments under the LAFHAS are made by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

Benefits are paid in two semester instalments:

Semester 1 period: 22 January – 21 June 2024

Semester 2 period: 08 July – 13 December 2024

Remote Area Tuition Allowance is paid to the school in which the student boards provided the school is an approved boarding school.

Remote Area Travel Allowance, *Remote Area Allowance* and *RADS* benefits, are paid to the financial institution nominated by the applicant, on the annual application form.

8. What if family or student circumstances change?

Following lodgement of an application form, School Financial Resourcing (1800 248 997) must be advised immediately of any subsequent change in circumstances e.g. changes to:

- boarding arrangements
- family residential address
- school attended
- personal financial institution account details
- local school transport service.

Changes of circumstances usually require reassessment of applications and entitlements already paid. Benefits payable are determined by the date of change.

Students commencing or leaving school part-way through the school year receive pro rata entitlements based on the actual number of school days attended.

9. What happens if overpayments occur?

Overpayments that may result from a change in family or student circumstances are recoverable to the date that an applicant is found to be ineligible.

An applicant is responsible for ensuring that distances quoted on the application form are accurate.

Where appropriate the local Department of Transport and Main Roads office should be contacted to confirm if any distances have changed as a result of roadwork or bus route modifications.

10. Which circumstances DO NOT attract assistance under the LAFHAS?

- Students who live at home and travel to school daily.
- Students who live with a parent(s) in a second home which is owned, leased or rented by their parents for education purposes and which is close to Queensland Government schools with required year levels, or students who are boarding at and/or attending an education facility in the same town as a second home arrangement established for education purposes.
- Subjects or courses students wish to undertake that are not available at the local government school, or other family choices.
- Students in receipt of the Australian Government, ABSTUDY allowance.
- Students being educated from home under a Distance Education program.

11. Application forms

Application forms must be completed annually.

Benefits are not available retrospectively for previous years.

How to access an application form

- Online application form: complete and submit electronically.
- Online static application form (.pdf): print, manually complete and return via post to the address indicated on the application form or via facsimile on 3034 5890.
- Paper application package: available by contacting School Financial Resourcing, Department of Education on freecall 1800 248 997.

Online and static applications are located on the department's website <https://www.qld.gov.au/education/schools/financial/ruralremote/pages/lafhas>

12. Lodgement of application forms

Completed applications must be received prior to 31 December for the year of application.

School Financial Resourcing

Department of Education

PO Box 15033, City East Qld 4002

Email: Lafhas@qed.qld.gov.au

Queensland Government allowance for secondary students - Textbook and Resource Allowance (TRA)

Parents of students attending approved secondary schools may be eligible to receive a *Textbook and Resource Allowance* once in any calendar year. *Textbook and Resource Allowance* is paid automatically to schools, on behalf of parents, for eligible secondary students.

For information on the amount of allowance payable, go to the department's website <https://education.qld.gov.au/about-us/budgets-funding-grants/grants/parents-and-students/textbook-resource-allowance>

Transport assistance - Department of Transport and Main Roads

For information on the School Transport Assistance Scheme contact your local Department of Transport and Main Roads office. The following types of assistance are available to students who meet eligibility guidelines:

- rail transport
- bus transport assistance
- conveyance allowance
- assistance for isolated students.

Information on the internet

www.tmr.qld.gov.au

Transport assistance - Department of Education

Transport assistance for students with disabilities

Assistance is available to help students with disabilities and high support needs to access the nearest suitable approved special education program that meets their needs.

Government schools

Contact the principal of the school attended or the relevant Department of Education regional office.

Information on the internet

<https://www.qld.gov.au/education/international/live/pages/transport>

Non-government schools

Contact the principal of the school attended or the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, telephone 07 3316 5800.

Australian Government assistance

For claim forms or further information contact any Centrelink or Family Assistance Office or call one of the following national telephone numbers:

- 1800 132 317 ABSTUDY
- 132 318 Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme
- 136 150 Family Assistance Office (Family Tax Benefit)
- 132 490 Youth and Student Services (Austudy, Youth Allowance)

Information on the internet

www.humanservices.gov.au