

Student Athlete Support Scheme (2024/25 School Year)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: Who are the target beneficiaries of the Scheme?

A1: Through the Scheme, we aim to ensure that students from lower income background who show interest in and have the potential to perform well in sport have the opportunity to take part in inter-schools sports events organised by the Schools Sports Federation of Hong Kong, China (HKSSF), as well as the Outreach Coaching Programme (school squad training) and Joint School Sports Training Programme under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) School Sports Programme. The target beneficiaries of the Scheme are students from lower income backgrounds who are recommended by their school principals as having the sporting potentials to represent their schools.

Q2: How can the Scheme support eligible students?

A2: Funds provided by the Scheme cover four main areas –

1. Purchase of personal sports equipment;
2. Transportation fees for local training (including those under the Schools Sports Programme of the LCSD as stated in Item 4 below) and HKSSF competitions;
3. School squad coaching fees; and
4. Course fees for participating in the Outreach Coaching Programme (school squad training) and Joint School Sports Training Programme of HKSSF sports under the LCSD School Sports Programme.

Examples of **eligible** items of expenditure are –

- personal rackets for sports
- personal sportswear for competitions
- personal sports shoes
- other personal sports equipment, such as swimming goggles, softball gloves and fencing equipment
- an appropriate proportion of the cost of equipment that students have to share in order to participate in school squad training or HKSSF competitions, such as shuttlecocks and table tennis balls
- transportation costs for travelling to and from the HKSSF competitions or school squad training venues
- an appropriate proportion of fees for school squad coaching, both inside or outside schools, that students have to share in order to participate in school squads

Examples of **ineligible** items of expenditure are –

- equipment, such as rackets and sportswear, that is used by members of the whole school squad in turn
- the total amount of fees for hiring personal coaches or for hiring coaches for the whole school squad
- expenses incurred by students to attend any other training or hobby classes that is not related to inter-schools competition
- expenses incurred by schools to organise sports hobby classes or internal sports competitions
- entry fees for HKSSF events

Q3: Is there a funding ceiling?

A3: The funding ceiling for each school is \$15,000 and the amount of grant for each eligible student should not exceed \$3,000.

Q4: How will schools know the amount of grant they may receive?

A4: The Scheme will be implemented in a school-based manner. After vetting the applications, we will notify the schools whether or not grants will be awarded. Schools are required to submit a report and provide details of the beneficiaries, including the amount of funding involved under each eligible expenditure item.

Grants under the Scheme should be allocated for the benefit of individual students, for example, to purchase personal equipment, or pay coaching fees that beneficiaries have to share in order to participate in school squad training and competition.

Q5: Can schools use the funding to hire additional coaches for school squads, organise more training courses or purchase equipment to be shared by all squad members?

A5: Our target beneficiaries are individual students rather than schools or school squads. Grants under the Scheme therefore should not be spent on, for example, hiring new coaches for the school or purchasing equipment which is shared by the whole school squad, but should be used to purchase personal equipment that is used and retained by the beneficiaries.

Q6: For schools which have just a few school squads and seldom take part in HKSSF events, is it necessary for them to set up new school squads in order to join the Scheme?

A6: The aim of the Scheme is to provide schools with an additional source of funding to subsidise needy students with sporting potentials to participate in HKSSF events. We do not require the participating schools to set up new school squads. Schools may select eligible students with potential to join the existing school squads.

Q7: Why does the Scheme only cover HKSSF sports?

A7: The inter-school competitions organised by the HKSSF covers 23 sports for secondary schools and 14 for primary schools, including the most widely participated school sports in Hong Kong. Schools represent a major channel for students to take part in sports activities. As the structure of the HKSSF competitions are more school-based and school oriented, this is in line with the aims of the Scheme. Having regard to feedback from participating schools, we have, since the 2014/15 school year, extended the Scheme to cover the Outreach Coaching Programme (school squad training) and Joint School Sports Training Programme under the LCSD School Sports Programme of the same sports.

Q8: Why does the Scheme accept applications from HKSSF member schools only?

A8: The inter-school competitions organised by the HKSSF include the most widely participated in in Hong Kong. There are currently over 1,000 HKSSF member schools. Registered schools may apply for HKSSF membership to allow their students to take part in HKSSF events, as long as they meet the relevant requirements. Details can be found on the HKSSF website: (<http://www.hkssf.org.hk>).

Q9: Why does the Scheme not subsidise overseas competitions and squad training?

A9: The Scheme aims to ensure that needy students have the opportunity to take part in inter-school sports competitions. Therefore, eligible items under the Scheme are those essential for participating in such competitions, such as personal equipment and transportation costs. Schools may apply for grants from sources, such as the Quality Education Fund, to support students taking part in overseas competitions.

Q10: Can grants be used to pay for training courses provided by other organisations?

A10: As the Scheme aims to help needy students with sporting potential to join school squads and participate in HKSSF events, grants can only be used for the purchase of personal equipment, transportation costs, school squad coaching fees and the course fees for the Outreach Coaching Programme (school squad training) and Joint School Sports Training Programme for HKSSF sports under the LCSD School Sports Programme.

Other personal training courses, hobby classes or training unrelated to inter-school competitions are not supported.

Q11: Why does the Scheme not subsidise other programmes under the LCSD Schools Sports Programme?

A11: The two programmes included in the Scheme, namely the Outreach Coaching Programme (school squad training) and the Joint School Sports Training Programme, are targeted at students with sporting talents, and are in line with the objectives of the Scheme. Other programmes under the LCSD School Sports Programme focus on more general promotional and educational purposes and therefore have not been included.

Q12: Can grants be used for school squad training held during the summer vacation?

A12 : The Scheme aims to ensure that needy students with sporting potential can participate in HKSSF competitions. As most HKSSF competitions will end before mid-June, training held during the summer vacation is not included in the Scheme. Schools may apply for grants from other sources, such as the Hong Kong Jockey Club Life-wide Learning Fund, to support training held during the summer.

Q13: Should an equal amount of funding be allocated to each beneficiary? Is there any quota for students benefiting from the Scheme per year?

A13: Schools should recommend which students from low-income families should receive grants and the respective amount in accordance with the funding ceiling. There is no annual quota for beneficiaries of the Scheme. However, each eligible student should only receive a subsidy of not more than \$3,000 per year.

Q14: Can beneficiaries of the Scheme receive other subsidies simultaneously for taking part in the same sports event?

A14: Beneficiaries of the Scheme may receive other subsidies for taking part in the same sports event. However, the total amount of funding received from different sources shall not exceed the total sum that the beneficiary has to pay for the particular sports event. Schools should keep a record of the subsidies received by the beneficiaries from different sources.

Q15: How do schools know which students are receiving the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) and which students are receiving full or half grant from the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA)?

A15: Schools may devise their own mechanisms for identifying which students are recipients of CSSA or grants from the SFAA.

Q16: Can schools use the funding from the Scheme to cover expenses incurred by teachers accompanying students to participate in training and competitions?

A16: The aim of the Scheme is to support students. Schools should allocate funding to individual students, not teachers.

Q17: Why is the funding not released at the beginning of the school year?

A17: To simplify the administrative arrangements, we will consider each application and notify schools of the results individually. Funding will be reimbursed to schools after the submission of the year-end report.

Q18: What are the arrangements for disbursing the subsidy to the students?

A18: Schools should disburse the funds to the eligible students as soon as the eligible expenses have been claimed by the students concerned. Funds will be released to schools on a reimbursement basis according to the following schedule:

Submission of Year-end Report	Reimbursement (Tentative)
On or before 14 March 2025	On or before 13 June 2025
On or before 30 May 2025	On or before 29 August 2025

Q19: Can beneficiaries purchase two sets of the same kind of equipment, such as sports shoes?

A19: Schools may decide whether or not students need to purchase two sets of the same kind of equipment according to the actual circumstances.

Q20: Can schools spend all the funding on a single item?

A20: The Scheme allows schools flexibility to allocate the funding to support students. Schools may therefore decide how the funding should be allocated.

Q21: How can students record the eligible expenses when using public transportation?

A21: Students are only required to record the dates, purposes, routes, costs, origins and destinations of each journey. These should be endorsed by parents/guardians and the school representative. We will provide a public transportation expenses template to facilitate students and schools in recording and monitoring such expenses.

Q22: Do transportation costs include taxi fares?

A22: The Scheme only covers public transport fares or fees that individual students have to share for hiring coaches. Taxi fares are not included.

Q23: Is it mandatory for schools to submit Year-end Reports and reimbursement applications at the end of the school year?

A23: The deadline for submission of Year-end Reports is 30 May 2024. However, we encourage schools to submit their Year-end Reports as soon as they have spent the entire grant. Late applications for reimbursement will not be processed. We will disburse the funds by cheques to schools after reviewing the reports submitted.

Funds will be released on a reimbursement basis according to the following schedule:

Submission of Year-end Report	Reimbursement
On or before 14 March 2024	On or before 13 June 2024
On or before 30 May 2024	On or before 29 August 2024

Q24: Can schools submit two reimbursement applications, requesting for partial reimbursement each time?

A24: To simplify the administrative arrangements, schools should only submit one reimbursement application for each school year. We encourage schools to submit their reports as soon as they have spent the entire grant. We will disburse the funds to schools after reviewing the reports submitted.

Q25: Do beneficiaries need to return their personal equipment purchased using grants awarded under the Scheme to schools after graduation?

A25: Beneficiaries may retain personal equipment purchased using grants awarded under the Scheme after graduation.

Q26: Can grants under the Scheme be used to pay the full amount of fees to be shared by students for taking part in competitions or training?

A26: The aim of the Scheme is to provide schools with an additional funding source to ensure students from low-income backgrounds with sporting potentials can participate in HKSSF events. Grants can only be used to cover the portion of fees that the beneficiaries are required to bear.

Q27: What are the accounting procedures for the Scheme? Should schools submit receipts to the HKSSF?

A27: The accounting procedures of the Scheme should be in line with the school-based financial management practices. Schools should keep simple but easy-to-read ledgers of all transactions and should ensure that the fund-related records are consistent with the requirements of internal bookkeeping and external audit. Schools are generally not required to submit receipts but are expected to keep all records of transactions and relevant receipts for at least seven years for the purpose of internal bookkeeping and external audit.

Q28: What documents should be kept by schools for checking?

A28: To facilitate checking, schools should keep all vouchers related to the Scheme, documents signed by the school representative and the parents/guardians of the beneficiaries acknowledging the receipt of equipment purchased as well as the public transport expenses records under the Scheme.

Q29: Should the school keep a separate account for each eligible student?

A29: Schools may decide which students may receive the subsidy and the respective amount in accordance with the funding ceiling. In general, schools need not keep accounts on an individual basis, but should keep a record of the amount of grant received by each beneficiary. Beneficiaries of the Scheme may receive other subsidies for taking part in the same sports event. However, schools should ensure that the total amount of funding received does not exceed the total sum that a beneficiary has to pay for the particular sports event, and should keep a clear record of the amount received by the beneficiaries from different sources of funding.