

Subsidy Scheme for Internet Access Charges for Needy Students in the 2010/11 school year

Recognising that Internet access at home is becoming as important as other learning resources and that students from low-income families should be supported on access to Internet learning opportunities at home, the Government will introduce a household-based cash Subsidy Scheme for Internet Access Charges in the 2010/11 school year.

Eligibility

According to this Scheme, needy families with children who are full-time students receiving education at primary and secondary levels will be provided with the subsidy for Internet access charges in the 2010/11 school year as follows –

- (a) full rate subsidy of \$1,300 for families whose children are eligible for the flat-rate grant for School-related Expenses under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme; and
- (b) full rate subsidy of \$1,300 or half rate subsidy of \$650 for families whose children can pass the existing means test for receiving financial assistance under the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA). The granting of the full rate or half rate will depend on the result of the means test.

The subsidy will be granted on a household and non-accountable basis, such that parents can use the subsidy flexibly to acquire Internet access services that best meet their children's learning needs.

Application Procedure and Payment arrangement of SFAA

Starting from mid-June 2010, SFAA will issue written notifications to primary and secondary student-applicants who have passed the means test for student financial assistance in the 2010/11 school year, informing them their assessed levels of assistance in 2010/11 school year and details of the new Subsidy Scheme. Parents of these student-applicants may then apply for the subsidy. SFAA will start to disburse the subsidy to the eligible families through bank transfer as from late August 2010 onwards. Families who pass the means test later in the school year may apply for the Scheme and be granted the subsidy within the 2010/11 school year once their eligibility is confirmed.

Payment arrangement of the Social Welfare Department (SWD)

SWD will also disburse the subsidy to eligible CSSA families starting from August 2010 through the existing CSSA payment arrangement.

Computer Recycling Programme

In parallel, the Education Bureau (EDB) announces that, as the new cash Subsidy Scheme is in place, new applications for the provision of one-year Free Internet Access Service under the current “Computer Recycling Programme” (CRP) will no longer be accepted with effect from 1 June 2010. Instead, eligible families should apply for/receive the new cash subsidy for Internet access charges from SFAA or SWD.

As to students who are currently benefitting from the one-year free Internet access services under the CRP, they may continue to enjoy the free services until the expiry of the one-year period. Upon expiry of the services, eligible families may apply for/receive cash subsidy for Internet access charges from SFAA or SWD.

In addition, the provision of recycled computers under the CRP will continue until 5 February 2011 as originally scheduled, subject to availability of funds. Application details can be found at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/ited/comprecycle>.

Enquiries

Parents or students may make enquiries about the eligibility criteria and application procedures for the new Subsidy Scheme with SFAA at 8226 7067. Those receiving assistance under the CSSA Scheme may make enquiries with SWD at 2343 2255. Enquiries about CRP should be made to EDB at 3698 3605.

1 June 2010