

Information Statement

Distance Education ICT Subsidy Scheme

Background

The Department of Education provides a range of high-quality programs and services through seven schools of distance education.

Schools of distance education administer the Distance Education ICT Subsidy Scheme which offsets the cost of computer equipment for geographically isolated and medical students currently enrolled in a School of Distance Education. Geographically isolated students are also eligible for an additional subsidy for subscribing to an Internet service.

Hardware subsidy

An annual subsidy for students currently enrolled in an SDE in the distance/geographically isolated and medical categories of \$400 to assist with purchasing, replacing or upgrading computer hardware. These payments occur annually in April and October. Newly enrolled students will be eligible for the subsidy following six months of continuous enrolment. These subsequent payments will be made in October.

Schools will be responsible for the issuing of the subsidy to eligible students who wish to be involved in the scheme.

The subsidy is to be used to upgrade, enhance or purchase computer equipment for enhancing student learning. There is no restriction on the use of suppliers, however, schools may provide advice on configurations to ensure consistency/standardisation of systems. Schools should also advise students of the potential availability of refurbished computers available through GreenPC.

Broadband Internet subsidy

An annual subsidy for students currently enrolled in an SDE in the distance/geographically isolated category of \$500 to assist with offsetting the costs of broadband Internet access and download charges for the home classroom.

The subsidy is provided to assist payment of monthly service fees for broadband Internet. It is not for the purchase of infrastructure such as satellite dishes, although it is acknowledged that some broadband Internet providers may combine infrastructure, access and download fees.

Distance education students enrolled in the geographically isolated category for a minimum period of six months (continuous) and who either have access to broadband Internet or who commit to getting broadband Internet access during the school year are eligible to receive the subsidy.

For the purposes of the subsidy, a 'broadband' connection is defined as a 256K or better connection.

Summary of Internet subsidy conditions for eligible students

- students must be currently enrolled at a School of Distance Education continuously for six months before becoming eligible for the subsidy
- the subsidy will be paid in April and October in a calendar year
- new students enrolled at the beginning of the school year will be eligible for the subsidy payment in June of the same year
- schools will also be able to nominate eligible students as 'intending' to subscribe to a service and claim the subsidy within the school year
- the October payment of the subsidy is intended to capture eligible students who enrolled and subscribed to a service later in the year
- exceptional circumstances may be considered on a case-by-case basis for students remaining on a 'dial-up' service. E.g. A student that resides in accommodation provided by an employer who is unwilling to subscribe to a high speed service or where a student would be financially disadvantaged by having to exit a 'dial up' contract early
- families with exceptional circumstances and remain on a 'dial-up' service will only be provided with an annual grant of \$300 per annum