



SPONSORSHIPS AND STUDY LEAVE MANUAL

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1 Introduction

1.1 Applicability of This Manual to Ministries and Departments

This manual governs study leave and sponsorships as part of staff development in the Public Service. When granting any form of sponsorship it is important to keep in mind that training, whether undertaken in Malta or abroad, is an investment in people which, apart from benefiting the individual, should be of maximum benefit to the organisation. Hence, careful study of the return on investment the government will achieve must be made, based on the criteria outlined in this Manual.

1.2 Application Guidelines

The IPS is the focal point for training of Public Officers and Ministries should refer to the Institute for guidance and collaboration when the need for ministry-specific initiatives is felt. Prospective applicants will be guided by the respective calls for training, sponsorships, etc. The Prospectus is published at the start of each academic year with a specific period for applications. Ministries may still approach the Institute for *ad hoc* consultations, training needs and areas related to the above. The policy of training and development beyond that offered in the Prospectus is laid out in the following articles.

2 Sponsorships

2.1 Government-Sponsored Local Courses

In certain instances Government may opt to sponsor officers to attend courses in 'external' educational institutions, deeming it more feasible than organising the course internally. The granting of government sponsorships, in whichever form, that is whether it involves course fees, long-term study leave or payment of any funds related to full-time study, is subject to the following provisions:

- a) officers may only be granted a sponsorship to undergo a course for specific priority needs identified by Government;
- b) selection should be made after the issue of an organisation-wide or Ministry/Department call for applications and selected officers would be granted paid study leave and/or payment of tuition fees for the duration of their course; and
- c) such granting of study leave or any other study-associated grants will be made and revised on an annual basis and their extension will depend on the officers' progress in their studies.

Serving officers who are selected by Government to undergo courses for specific needs identified by the Government in a local educational institution may be granted any or all of the following:

- a) paid study leave
- b) payment of course fees, if any;
- c) a book and equipment allowance as specified in the relative circular/call for applications; the allowance is payable during the course of each academic year.

A scholarship holder who is undergoing a full-time course may not engage in any paid employment without the permission of the Head of the respective Ministry/Department.

2.2 Government-Sponsored Courses Abroad

When local educational structures do not provide courses in particular specialised areas or areas of particular interest to the Public Service, departments have to resort to overseas educational bodies and organisations in order to cater for the training needs of their employees.

Public officers who are sponsored by their employing departments to follow courses of training abroad may be granted the following:

- a) full salary;
- b) registration and tuition fees;
- c) subsistence allowance;
- d) book and equipment allowance;
- e) return air passage;
- f) personal insurance.

2.2.1 Subsistence allowance

The daily rates of subsistence allowance paid to officers sent for training abroad are set out in circulars issued from time to time by the Ministry for Finance. A distinction should be made between training that is **operations-linked**, ie where an individual is obliged by his Department to attend short (maximum 2 weeks) training courses/workshops/seminars that are crucial to Departmental operations and international commitments, and training that is more of an **academic/informative** nature that may add value to the development of an individual participant but is not a requisite from a departmental perspective. When the former case applies, Departments should make a case as to why they consider that duty travel subsistence rates should apply rather than Scholarship Rates, forwarding same to IPS, through the Permanent Secretary (People and Standards) and copying the Ministry for Finance. Full details should be forwarded by the requesting Department and if any subsidised accommodation/meals is being made available this should be taken account of by IPS/P&SD/MFIN in its decision to endorse request or otherwise.

In cases of training which is operations-linked and lasts longer than fifteen consecutive days the Scholarship Rates should be applied after the fifteen days expire.

The same apportionment of subsistence applicable to duty travel rates applies also to training subsistence rates ie: Accommodation inclusive of breakfast 60%,

accommodation excluding breakfast 50%, two meals 10% each, and sundry expenses 20%.

Subsistence allowance is paid from the night following arrival in the country of study, provided that not more than three days - five, if a Saturday and Sunday intervene - elapse between the date of commencement of payments and the start of the course. Every scholarship holder is expected to return to Malta at the first available opportunity after the termination of his/her course and subsistence allowance will only be paid up to his/her return to Malta or up to three nights beyond the termination date, whichever is the earlier. This is to be specified in the Form of Undertaking.

An officer who is granted an overseas scholarship must notify his/her employing department about the date of termination of the course. This declaration is to be supported by documentary evidence from the university or other institution which he/she is attending, confirming the effective date of termination.

Subsistence allowance is not paid in respect of periods spent in Malta by scholarship holders.

A scholarship holder may not engage in any paid employment without the permission of the respective Head of Department. Where such permission is given, the subsistence allowance is reduced by an amount equal to the remuneration received in respect of such employment.

2.2.2 Book and equipment allowance

An allowance may be paid to officers who attend courses of study abroad or distance learning courses of more than one month and up to one year.

2.2.3 Travelling expenses abroad

Where an officer is required to undertake journeys to complete a course of study, the actual travelling expenses incurred are refundable as long as the provisions of the Public Service Management Code and public procurement procedures (in respect of flights and any shipping expenses) have been strictly adhered to in making the travel arrangements. Fares from home to the place of study and vice-versa are not refundable.

2.3 Distance Learning Programmes

Where distance learning programmes are undertaken the conditions laid down as regards payment of tuition fees, forms of undertaking, drawing up acts of hypothecation and refunds are governed by the rules and conditions set down in this Manual.

2.4 Fellowships, Scholarships by Foreign Governments and International Organisations

Offers of scholarships by foreign governments and international organisations are from time to time published in the Government Gazette and the Maltese media or via circulars. Heads of Department who consider that the fields of study specified in the relative notice are of interest to their department and would meet existing training needs, are invited to take advantage of these offers by nominating suitable officers for these courses.

Public officers who are approached by any embassy or any local, foreign or international institution or organisation in connection with the grant of a training award should advise the embassy, institution or organisation that such approach should be made to Government through the IPS within the People and Standards Division.

The embassy, institution or organisation should also be advised at the same time that any such offer should be made without indicating any specific nominee and that it is up to the Government to decide on the most suitable nomination.

Officers, other than those employed on a part-time basis, awarded fellowships, etc., by foreign governments, international agencies or other organisations after outright nomination by the department, or after selection limited to serving officers, may receive the following from public funds, provided, in all cases, that the course of study has a direct connection with their duties:

- a) full salary;
- b) the cost of passages, where this is not met by the awarding agency;
- c) a book and equipment allowance, where such an allowance is not paid by the awarding agency and provided that such allowance would have been paid had the officer been sent on a Government sponsored course;

- d) the difference between the subsistence allowance paid by the awarding agency and the Government approved rate applicable to the country where the scholarship is tenable;
- e) refund of luggage expenses as provided in sub-paragraph 2.2.3 above.

Attention is particularly drawn to the provisions in the previous paragraph which stipulate that only officers who are nominated directly by their employing department, or after selection limited to serving officers, may be entitled to the payments set down in the same paragraph.

Officers who, on their own initiative, apply for fellowships, scholarships, etc through other Government organisations, may only be granted study leave (paid or unpaid) in accordance with the provisions set down in relevant sections of this Manual. No other payments from public funds should be issued in such cases.

2.5 Other matters

2.5.1 Duty during the Summer Vacation

Officers following courses of study overseas who return to Malta for their holidays are required to report to their employing departments, and they are to be recalled to perform duty in their department during the period of the summer vacation of the institution where they are following such courses of study, irrespective of whether they are on paid or unpaid study leave.

2.5.2 Income Tax

Scholarship holders remain liable to income tax on the funds received from their employer, if such funds would still have been received by reason of the employment in the absence of such scholarship. Further information regarding the position of trainees in those countries with which Malta has an agreement for the relief of double taxation should be obtained from the Inland Revenue Department. Such information should be brought to the notice of officers proceeding on a scholarship to the countries in question.

3 Study Leave

Study leave can be either paid or unpaid. As a general principle, any type of study leave including day release for study or to attend lectures, is granted solely for educational purposes. Study leave enables officers to attend lectures and tutorials, use campus facilities, do research and coursework, and study for examinations. Study leave may be rescinded if it is used for unrelated purposes, for example to perform private work, and the officer in question may also face disciplinary proceedings.

It is understood that student life can occasionally involve participation in extracurricular activities that might not be strictly course-related.¹ Reasonable allowance will be made for such situations as long as section 4 of this document is observed.

The following guidelines are to be observed in the granting of study leave.

3.1 Unpaid Study Leave

- a) unpaid study leave may only be granted to an officer who has completed at least one year's service;
- b) serving officers on unpaid study leave will only be eligible for an appointment if:
 - the officer resumes duties: in this case the officer will not be granted further unpaid study leave before the lapse of one year from the date of resumption of duties;
 - the appointment will not prejudice the chances for appointment of other contestants for the post and the studies are of benefit to the service; and
 - the effective date of appointment and resultant seniority will be the date when the officer resumes regular duties.

¹ For example, a public officer on a course might be nominated class representative and would in this capacity be expected to attend certain activities.

3.1.1 Courses undertaken by employees on their own initiative

Officers who undertake courses on their own initiative may normally be granted study leave without pay on condition that:

- a) the officers concerned should have completed the probationary period of their employment with government;
- b) the officers provide documentary evidence from the training organisation concerned, confirming that they have been admitted to the course of study/training; and
- c) there are no objections from the Head of the officers' employing department.

Officers who have been employed in Government service for less than one year may be granted thirty days unpaid study leave subject to the conditions at (b) and (c) above.

Approval of unpaid study leave may be granted for an initial period not exceeding one year. It may, however, be renewed on an annual basis for the duration of the course of studies originally undertaken by the employee. Such an extension of unpaid study leave should be conditional on progress in the officer's studies.

In the case of courses undertaken at the University of Malta or MCAST, officers are to report for duty during the University summer recess within their respective department and they will receive their substantive salary. They will also be entitled to pro-rata vacation leave and sick leave.

3.2 Paid Study Leave

- a) paid study leave may only be granted to an officer who has completed the probationary period of their employment with government;
- b) paid study leave to officers who are still within the probationary period referred to in (a) above may only be granted:

- i. to newly-recruited officers when the qualification obtainable after successful completion of the course is tied to an appointment and
 - ii. to officers who are selected to follow specific training programmes which had been previously identified by the organisation prior to their engagement;
- c) serving officers who are granted paid study leave may be considered for appointment during the period of the approved paid study leave on condition that the course is completed during the probationary period.

3.2.1 **Paid study leave to follow full-time courses**

As explained above, in the section on sponsorships, in the case of full-time courses, the granting of paid study leave or payment of any funds related to full-time study is subject to the following provisions:

- a) officers may only be granted paid study leave to undergo a course for specific priority needs identified by Government;
- b) selection should be made after the issue of an organisation-wide or Ministry/Department call for applications and selected officers would be granted paid study leave and/or payment of tuition fees for the duration of their course; and
- c) such granting of study leave or any other study-associated grants will be made and revised on an annual basis and their extension will depend on the officers' progress in their studies.

3.2.2 **Courses Undertaken by Employees on Their Own Initiative**

Employees who start courses on their own initiative may approach their ministry or department with a request for assistance or support. Ministries or departments should consider whether or not providing support would be in the public interest. This question can be addressed in three stages.

(a) Is there a relationship between the course and the employee's duties?

For the course to be in the public interest, it should normally be related to the employee's duties. The relationship could be direct, meaning that the

training would help the employee perform his or her current duties better. Or else the relationship could be indirect, in the sense that the training would enable the employee to carry out a wider range of duties, or it would contribute to the employee's career development in the Public Service by preparing him or her to take on higher responsibilities.

If there is no relationship between the course and the employee's duties, the course should not be considered in the public interest unless it would enable the employee to take up a new career in a field in which there is a shortage of staff in the Public Service or at a national level.

(b) Is the level of performance of the employee in question satisfactory?

If an employee's performance is unsatisfactory, the Public Service is likely to reap little benefit from supporting a course undertaken by the employee on his or her own initiative, unless it happens to be specifically targeted at enabling the employee to improve his or her performance.

(c) Do the benefits justify the costs?

If the answers to both (a) and (b) are yes, ministries and departments should then weigh the likely benefits against the level of support required and the costs involved. The level of support provided to the employee should be proportionate to the likely benefits. In this context it should be borne in mind that the grant of unpaid leave represents a substantial cost to the ministry or department concerned, even though there is no financial outlay, since it is being deprived of the services of the employee for the duration of the unpaid leave.

Support for courses undertaken by employees on their own initiative can take the form of time off to attend lectures; examination leave; short periods of paid study leave. Further details are provided in the next section of this manual.

3.2.3 Paid Study Leave to sit for exams/short periods of study leave.

This is a specific form of study leave that enables officers to prepare for examinations or finish assignments but not to attend lectures. Examination leave is for a short period only and is usually granted to officers on evening or distance learning courses.

In certain circumstances, officers may be granted paid study leave for short periods as follows:

Degree/MQF level equivalent	Maximum per year
Doctorate (MQF level 8)	50 days
Master's (MQF level 7)	30 days
Bachelor's (MQF level 6)	20 days
Diploma (MQF level 5)	14 days
Certificate (MQF level 4)	10 days
MQF level 3 or less	7 days

Requests for paid study leave are considered:

- a) on the production of satisfactory documentary evidence confirming the officers' admission to the course;
- b) if the course has a direct connection with the officers' current duties;
- c) provided the employing departments are able to release the officers without needing a replacement.

The Rules Governing the Award of Scholarships at Appendix III apply when granting paid study leave.

3.3 Day Release

"Day release" means release with pay for a number of hours or days per week, but not the entire week. Day release is usually granted where a course is organised so lectures are held only on particular days of the week.

"Daytime academic courses in Malta" refers to courses of study lasting one or more academic years in which lectures are held locally during working hours.

3.3.1 How day release is specified

As a general rule officers should only be released once per week although this could be subject to any other conditions stipulated in the call/circular or as otherwise declared by the People and Standards Division.

Day release may be awarded in the form of a number of hours or as one or, in exceptional circumstances, more days per week, to be taken when specified. The amount of day release may thus include part-days. The amount of day release may also be changed over time according to the demands of the course subject to the approval of the Head of Department and the People and Standards Division.

3.3.2 Christmas, Easter and summer holidays

Day release and study leave to attend academic courses in Malta do not cover the Christmas and Easter recesses and the summer vacation. Accordingly, officers must report for duty during the Christmas and Easter recesses. Officers must also report for duty in summer, starting the day after they sit for their last examination of the academic year other than resits.

3.3.3 Assignments, examinations, dissertations and resits

Officers on day release are not permitted any additional time off during the academic year (other than ordinary vacation leave) to do coursework, work on their dissertations, or study for examinations.

Officers on day release and study leave are not permitted any additional time off in summer (other than ordinary vacation leave) to work on their dissertations, do any other coursework, or study for resits.²

3.3.4 Attendance at lectures and tutorials

It is understood that public officers on day release or study leave may study or do coursework from home when there are no lectures. However, the grant of day release

² Where day release is concerned, this is in keeping with the BA (Hons) Public Administration circular, which says “No additional time off (other than ordinary vacation leave) will be permitted before examinations or for the purpose of preparing dissertations.”

or study leave implies a commitment on the officer's part to attend lectures and tutorials. Failure to attend lectures or tutorials without strong justification and without following the procedures below may result in the rescinding of day release or study leave. In addition, the officer concerned may face disciplinary proceedings.

3.3.5 Procedure to be followed in case of sickness

An officer on day release or study leave should report sick to his or her place of work if the officer is unable to attend any lectures or tutorials due to sickness. Medical certificates are to be obtained and sent to the employer and the Department of Social Security as per PSMC provisions. Moreover, the officer should also inform the secretariat of his or her academic institution by email (keeping the Institute for the Public Services in copy) that he or she will miss lectures due to sickness.

The Institute for the Public Services is empowered to verify with the officer's place of work whether any missed lectures or tutorials on his or her part are covered by sickness certificates as required here. To this end IPS staff may see the sickness certificates themselves.

3.3.6 Procedure covering absence for any other reason

Should an officer on day release or study leave be unable to attend a lecture or tutorial for any pressing reason other than illness, he or she should inform the secretariat of his or her academic institution by email, keeping the Institute for the Public Services in copy. The officer should also apply to his or her place of work for vacation leave. Both steps should be taken well in advance of the lecture in question, not after the event.

Compliance with this procedure does not exonerate an officer from the obligation to put his or her best efforts into the course. An officer should miss lectures or tutorials only in exceptional circumstances. An officer who fails a course due to negligence may be obliged to refund the costs of his or her sponsorship, and a significant record of course absences is one of the possible indicators of negligence.³ This will apply even if the officer's absences are covered as provided for in this document.

3.3.7 Emergency recall to duty

³ A course attendance record which does not reach at least 85 per cent constitutes an indicator of negligence on the part of the sponsored officer.

Emergency situations may arise in which an officer on day release or study leave is recalled to work for a temporary period. Emergency recall may take place only on the instructions of the officer's Permanent Secretary or head of department, and it should be for a strictly limited period.

Upon recalling an officer for emergency reasons, the ministry or department should immediately notify his or her academic institution, in writing, that the officer will be absent from lectures for a given period due to the recall. This notification should be copied to the officer and the Institute for the Public Services.

Course absences resulting from an emergency recall to duty would not be held against the officer concerned.

This section is without prejudice to day release or study leave being rescinded altogether, should this be necessary for operational or other reasons.

3.4 Facilities for Time-off

The grant of time-off to public officers in order to attend courses of study during office hours is bound to cause some disruption to the employing department. Therefore, time-off should be granted very sparingly except where it can be shown that such attendance would clearly be beneficial to the organisation. Time-off will commence at the time the officer leaves his/her place of work until the officer returns to his/her desk or until the officer's clocking off time.

Subject to the above conditions, the grant of time-off is regulated as follows:

- a) **Compulsory attendance** - Where attendance at lectures is insisted upon by the employing department, time-off may be granted without the need to compensate for lost working hours by after-hours attendance.
- b) **Non-compulsory attendance** -
 - (i) **Courses of study undertaken on the initiative of the employee** - An employee who on his or her initiative undertakes a course of study in a subject related to his or her work or that may be of interest to the employer, may request the head of department in writing to be exempted for specific periods of work or be given permission to

leave early from work if attending evening courses after working time. Documentary evidence has to be submitted when presenting the request as well as once he or she starts the studies by submitting regularly assessment results and other evidence, to demonstrate regular attendance. It is in the discretion of the head of department, and work exigencies permitting, whether such requests are to be favourably considered. Approval has to be given in writing and the arrangement could be subject to conditions by the management. If the employee cannot be excused for the whole period or is expected to work back a number of hours to make up, other arrangements can be entered into. Thus, for example, time-off may still be allowed subject to the officer concerned making up to 50% of such time-off by working after-hours or some such arrangement whereby work is not allowed to accumulate or fall in arrear.

- ii) **Non-vocational training** - Where officers seek permission to attend courses which have no direct connection with their work and are not likely to make them more efficient in their duties, time-off, within a limit of six hours per week, may be granted on condition that it is compensated for by an equal period of attendance outside office hours and subject to its grant not causing any inconvenience or additional expenditure.

Where time-off is granted, its continuation is conditional on satisfactory progress in the course of studies.

3.4.1 **Duty During the Summer Vacation**

Government employees following courses of study in Malta are to be recalled to perform duty in their department during the period of the summer vacation of the institutions where they are following such courses of study, irrespective of whether they are on paid or unpaid study leave. The Christmas and Easter academic holidays are considered as Vacation Leave.

3.5 Time-off-in-lieu

In cases of officers in grades which are eligible for overtime payment time-off-in-lieu may be given to compensate for courses attended outside office hours. As a general rule officers attending courses which are considered mandatory (eg: induction courses) time-off-in-lieu on a 1:1 basis can be given for sessions which are held outside the established office hours (telework hours are considered to be office hours). Courses which lead to advancement and include a component outside office hours are to be attended from the officers' own time and hence no time-off-in-lieu should be granted.

Officers in grades which are not eligible for overtime payment are not entitled to TOIL.

4 Service Obligation

- 4.1.1 When officers attend courses of study which involve the expenditure of public funds in any form (including the payment of salary during study leave), they are required to sign an undertaking binding themselves to serve their organisation for a specific term as indicated at paragraph 3 of Appendix III to this Manual. Whatever the duration of the course, however, the total period for which officers are bound for one particular course should not exceed five years. The undertaking is to be in the form shown at Appendix I to this Manual. If the course of study leads to the acquisition of academic qualifications and the costs to the Government (including the payment of salary during study leave) exceed €4100, or does not lead to a formal qualification but is over €4100 and it is deemed that further guarantees are justified officers will also be required to either enter into a formal act of hypothecation with the Government in guarantee of fulfilment of the undertaking, or provide for the issue of a bank guarantee in favour of the Government.
- 4.1.2 Paragraph 4.1.1 may apply to training which is being provided to selected applicants for a post or position as a pre-requisite for appointment. In such a case the relevant call for applications should set out the requirement for the selected candidates to enter into a contract to serve the Government and (if applicable) to hypothecate their property.
- 4.1.3 Scholarship holders not in Government service who are granted a scholarship, should sign the Form of Undertaking shown at Appendix II to this manual.
- 4.1.4 Officers who throughout their service career benefit from more than one scholarship are to serve their obligations in strict chronological order and in accordance with the date of the signing of the relative undertaking and/or deed.

4.2 Rules Governing Sponsorships

- 4.2.1 The rules governing the award of sponsorships can be found at Appendix III. Every person signing an undertaking as contemplated in sub-paragraph 4.1 above is to be made fully aware of these rules which he/she is required to sign and retain a copy thereof.
- 4.2.2 These arrangements should be strictly adhered to by Heads of entities in order to ascertain that the conditions for training are standardised and all public officers are fairly treated, irrespective of their grade and place of work.
- 4.2.3 When awarding sponsorships to follow courses of training the following points should be kept in mind:
- a) utmost care should be taken in the selection of the awardees, in order to minimise the chances of failure;
 - b) undertakings must be signed before the persons commence their studies or training and/or proceed abroad;
 - c) if the sponsored officer fails to successfully complete the prescribed course due to negligence on his or her part, or if he or she fails to serve the Government in accordance with his/her undertaking, he or she may be required to refund the costs incurred by the Government;
 - d) where legal action is indicated, prompt steps are to be taken by the respective Ministry/Department through its legal office or the Office of the Attorney General, as applicable, without needless recourse to the Office of the Prime Minister or the Ministry of Finance for agreement to such line of action.
- 4.2.4 A sponsored officer who fails to successfully complete the prescribed course should not be held liable for the costs of the course if he or she has put his or her best efforts into the course, or if the failure to

complete the course resulted from circumstances beyond his or her control. If, however, the failure to complete the course resulted from negligence on the officer's part, he or she should be required to refund all or part of the costs incurred by the Government as a result of the sponsorship. As soon as possible after it is informed about the officer's failure to complete the course, the organisation administering the sponsorship should seek to ascertain whether or not this was due to negligence on the officer's part. Indicators of negligence may include among others any of the following:

- a) a course attendance record which does not reach at least 85 per cent;
- b) failure to submit coursework in time for unjustified reasons;
- c) unsatisfactory conduct, including conduct which indicates that the sponsored officer did not devote sufficient time to coursework;
- d) avoidable course costs that were incurred at a time when it was already clear that the officer would not be able to successfully complete the course.

4.3 Discontinuation of Studies on Grounds of Ill Health

4.3.1 Courses of study abroad

Every candidate who is undertaking a course of studies and who has to abandon his/her course as a result of physical or mental illness is to bring back with him/her to Malta a medical certificate from a qualified medical practitioner indicating why he/she is unable to continue with his/her studies. Any such certificate should be authenticated by the appropriate authorities in the country in question. Unless such a certificate is produced, the candidate may be required to refund all or part of the costs incurred by the sponsoring organisation as a result of the sponsorship.

4.3.2 Local courses of study

When a candidate undergoing a course of study locally is unable to continue with his/her studies because of any physical or mental illness, he/she is to be referred for examination to the Chief Medical Officer, who will report on the candidate's state of health. The candidate may be required to refund all or part of the costs incurred by the sponsoring organisation as a result of the sponsorship unless it is officially certified in this manner that the candidate's state of health precluded him/her from completing the course.

4.4 Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Studies

4.4.1 The grant of long-term paid study leave to officers who intend to follow courses and undertake research leading to doctorate and post-doctoral qualifications should be approved only if the need to follow this level of studies is identified by Government. In this case, the officers who could benefit from paid study leave should be selected through an organisation-wide or Ministry/Department selection process and after the issue of a call for applications.

4.4.2 The grant of paid study leave for short periods not exceeding a total of 50 days in one calendar year, may be approved subject to the general conditions for the grant of this type of study leave as specified in paragraph 3.2.3.

4.4.3 On the other hand, officers who wish to undertake doctorate or post-doctoral studies and research on their own initiative, may be granted unpaid study leave for the duration of their studies. The grant of unpaid study leave for this purpose is strictly governed by the conditions set out in the relevant section.

5 Other Training

5.1 Conferences and Seminars

A Head of Department may authorise the attendance of officers at local conferences, seminars and other activities held during working hours if, in the Head's opinion, it is necessary for the department to be represented at such an event, or the department would benefit by enabling staff to keep abreast of developments in particular fields. Alternatively individual officers may, of course, utilise their vacation leave to attend conferences, seminars, or personal development activities which take place during office hours.

Personal information on this form is protected and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Appendix I - Form of Undertaking for Government Scholarship Holders

(Amend the text within brackets accordingly)

I acknowledge that in accepting the (*scholarship / sponsorship / study leave*) to enable me to follow a (*type of qualification and area of study*) at (*name of University/Educational Institution*)....., during the period (*period of studies or study leave*) I take advantage of public funds in order to complete the said training and I agree that on completion of the training/studies I will continue to serve the Government and/or any other recognised organisation at the discretion of the Government for a period of (...¹) years from the production of documentary evidence showing successful completion of my studies.

I also accept that the above-mentioned scholarship is being granted to me under the conditions set out in the rules governing the award of scholarships to which I hereby bind myself, a copy whereof is being signed by me and attached hereto.

.....
(Name and signature of beneficiary)

.....
ID Number

.....
(Name, grade and signature of the Representative of the Government of the Republic of Malta)

.....
ID Number

.....
(Date)

The information shown on this form will be used by the Institute for the Public Services/Ministry/Department for record-keeping purposes and for any action that may be required relating to this Undertaking.

¹ As per paragraph 3 in Appendix III

Appendix II – Form of Undertaking for Scholarship Holders Not in Government Service

Personal information on this form is protected and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

I acknowledge that in accepting nomination for a scholarship awarded by (*awarding organisation/government*)..... in order to follow a course in (*course title/subject*)..... organised by the (*name of institution*) during the period I shall be utilising a scholarship offered to the Malta Government. I hereby bind myself, if selected for the scholarship, to be available to serve the Government of Malta, or otherwise the private sector in Malta, Government having the first option, in a post appropriate with the level/s of the qualification/s which I shall obtain, for a period of (*number of years of obligation according to the criteria shown in Appendix III*) years from my return to Malta upon completion of the course of study/training. If no offer of suitable employment in Malta is received within six months of my return this undertaking would no longer be binding.

I acknowledge further that the above-mentioned scholarship is being granted to me under the conditions set out in the rules governing the award of scholarships insofar as they are applicable to this particular scholarship and I hereby bind myself to abide by those rules.

I also bind myself to pay the Government of Malta the penalty of (*penalty incurred based on the salary/wage, any allowances, fees (eg course fees), and any other expenses*) €..... for failure to comply fully with my obligations according to this undertaking.

.....
(Name and signature of beneficiary)

.....
ID Number

.....
(Name, grade and signature of the Representative of the Government of the Republic of Malta)

.....
ID Number

.....
(Date)

The information shown on this form will be used by the Institute for the Public Services/Ministry/Department for record-keeping purposes and for any action that may be required relating to this Undertaking.

Appendix III – Rules Governing the Award of Scholarships

1. A scholarship/sponsorship will cover funds as indicated in the form of undertaking, paid to the sponsorship holder (known from now on as 'the beneficiary') as well as any payments effected by Government on his/her behalf, in pursuing the approved course of studies/training.
2. The beneficiary will be required:
 - (a) to devote his/her whole time to follow the course of instruction for which the scholarship is awarded, unless permission to undertake other work or to change his/her course is granted by his/her Ministry/Department and unless the course of study is undertaken after office hours or through distance learning;
 - (b) to sit prescribed examinations or approved group of examinations;
 - (c) to satisfy his/her Ministry/Department as to attendance, conduct and progress by reports from the head of the institution or other authority under whom the course of training is being undertaken.
3. Before starting or proceeding on a course, the scholarship holder will be required to sign an undertaking binding himself/herself to serve the Government for a given period, as stated hereunder, from the date of termination of his/her studies.

Duration of Scholarship or Course Expenses as per para 3.1 below	Period for which the beneficiary will be bound to serve
Up to 1 week duration or up to €700 expenses	6 Months
Above 1 week and up to 1 month or up to €1300 expenses	9 Months
Above 1 month and up to 3 months or up to €1900 expenses	1 Year
Above 3 and up to 6 months or up to €3000 expenses	2 Years
Above 6 and up to 9 months or up to €4100 expenses	3 Years
Above 9 and up to 12 months or up to €6000 expenses	4 Years
Above 12 months or up to €8500 expenses	5 Years

3.1 Calculation of the period for which the scholarship holder will be bound to serve should be made as follows:

- Where fees are involved the period for binding should be calculated on the expenses
- Where salary only will be paid the period for binding should be based on the length of the course
- Where expenses involve fees and salary the binding period shall be left at the discretion of the respective Permanent Secretary (for courses of less than one year) and IPS (for courses over one year). It is understood that a reasonable agreement is reached in these cases.

In the case of sponsorships for distance learning or part-time programmes the period of service is to be calculated against approximate cost shown in brackets in the above table.

4. A scholarship/sponsorship may be suspended or terminated if:-

- (a) reports on the beneficiary's work or conduct are unsatisfactory;
- (b) the beneficiary, without reasonable excuse, fails to pass a prescribed examination within the time fixed by the authorities of the institution which he/she is attending, or by his/her Ministry/Department;
- (c) the beneficiary engages in any occupation which is detrimental to his/her progress in the course of studies prescribed for him/her or accepts any paid employment without the permission of his/her Ministry/Department;
- (d) the beneficiary becomes unfit to complete his/her studies owing to illness or is absent from his/her studies for owing to illness.

5. In some cases where the course of study is abroad the cost of a return passage will be met if the scholarship is terminated for reasons stated above provided that, if the scholarship holder declines to travel at the earliest opportunity without reasonable excuse, he/she will lose his/her right to a free passage and the payment of any allowance which he/she may be receiving will cease forthwith.

6. The beneficiary must notify his/her Ministry/Department of the date of termination of his/her course. This declaration is to be supported by documentary evidence from the university or institution which he/she is attending confirming the effective date of termination.

7. The beneficiary may be required to pass a medical examination before selection and he/she may also be required to submit to an annual medical examination during the tenure of the scholarship.

8. The beneficiary may also be required to refund all or any part of the expenses incurred by the Government on his/her behalf and in connection with his/her scholarship

- (a) if he/she fails to successfully complete the course due to negligence on his/her part; or
- (b) if he/she fails to serve the Government as stated in paragraph 3 above.

9. For this purpose the scholarship holder may be required to enter into a formal act of hypothecation with the Government before the commencement of the course if the costs to the Government amount to more than €4100.

10. On successful completion of the studies, the beneficiary must be prepared to accept to be transferred to an area where the Government can reap maximum benefit from the beneficiary's qualifications.

11. Any qualification allowance resulting from a government sponsorship is regulated by section 22.1 of the Collective Agreement for Employees in the Public Service (effective 1st January 2017).

12. Every candidate who is undertaking a course of studies and who has to abandon his/her course as a result of physical or mental illness is to bring back with him/her to Malta a medical certificate from a qualified medical practitioner indicating why he/she is unable to continue with his/her studies. Any such certificate should be authenticated by the appropriate authorities in the country in question. Unless such a certificate is produced, the candidate may be required to refund all or part of the costs incurred by the sponsoring organisation as a result of the sponsorship.

13. When a candidate undertaking a course of study locally is unable to go on with his/her studies because of any physical or mental illness he/she is to be referred for examination to the People and Standards Division, who will report on the candidate's state of health. The candidate may be required to refund all or part of the costs incurred by the sponsoring organisation as a result of the sponsorship unless it is officially certified in this manner that the candidate's state of health precluded him/her from completing the course.

.....
(Name and signature of beneficiary)

.....
ID Number

.....
(Date)

Frequently Asked Questions

Am I entitled to study leave?

If you have completed the probationary period of your first employment with government you are eligible to apply.

How do I apply for study leave?

You need to write a letter to your Permanent Secretary through your Head of Department outlining your reason for making use of study leave. With your application you need to provide documentary evidence that you are following the course.



I am doing a course on my own initiative. Am I entitled to study leave to sit for exams?

If the course is related to your studies you can apply for a number of days of study leave every year as outlined in the table at section 3.2.3

If the course is not relevant to your job you may apply for unpaid study leave.

Should I apply for paid or unpaid study leave?

If your course has a direct bearing on your work you may apply for paid study leave