



PARTNER EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (PEEP) GUIDELINES

The Partner Education and Employment Program (PEEP) guidelines will aid you in preparing your application. You should read them in full, and ensure that you meet the eligibility requirements for the program.

Purpose	The PEEP guidelines provide information for applicants wishing to apply for ongoing funding towards education approved under PEEP, prior to 1 July 2017.
Assessment of Applications	All applications submitted to the Defence Community Organisation (DCO) will be assessed to confirm eligibility.
Outcome of Applications	DCO will email applicants with advice of the outcome of their applications. Applicants should anticipate that it will take a minimum of 28 days from receipt of a complete and correct application (inclusive of completed application form and any required attachments).
Your Responsibility	<p>Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they have read these guidelines, that their application meets the eligibility criteria and that the information provided in their application is true and correct. Approved applicants must advise DCO (DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au) of any subsequent change in circumstances relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. change in employment status (i.e. gaining employment);b. change in relationship status;c. change to approved study (including fee increases); andd. change to your residential location.
	Applicants must also print and sign the application form with an understanding that the program is Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) reportable.
Application Assistance	If you require assistance in completing the PEEP application process contact the Defence Family Helpline (DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au).
For more Information	Go to the DCO website www.defence.gov.au/dco or call the Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608.

Please keep these guidelines for your information

Preface

These guidelines set out the intent of the program along with the eligibility criteria that applications will be assessed against.

Applicants should be aware that giving false or misleading information to the Commonwealth is a serious offence under the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth). Where false or misleading information is provided, or relevant information withheld, criminal or disciplinary action under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013, Defence Force Discipline Act 1982, Public Service Act 1999, or the Criminal Code Act 1995 may be taken depending on the circumstances. If the applicant is a member of the ADF, or employed under the Public Service Act, administrative action may also be taken by Defence and sanctions imposed. Applications may be disregarded if, in the belief of the Department, false or misleading information has formed a component of an application.



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Part 1 – Introduction

1.1 The requirement for periodic relocations is often an integral part of the Defence lifestyle and can cause disruption to the ongoing employment of the partners of ADF members.

Intent of PEEP

1.2 PEEP, from 1 July 2017, facilitates ongoing funding towards previously approved education to contribute to the employability of partners when they are relocated as a consequence of their ADF partner's military service.

1.3 PEEP does not guarantee employment; nor is it intended to fund career changes, professional development within employment streams (i.e. where the partner already possesses an existing qualification and/or employment) or self-interest and hobby courses.

General

1.4 These guidelines apply to a spouse or a recognised interdependent partner (as defined in PACMAN Chapter 1, Part 3, Division 2) of an ADF member. For the purposes of these guidelines the term 'partner' will be used to mean spouse or interdependent partner.

1.5 PEEP is not a statutory benefit and is available to Defence recognised partners strictly in accordance with the terms and conditions of this policy document.

1.6 Funding for PEEP will be considered from applicants in both Australian and overseas posting locations. Initiatives must be undertaken through providers who are registered by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) or are Australian Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

PEEP Initiatives

1.7 Applicants can apply to access ongoing funding towards education that was approved prior to the 1 July 2017.

PEEP Funding

1.8 Funding for approved education under PEEP is a contribution towards a partner's employability; it should not be regarded as Defence's responsibility to fund the full cost where the cost exceeds the PEEP funding cap for a posting location.

1.9 The maximum amount of funding that may be used for approved education under PEEP in any posting location is \$6000. The total funding for approved PEEP initiatives (including any funding for initiatives prior to 1 July 2017) during the maximum 10 year period is \$12,000, subject to the member continuing in effective service during that period. Eligibility will be reassessed for each application for PEEP funding.

1.10 Expenditure over the maximum of \$6000, available for approved PEEP initiatives in a single posting location, must be self-funded.

1.11 PEEP funding is not guaranteed and is subject to the availability of sufficient funding in the relevant financial year.

1.12 Funding assistance for education courses only includes the course tuition costs. PEEP does not cover subscription fees, administration fees, workshops, police or working with children checks, textbooks, course material costs, uniforms, internet costs or equipment associated with the course. Nor does it cover accommodation, meals, counselling sessions, driving lessons, postage and travel to and from any venue or location from which the training is being conducted.

Part 2 – Eligibility

- 2.1 PEEP eligibility criteria are based on the following:
- a. Applicants must be recognised on Personnel Management Key Solution (PMKeyS) as a partner of a full time member on effective service.
 - b. Applications for continued funding of approved education must be lodged within twelve months of the member's partner being granted a removal to a new posting location within Australia or overseas.
 - c. Partners who are approved for continued funding must access this funding within 12 months from the date of approval.
 - d. Previously approved partners who do not access PEEP funding for their approved course within 12 months will not be able to apply for additional funding and will no longer be considered as an approved PEEP applicant. This excludes applicants who have exceeded the \$6,000 funding cap in each posting locality; they must still apply to access funding within 12 months of relocating upon posting.
 - e. Defence must have relocated the partner to a new posting location upon the posting of the member. If the member proceeds on a posting unaccompanied, the partner is not eligible for PEEP funding.
 - f. PEEP is not available to partners of members who are separating from the ADF. Once an intention to separate is recorded on PMKeyS, eligibility to PEEP funding ceases.
 - g. Partners who are also ADF reservists will be considered and assessed against all other eligibility requirements. Partners who are undertaking continuous full time Service are not eligible for PEEP funding.
 - h. Partners who have regular employment will not be eligible for PEEP funding.
 - i. Partners who are on paid maternity leave will not be eligible for PEEP funding.
 - j. For ongoing approved education with multiple semesters/ study periods, an application form is required for each semester/ study period. Proof of completion of prior subject/s/unit/s undertaken will be required before any further funding will be considered. Applicants are required to provide transcripts of all completed subject/s/unit/s to date before further funding will be considered. Should these not be available at the time of applying for further funding assistance, partners may still apply however approval for funding will be delayed until this evidence is received.

Part 3 – Initiatives available

Education to support employability in a new posting location

- 3.1 Funding may be available under PEEP to continue in pre-approved vocational courses and tertiary study up to and including a partner's first undergraduate degree. Partners continuing this initiative overseas may only study via distance learning through Australian providers who are registered TEQSA or are RTOs.
- 3.2 Approved education covered by PEEP must be:
- a. accredited;
 - b. provided through a registered TEQSA institution or an RTO;
 - c. likely to add employment related skills; and
 - d. GST free.
- 3.3 Approved education can be provided:
- a. via face-to-face attendance; or
 - b. online; or
 - c. by correspondence.

Long Term Study

3.4 Should the tertiary institution not operate on a semester basis (i.e. trimesters), or there are no breaks between study periods, applicants may apply for units/subjects in the subsequent study period, prior to transcripts being available.

Applicants are still required to provide transcripts as soon as possible, and should be aware that further funding may be withheld pending successful completion of previously funded units. Approval may only be given for a maximum of two study periods at a time.

Part 4 – How to apply

4.1 Applications for continued funding of approved education must be lodged within twelve months of the member's partner being granted a removal to a new posting location within Australia or overseas. (subject to the availability of sufficient funding).

4.2 Interested partners need to read the eligibility criteria and then complete the PEEP application form. The form must be printed and signed by both the member and the applicant, and submitted to DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au. The PEEP application form is a .pdf file that can be populated electronically and the member and partner can sign electronically if preferred. If the member is absent due to deployment, training or exercise, please state this in his/her signature field on the application form.

4.3 Applications must be approved prior to continuing approved education under PEEP. There is no discretion to approve applications for assistance retrospectively.

4.4 DCO staff will assess applications in the order in which they are received. Applicants should anticipate that it will take a minimum of 28 days from receipt of a complete and correct application (and any necessary evidence as attachments to the application form) for an assessment to be made. Applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application.

4.5 Approved applicants may be required to supply evidence at any stage, subsequent to their approval, to confirm their continuing eligibility, having regard to the requirements and aim of PEEP.

4.6 If circumstances change and a partner is not able to undertake or complete approved PEEP education, it is the partner's responsibility to advise DCO in writing and arrange reimbursement to Defence, prior to consideration of any further PEEP applications. Please refer to clause 6.5 of these guidelines for the process for reimbursing Defence.

4.7 Evidence must be attached that PEEP previously funded education and/or training has been completed.

4.8 Should the tertiary institution not operate on a semester basis (i.e. trimesters), or there are no breaks between study periods, applicants may apply for units/subjects in the subsequent study period, prior to transcripts being available. Applicants are still required to provide transcripts as soon as possible, and should be aware that further funding may be withheld pending successful completion of previously funded units. Approval may only be given for a maximum of two study periods at a time.

4.9 If circumstances change and the partner cannot undertake the approved PEEP initiative through ill health or for any other reason, it is the partner's responsibility to negotiate or arrange with the service provider to have the education and/or training deferred to a later date or for the money to be reimbursed to Defence. Approved applicants are required to advise DCO in writing of the changes. If this is not undertaken then no further funding will be approved. Please refer to clause 7.5 of the guidelines for the process for reimbursing Defence.

Part 5 – Payment or reimbursement

Payment/Reimbursement

5.1 DCO may pay the service provider on a partner's behalf upon receipt of an authorised invoice. Alternatively, the partner may pay the provider, after approval has been granted, and seek reimbursement from DCO. The applicant must provide a copy of the original invoice and a receipt as evidence that payment has occurred. The expense will be reimbursed to the ADF member's ROMAN nominated bank account.

Part 5 – Payment or reimbursement (continued)

5.2 Applications must be approved prior to commencing approved PEEP education. There is no discretion to approve applications for assistance retrospectively.

5.3 All requests for payments and reimbursements should clearly state the PEEP ID approval number to enable efficient payment and finalisation of accounts.

5.4 Invoices issued by the ATO for HECS-HELP / FEE-HELP will not be considered. Reimbursement will only be considered if fees have been paid in full up front to the institution. PEEP funding does not cover reimbursement of voluntary payments made into HECS/FEE HELP accounts.

5.5 Partners seeking to repay PEEP funds to Defence should send a written request to the Defence Family Helpline. DCO will seek written confirmation of the debt from the member and forward to Defence Accounts Receivable. Defence Accounts Receivable will then issue an invoice to the member detailing the available payment options.

Fringe Benefits Tax

5.6 Payment of this benefit may result in a Reportable Fringe Benefit Tax Amount (RFBA) being recorded against the ADF member. An RFBA will result when a member has received fringe benefits to the total of \$2000 in a FBT year (1 April to 31 March). An RFBA does not have any income tax implications, but will have financial impacts if you are in receipt of any Government means tested benefits. Therefore it is recommended that applicants seek independent tax advice prior to lodging an application.

For further information regarding the impacts of a RFBA refer to the ATO website:

[https://www.ato.gov.au/General/Fringe-benefits-tax-\(FBT\)/In-detail/Employees/Reportable-fringe-benefits--facts-for-employees/](https://www.ato.gov.au/General/Fringe-benefits-tax-(FBT)/In-detail/Employees/Reportable-fringe-benefits--facts-for-employees/)

Part 6 –Administration

Disclaimer

6.1 The Australian Government will not accept responsibility for any misunderstanding arising from the failure by an applicant to comply with these guidelines, or arising from any ambiguity, discrepancy or error contained in an application.

False or Misleading Information

6.2 Applicants should be aware that giving false or misleading information to the Commonwealth is a serious offence under the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth). Where false or misleading information is provided, or relevant information withheld, criminal or disciplinary action under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013, Defence Force Discipline Act 1982, Public Service Act 1999, or the Criminal Code Act 1995 may be taken depending on the circumstances. If the applicant is a member of the ADF, or employed under the Public Service Act, administrative action may also be taken by Defence and sanctions imposed. Applications may be disregarded if, in the belief of the Department, false or misleading information has formed a component of an application.

Our Service Commitment

6.3 PEEP aims to provide a valuable service to its clients. As part of managing the program, the following processes and procedures are applied, ensuring that the needs of ADF partners are met in an efficient and effective manner:

- telephone queries are answered within 48 hours; and
- applications are processed within 28 days.

Approving Authority

6.4 The Director General DCO is the approving authority for PEEP. However, the day to day approval of applications has been delegated to DCO staff who will assess applications and provide a response to each application where necessary.

Part 6 –Administration (continued)

Discretionary Provisions

6.5 If a partner is not eligible for assistance, they may apply in writing to the delegate requesting discretionary approval for special/exceptional circumstances. This must be sent to the Defence Family Helpline (DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au) and be accompanied by a completed application form and supporting comments. When forming their view, the delegate will consider the following factors:

- a. that the application aligns with the intent of PEEP (refer to Part 1 clause 1.2); and
- b. any other factors relevant to the application.

Review of decision process

6.6 In cases where an applicant is dissatisfied with a decision concerning PEEP, there is an internal review process.

6.7 Requests for review of a decision are to be forwarded in writing to the Defence Family Helpline (DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au) clearly identifying the reason/s for the request. Applicants should anticipate that it will take a minimum of 28 days for each review and applicants will be notified of the outcome, in writing.

6.8 In the first instance, a request for review of a decision will be considered by the Deputy Director, National Operations, DCO. If an applicant remains dissatisfied, a final request for review of a decision will be considered by the Director, National Operations, DCO.

6.9 Additionally, ADF members have access to the redress of grievance process.

Evaluation

6.10 DCO will conduct assessments of PEEP, in particular the approved education component, to assess that the intent of PEEP is being met and where necessary, adjust the eligibility to improve the assistance to ensure that the intent of the program is met.

Privacy

Why we collect information

6.11 DCO collects personal information in order to provide quality services, on behalf of Command, to members and their families. This includes assessing and evaluating issues that might impinge on the wellbeing of a family and/or harm their relationship with Defence.

How we collect information

6.12 DCO, in collecting personal information of current members and/or their family's circumstances, is required to comply with the Privacy Act 1988 which regulates the manner in which the organisation collects, handles, stores, secures, maintains, provides access to, uses and discloses personal information.

Who uses the information, and how

6.13 Who has access to the information, and under what circumstances, depends on the situation, and the nature of the request for DCO services. Information may be used by:

- a. Command;
- b. member's Commanding Officer; and/or
- c. other military agencies such as service career managers including to support individual preparedness for operations.

6.14 In general, DCO will use the information directly for the purpose it is collected. If required, for a use other than for that related to the primary purpose of collection, express consent will be sought from the client concerned.

Part 6 –Administration (continued)

6.15 This information may be recorded as a social work report, DCO report, case notes, DCO case plan, or a transition support separation plan, and filed in a DCO client file. DCO collects uses and/or discloses ONLY that information which is related to a function of the organisation.

Disclosure of your information

6.16 DCO may sometimes need to disclose personal information about you and/or your families' circumstances to other domestic or international agencies or organisations. These organisations may include those operating in such sectors as:

- a. health;
- b. community;
- c. medical;
- d. educational; and/or
- e. legal.

6.17 When a disclosure of personal information is made to an international authority, Defence will take reasonable steps to ensure that your information is only handled by those organisations that can practically provide an assurance/expectation of limited exposure.

More information can be found at <http://www.defence.gov.au/dco/Privacy.asp>

Part 7 – Administration - Definitions

Member	A member of the Permanent Forces
Removal	Removal means a Defence approved removal on posting to a new locality and includes a removal on marriage or on recognition of an interdependent partner vide PACMAN Chapter 1, Part 3, Division 2. It does not include a discharge removal.
Partner	A partner is a person who is the spouse or interdependent partner of an ADF member as defined in PACMAN Chapter 1, Part 3, Division 2: Definition.
Effective service	Effective service means service that meets all these conditions. <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. It is continuous full time service.b. It is paid.
Employment stream	Like occupation/job
Regular employment	Work that is undertaken on a recurring basis