

DEFENCE INSTRUCTIONS AND NOTICES

(Not to be communicated to anyone outside HM Service without authority)

Title: The Standard Learning Credit Scheme: Sponsorship of service personnel for Personal Development

Audience: Serving members of the Armed Forces.

Applies: 01 Jul 08

Expires: Valid until replaced: to be reviewed annually.

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Content: Information on the Armed Forces Standard Learning Credit Scheme including eligibility and claims submission procedure.

Sponsor: DGTE

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BACKGROUND - THE ARMED FORCES LEARNING CREDITS SCHEMES – STANDARD LEARNING CREDITS

1. The MOD promotes lifelong learning among members of the Armed Forces, and this is encouraged through the Learning Credits schemes. **The Standard Learning Credit (SLC)** scheme supplies financial support, throughout the Service person's career, for multiple, small-scale learning activities. The Enhanced Learning Credit (ELC) scheme (see 2008DIN07- 104) is designed to complement the SLC scheme by providing larger scale help to personnel who qualify to pay for higher level learning at Level 3 (GCE A level and equivalent) and above as defined by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (England and Wales) or at Level 6 and above on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The ELC scheme complements the SLC scheme to further motivate full time members of the Armed Forces to pursue their personal development, both during their Service and for up to ten years afterwards, subject to the qualifying criteria being met.

INTRODUCTION

2. This DIN sets out clearly the benefits and regulations which define the **SLC Scheme**. It is structured into key areas as follows: Definitions, The Aim of the Scheme, Scheme Outline, Eligibility to Submit a Claim, Eligibility of Claim Purpose, Application, Claim Submission, and Further Guidance. All personnel using the SLC Scheme must adhere to the rules described in this DIN. Failure to comply will result in the removal of eligibility to use the scheme and render individual claims inadmissible.

DEFINITIONS

3. The following definitions are used throughout this DIN:
- a. Where the phrase 'Education Staff(s)' is used it is to be interpreted throughout as referring to all Army Education Staff , RAF Learning Centre and Education Staff and RN/RM Education & Resettlement Officers (EROs) and Fleet Education Officers (FEEdOs).

AIMS OF THE STANDARD LEARNING CREDITS (SLC) SCHEME

4. The aims of the SLC scheme are:
- a. To provide funding support to Service personnel who wish to enhance their educational or vocational achievements.
 - b. To enhance the reputation of the MOD as a modern and forward-looking employer, and thereby encourage the recruitment and retention of sufficient high quality numbers of Armed Forces personnel.
 - c. To enable the MOD to participate more fully in the Government's "Life Long Learning" initiative.

SCHEME OUTLINE

5. SLC is a refund scheme and operates as an annualised allowance from 1 Apr to 31 Mar each year. It does not operate as an account in which the allowance can be carried forward from year to year, nor does the scheme permit retrospective payments from previous financial years, except in exceptional operational or compassionate circumstances (see para 12). SLC monies are paid to claimants upon completion of learning.

6. The SLC is **not** an entitlement. Provided they fulfil all the relevant criteria of the scheme personnel **may** be eligible to claim SLC support. Regular¹ personnel may be eligible to claim from public funds 80% of fees, up to a maximum of £175 per financial year, paid to civilian bodies for certain personal development courses, examinations and support.

ELIGIBILITY TO SUBMIT A CLAIM

7. Before embarking upon an activity for which a refund may be claimed, the applicant is to be interviewed by the local Education Officer or, if such a post does not exist, under single Service arrangements. Personnel should consider carefully:

- a. The relevance of the course or qualification in question to their personal development goals and choice of funding, if appropriate.
- b. Their own ability to cope with the pressures of study or provision of evidence for assessment.
- c. The risk of disruption to the course, and loss of course fees, by exigencies of Service life.
- d. The flexibility of the study method.

Furthermore, all of the following conditions must be satisfied:

- e. The applicant must be authorised to undertake the activity and registered with Education Staffs in accordance with single Service regulations.
- f. The applicant must be able to demonstrate that the activity will directly benefit the Service, unless the activity is being undertaken as preparation for resettlement.
- g. The proposed activity has a substantial developmental value or, where applicable, resettlement content, and is, as far as can be judged, appropriate to the applicant's personal development goals and within the applicant's ability. Evidence that the activity is part of a Personal Development Plan contained within a Personal Development Record may ensure a better chance of a successful claim.

¹ As defined by single Services.

h. Those claiming support under the ELC scheme may **not** also claim simultaneous SLC. *In consequence, SLC may not be used to fund an exam for a course of study which has been supported by ELC funding.*

i. For eligible qualification courses starting on, or after, **1 Sep 08** it will be permissible for Service Leavers (SL) undergoing resettlement to use their Individual Resettlement Training Cost (IRTC) grant, in addition to their SLC, to finance the undertaking of a nationally recognised qualification. It will be permitted, under these circumstances only, for SL to use their IRTC grant to offset, or pay in full, the 20% personal contribution required when undertaking learning using SLC. Allowing SL to use both funding streams in this fashion ensures that they have the greatest level of flexibility when financing their preferred learning.

j. Claims for both SLC and IRTC to pay towards a single resettlement learning activity should continue to be submitted in accordance with the individual scheme regulations. Any unspent IRTC may be directed towards another training activity. It is the Service Leaver's responsibility, using the advice and guidance offered from Education and Resettlement Advisers, to determine how best to optimise the funding support available when undertaking resettlement.

k. Other than the use of SLC and IRTC when undertaking resettlement learning activities the applicant must not be in receipt of any other funding from Service sources for the proposed activity including ELC².

l. Any learning activity undertaken must be done so by the most cost-effective means.

m. Proof that learning has taken place must be produced.

ELIGIBILITY OF CLAIM PURPOSE

8. Subject to the eligibility criteria defined in para 7 above, all regular Service personnel are eligible to claim a partial refund of fees from the SLC Scheme for the following:

a. External Courses and Qualifications. These are:

- (1) Part-Time academic and vocational courses at colleges of further education and similar institutions.
- (2) Open learning courses which require regular attendance at a local access centre.

² SLC is not to be used to pay for Summer/Residential school fees. Personnel should use single service sponsorship schemes.

- (3) Courses of individual tuition including foreign language tuition, from recognised learning providers.

all of which lead to or facilitate the award of nationally recognised qualifications as defined in the following sources:

- (4) The National Data Base of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ) website: www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk
 - (5) The current edition of 'British Qualifications' or 'British Vocational Qualifications'.
 - (6) The National Academic Recognition Centre for the United Kingdom (UK NARIC): www.naric.org.uk
 - (7) The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Directory: www.ucas.com
- b. *Scottish/National Vocational Qualifications (S/NVQs)*. S/NVQs are recognised national qualifications designed to be gained in the workplace. However, SLCs cannot be claimed for a S/NVQ gained through witness testimony only. There must be evidence of fresh individual work (not merely a redrafting of work which has previously been undertaken) leading to the completion of a portfolio of evidence. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) assessment fees leading to partial or complete qualifications are eligible provided the criteria above are met.
 - c. *Open University Courses*. A partial refund of fees under the terms of this DIN may be claimed in respect of any course in the Open University's undergraduate, associate student, higher degree, Business School or continuing education programmes. The detailed regulations for the Armed Forces' Open University Scheme are published separately by each Service.
 - d. *Distance-Learning Courses*. Certain Distance Learning packages can be funded under SLC provided that the unit Education Officer or the appropriate single Service authority approves them. Open University courses, open/distance learning courses for resettlement during the last 24 months before exit are administered under normal SLC arrangements.
 - e. *Resettlement Preparation Courses*. SLC can be used for resettlement purposes once an individual has formally commenced their resettlement. Fees paid for training courses which form part of an individual's resettlement strategy may be eligible for a partial refund under the terms of this DIN as follows:

Serial	Time Period Eligibility & Admissibility	SLC for Educational Purposes (inc Personal Development, S/NVQ) ¹	SLC for Resettlement Purposes ²
1	Throughout career up to last 24 months	YES	NO
2	Last 2 years of service - Eligible for Graduated Resettlement Time (see note 1/4)	YES	YES ⁴
3	Earlier than last two years of service for those over 50 years of age or with 30 or more years service (see note 1/4)	YES	YES (see note 4)
4	Last 2 years of service - Ineligible for Graduated Resettlement Time	YES	YES

Notes

- 1 S/NVQ - Individuals cannot claim SLC for a S/NVQ gained through witness testimony only. There must be evidence of fresh individual work, preferably in written format, although audio/video recording is an acceptable form of evidence of a professional discussion. Branch or trade training is not admissible.
- 2 A course which supports an individual's approved resettlement strategy. Branch or trade training is not admissible. The course undertaken must result in a nationally recognised qualification
- 3 Agreed Tri-Service resettlement preparatory phase normally the last 24 months.
- 4 For details of the Graduated Resettlement Time Scheme see JSP 534.

- f. Deferred Resettlement. SLC can be used once during Deferred Resettlement provided that the Service Leaver did not draw down the SLC in their last year of service. The use of SLC during Deferred Resettlement is subject to the scheme regulations that would have applied if the SLC had been used pre-discharge.
- g. External Examinations. Fees paid for examinations associated with the above courses may also be partially refunded. This includes fees paid for examinations taken following an eligible resettlement training course, including those at Service Resettlement Training Centres, which lead to a nationally recognised award as defined in the current edition of 'British Qualifications', 'British Vocational Qualifications' or those recognised by professional/awarding bodies. A refund is also admissible for the cost of an assessment, which leads to the award of a recognised qualification following a course for which no fees have been paid. SLC cannot be used to pay for an exam for a course which has been funded by ELC.

- h. Professional Bodies and Institutes. Initial registration and accreditation fees (but refer to the caveat at Para 10c) paid to professional bodies and institutes expressly to gain qualifications (ie Certificates or Diplomas rather than categories of membership).
- i. Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD). Armed Forces personnel, diagnosed by a SpLD Adviser and found to be ‘at risk of having a severe form of SpLD’, are eligible (post Phase 2 training) to claim SLC support for formal assessment by an Educational/Occupational Psychologist. The single Service may assist with the selection of a suitable professional. Importantly, before such a professional is engaged, clearance for funding must be sought in accordance with paragraph 11 below. The psychologist must be made aware of the over-arching ethos behind the departmental SpLD policy published by DGTE. Specialist tuition and computer software support for an individual who has been professionally diagnosed with a SpLD need can be funded through SLC, provided that the following provisions are met:
- (1) The software has been recommended in the Individual Learning Plan produced by the SpLD Adviser or in the Educational/Occupational Psychologist’s report
 - (2) The software is bought in direct support of the individual’s SpLD, e.g. specific programmes such as TextHelp. The individual’s line manager is also required to provide a report, via the unit SpLD Adviser, to single Services SpLD HQ staff six months after the software has been purchased to assess the effectiveness of the product in improving the performance of the individual in specific areas of work.
 - (3) All other requirements for claiming SLC are observed.
- j. Credit Transfer Fees. Fees charged by Further Education (FE) or Higher Education (HE) institutions to calculate the amount of course credits which may be awarded to an individual based upon previous academic and vocational qualifications and experience.
- k. Coaching and Management of Sport for Individual Personal Development. Courses and qualifications which are required for the coaching and management of sport in the Services, provided that they are in support of an individual’s personal development and included in their Personal Development Plan. There must be evidence of intellectual development. Cases of this kind are to be examined by the appropriate authority (Education Officer or other) and where there is any doubt, they should be referred to appropriate HQ Staffs. Individuals must prove that the activity for which SLC support is sought is, or will be, part of a recognised Service secondary duty. In some cases qualifications are available through courses funded by Service Sports Boards although places are often limited.

Educations staff/line management should check availability before approving the use of SLC.

9. The maximum proportion of any fee which may be refunded is 80%; the student is responsible for the balance. The total amount which may be refunded to an individual in respect of fees paid in any of the above categories in any financial year is £175; this figure is subject to periodic review by MOD. Any changes to the value of SLC will be announced in future editions of this DIN. The figure to be used in calculating the refund due is that applicable for the financial year in which the refund is authorised for payment (see paras 12 - 14). MOD rules strictly forbid the acceptance of inducements or incentives from providers including subsidies, free accommodation, travel, food and equipment. Learners who breach these rules risk forfeiting their claim for SLC support.

Inadmissible activities

10. The following are ineligible for SLC support:

- a. *Service Training*. General Service Training and training courses or qualifications undertaken for the benefit of the individual's own branch or trade (formal training, external training, further training, continuation training or refresher training) are funded by branch or trade sponsors.
- b. *Civilian Accredited Service Training*. Training sponsors are accrediting Service courses with external awarding bodies towards an external training qualification. Whilst this practice is of great benefit to Service personnel in assisting them with gaining accreditation on a through-career basis, the funding of qualifications and examinations of this kind is not within the spirit of SLC. The only case for authorising a partial refund under SLC in this area is where both of the following criteria are met:
 - (1) A minimum of 30 hours of additional work, which is not an integral part of the Service Course syllabus, is completed in the student's own time.³
 - (2) An examination, assessment or assignment, which is not an integral part of the Service Course syllabus, and is assessed by an external assessor, is undertaken by the trainee as an option.
- c. *Professional bodies and institutes*. Annual membership fees for professional bodies or institutes are not eligible for partial refund under the SLC Scheme.
- d. *Course books and materials*. SLC funding may be claimed for course fees only. Course text books or other materials for which there are additional charges, are not eligible for partial refund under the SLC. Text books may be obtainable on loan from the Joint Service Central Library through education/learning centres or via single Service arrangements. Interactive

³ The 30 hours minimum is for guidance purposes. Applicants must prove to Education Staffs that they have undertaken substantial work.

CD-ROM based courses may be SLC funded, provided that they fulfil the criteria stated at paras 7 and 8.

- e. Normal Service Sports' and Joint Service Adventurous Training. Sports coaching and management activities undertaken either under the auspices of normal Service sports' provision, including sports improvement courses, or under single-Service or Joint Service Adventurous Training Schemes, do not attract a partial refund of fees under SLC. A list of JS AT schemes can be found in JSP419. All other sporting courses or activities are specifically excluded from SLC support.
- f. Battlefield Tours. Battlefield tours are not eligible for partial refund under the SLC scheme.
- g. City and Guilds Senior Awards Scheme. This scheme is already partially funded by the single Services. SLC can not be used towards the personal contribution element (see separate single Service regulations promulgated in the relevant DIN).

SLC APPLICATION

11. Before embarking on a course personnel must complete the tri-service application form (MOD Form 1950 see Annex) and ensure it is signed by their line manager and education staff. Without the relevant application form personnel will not be eligible for a refund. MOD F1950 can be obtained from:

- a. Navy RN/RM Education and Resettlement Officers.
- b. Army Army Education Centres.
- c. RAF RAF learning centres.

SLC Claim Submission

12. Courses lasting up to 12 months. For courses lasting up to 12 months, the refund is to be made on completion of the course, i.e. after the student has taken the relevant examination or, for non-examination courses, on production of evidence of satisfactory attendance throughout or of a certificate of course completion from the institute concerned. Only one refund may be made in respect of such courses, even if they begin and end in different financial years, and the refund is normally to be made in the financial year in which the course is completed. Where there are exceptional operational or compassionate circumstances that prevent the claim being made by 31 Mar, a case should be presented to the relevant Service HQ at the earliest opportunity as defined by single Service regulations.

13. Courses lasting longer than 12 months. For courses lasting longer than 12 months, the refund may be paid at the end of each course of study year, on production of evidence of satisfactory attendance for that period. Personnel must complete the appropriate Single Service application form for each year of study for which they intend to claim a refund. Further refunds may be made at 12 monthly intervals and on

completion, normally subject to a maximum of three refunds for any one course of study.

Procedures for authorising refunds

14. *Payment of refunds.* The authorisation and payment of refunds is to be carried out in accordance with single-Service procedures.

15. *Postings and withdrawals.* *When a student is posted during a course, the information on any refunds authorised or paid during the current financial year is to be included with the student's personnel records according to single Service regulations.* If, as a result of posting, discharge or retirement, a student has to withdraw from a course, or complete it after discharge, a refund of fees will not normally be admissible. However, if the posting, discharge or retirement could not have been foreseen at the time of enrolment for the course, a refund up to the full value of SLC may be authorised. Under no circumstances will a refund in excess of £175 be authorised. These are the only exceptions to the regulations for the timing of refunds set out in paras 12 and 13.

16. *Refunds to members of other Services.* Refunds may be authorised within the scheme to members of other Services providing the above criteria are met and the individual cannot reasonably be expected to process a claim through his parent Service. All such refunds would be carried out in accordance with the regulations of the administering Service.

Reserve Forces Personnel

17. For the purpose of the SLC Scheme, personnel who are serving on a full-time basis with Reserve Forces, e.g. Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel or Non-Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS), are considered to be 'regular' and are therefore eligible to claim SLC. However, the maximum claim permissible will be determined pro-rata with their length of qualifying full-time service. Therefore, for example, an individual who has completed six month's full-time service in the 12 months preceding the date of his examination/end of course or module will only be able to claim up to half the SLC.

Authority for travel

18. Eligibility to travel at public expense may be authorised to attend personal development activities up to a maximum of five return journeys per week for distances up to 60 miles per return journey, and exceptionally up to a 100 miles in each direction, provided that the total mileage undertaken per week does not exceed 300 miles

19. Authorisation to undertake an activity at a civilian educational institute or organisation does not guarantee the refund of any associated travel costs, which are subject to funds being available within the local unit budget. All such refunds are to be administered in accordance with the procedures in operation of the individual's Service.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

20. Further Guidance:

RN: Individuals within the RN can seek further guidance on both the SLC and ELC Schemes from their ERO.

ARMY: Individuals within the Army can seek further guidance on both the SLC and ELC Schemes from their local Army Education Centre.

RAF: Individuals within the RAF can seek further guidance on both the SLC and ELC Schemes from their local Learning Centre.

APPLICATION FOR STANDARD LEARNING CREDITS (SLC) FUNDING

**SLC funding cannot be claimed retrospectively.
Prior authorisation must be obtained or the application will be refused.**

Part 1 – To be completed by the applicant (please use block capitals)

Rank/Rate:	Surname:
Initials:	Service Number:
TX/Discharge Date:	Ship/Station/Unit:
Section/Unit Address (in full):	
Tel Number:	Unit Identity Number (UIN):

Part 2 Course details

Course Title					
Qualification Gained			Awarding Body		
Name & Address of Learning Provider			Level of Qualification	SQL No. (Ed Staff use only)	
Start Date			End Date		
Total Cost of Course	£	SLC Amount	£	Applicant's Contribution (min 20%)	£
Method of Study (ie DL/OL/e-learning)			Day/Shift Release (delete as appropriate)	Yes	No
Single Travelling Distance in Miles					

Part 3 – Reason for study/previous course details

Details of previous study/courses relevant to this application:
Reason for study (identify motivation other than just personal development):
What benefit will this course bring to the service?:

Part 4 – Undertaking by Applicant

I have read the relevant DIN. This learning activity forms part of my Personal Development plan. I agree to inform the relevant Education Staff of any changes in circumstances that may affect my ability to complete my course of study.

Applicant’s signature:	Date:
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Part 5 – Action by Applicant’s Line Manager

I have noted the details of the course at Para 2 and I approve this application to study. (Note: QR 2470/BR 1797 authorises travel at public expense for attendance on courses of education. Expenditure for such travel is met by the applicant’s own section/UIN.)

Name:	Signature:
Date:	Contact Details:

Part 6 –Action by Learning Centre Staff/Personal Learning Advisor (PLA)/Single Service Representative (SSR)

- *I have consulted the applicant and confirm that this course is eligible for SLC funding in accordance with the relevant DIN.
- *I have consulted the applicant and informed him/her that this course is ineligible for SLC funding.
- * Delete as appropriate.

PLA/SSR/RN Name:	Contact Details
PLA/SSR/RN Signature:	Date:
Explanatory Notes (Ed staff use only):	

- RN: Education & Resettlement Officer (ERO)
Fleet Education Officer (FEEdO)
Naval Resettlement Information Officer (NRIO)
- Army: Single Service Representative (SSR)
Army Education Centre ETS Officers
- RAF: Personal Learning Adviser (PLA)