



## ***FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR FSM STUDENTS STRANDED DUE TO COVID-19 TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS***

### ***INSTRUCTIONS TO SUPPORT APPLICATION FORMS***

#### **I. Introduction**

On January 30, 2020 the FSM President declared a Health Emergency and imposed restrictions on travelers' originating in COVID-19 affected countries which in turn affected FSM citizens who were travelling abroad for various reasons (i.e. health emergency, completion of overseas employment, vacation and relocating back to the FSM etc). Further to the Health Emergency, on March 25 FSM completely shut down its borders in each State to eliminate the risk of COVID-19 from entering.

As a result, there are a number of FSM students studying overseas who have found themselves stranded in transit on their way home or stranded because when classes were complete, travel restrictions were already in place.

The circumstances for students vary greatly,

- students on full scholarships who are being looked after by development partners;
- FSM Government paying dormitory (i.e. board and food) costs for students who are still remaining in dorms although the year is complete (University of Guam);
- FSM Government appropriated funds to provide one-off financial assistance to students stranded in Fiji and China;
- Chinese Government providing a stipend to FSM students studying in China;
- US students may (still not confirmed) qualify for Higher Education assistance under the CARES Act;
- as well as students stranded with no form of additional assistance.

A stranded FSM student must complete an application form and provide all the relevant details to support their application for financial assistance.

In the first instance, all students are encouraged to apply for financial assistance which is \$500 per student as a one-off payment. Further assistance will be considered based on funding availability and financial hardship.



## II. Who can file an application?

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- 1) FSM students who are studying abroad
- 2) Each group of students will be considered and cross-checked through official lists provided by the Dept of Education.

## III. Where can applications be lodged?

Applications can be found on the DOFA website [www.dofa.gov.fm](http://www.dofa.gov.fm) or be collected from the Consulate or Embassy Offices in Tokyo, China, Suva, Portland, Hawaii, and Guam.

Applications and supporting documents can be lodged online to [covid19stranded@dofa.gov.fm](mailto:covid19stranded@dofa.gov.fm). Applications can also be lodged at the consulate or embassy offices noted above. If the applicant requires personal assistance, staff at each Consulate will assist with the completion of application forms and scanning of relevant documentation to support each application.

Applicants must ensure there is sufficient information on the application form so DOFA can make an eligibility determination or can follow up with the applicant if more information is required.

## IV. Disbursement approval procedure

### A. REVIEWING AND APPROVING OFFICIAL:

1. The Secretary of Finance & Administration or their designee will review all documentation sent via the official email or through overseas Offices.
2. Once satisfied that all information is in order, the Secretary of Finance or designee will determine whether the application is eligible.
3. Should the information provided be insufficient, then the Secretary of Finance or designee may request further information from the applicant.
4. In cases, where the Secretary or designee deems that the application does not qualify then they will notify the applicant of the decision. The applicant can appeal the decision by notifying DOFA in writing why they disagree with the determination.



## **B. DOCUMENTATION:**

1. A completed application form. One form per student.
2. Student **MUST** provide a copy of the passport biopage included under the application.
3. Student **MAY** provide any other documentation they deem appropriate to support their application.

## **V. Payment procedure**

The applicant will signal in the main application form which payment method they prefer i.e. cash check through Consulate, direct deposit to Bank of Guam account or direct deposit to Bank of FSM account.

### ***Cash check through Consulate***

1. Upon approval of the request, Secretary of Finance & Administration or designee will prepare a cover letter addressed to the Consulate Head of Mission and cc to the Assistant Secretary of Finance (Division of Treasury) listing the claimant names and the total amount payable to the main applicants for each application.
2. The cover letter will inform the Assistant Secretary of Finance (Division of Treasury) to process one check amounting to the total listing payable to the appropriate Consulate office. Treasury will then deposit the approved amount into the FSM Consulate Offices operation account for further disbursements to the appropriate recipients.
3. The same cover letter will also inform the Consulate Office the name of the claimant(s) with one check to be issued for each family unit.
4. Approved staff of the Consulate Office will contact claimants when checks are available for collection. The cover letter will be used as the signature registry for each claimant to sign upon presentation of passport ID and collection of their check.
5. As soon as all checks have been issued, the Consulate Office must provide to the Assistant Secretary of Finance (Division of Treasury) a scanned copy of:
  - a. Completed signature registry
  - b. Copy of checks issued to each claimant



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6. Upon receipt of the information listed above, Treasury will enter all check details into Fundware.

***Direct deposit to Bank of Guam or Bank of FSM***

1. Upon approval of the request, Secretary of Finance & Administration or designee will prepare a cover letter addressed to the Bank of FSM/Guam and cc to the Assistant Secretary of Finance (Division of Treasury) listing the claimant names, bank account details and the total amount payable to the main applicants for each application.
2. The cover letter will inform the Assistant Secretary of Finance (Division of Treasury) to process one check amounting to the total listing payable to the appropriate Bank. Treasury will then deposit the approved amount to the Bank to deposit in the recipient's bank account (as provided).
3. The bank must provide a stamped receipt/deposit slip for each deposit to confirm the name, account number and amount deposited.
4. Approved staff of Treasury must contact claimants when checks have been deposited with a scanned copy of the deposit receipt.

**VI. CONTACT DETAILS**

Should there be any queries relating to this Finance Assistance package please contact [COVID19stranded@dofa.gov.fm](mailto:COVID19stranded@dofa.gov.fm) or your nearest Consulate.

**VII. ENDORSEMENT OF PROCEDURES**

***These instructions and payment procedures have been confirmed and endorsed by the Secretary of Finance & Administration.***

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Amor'.

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**Eugene Amor**  
**Secretary of Finance & Administration**

**06/25/20**

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**Date**