

IPS Circular No. 01/2025

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
Institute for the Public Services
San Salvatore Bastion
Sa Maison Road
Floriana

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Permanent Secretaries
Directors General
Directors

SPONSORSHIPS FOR ACADEMIC COURSES
(co-funded by the European Social Fund Plus)

1. Introduction

1.1 A number of sponsorships are being offered to officers in the Public Administration by the Institute for the Public Services within the Office of the Prime Minister.

1.2 These sponsorships are co-funded by the European Social Fund Plus.

1.3 These sponsorships are intended for distance learning courses¹ or part-time evening courses offered by foreign or locally recognised educational institutions. Courses must be successfully completed by not later than **30 September 2029** (proof should include either the official transcript or certificate of completion or an official letter from the institution that the course has been successfully completed). A copy of the transcript, official certificate, and dissertation, where this is part of the course requirements, are mandatory.

2. Areas for Sponsorship

2.1 Applications for sponsorship are accepted for academic courses at Level 8 (PhD – Doctoral Degree), Level 7 (Master’s Degree or Post-Graduate Diploma/Certificate), Level 6 (Bachelor’s Degree) and Level 5 (Undergraduate Diploma, Foundation Degree and Undergraduate Certificate).

¹ Distance Learning courses must be carried out on a part-time basis.

A number of areas have been identified by Government as a priority and are aimed at fostering Lifelong Learning amongst public service employees provided primarily by the Institute for the Public Services. Such measures will also be supported through the ESF+, should the project be co-funded through EU funds, with the aim of enabling individuals to gain additional skills in relation to a shift towards digitalisation (AI, ICT), improved service delivery (Customer Care, Leadership, etc) adaptation to different new digital realities (Policy making, Innovation, Strategic Change) and working models and modernisation of the workforce and administration, amongst others.

This will aim to widen employees' career path possibilities as well as provide better mobility prospects across the organisation. In this regard, this project will support actions covering the delivery and implementation of training programmes supporting the adaptation and upgrading of skills of the workforce, in order to meet new challenges.

Therefore, applicants are encouraged to apply for studies in the following areas:

Government HR/Administration/People Management
Leadership, Management and Strategic Change
Artificial Intelligence
Strategic Foresight
Policy Making
EU Affairs
Government Procurement
Government Finance/Accounting
Innovation
ICT
Customer Care

Other areas will also be considered, should the applicant provide a signed justification by his or her Permanent Secretary attesting that the area of study is relevant to the Ministry where the applicant is employed.

3. Eligibility

3.1 To be eligible for the award of a sponsorship, an applicant must:

- a) apply for an academic course that conforms with the conditions of this Circular (refer to section 4).
- b) be accepted by the university / training institution concerned to undertake the qualification applied for. Information on course content and unconditional letter of acceptance (ULA) should be submitted with the application form and should include start/end date of course, total course fees (in Euro currency) and number of credits.

- c) hold an appointment in the Public Administration above scale 17 or equivalent (to be endorsed in application by respective HR/Corporate Services Director).
- d) have completed their probationary period of their employment with the Public Administration (to be endorsed in application by respective HR/Corporate Services Director). The cut-off date for the probationary period is the date of the application form.
- e) produce a recognition statement on comparability and recognition of the qualification issued by the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) within the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority, in cases where the qualification is being read with a foreign university or a private training institution.
- f) ensure that the application form is endorsed by the Head of Department and Permanent Secretary. **This means that it is the responsibility of the Permanent Secretary to decide whether the course chosen will be of added value to the applicant and thus contribute to the overall performance of the Administration.**
- g) satisfy the requirements in section 4 and Appendix III within the Sponsorships and Study Leave Manual.

3.2 Courses that started after **16 July 2024** may be eligible for full payment.

3.3 Officers who started a course before this cut-off date will be eligible for payments made after this date, as long as the remaining duration of the course is above 1 month from the cut-off date, **or** expenses exceed €1,300. These conditions imply that the beneficiary will be bound to serve the Government a minimum of 1 Year from the date of award of qualification as featured on the official transcript (as per clause 3 of Appendix III - *Rules Governing the Award of Scholarships* in the *Scholarships and Study Leave Manual*).

3.4 Eligible officers **who have already paid their course in full and/or completed their studies** cannot apply for sponsorship.

3.5 Applicants in possession of other national/EU (or a combination of both) public grants or national/EU/Commonwealth (or a combination) scholarships for the same course or programme shall be deemed **ineligible** under this call. In the event that an applicant is granted a scholarship and IPS discovers, after the grant of such scholarship, that the scholarship awardee was, at any point in time, whether prior to the award of the IPS scholarship, or after such award, in receipt of any national/EU public grant or national/EU scholarship,

the scholarship awardee shall be liable to refund all the amount paid to him/her up to then, or on his/her behalf in full, and this without prejudice to any other legal action which may be taken in his/her regard.

3.6 Travel costs (flights and subsistence) – with respect to mandatory sessions/lectures abroad as part of the academic course shall be eligible for sponsorship.

3.7 Pre-modules or preparatory courses that lead to the successful completion of the academic course applied for shall be considered eligible for funding as long as all the other conditions are met.

3.8 Bench Fees (view 6.4 below) shall also be considered eligible for funding.

4. Documentation

4.1 Officers who satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in this circular are invited to submit an **application form for sponsorship**, which is available from the IPS website:

<https://instituteforthepublicservices.gov.mt/en/pages/esf-03-345>

The application is to be accompanied by (i) **information on the Course Content including the number of course credits** and (iii) **Unconditional letter of acceptance by the Institution/University (ULA)**. The information on the course content should originate from the respective university / training institution (eg: course flyer or correspondence). Such information is required to enable IPS to award this sponsorship.

4.2 The application is to have a recommendation by the Head of Department/CEO and endorsed by the respective Permanent Secretary, clearly marked according to the qualification applied for and submitted on email address: esf03.345.ips@gov.mt. **Applications will only be accepted via email. No physical applications will be accepted. Any hardcopies will need to be scanned and sent virtually/attached to the email, as pdfs.** Received applications will be acknowledged by means of an email. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

5. Financial Thresholds

5.1 Eligible officers reading for qualifications at MQF levels 5, 6, and 8 shall be reimbursed at a rate reflecting real costs i.e. as per official amount stated by the University or Training Institute in the course information or the ULA. This will be confirmed on the official invoices, receipts and bank transfers documentation sent to IPS by the beneficiaries. Costs should be in Euro or, if in another currency, the equivalent amount in Euro should be stated.

5.2 For eligible officers reading for an MQF level 7 qualification, the value of the grant will be based on the number of ECTSs achieved. For applicants reading for a course in Malta, the amount paid for every ECTS achieved will be €65, whereas for students reading for a course abroad the amount paid for every ECTS will be €113.

5.3 As per clause 3 in Appendix III - *Rules Governing the Award of Scholarships* in the *Sponsorships and Study Leave Manual*, the scholarship holder shall be bound to serve the Government for a given period from the date of the presentation of the official transcript or official letter stating that the applicant has successfully completed the course.

5.4 Sponsorships that exceed the amount of €4,100 will require an act of hypothecation.

6. Payments

6.1 For qualifications at MQF Levels 5, 6 and 8:

6.1.1 All approved applicants will be required to present invoices from the local university / training institution offering the academic course. Invoices are to refer explicitly to course fees (including bench fees) in the description as no other expenses are eligible for sponsorship. Invoices are to be accompanied by the bank details of the relevant university / training institution. Such details are to be submitted utilising the Financial Identification Form (FIF), which is available from the IPS website:

<https://instituteforthepublicservices.gov.mt/en/pages/esf-03-345>

6.1.2 Payments towards non-local Universities / Training institutions must be made in full by the successful applicant/Ministry. These payments will be reimbursed accordingly in Euro subject to the submission of the original customer's copy of the Payment Transfer from the relevant Bank, an invoice in Euro, and a receipt of payment issued by the University / Training institution. These documents need to be accompanied by the bank details of the relevant applicant. Such details are to be submitted utilising the Financial Identification Form (FIF), which is available from the IPS website:

<https://instituteforthepublicservices.gov.mt/en/pages/esf-03-345>

6.1.3 Payments will be capped as follows:

MQF Level	Maximum amount sponsored
Level 8	€20,000
Level 6	€10,000
Level 5	€5,000

6.2 For qualifications at MQF Level 7:

6.2.1 The first 50% out of the number of ECTS, as indicated on the ULA will be paid upfront after the signing of the Scholarship contract. Interim payments will be paid upon presentation of provisional documentation confirming that the first 50% of the number of ECTS have been achieved and exceeded. The last 5% out of the number of ECTS, as indicated on the ULA will be paid upon confirmation by university of award/qualification and presentation of all contractual obligations (i.e. official transcript, official certificate, soft copy of dissertation/hard copy dissertation), which must be received by not later than 30 September 2029.

6.2.2 With regards to applicants following the MQF Level 7 qualifications, payment towards local and non-local Universities / Training Institutions must be made in full by the applicant. These will then be reimbursed according to clause 6.2.1 of this circular.

6.3 Flights and subsistence shall be payable by reimbursement to the Ministry concerned. Claims for travel costs are to be made in line with ESF+ Regulations and National Eligibility Rules and ERASMUS+ Programme.

The ERASMUS+ distance calculator may be found at:

https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/distance-calculator_en

while the corresponding travel rate may be found in the 2025 ERASMUS+ Programme Guide accessible online. https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-11/erasmus-programme-guide-2025_en.pdf particularly under the section Funding Rules

In case of flight expenses, the following documents should also be attached:

- (i) original boarding passes or other evidence in case of online check-in
- (ii) confirmation of attendance
- (iii) module details

For subsistence reimbursement the following document should be attached:

- (i) the SEPA credit transfer report from the Central Bank of Malta
- (ii) Original statement of expenditure

Subsistence will be calculated as per latest *overseas duty* 'Per Diem Rates' published on <https://finance.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Per-Diem-Allowance-for-Overseas-Duty-Travel-2025.pdf>

6.4 Bench fees are defined as fees being educational costs related to the execution of studies or research activities, but which are not covered by the tuition fees, and not related (but not limited) to general maintenance, travel, conference attendance (including registration fees), buying of books, registration to access libraries, use/purchase of computer/laptops, hard disks, power chargers, health insurance, sports membership or living costs/personal salaries of the awardee. For bench fees above five hundred euro (€500) a breakdown of the costs needs to be provided by the recognised Institution before the signing of the Sponsorship Undertaking. ONLY technical expenses directly related to the programme/course from the recognised Institution are eligible. Failure by the recognised Institution and/or the awardee to provide such a breakdown, precludes the IPS from the obligation to honour any claims for bench fees. All bench fees need to be declared in writing in the Unconditional Letter of Acceptance (ULA). Any increase in, or any additional bench fees cannot be claimed by the awardee or the recognised Institution if not included in the ULA submitted by the closing date.

6.5 Expenses that do not fall under the above will have to be borne by the applicant.

7. Obligations Post-Studies

7.1 Prior to the award of the sponsorship, selected officers will be required to sign an undertaking and, in cases, a notarial deed binding them to serve in the Public Administration for a period as determined in the Sponsorships and Study Leave Manual (Appendix III) and also, if required, to deliver training in their respective fields of study as in-house trainers, after attending a short course in training delivery.

7.2 All successful applicants are required to present the transcript of results and/or other original evidence showing the successful completion of their academic course. They are also required to present a copy of the official certificate of their qualification to IPS as soon as this is available but definitely by not later than **30 September 2029**.

7.3 All successful applicants who are required to submit a dissertation as part of their course of study must provide a soft copy of their dissertation (or softbound/hardbound copy if preferred) to IPS. If this sponsorship is co-funded through ESF+, dissertations should include a publicity statement as advised by IPS.

8. Reservations

8.1 The IPS will not be held liable for any losses or damages caused by the applicant to the university / training institution concerned as well as any lack of commitment or misbehaviour.

8.2 The IPS will also not be held liable if for any reason the University / training institution concerned interrupts the course applied for or stops the applicant from continuing his or her studies.

8.3 If, for any reason, a selected applicant discontinues the studies being sponsored, he/she may be required to refund part, or all of the sponsorship paid.

8.4 Selected applicants that are found to have given false information or who have in any manner withheld information that would have influenced the awarding of the sponsorship, shall be immediately disqualified and asked to refund the full amount paid on their behalf.

8.5 The IPS reserves the right, subject to written notification, to terminate the award of the sponsorship if the applicant's progress is deemed unsatisfactory and/or if the applicant is found in breach of any provision of this Circular.

8.6 Applications are on a first come first served basis. If the entire budget allocated for this component is taken before the end date of the project, the call for application shall be terminated.

8.7 The IPS reserves the right to publish the names of the applicants being sponsored on its website.

9. Further Information

9.1 Further information, including details on the financial benefits and contractual conditions may be obtained from the website <https://instituteforthepublicservices.gov.mt/en/pages/esf-03-345> or by contacting the Institute for the Public Services, San Salvatore Bastion, Sa Maison Road Floriana by telephone, during working hours, on **22001854** or by e-mail on esf03.345.ips@gov.mt.

9.2 It is important that this Circular is brought to the attention of all eligible officers in your organisation.

Keith Bartolo
Principal
Institute for the Public Services