

## Frequently Asked Question (FAQ)

Q1. If you want to claim for equipment do you have to have proof of a course sign up?

A1. Yes, you must provide a letter from the training provider stating that you have enrolled on the course. The letter must include the course title, start, and finish dates of the course and its duration (day/s). Further information can be found at the weblink below.

<https://www.solas.ie/programmes/debenhams-training-fund/>

Q2. What is the process to reclaim fees paid for courses and associates expenses in doing these courses?

A2. The Process:

1. Download and complete the reimbursement form or forms as required from the link below.

- Career and Training Grant Form
- Equipment and Materials Reimbursement Form

<https://www.solas.ie/programmes/debenhams-training-fund/>

a) Provide a letter from Training Provider stating you require equipment, and or course materials to complete the course. The letter should also specify the course you have enrolled on or are attending.

b) Provide a course brochure/weblink to the course you are attending

1. Course Fee/Equipment and Course Material receipt/s must be addressed to you (original receipt only). \*Seek an email receipt and forward this along with the supporting documentation to [Debenhamstrainingfund@solas.ie](mailto:Debenhamstrainingfund@solas.ie) or 2 printed receipts from vendor/s for equipment/fees. The client keeps one receipt for warranty purposes and the other receipt is submitted with the claim.

2. E-mail documentation to [Debenhamstrainingfund@solas.ie](mailto:Debenhamstrainingfund@solas.ie) or POST to Debenhams Training Fund, C/O Brian Head, SOLAS, Castleforbes House, Castleforbes Road, Dublin

3. *Please Note: In the subject line of the email title; Reimbursements/Claim/s  
Forward all the documentation in one email.*

Q3. Why is a copy of the receipt not acceptable to send in e.g., a photocopy or attachment?  
The original receipt is your warranty for equipment and without the original the store may not entertain you if you have a problem with the purchase?

A3. Original receipts are a requirement of the Government Audit process. SOLAS must keep the original receipts on file by SOLAS for a period of 7.5 years. When purchasing your equipment, the vendor usually issues email receipts. Forward the email receipt on to SOLAS with your completed claims form and supporting documentation.

Q4. If a person wishes to do a course will the fee be paid upfront by SOLAS ? If they do not finish course, will they have to refund SOLAS the fees?

A4. It is important, before a client enrolls on any training programme that they are sure that the programme of training meets their career needs. Career guidance services are available through the fund to the client to assist in ascertaining the clients training/career requirements. If clients are unsure on the direction they wish to take, please contact the SOLAS Co-ordination Unit who will arrange a career service for you.

If course fees are due SOLAS will book your place on the course and pay your course fee. Prior to commencing the course, you will need to complete and submit a Career and Training Grant Form. Once approved, SOLAS will book and deal with the training provider directly on your behalf and confirm your acceptance on to the course. No refund would be required if you do not complete the course.

Q5. Will a zoom/video recording call be recorded, and can you set out in detail how people can view this zoom/video recording?

SOLAS has held 7 group information sessions. SOLAS will circulate the presentation to all registered clients.

Q6. Can people use their money towards driving lessons and tests. A lot of people are still not using public transport because of Covid. They feel that being able to drive will help them get back out into society and work again and be useful for travelling for interviews.

A6. Yes, if it allows the client to travel to work or obtain employment.

Q7. Do I stay on PUP while doing courses?

A7. Clients will need to contact Social Welfare to discuss this matter. SOLAS is only responsible for administering the training fund.

Q8. For those who do courses what will their job seekers payment be? We have heard it goes to €246 when doing a course to cover expenses. Is this true?

A8. Clients will need to contact Social Welfare on this matter. SOLAS is only responsible for administering the training fund.

Q9. We were told in the beginning that for those who had already done courses and had their PUP stopped and were put on job seekers that they will be reimbursed the difference, is this still the case.

A9. No, the fund is a training fund and cannot be used to supplement Social Welfare payments.

Q10. Where did the cap on equipment come from? Surely it is up to us how much we spend on it once its within our share e.g., course €200, laptop €3000. With the caps in place, if your course is €200 then you're only allowed €800 on equipment, what happens to the rest of your €2000+ share?

A10. As set out in the Labour Court recommendations 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020, SOLAS is to model the Debenhams Initiative on the European Globalisation Fund (EGF), the suite of training grants, including categories of support and allocation of funding and their limits were approved by the EGF Managing Authority (Government Department). As detailed in the example above the €2000 still stays in the client's fund and can be used for training/ upskilling/travel/career guidance.

Q11. What is available for the retirees from our fund? Most have said they don't want to do courses so how do they get their share?

A11. The fund is a training fund, the retiree should identify events that they are interested in and discuss them with the SOLAS Co-ordination Unit directly.

Q12. How long does the fund last for?

A12. The fund is in operation for 2 years.

Q13. Are you entitled to holiday time during the duration of the fund?

A 13. Yes, clients of the fund have 2 years to avail of the supports and services. You can start and stop your training as required during that period. It is important to remember that you must be registered and eligible to avail of the fund, so early registration is essential.

Q14. Is the fund available to non-union members?

A14. Yes, non-union members can avail of the fund.

Q15. If I am on sick benefit and want to book a course and buy equipment such as laptop etc. now, can I go ahead? The course starts next year. I need to get back to work.

A15. Download and complete the SOLAS Career and Training Grant Form from the SOLAS Debenhams webpage. Once approved, SOLAS will book your place on the course on your behalf. Once you have enrolled on the course and the Training Provider has confirmed that a laptop is required, a laptop can be purchased, and the client can seek reimbursement for the laptop by completing and submitting an Equipment and Material reimbursement claims form and supporting documentation to SOLAS for payment processing.

Q16. How long does it take for the money to go into my bank? [If I buy a laptop on Visa.]

A16. If the reimbursement form/s are complete and signed and we have your bank details and the supporting documentation required is present, usually within a few weeks. However, it may take longer if we must engage with the client to seek missing or awaiting information to process the payment.

Q17. When will I get a 1 to 1 session with SOLAS?

SOLAS has completed a number of 1-1 sessions regionally with ex-workers in 2021. If you want to book a 1-1 session with the co-ordination team in SOLAS, please email us at [debenhamstrainingfund@solas.ie](mailto:debenhamstrainingfund@solas.ie) and book a session

Q18. What can I claim for if I am near retirement and not going back to work? Can I still buy equipment like computer, camera phone and printer?

A18. No, not unless the laptop/printer are for a course you are attending, and the equipment is required for you to complete the course. Laptops/printer are expense contributions and must be associated/linked with a training course.

Q19. We were told part of the wellbeing was access to councillors to help people who have been affected by what happened and the way we were treated?

A19. Clients of the fund can access and avail of career coaching/life coaching/mindfulness. Clients should contact the SOLAS Co-ordination Unit to discuss their requirements.

Q20. If you apply for a course, say a Computer Programming one, you pay for the course and equipment and are refunded from the fund, but what if after a few weeks you decide it's not for you can we return the equipment and keep the refund?

A20. We want the client to make the best-informed decisions on what training they should undertake to making the most of the funds available. Therefore, the one-to-one sessions are beneficial to the client, as the client can be offered career guidance and coaching services to ascertain training required so that the scenario that has been described in the question doesn't happen. Once SOLAS reimburses the client for the equipment it is theirs. SOLAS is required to monitor courses that the client is attending.

Q21. What if in 6 months' time you find a different course like a mechanics course which requires you to buy tools can you be reimbursed with the remainder of your share?

For example, your total share from the fund is approx. €3400, your first course and equipment etc comes to €1400 leaving you €2000 to use towards 2nd course and different equipment. Is all this possible?

A21. There is a maximum course expense contribution of €1,000 for the total period of the fund (2 years) As an example, if the client is reimbursed €500 towards a laptop for their 1st course, then they will have only €500 left toward equipment/course materials for their 2nd course. If, however for the 2nd course only €200 is reimbursed for equipment/course materials, then €300 goes back into the client fund for equipment/course materials for a 3rd course or to be used for training.

Q22. I have started a higher education master's degree course; can I use my current fund (€3,649.63) towards the course fees?

A22. Yes, you can, the €3,649.63 was an indicative figure. Please contact the SOLAS Co- ordination Unit to discuss

Q23. Advances for equipment? Some members cannot afford to pay upfront for laptops etc, this is blocking them from booking onto courses and they cannot avail of the fund. Allowances need to be made for all members depending on their situation.

A23. The fund does not allow for advancement for equipment. The client must purchase the equipment and or materials and seek a reimbursement from SOLAS

Q24. Why are we being asked for our RP50? This contains private information and could bias their access to the fund.

A24. As part of the governance of the Debenhams Training Fund, it is a requirement of the fund that any ex-worker that opt-in to avail of the fund must undergo an eligibility check by SOLAS before they can access the fund. Due to GDPR SOLAS was unable to confirm the ex-workers eligibility with the Joint Liquidators (KPMG) so SOLAS engaged directly with individuals to seek sight of the person's RP50, letter of confirmation from DSP or an IP1 form and to confirm eligibility to the fund.

Q25. Have both unions given the member numbers? Will the new starting figure be amended and sent to all members?

A25. Yes, both unions have provided the number of members. The indicative starting figure of €3,649.63 was presented as part of the group information/briefing session in November 2021. DFHERIS have recently completed a review of the training fund, the outcome of the review is that there is no cap on payments to eligible clients for training/upskilling courses or training grant reimbursements. Any eligible client can apply for training/upskilling courses or a training grant reimbursement up to 31 October 2023 . SOLAS will assess all applications for grants and reimbursements based on the current criteria, on a case-by-case basis.

Q26. At what point will the redividing of remaining funds happen? Members don't accept that the committee will decide what the remainder is used for. All members were told that any remaining funds would be redivided. This should be confirmed in writing now.

A26. The Advisory Committee will be advised by SOLAS on the fund spend on a month-by-month basis. Recently DFHERIS completed a review of the training fund, there is now no cap on payments to eligible clients for training/upskilling courses or training grant reimbursements. Any eligible client can apply for training/upskilling courses or a training grant reimbursement up to 31 October 2023 . SOLAS will

assess all applications for grants and reimbursements based on the current criteria, on a case-by-case basis.

Q27. I want to ask SOLAS questions through my union representative and not individually or in one-on-one meetings.

A27. General questions regarding the fund may be asked through your union representative. To ensure the most efficient service and supports to the client. Questions relating to the individual's personal situation regarding accessing the fund/training/career/reimbursement claims, etc is best discussed with the SOLAS Co-ordination Unit.

Q28. There are still some members that wish to apply to utilise the fund but are waiting on clarity and answers before they begin the process. Can they apply at any stage in the 2 years?

A28. SOLAS would urge all ex-workers who yet haven't opted into avail of the fund to do so ASAP. If you have opted in and haven't completed and returned your Client Registration or RP50 it is important to remember that you cannot avail of the fund until your eligibility is checked and confirmed by SOLAS. SOLAS advises early registration.

Q29. If I enrol and attend a course, can I claim petrol expenses travelling to and from the course?

A29. Yes, to claim travel expenses to and from your course, download and complete the Travel and Childcare Claim Form at the following link  
<https://www.solas.ie/programmes/debenhams-training-fund/>

You will need to provide a letter from the training provider confirming the day/s you attended the course for every claim you submit to SOLAS. The claim will be processed based on the daily distance travelled.

You will also need to provide a copy Google Maps of the route you travelled to and from your course, detailing the kilometres travelled. See the webpage for more details.

Q30. How is the payment for my reimbursement made, by cheque or bank transfer?

A30. Client reimbursement payments are made directly to the eligible client's bank account via electronic transfer. The client will be sent a Bank Authorisation Form from SOLAS, this form must be completed and returned along with the top part of the first page of

your bank statement or verified/stamped by your bank. The client must return the completed form to SOLAS.

Q31. I did a course last year and somebody else bought me a laptop, can I seek a reimbursement for the laptop.

A31. You must be able to provide an original receipt for the laptop that you purchased. Store receipts are usually emailed to the purchaser and will include their name/address. SOLAS would advise that you contact them to discuss the matter.

Q32. I did a course 6 months ago; can I get a laptop for work?

A32. To seek a reimbursement for a laptop, it must be linked to a course you are enrolled on or attending. A letter is also required from the training provider stating that you need the laptop to complete the course. See the How to Guide - Submitting a Reimbursement Claim at the following link.

<https://www.solas.ie/programmes/debenhams-training-fund/>

Q33. Why is SOLAS asking for the client's bank details to be stamped/verified by their bank?

A33. As the payment being reimbursed is public expenditure the Bank Authorisation Form along with the top part of the first page of your bank statement or stamped/verified by the client's bank is required to confirm to SOLAS that the reimbursement payment being made is to the eligible client bank account.

Q34. Can I seek a reimbursement for childcare while I was attending a 6-week course?

A34. Yes, you will need to complete the Travel and Childcare claims reimbursement form.

<https://www.solas.ie/programmes/debenhams-training-fund/>

Provide a letter from the registered creche or nursery detailing the date/s that your child attended, Start/Finish and times of attendance. The letter should also include the name/address of the creche/nursery and their registration number.

Also provide a letter from the training provider detailing that you were enrolled and completed the course, course title, qualification gained, start and finish dates of the course and the days you attended.



Q35. How can I get a laptop

A35. SOLAS cannot purchase a laptop on your behalf, in order to get a laptop, the eligible client must be enrolled on a course. once SOLAS has evidence that the client has place/enrolled on the course, approval for the client to purchase a laptop will be confirmed by SOLAS. Once purchased the client can seek a reimbursement from SOLAS for the laptop up to the maximum value of €1,000 (See the How to Guide on the webpage)

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