

## Introduction

The Specialist Training Program (STP) seeks to extend vocational training for specialist registrars into settings outside traditional metropolitan teaching hospitals, including regional, rural, remote and private facilities.

The Department of Health appreciates that trainees in rural and remote settings will face additional barriers and higher costs in accessing training resources than those in more traditional training situations. They will have to travel further to attend seminars, or access information through the World Wide Web. They (or their employers) may also face additional costs in arranging accommodation.

The STP therefore allows a loading, based on the amount of time the trainee in a post spends in regional and remote Australia, to assist in meeting these additional costs. In 2018, this Rural Support Loading (RSL) allows a site to claim up to \$22,500 (GST exclusive) for each post where the trainee spends time in rural and remote areas.

Eligibility of the post for RSL is determined by the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Area 2-5 classification status of the facilities where training takes place. STP posts where a trainee spends time in an RA2-5 setting are eligible for RSL. RA classifications can be checked by visiting the Department's [DoctorConnect website](#).

## How RSL can be used

The purpose of RSL is to assist in meeting additional costs which the trainee may incur during their training in regional and remote areas. Examples of the types of costs which may be eligible include:

- Resources (e.g. books, computers)
- Attendance at training courses, meetings and conferences (within Australia only)
- Videoconferencing facilities
- Broadband access/IT upgrades
- Research projects (e.g. access to online library, laboratory equipment)
- Relocation costs
- Travel expenses
- Accommodation costs

RSL **cannot** be used to fund

- Trainee salaries
- Supervisor salaries or travel expenses,
- Expenses involved in the accreditation of the facility as a training site
- College fees
- Hospital operating expenses not related to the trainee experience in the location.

The decision to accept or reject a claim is in the *absolute discretion* of the RACP. Previous acceptance of a similar expense does not guarantee that it will be allowed. If in doubt, please contact the RACP

The tables below give examples of the types of expenses which have been approved and rejected for RSL funding in the past.

## Reporting requirements

All sites who believe that they are eligible to receive RSL funding are required to submit

- an Estimate of RSL Expenditure at the start of the year, detailing their anticipated expenditure on eligible items;
- an Annual RSL Report in November detailing actual expenditure to the date of the report, and any eligible expenses anticipated before the end of the second semester.

### How RSL is paid

The process commences when the site provides the RACP with their Estimate of RSL Expenditure via the STP Web Portal.

The RACP will review the estimates to determine if the proposed expenses are likely to be funded. Additional information and clarification may be requested. Ineligible expenses may be identified and rejected at this point. This is to assist the sites in identifying costs which may be eligible and avoid disappointment where possible.

Where RSL-eligible expenses are incurred by the trainee, the training site should pay on their behalf or reimburse their trainees. The RACP will reimburse the training site up to the limits set by the Department of Health on provision of suitable evidence of expenditure.

RSL will be paid to sites in two instalments.

- The first will be paid once the first semester progress report has confirmed that a trainee was in fact in the post during the semester, and the progress report has been otherwise approved.
- The second will be processed at the end of the year after sites submit an RSL Annual Report through the web portal.

The RACP requires that sites provide documentary evidence to support the amounts in their RSL Annual Report. Evidence may include tax invoices, receipts, lease agreements, or trainee expense claims. The bases of any estimates of amounts yet to be paid should be clearly set out. Additional information and clarification may be requested. Ineligible expenses, or those which cannot be substantiated, may be identified and rejected at this point.

**Please note:** RSL funding is linked to the trainee and will not be paid where the post is vacant, even if the training site has incurred expenditure on, for example, accommodation.

Payment is made:

- on a pro rata basis for the proportion of training that takes place in an RA2-5 setting;
- to the training site which is responsible for the training post (the entity incorporating the post that holds a Funding and Administration Agreement with the College).

**RSL Payments will not be made to individual trainees.**

### For more information

For any enquiries regarding RSL funding, please contact the STP Unit at the RACP on [STP@racp.edu.au](mailto:STP@racp.edu.au) or (02) 9256 9665.

Expenses potentially eligible for RSL

The table below gives examples of the some of the expenses claimed and the supporting evidence which have been accepted in the past.

Expense	Comment	Acceptable Evidence
Accommodation costs	Rent, utilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May include an estimate of the rental value of accommodation owned by the facility and provided free of charge.</li> <li>• Should be reduced by any amount of the expenses met by the trainee directly.</li> </ul>	Lease agreements, statements from lessors, invoices, rental valuations from estate agents.
Attendance at interstate training courses, meetings, conferences	Flights, taxis, accommodation, attendance charges	Invoices, internal expense claims
Attendance at intrastate training courses, meetings, conferences	Flights, taxis, accommodation, attendance charges	Invoices, internal expense claims
Professional Development Allowances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where the trainee is paid a professional development allowance in lieu of actual expenses, the allowance may be eligible.</li> <li>• The RACP is extremely unlikely to accept both a professional development allowance and costs of attending intra/interstate conferences.</li> </ul>	Extracts from payroll systems, extracts from contracts of employment.
Broadband access / IT upgrade	Equipment, installation, software, relating to the trainee or training position but not for the entire training site	Invoices, basis of allocation of charges
Video conferencing facilities	Equipment, installation, software	Invoices, basis of allocation of charges
Monthly computer seat and charges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer, phone, software costs</li> <li>• Tablet if required for the STP trainee</li> </ul>	Invoices, basis of allocation of charges. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Claims deemed excessive will be subject to follow-up, and may be rejected or amended.</li> <li>• A <b>new</b> tablet for each trainee rotating through the post is deemed excessive.</li> </ul>
Online training modules (clinical)	Registration costs	Invoices, internal expense claims
Relocation costs	Flights, household removal, vehicle removal	Invoices, internal expense claims
Research projects	Access to online library, laboratory equipment	Invoices, basis of allocation of charges

Expense	Comment	Acceptable Evidence
Travel expenses to and from clinics	Car hire, use of vehicle, flights	Invoices, basis of allocation of charges, internal expense claims
Textbooks, journal subscriptions		Invoices, receipts, internal expense claims

### Expenses ineligible for RSL

The table below gives examples of the some of the expenses claimed which have been disallowed in the past.

Expense	Comment
Trainee salary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSL funds cannot be used to 'top up' trainee salary</li> <li>'Travel time' to outreach clinics cannot be funded from RSL</li> </ul>
Locum costs	Costs of covering the trainee's position whilst they are travelling are ineligible
Supervisor and administration staff time	Additional time spent by Supervisors because they have an additional trainee, or by administration staff because the hospital staff is larger, is not eligible
Supervisor travel and accommodation	The cost of Supervisors travelling to outreach clinics with the trainees is ineligible
Accreditation costs	Costs associated with the accreditation of the site as a training post or in preparing an Expression of Interest for STP funding are ineligible
International travel	The Commonwealth has specifically excluded international travel and attendance at training courses, meetings, and conferences held outside Australia
RACP training and examination fees	RSL funds cannot be used to pay for Trainee registration or other College fees
Internal training	Training required to be completed by all employees as part of their site induction will not be allowed
Recruitment costs	Charges from recruitment consultants are not eligible
Hospital equipment and stationery	Camera, doctor's bag, printer toner, dictaphone, sphygmomanometers and cuffs with case, measuring mats, tendon hammers, tongue depressors, ear specula, urinalysis strips, clinical dummies
Office equipment (filing cabinets, chair)	No, unless setting up an office or workstation for the STP trainee. Such costs will only be allowed once.