

Host Family Handbook

ECA Education Consultancy Limited

WELCOME

Warmest welcome to our prospective host families; we are most grateful and gratified that you have contacted us to find out more about our company and what is involved in becoming a Host Family.

A host family provides a home-from-home with comfort and security where warm and long-lasting friendships can be established. We appreciate you opening homes to boys and girls from a different culture. Every child has their different needs – that is why we seek such variety in our host families.

This handbook is designed to help you to understand what you can expect when hosting overseas students and what is expected of you as a host family. You will be required to keep a high standard of service by providing a friendly, comfortable, safe and hygienic home for our overseas students.

This handbook should be read in conjunction with Homestay Agreement and key policies including safeguarding, anti-radicalization, missing students and data protection policy. Those key Policies and Handbooks are accessible and downloadable for all homestays on our company website http://www.ecaeducation.com/documents.php. Please ensure that you have read and understood all.

All homestays will receive notification if any annual updates of the policies and handbooks. All homestays complete safeguarding training, refreshed at regular intervals. In the Homestay Agreement, you will find the duration and termination terms.

VISION, MISION, VALUE and AIMS

We deem children and young people's welfare as our paramount responsibility, and we expect the same from you. We would like to share with you our company Vision, Mission, and Value statements.

OUR VISION

We support the international students throughout their study journey in the UK by creating a safe, healthy and reliable environment and network, so they can reach their best potential for every stage of their education.

OUR MISSION

We are here to help young international students that choose to study in the UK. From the moment of choosing the right schools, to the moment they finish their A levels, we support them from every angle, so the students have everything they need to ensure a smooth transition in switching school system from their home country to the UK.

OUR VALUES

- **Efficiency**: we listen, we pay attention to details, and we take actions with great efficiency.
- **Consistency**: we make continuous efforts.
- Achievement: we strive for excellence and ensure the welfare of the students.



- **Relationships** Creating and maintaining meaningful relationships among students, families, host families and business partners.
- Respect we promote an environment that appreciates the values of students, families, colleagues and different cultures

OUR KEY AIMS

- To ensure 24/7 emergency service is available for our students during their stay in UK
- To give the parents of our students' peace of mind knowing that their children are fully supported by ECA during their stay in UK
- To listen to the parents' & students' needs and wants and try our best to help our overseas students to achieve goals in the aspects of both personal development and academic progress
- To develop a strict code of practice for our ECA members to adhere to in order to ensure students' welfare
- To help our students to gain admission into the best schools and universities in the UK
- To carefully select and inspect homestay families to protect and care for students in their home in the UK
- to comply with the 1989 & 2004 Children Act and meet the requirements of the Department for Education's guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)

The HANDBOOK is just a brief introduction to what is involved. If you would like to find out more, please feel free to contact us. We look forward to hearing from you soon.



WHY HOST FAMILIES

The first question that comes to you might be why there is a need for host families. Parents who opt to send their children to UK boarding schools at an early age (usually from 8-year-old upwards) want reassurance that their children will receive the best possible care at their host family, together with an involvement in and encouragement of their academic and social progress. Parents to older students however might have different requirements, wanting the security and positive guidance of a family but not the level of involvement that younger students need.

The majority of boarding schools, and a fair number of day schools in the UK offering international students a place, also recognize the importance of guardianship and insist their international students whose parents are resident abroad have a UK-based guardian allocated to them.

The level of involvement expected from guardians varies hugely between different schools, from those who are happy for ECA to be the named guardian with no additional host family needed, to those who insist on a family also being allocated within a certain distance of the school, and for the student to stay with them over every exeat and half term holiday.

HOW TO WELCOME INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

ECA tries where possible to place you with student(s) more compatible in terms of their experience, interests and location. Also, we try to place students in the same host family for all their stays away from school to provide consistency.

Your student(s) will usually be attending independent boarding schools in the UK. During exeat weekend (weekends away from school) and half terms, most boarding schools close and students will have a break at your home.

When the student first arrives at your home, please make sure they are welcomed, as staying in an unfamiliar environment can be an anxious experience for a young person whose family lives in another country. Although students sometimes prefer to have their private time in their room working or playing, family time, such as watching TV/movies together in the living room, family chats, playing board games together can be so much enjoyed and appreciated.

Language: Our students come to England to study for English examinations, e.g. GCSE, A-Level,. Some of our students speak fairly good English but it is not always the case. Please be patient with the students who cannot express themselves in English well, or are shy to open their mouths and encourage them to speak more.

Culture: Our students can be confused and feel insecure about being in a new country with a different culture. Everything is new and many things can be strange to them especially to younger students. The food, the currency, the language, the customs, the weather, even the tools to eat their meals with... are not what they are familiar with at home. Please treat them with patience and respect and be more tolerant of their different behaviour, if necessary explain to them the differences and teach them about English culture and customs.

Pets: Most English families love their pets. It is not quite the same in Asia. Some students may not have had contact with pets, such as dogs and cats, and might consider them unhygienic and frightening. Please try to understand and be sensitive about this and make sure the student is not too concerned about it.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING A HOST FAMILY

Being a host family to an international student is a varied role offering numerous rewards (including financial) and opportunities.

You and your family would enjoy various benefits including:

- ✓ The opportunity to provide guidance and share life experiences in the same way that parents would do with their own children
- \checkmark The opportunity to learn about another culture
- \checkmark The joy and excitement that a young person can bring to a family
- ✓ Some nice company for you or any children of yours
- Meeting other guardians, sharing experiences, attending events organized by ECA and the student's school and gaining a new circle of friends and contacts
- ✓ The chance to participate in school events and activities
- ✓ Valuable extra income

WHAT IS REQUIRED BY ECA

ECA requires the following documents from host families before we can place any students with you:

- Original photographic identification documents
- 2 references (one personal and one professional from people who have known you for at least 2 years, including someone who has known you working with children if you have had this experience)
- Satisfactory Enhanced DBS and barred list check (Disclosure and Barring Service) certificates on everyone living in your household who is over 16 years' old
- Photographs of host families, preferably with some pictures of their home
- Annual gas safety check certificate if applicable
- Home and Car Insurance certificate(s)

In order to ensure the student(s)'s security, we will also need to check that you have the relevant numbers of functioning smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

Some key points which help to safeguard the welfare and privacy of student for Host Family to follow:

- ensure sufficient privacy for our student (e.g.: enter the student's bedroom appropriately by knocking first)
- ensure security (e.g. bathroom and bedroom doors shall be able to be locked from the inside)
- Create a healthy environment (e.g. smoking is not allowed inside the house or around the Student for Host Family and their visitors)
- Restrictions on tobacco/alcohol/illegal drugs with details in our Student Handbook and Student code of Conduct. If Host Family suspects the student have relevant issue(s), please remind them of the English laws (they will already have been informed by ECA about such restrictions but please still contact ECA, we will take appropriate actions)
- Host Family House Rules to be communicated in advance (e.g. bedtime, mealtime, access to the kitchen, routines, etc.)



We will visit you each year to ensure high standards are maintained. Usually, this yearly visit will be arranged while the student(s) are staying with you so that ECA coordinator will be able to meet both the host family and the student(s).

If there's a car to be used to transport the Student, ECA will:

- 1) Check that if Host Family have adequate comprehensive vehicle insurance in place; and
- 2) Check that if Host Family have informed their insurers that they will be using their car to provide transport to international students for which they may be paid or receive expenses.
- 3) Look at the car carefully where possible during our inspection

If there are any changes to your home (including people staying there) or student facilities, it is your responsibility to let us know as soon as possible.

Occasionally the Host Family might be involved in an inspection or interview by a third party AEGIS (Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students) which is an accreditation organisation to safeguard the welfare of international students studying at schools, colleges and universities in the UK, making them feel safe, welcome and cared for. Through a rigorous accreditation process, they provide peace of mind that those offering guardianship services to students meet the very highest standards of care. As part of this process, they periodically ask homestays to complete a questionnaire to share their views of our services. They will also ask to visit a sample of our homestays to check that we are adhering to their standards. As part of your agreement to host for us, we ask that you engage in this process when approached by AEGIS.

Host Family to Provide	Details
BEDROOM - A comfortable bed - Clean, warm bedding and a bath towel (changed weekly) - Storage area - A table/desk and chair with good lighting for working	Each student should have their own bedroom and their own bed. It is acceptable to share a bedroom with someone of a similar age and of the same gender with their parents' permission in advance. If students are sharing a room, please introduce them, remind them to be respectful to each other and ensure that they understand that they can approach you with any issues.
	The Host Family MUST NOT accommodate more than three Students at any one time. The Host Family MUST NOT accommodate student under the age of 16 together with any student over the age of 20 at this same time. The Host Family MUST NOT host any other paying guests or operate any form of B&B facility when hosting our student.

WHAT TO OFFER TO THE STUDENTS



	Bathrooms can be shared.
BATHROOM	Most students are used to taking daily showers. Advise them the suitable times for them to use the bathroom, and patiently teach them and make sure your student knows how to use the shower (e.g. adjusting shower water temperature, keeping the shower curtain inside), toilet facilities, and where to put any rubbish. Also, if appropriate, make sure you explain the arrangements for disposing of sanitary items.
	You may wish to suggest a maximum time for a shower – e.g. 10 minutes, as at home they are often used to unlimited hot water. Ask them to leave the bathroom clean and tidy. Please inform the student(s) of any guidelines you may have to ensure privacy for the student and members of your family.
	Communicate with the student(s) about the meal arrangements. Asian students have three meals a day and they consider food is one of their priorities of life. Home-cooked food is hugely appreciated!
	You will be informed of the student(s) food allergies if any or in some cases, dislikes. But we suggest that you have a discussion on the student(s)' arrival about mealtime and the types of food he or she particularly likes or dislikes.
MEALS	Lunch is quite light for most UK households but for Asian and also in UK boarding schools, lunch is a main meal. A compromise would be good idea. Pasta with sauce, sandwich with lots of fillings and
• Breakfast	hotdogs are always popular. In the Student Handbook provided, we advise students not to help
• Lunch	themselves to snacks between meals, but please encourage them to ask when they feel hungry. Teenagers are growing fast and consume food rather quickly. If they are hungry, fruit, cake, yogurt or biscuits
• Dinner	should be available. Sometimes, the student's table manners cause a little concern.
• Snacks	Remember, for some of them, they have only just become accustomed to using a knife and fork (they may have only used chopsticks before). Please respect this difficulty and we would also ask you to understand that slurping food, talking with a mouth full etc. is broadly common and acceptable in China, but at the same time try to offer some sensitive guidance if you feel it is necessary. The Student Handbook explains some typical British customs and manners including not leaving the table until everyone has finished and helping to carry the plates to the kitchen at the end of the meal.
LAUNDRY	Please let your student know where they can put their laundry and the days that you use your washing machine.
INTERNET ACCESS	Students now expect access to an internet connection, preferably wireless. All schools provide this but do limit use and monitor it carefully. The internet should only be used for academic work and also to stay in touch with their family and friends during the holiday period.



	Unrestricted Access - There is increasing concern about the dangers to young people of free and unrestricted access to the Internet without appropriate controls. We would advise hosts to limit access in the best interests of the student. For example, wireless Internet could be switched off overnight if necessary.
	Host families should feel free to switch off the internet if it is being used excessively or at unsociable hours.
	Students should not need to use your telephone landline. In case they do, they should always ask for your permission, and the cost can be reimbursed with the remuneration in the Claim Form.
Others Explain basic fire escape routes, access to the outside doors, and to location of any necessary keys. Please also ensure that they know dial 999 for Police, Fire or Ambulance should any such emergency arise whilst they are staying with you.	
Transportation (optional)	When you offer to the student to sit in your car, please bear in mind: The law requires that drivers and passengers aged 14 and over in cars, vans and other commercial vehicles must wear a seatbelt , if available. As a driver you are responsible for ensuring that anyone under the age of 14 wears a seat belt or uses an appropriate child restraint as required by law. The law requires all children travelling in the front or rear seat of any car, van or goods vehicle must use the correct child car seat until they are either 135 cm in height or 12 years old (which ever they reach first).

WHAT ARE ECA'S AND YOUR RESPONSIBILTIES

ECA is responsible for our international students and acts as their guardian while they are in the UK. However, general responsibilities are often shared between ECA and our host families. A list of activities and respective responsibilities are outlined below as guidance. For more details, please reach us via <u>admin@ecaeducation.com</u> or 113 4143 518.

Guardianship		Host Family
Signing agreements with the parents and the placement of the student with a host family	\checkmark	
Liaison with parents and schools	\checkmark	
Making care decisions	\checkmark	
Routine contact with parents as appropriate		
Provision of accommodation for exeats, half-term holidays and if required, long school holidays		
Informing ECA if the child is to stay anywhere other than at the host family		
Liaison with the school to make arrangements for exeats and half-term holidays		
Educational Support		
Signing parental permission slips e.g. for trips, extra lessons or compliance with school policies relating		
to matters such as drug abuse	V	
Routine liaison with the school over pastoral matters		



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\checkmark	\checkmark
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Responsibilities during a pandemic

Pandemics can cause major disruption to travel and schooling. *ECA* takes advice from the government, Public Health England and the World Health Organisation. AEGIS also provides guidance for members to follow. This is regularly updated as a situation develops. Usually, in a pandemic it is important to restrict movement so as not to spread the disease further. That means boarding school students would usually remain at school. In the event of a pandemic, ECA may not be able to offer homestay accommodation as this could place students, homestay families and the wider community at risk. *ECA* will work with parents to find flights to home countries where required. ECA will work with schools to meet students' needs during a pandemic. This could be by helping to support students to learn remotely as directed by the school. *ECA* will work with parents and schools to find suitable quarantine accommodation for students where required.

TOP TIPS FOR HOSTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Tip 1: Treat the student(s) as your own children

Just stand in their shoes, think about if your children were at their host families in a foreign country, how would you like your children to be treated.



Tip 2: Keep them occupied if the student(s) feel homesick

Student(s) could feel homesick or worried about their family especially when they are at a young age or when they are left alone. If you sense such emotions or if the student(s) share it with you, try to give them a hot chocolate with some biscuits (a cup of hot chocolate can always be a best cure when a young person is feeling down) and occupy them physically or keep their mind busy.

Tip 3: Let them relax when needed

Don't worry if the student(s) like to sleep more hours in the morning or play games on their phone/computer for some time. School life can be very stressful. Some relaxation will only do them good. If you find them playing computer games or playing with their phone all day, that's another story and please set some parameters for them.

Tip 4: If you find the student(s) too quiet or sitting about doing nothing, involve them

Some students might be shy or don't know how to make conversation with people, especially strangers when they first arrive at your home. What you need to do is to break the ice by chatting with them about your life experience and ask them about theirs and what the differences are between the UK and their own country which they might be interested to share.

When the student(s) are away from home and in unfamiliar environments, time can go very slowly. It is good to involve them in helping you around the house, perhaps asking them to set the table, help with the gardening, make tea or coffee for everyone. Or you can teach them how to play board games, how to do some simple baking, etc.

You can try some of those family activities which student(s) often find amusing

- To see a movie, a play or a show
- To visit the town centre, supermarket or shopping centre most student(s) love shopping
- To encourage them to do some exercise: play badminton, table tennis, tennis, swimming, cycling...
- To encourage them to play musical instruments if you know they do
- To teach them how to cook/bake following a recipe
- To encourage them to do some painting, drawing, sewing
- To help them to enjoy nature. Most of the students in China live in big cities and they have limited access to the countryside or wildlife. Try to take a walk in the park, the countryside, or even the nearby woods.
- To play some board games with them. Young people usually love games. Monopoly, Scrabble, Hedbanz, or card games... Games are a fun way to bring much laughter and sometimes help to develop the student(s) English vocabulary.

Tip 5: Students plan to go out

If your student goes out, you should always know their plans, return times and exchange telephone numbers. Students are told to always contact their host families if there is a change to plans.

Here are guidelines on Student Handbook that students need to follow.		
16 and under:	Must be accompanied by an adult member of host family	
16 & 17:	Must be home by 10pm at the latest	
18 and over:	Must be Home by 11pm at the latest	



TIP 6: FORBIDDEN BEHAVIOURS

Staying away overnight is forbidden unless specific permission has been given in advance by ECA normally with the consent of the student's parents.

Friends of students are not allowed to stay with you unless ECA has approved temporary guardianship in advance. This is for legal and insurance reasons.

Students are not allowed to smoke and students over the age of 18 may only drink alcohol with your express permission and under your supervision. If you have any other concerns, please contact us immediately.



MISCONCEPTION OF HOSTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

It is without any doubt that hosting international students can be a pleasant experience, however, it can also be stressful and confusing. Here are the common misconceptions and the truth behind it.

1. The student(s) you host does not act like the children in the UK

All of our students are from China. Before they come to the UK, the majority of them live in apartments in big cities with maids. Unlike our children in the UK, the students might not be keen on house activities or chores. The truth behind it is parents in China value education above all else and children are often overloaded with academic work or learning skills. To ensure Chinese children's full focus is on study and skill-learning, parents usually do not involve their children in household activities.

The students might not like some of food children in the UK do. Please be aware that, in China, people stick to their three **hot** meals as a must-have. Hot food/drink is considered as healthier and they rarely eat cold food as their main meal.

Children in the UK are taught to say "please", "thank you", "sorry", and "excuse me" from a very young age, but those words are not as so-frequently used in China. Students are expected to be polite and courteous, and you should give them friendly guidance on this.

It is likely that your student will have a lot of schoolwork and possibly revision to do during the holiday period, so they may spend more time in their bedroom than you would expect.

Most Chinese students are quiet and shy when it comes to asking help or raising concerns. Please encourage them and explain to them if necessary.

2. It's expensive to host an international student

The students will bring their own spending money for personal needs during the homestay. The students are responsible for items such as uniforms, books, school supplies and trips. You are not expected to be out of pocket hosting an international student.

3. It would be difficult to communicate with each other

Students in China start learning English at early age. Most of our students speak fairly good English. Occasionally, some students might struggle and be shy to open their mouths, but if you speak more slowly and clearly, chances are that they will understand. With some encouragement and smiles, they will be confident enough to share their thoughts with you in English. Keep having conversations with them, it will be very helpful to improve their English.

4. Being the host parent(s) you become the guardian of the international student

A legal guardian is defined as "a person who has the legal authority and the corresponding duty to care for the personal and property interests of another person, as appointed by a court of law. You will not become the international student's legal guardian.

You are granted certain responsibilities under the Homestay Agreement to maintain the health and welfare of the host student(s). In rare but serious circumstances, you will be permitted to authorize emergency treatments on the students' behalf if the natural parents are unable to be reached. ECA coordinator would be with you in the rare case this occurs.



FAQ

Q: When would we need to host?

Boarding schools in the UK have their breaks of EXEAT weekends, half term holidays and long holidays. The students will be assigned to stay with their homestay families during EXEAT weekends, half terms and rarely during long holidays. Sometimes, homestay might also be needed when the student comes across some medical emergency, or during suspension/exclusion from the school.

Q: Can I host as I am retired and have no children of my own?

Yes! There are students who prefer a home without young children around so they can focus on study.

Q: Can I host even though I am a single mum/dad?

Yes! Our requirements to be a host parent are fairly simple. First, applicants must express an interest in opening their homes to a new international student and want to treat and supervise the student as if he or she is your own. Host parent(s) must also be able to provide a private bedroom, three meals per day and some transportation when it is needed

Q: Can I host when I am fully employed

No – it would not be acceptable to leave a student under the age of 18 years old unattended within the household. An adult member of the Host Family should be available at all times for children under 18 years of age, if you are not available, ECA will need to be made aware of any arrangements which may involve further DBS checking of anyone who will be involved in supervision of any Student.

Q: How can I support and offer comfort to a child in distress?

As set out in our Staff Code of Conduct, if it is necessary to be alone with a child, this should, ideally, be in a place in full view of others

- If a child is injured or upset, appropriate comforting is a natural reaction. In full view of others, this is fine but staff should be aware that in a one to one situation, such comforting may be open to misinterpretation
- Be aware that an upset child might readily misconstrue a situation and, if possible, always ensure that the child is accompanied by a friend
- When investigating allegations of e.g. bullying, it is wise to invite another member of staff or witness to attend, so that the child feels supported. This will also act as protection from misinterpretation.
- n responding to individual children's distress, staff will need to consider carefully whether they should offer advice, sympathy or counselling if a discussion enters a sensitive area or, alternatively, refer them to a colleague or agency better placed to offer appropriate advice

Q: How if the Student wants to use the kitchen to cook a meal

It is advised that the Host Family allows the Student have access to the kitchen and prepare meals for themselves/everyone, appropriate supervision shall be provided in line with their age and experience and that basic food hygiene controls are in place.

Q: How if the Student misbehave?

You can contact ECA if you find the Student misbehave or do not respect the House Rule.



Under no circumstances must physical punishment ever be used! The Host Family may only use reasonable, appropriate and lawful means of control and contact with our Student so as to provide comfort if in distress and to maintain safety and good order in the home. If there is any form of physical restraint, then the Host Family must contact ECA immediately to explain the circumstances.

Q: Where are the student(s) from?

All of students are from China at this stage.

Q: How old will the student(s) be?

The majority of our students are around 12-18 years old. On rare occasions, there are young students from 8-11 years old.

Q: Am I the student's guardian?

No. ECA will remain the student's guardian even when he/she is staying with you

Q: Will I have to pay for everything if I plan to take the student(s) out for trips

You are not expected to be out of pocket for hosting students. Before planning your trips, please notify ECA in advance, and we will communicate with the parents to make sure they are willing to cover the cost.

Q: Will I need to host over Easter, Christmas or Summer holidays?

The majority of our students will go back home for the Easter, Christmas and summer holidays. But there will be some exceptions. We will inform you well in advance if the student(s) needs accommodation during those exceptional periods.

Q: What do we do in case of an accident or illness

Contact our 24/7 emergency number in the footer of this document. If it is an emergency, take any necessary action such as calling 999 before getting in touch with us.

Q: May I host more than one student at a time?

Yes. You may host up to three students. Sometimes it works best to have more than one student as they provide a good companion for each other.

COMPLAINTS

We value complaints as we deem them as our opportunity to improve or amend.

Should there be any complaints regarding services provided or any aspects in relation to ECA, follow our Complaints Policy on our website http://www.ecaeducation.com/documents.php

HOW MUCH AND WHEN DO HOST FAMILIES GET PAID

Host Family Remuneration

Host family remuneration includes accommodation, breakfast, lunch and evening meals, simple laundry service (not dry cleaning).

Remuneration is based on £55+ per night (outside London), £65+ per night (London).



Additional accommodation over the holiday periods (Christmas and Easter) will be paid at £60+ per night (outside London) and £70+ per night (London).

When and how do we get paid?

At the end of each stay, Host Family submits the Host Family Claim Form (see Appendix A). If the Claim Form is in good order and ECA has no further question, ECA will arrange a direct payment from its company account within 10 working days by a bank transfer to Host Family's designated bank account.

How to deal with other expenses and damage compensation?

If the Student is responsible for any expenses or bills to the home or amenities, which are directly attributable to the Student, please submit these as well for reimbursement in the Claim Form. Please do attach all the receipts for claims.

Should a damage claim be made by a Host Family against a Student, following the Student's departure from the home, Host Family have 15 days from the date of departure to submit copies of receipts for repairs to ECA. If no receipts are received within that time frame, damage will not be compensated.

If you have any concerns either before or during your student's homestay, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We have prepared a Safeguarding Contact Database file (Appendix B) for your easy reference.



Appendix A

Host Family Claim From

General Information	
Host Parent Full Name:	
Host Family Address:	
Student's Full Name:	
Student's School Name:	
Student arrival date:	
Student departure date:	
Total Nights:	
Type of home stay (please tick before	() Regular half term or exeat £40/night,
the appropriate item)	£45/night (London)
	() Easter or Christmas holiday £45/night,
	£50/night (London)

Total Amount and Cost Assignment Total to claim (GBP):

Please remit the following Bank Details (for new host families or if you would like to change your bank details previously given) Card Holder's name: Bank name: Sort Code: Account number:

No.	Expenses Items	Total (GBP)
01	Accommodation	
02	Mileage	
03	Food	
04	Miscellaneous (please specify)	
05		
06	(Please add on a separate sheet if needed)	
Total		

Note: please put all the receipts in a word document or any other form of e-copy such as PDF, JPEG, etc. and send to admin@ecaeducation.com along with a completed claim form.

	Print Name	Signature
Claimant		
Approver		