



QUEENSLAND

NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

GUIDELINES

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Abbreviations

<i>BFAP</i>	<i>Bus Fare Assistance Program</i>
<i>CEO</i>	<i>Catholic Education Office</i>
<i>DEEWR</i>	.....	<i>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</i>
<i>DETA</i>	.....	<i>Department of Education, Training and the Arts</i>
<i>EAP</i>	.....	<i>Education Adjustment Program</i>
<i>FFPOS</i>	.....	<i>Full Fee Paying Overseas Student</i>
<i>IEP</i>	.....	<i>Individual Education Plan</i>
<i>ISQ</i>	.....	<i>Independent Schools Queensland</i>
<i>NGSTAS</i>	.....	<i>Non-Government Schools Transport Assistance Scheme</i>
<i>QCEC</i>	.....	<i>Queensland Catholic Education Commission</i>
<i>QT</i>	.....	<i>Queensland Transport</i>
<i>RACQ</i>	.....	<i>Royal Automobile Club of Queensland</i>
<i>SET (Plan)</i>	.....	<i>Senior Education Training (Plan)</i>
<i>STAS</i>	.....	<i>School Transport Assistance Scheme</i>

1 INTRODUCTION

The Queensland Government considers families have the prime responsibility for making suitable travel arrangements for their children to attend school. Since 1997 the Queensland government has provided funding to enable the non-State school sector to administer a transport assistance scheme for students attending non-State schools.

The scheme is known as the Non-Government Schools Transport Assistance Scheme (NGSTAS). It is a joint initiative of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) and Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ). The scheme is oversighted by the Schools Transport Reference Committee and is administered by QCEC on behalf of all non-State schools.

The NGSTAS consists of two programs:

- The Bus Fare Assistance Program (BFAP), and
- The Students with Disabilities Transport Assistance Program.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Objective:

The purpose of the program is to provide financial support to families of those students whose disability necessitates transport assistance to and from school by a means that takes account of their disability.

Statement of Intent:

The Queensland government, through the non-State school sector, provides financial assistance for students with disabilities attending non-State schools where it is necessitated by the nature of the student's disability and the circumstances of the family.

The program provides financial assistance to parents/carers of students with disabilities who attend non-State schools and have been assessed as being eligible for travel assistance. The assistance is provided to enable the students to access an accredited non-State school.

To qualify for travel assistance students must have transport needs that are demonstrably different to those of their same age peers, by reason of their disability.

The level of assistance provided to eligible applicants will depend on the program funds available in the relevant semester.

Relevant Legislation and Policy

The Education (General Provisions) Act 2006

In October 2006 the new *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* came into effect, replacing the previous *Education (General Provisions) Act 1989*. The Act contains specific provisions relating to the provision of transport assistance to students with disabilities attending "schools in receipt of subsidy". Non-State schools are considered "schools in receipt of subsidy".

Section 421 of the Act provides for the Minister for Education to give assistance to an eligible student relating to his or her transportation to or from a non-State school and identifies the ways the Minister may give the assistance as including:

- paying to the student, or a parent of the student, all or part of the expenses of the transportation;
- making payments to a provider of the transportation;
- helping to organise or coordinate the transportation.

The non-State school sector does not make payments to transport providers and takes no part in the organisation or coordination of transport for students.

The 2006 Act identifies an eligible student as being a person who is attending a non-State school and who has a disability that necessitates transport to or from the school by a means that takes account of the disability.

2 ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

2.1 For Applicants

Applications for travel assistance will normally only be accepted from a parent, guardian or carer of eligible students. However, in exceptional circumstances applications may be accepted from charitable organisations or government agencies acting on behalf of a student.

2.2 For Students

To be eligible for travel assistance a student must:

- reside in Queensland,
- be eligible to attract the Australian Government General Recurrent Grant for the school attended,
- attend an accredited non-State school in Queensland,
- have a disability that necessitates transport assistance to and from their school,
- travel to and/or from school by private motor vehicle, taxi, train, or by an NGSTAS approved bus or ferry service,
- have been verified and deemed eligible for an Education Adjustment Program (EAP) profile,
- have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and transport needs that are identified as being eligible for travel assistance in the IEP, and
- have an impairment listed in the following ‘target group’,

IMPAIRMENT CATEGORY
Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Hearing Impairment
Intellectual Impairment
Physical Impairment
Social Emotional Disorder
Speech Language Impairment
Vision Impairment

2.2.1 Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances some students may be eligible for financial support. They must have their medical condition confirmed in writing by a medical practitioner. This exceptional circumstances category is designed to cover students who may have a condition or disability not covered in the impairment categories above. These could include anorexia, cystic fibrosis or broken limbs. This support would be for a specified period of time, as defined in the medical practitioner’s report.

2.2.2 Exchange Students

Exchange students participating in a Student Exchange Program with an exchange organisation that is registered by the Queensland Department of Education, Training & the Arts may be eligible for travel assistance.

The following students are **not eligible** for travel assistance:

- Students who have been declared ineligible for travel assistance as part of their IEP,
- Students who attend a State school,
- Students not eligible to attract the Australian Government General Recurrent Grant,
- Full Fee Paying Overseas Students (FFPOS),
- Pre-Preparatory Year students,
- Students residing outside Queensland, and
- Students travelling on a bus/ferry service that is not an NGSTAS approved service.

2.3 General Guidelines

2.3.1 Financial Assistance

The financial support available through this program depends on how the student is transported to and from school. Assistance will be provided in accordance with the following table:

Mode of Travel	Assistance Available
Bus, train or ferry	The full travel costs will be refunded if sufficient government funds are available.
Private motor vehicle	A kilometric allowance will be provided. It will be based on the one-way distance, by the shortest trafficable route, from the student's residence, or alternative accommodation, to the school attended. The motor vehicle allowance will be based on the vehicle running costs, per kilometre, as periodically determined by the RACQ.
Taxi	If a student has been rated ' <i>F Most Dependent</i> ' in the Travel Capability Rating Scale the full cost of taxi fares will be refunded, up to a maximum of \$300 per week, inclusive of any assistance provided through the Taxi Subsidy Scheme referred to in section 2.3.3 .

Eligible boarding school students who live in a rural or remote area will qualify for a Petrol and Oil allowance to assist with the cost of driving a private motor vehicle to and from the school at the start of term and at the end of term.

If government funds are limited in any given semester the level of assistance provided to eligible applicants will be a proportion of their normal entitlement.

Queensland Transport (QT) provides QCEC with details of any travel assistance it may have provided to non-State school students who have applied for travel assistance through the Non-Government Schools Students with Disabilities Transport Assistance Program. Any assistance provided by QT will be taken into consideration when calculating a student's NGSTAS entitlement.

2.3.2 Distance to School

Travel assistance will only be provided from a student's normal residential address to the school attended, via the shortest trafficable route. An exception may be made if a student is required to reside in temporary accommodation or if the student is conveyed to or from an alternative residence where the student receives before or after school care.

If the distance, by the shortest trafficable route, from the alternate address to the school attended is greater than the distance from the student's normal residence to the school attended, travel assistance will be based on the student's normal residential address.

2.3.3 Travel Assistance from Queensland Transport

Parents or carers of students who meet the eligibility criteria for travel assistance through the Queensland Transport *School Transport Assistance Scheme (STAS)* must submit an

application to Queensland Transport (QT) in addition to applying for assistance through the NGSTAS.

Some parents, guardians or carers may qualify for Conveyance Allowance Class A, Class C, Class D or Class I, while others may qualify for Drought Allowance from QT. Application forms for Conveyance Allowance are available from the Queensland Transport Public Transport Units located in Brisbane and most of the major towns and cities throughout Queensland. For more information refer to the following web site:

<http://www.transport.qld.gov.au/>

Some students may be eligible for travel assistance through the QT *Taxi Subsidy Scheme*. To be eligible to participate in the Taxi Subsidy Scheme students must have a severe permanent or temporary disability. Further details about the Taxi Subsidy Scheme can be obtained from the Taxi Subsidy Section at QT on (07) 3253 4954 or from: <http://www.transport.qld.gov.au/qt/PubTrans.nsf/index/Subsidy>.

Travel assistance received through the QT *STAS* or *Taxi Subsidy Scheme* will be taken into consideration when calculating an applicant's entitlement through the NGSTAS.

2.3.4 Criteria for QT Subsidised Bus Travel and the Impact on Non-State School Students

Urban Service Contract Areas

Throughout Queensland several bus companies have been granted urban service contracts by Queensland Transport. The companies are required to provide a range of services for the general public, including school students, within a declared geographical area. The contracts are generally restricted to cities and provincial towns such as Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Mackay, Toowoomba, Maryborough, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg, and Warwick.

Even though an urban service contract has been granted to a bus company for a particular geographical area other bus companies may also be permitted to provide bus services within that geographical area. However, government subsidies for school students are only paid for students who travel on buses operated by the company that has the urban service contract for a particular geographical area. The fact that Queensland Transport only pays assistance to contracted operators has a direct impact on a student's eligibility for travel assistance through the Non Government Schools Students with Disabilities Transport Assistance Program, as explained below.

Distance Eligible Students

Students who reside more than a specified distance from their nearest State school may be eligible for assisted bus travel to their nearest State school. For primary school students the distance threshold is 3.2 kilometres. It is 4.8 kilometres for secondary school students. Any students who reside more than the relevant distance from their nearest State school and meet other general criteria are considered to be 'distance eligible' students. The total cost of the bus fare for distance eligible students is paid directly to the bus operator by Queensland Transport. These students are generally granted a bus pass and travel at no cost to their family, courtesy of the Queensland Government.

Students Attending Non-State Schools

All students who attend non-State schools and reside more than the specified distance threshold (3.2 or 4.8 km) from their nearest State school may be eligible for assistance based on the distance between their residence and their nearest State school. If the distance to the non-State school attended by the student is greater than the distance to their nearest State

school the student must pay a 'top-up' fare to cover the cost of travelling the additional distance to their non-State school. This arrangement only applies to distance eligible students who travel on a bus operated by the company that has the service contract for the area in which the students reside. Students who travel on a non-contracted service are not eligible for the assisted travel provided by Queensland Transport to distance eligible students.

To be eligible for travel assistance through the Non Government Schools Students with Disabilities Transport Assistance Program students must use a bus operated by the company that has the urban service contract for the area in which they reside, if such a contract exists.

Even though a student may reside within an urban service contract area, on occasions it may be necessary for him/her to use a non-contracted bus service. This might occur when a student has no option other than to catch a late bus due to an after school activity such as sport or music practice. This is often unavoidable. Providing the student uses the contracted service for the majority of trips to and from school, he/she will be eligible for travel assistance through this program.

Students Travelling on Buses outside an Urban Service Contract Area

Students who reside in locations not covered by an urban service contract are not affected by the above eligibility requirement. However, these students must use a bus operated by a bus company approved by the Non Government Schools Transport Assistance Scheme.

2.3.5 Educational Adjustment Program

Students will be eligible for travel assistance if the relevant Catholic Education Office (CEO) or Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) office has confirmed their eligibility under the Education Adjustment Program.

Principals or their authorised representative are required to consider as part of the review of the student's IEP, the student's transport rating as set out in Section 4. To be eligible for travel assistance, the need must be demonstrably different to their same age peers.

2.3.6 Attendance Requirements

It is acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances some students will need to attend more than one school to access specialist support. These students may be eligible for travel assistance to access the schools, providing they are non-State schools. This arrangement is often referred to as a dual enrolment.

2.3.7 Students Attending a State School

Travel assistance will not be provided through this program to enable a student to attend a facility, such as an Early Childhood Developmental Unit at a State school, even if the student spends part of the week at a non-State school and the remainder at a State school. Travel assistance is only provided to attend the non-State school.

2.3.8 Ineligible Schools

Students attending the following schools are not eligible for travel assistance through this program:

- an Autism Queensland school
- an approved hospital school.

Other transport assistance may be available for students attending these schools. Parents should contact the school for further information.

2.3.9 The Glenleighden School

If The Glenleighden School is the closest school to a student's residence providing a program which meets the student's educational support needs, parents/carers should apply for travel assistance through The Glenleighden School. These applications will be considered by the Department of Education, Training and the Arts (DETA).

If The Glenleighden School is not the closest school to a student's residence providing a program which meets the student's educational support needs, parents/carers may be eligible for travel assistance through the NGSTAS.

2.3.10 Work Placements

Travel assistance is not available to students travelling to any form of "work experience" program.

2.3.11 Boarding School Students

Students who attend a boarding school on either a term or weekly basis may be eligible for transport assistance if they are conveyed to and/or from their school by public transport or private motor vehicle.

3. SAFETY-NET ASSISTANCE

For the purposes of this program 'Safety-Net assistance' refers to travel assistance available to parents or carers who have been issued with one of the following Commonwealth government cards:

- a Health Care Card,
- a Pensioner Concession Card, or
- a Veterans Affairs Pensioner Concession Card.

To be eligible for Safety Net assistance the parent or carer's child must be listed on the card issued by the government and have a travel capability rating of A or B, as set out in the *Student Travel Capability Rating Scale* in section 4.

Safety Net assistance is also available for carers of students who are under a Care and Protection Order and under the guardianship of the Director-General of the Department of Child Safety, providing the student has a travel capability rating of A or B, as set out in the *Student Travel Capability Rating Scale* in section 4.

4 STUDENT TRAVEL CAPABILITY RATING SCALE

<p>A. Adult Travel The student can negotiate all public transport services including change of trains, buses and/or ferries.</p>	<p>Students are not eligible for travel assistance unless they are eligible for Safety-Net assistance. Safety-Net students conveyed by bus, train or ferry will be eligible for a refund of their fares.</p>
<p>B. Independent The student is able to wait at the appropriate place for train, bus and/or ferry and knows where/when to alight. The student is able to board the bus, train and/or ferry and travel safely to the destination.</p>	<p>Students are not eligible for travel assistance unless they are eligible for Safety-Net assistance. Safety-Net students conveyed by bus, train or ferry will be eligible for a refund of their fares.</p>
<p>C. Semi independent The student is supervised while waiting at the appropriate place for train, bus and/or ferry. Once aboard train, bus and/or ferry the student can ride unaccompanied but may be met at the destination by an adult or responsible person. The driver/conductor may assist the student to alight at the destination.</p>	<p>Students conveyed by bus, train or ferry will be eligible for a refund of their fares.</p>
<p>D. Travel Assisted The student can travel on public transport only when accompanied by a responsible adult. Where transport connections have to be made the presence of an accompanying adult is needed. This category includes students who are conveyed to and/or from school by private motor vehicle rather than being restricted to travelling by public transport.</p>	<p>Students conveyed by bus, train or ferry will be eligible for a refund of their fares. The fares of an escort appointed by the school will be rebated to the school. Students conveyed by private motor vehicle will be eligible for travel assistance at the current kilometric rate per private motor vehicle.</p>
<p>E. Dependent The student is not able to use buses, trains or ferries to travel, by reason of disability, but can travel in vehicles (eg. private motor vehicles or taxis) that do not require modification.</p>	<p>Students will be eligible for travel assistance at the current kilometric rate per private motor vehicle.</p>
<p>F. Most Dependent The student has severe physical disabilities and can only travel in a special purpose vehicle such as a Maxi taxi or mini bus or a private motor vehicle that has been modified to accommodate the student's travel needs.</p>	<p>Students conveyed in a special purpose vehicle will be eligible for travel assistance up to a maximum of \$300 per week, inclusive of any subsidy provided by the Queensland Transport Taxi Subsidy Scheme. Students conveyed in a modified private motor vehicle will be eligible for travel assistance at the current kilometric rate per modified private motor vehicle.</p>

The changes in the travel capability rating may reflect the changes in the student's transport needs as they mature. As part of the IEP process, students' transport needs will be determined according to the travel capability rating scale above.

5 TRAVEL TRAINING

Travel training refers to the development of skills designed to increase a student's ability for independent travel. At an appropriate age, students who do not currently possess the skills to travel alone, but who have the potential to develop these skills, are expected to have them addressed through the school's educational program. The training may be identified as a goal in the student's IEP.

Most students eligible for travel assistance through this program would be expected to be moving towards transport independence by the time they require a Senior Education Training (SET) Plan.

6 APPLICATION PROCESS

Parents, guardians or carers are required to submit a separate online application form each semester for each eligible child. As not all parents are able to apply this way there is an alternative. A simplified paper application form is available from the school that your child attends. The arrangements require it to be submitted to your school where staff will enter it online on your behalf. For each application entered by the school, a service fee of \$5 will be paid to the school.

The online application must be submitted by the nominated closing date (31 October 2008 for Semester 2 2008). The 'submit' command sends the application to the Queensland Catholic Education Commission for processing. If a paper form is used, it must also be returned to the school by the nominated closing date (31 October 2008 for Semester 2 2008).

The school nominated in the online application will be informed by email of the details of the application received. Schools will be asked to certify online within 5 working days of notification, that:

- The student has been verified as eligible for an EAP profile of BSP,
- The impairment category,
- The student's Travel Capability Rating (identified in the IEP).

Travel assistance rebates are normally deposited into the nominated bank accounts of eligible applicants at the end of June for Semester 1 entitlements and end of November for Semester 2 entitlements. (Caveat – the payment timelines will be dependent upon the cashflow of State assistance for this program. If there is a delay in payment, all interested parties will be notified). All eligible applicants are advised by email or letter, if no email address is provided, that their payment has been deposited into their nominated bank account.

A fee may be deducted from the rebate if applicants provide inaccurate bank account details or fail to advise QCEC of any changes to bank account details prior to rebates being paid.

7 TRAVEL AUDITS

Each semester a random selection of applicants will be required to confirm that they have incurred the expenditure declared on their application form. Confirmation may be in the form of receipts from the transport operator or actual tickets issued to students. It is therefore recommended that parents retain all receipts and tickets for a period of six months after the semester has ended.

8 REVIEW

A review of a student's transport assistance needs should occur at least annually and be conducted by the school IEP team. A review may also be undertaken when a student's travel circumstances change.

9 MONITORING THESE GUIDELINES

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission and Independent Schools Queensland will monitor the implementation of these guidelines. Changes may be made to the guidelines in the future.

10 APPEAL PROCESS

Any appeal under these guidelines should be brought to the attention of the Non Government Schools Council through the Executive Officer School Transport at the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, GPO Box 2441, Brisbane, QLD 4001.

11 TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS NOT ELIGIBLE UNDER THESE GUIDELINES

Students who were eligible for travel assistance under the previous NGSTAS guidelines but are ineligible under the current guidelines will continue to receive travel assistance until the end of 2009 unless they:

- change residential address, or
- change from one school to another.

It is intended that from the beginning of 2010 the only students who will receive travel assistance will be those who qualify under the current guidelines.

Definitions of Terms

Alternative Accommodation

See Temporary Residential Accommodation below. Alternative accommodation may also include temporary accommodation for a student at a place other than the normal residential address, for reasons other than for providing relief for families.

Approved Bus Service

An approved bus service is one that has been approved by the Schools Transport Assistance Scheme. For the purposes of the Students with Disabilities Transport Assistance Program school owned buses will be considered approved bus services.

Accredited Non-State School

An accredited non-State school is a school that is provisionally accredited, or accredited, under the Education (Accreditation Non-State Schools) Act 2001.

Charitable Organisation

A charitable organisation is an incorporated not-for-profit agency whose objects include providing a public benefit in the field of welfare. Under these guidelines, the charitable organisation cannot be the school attended. A state government department is not a charitable organisation.

The following organisations are examples of charitable organisations:

- Anglicare
- Rotary
- Salvation Army
- St Vincent de Paul Society

Conveyance Allowance

Queensland Transport provides travel assistance to enable eligible students to travel to and from school. Some non-State school students may be eligible for various forms of conveyance allowance, such as Class A, Class D or Class I. Eligibility is determined by Queensland Transport. <http://www.transport.qld.gov.au/>

Dual Enrolment

The term dual enrolment is used to describe the enrolment of students across two schools to meet a student's educational needs at a particular time. The student may be enrolled at a non-State school and a State school facility such as a Early Childhood Developmental Unit (ECDU).

Education Adjustment Program

The Education Adjustment Program (EAP) is a system used to identify and respond to the educational needs of students with disabilities. It identifies the teaching adjustments that are made in a class/school program to provide an inclusive education for students with a verified diagnosis in autistic spectrum disorder, hearing impairment, intellectual impairment, physical impairment, social emotional disorder, speech-language impairment, vision impairment or a combination of these.

Education Adjustment Program (EAP) Profile

An EAP profile is a record of the education adjustments being made to assist students with disabilities in accessing curriculum, achieving curriculum outcomes and participating in

school life. The profile has been developed to describe the range of adjustments schools make for students with disabilities.

Eligible Student

Refer to section 2.2.

General Recurrent Grant

Funding provided by the Australian government for operational expenses incurred by non-State schools, such as teaching and ancillary staff salaries, professional development, curriculum development; maintenance and general operation provisions. The funding is based on the number of eligible students.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

The IEP is both a process and a product.

The Process:

The IEP process brings parents, professionals and the student (where appropriate) together as a team to consider the student's current level of performance and to determine needs and learning priorities for the next six months. Some team members may be heavily involved in the development of the IEP while others, such as a therapist, may provide specific information only.

The Product:

The product of the IEP process is a plan which provides key information to assist teachers in meeting a student's individual educational needs resulting from a disability.

Students requiring an IEP will be those

- with disabilities whose educational needs have been verified through the EAP process and are eligible for an Education Adjustment Profile.

Non-State School

The terms "non-government school" and "non-State school" are synonymous.

NGSTAS Approved Service

An NGSTAS approved service is a bus or ferry service that has been approved by the Schools Transport Reference Committee. Students with disabilities travelling on buses that are owned, leased, chartered or arranged by a school, parent or organisation affiliated with a school are eligible for transport assistance.

Public Transport

For the purpose of these guidelines public transport includes transport by bus, train, ferry or taxi that is available to any member of the public, including school students. It does not include buses owned, leased, chartered or arranged by a school, parent or organisation affiliated with a school.

School Attended

The school attended refers to the non-State school attended by the student.

Schools in Receipt of Subsidy

For the purpose of these guidelines, non-State schools are considered schools in receipt of subsidy.

Schools Transport Reference Committee

The committee comprises three representatives from the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and three from Independent Schools Queensland. Click here to download a copy of the Committee's charter. [Schools Transport Reference Committee Charter July 2008](#)

Shortest Trafficable Route

This is the shortest route using roads open for public use between the entrance to the school attended by the student and the property alignment at the vehicle access point to the student's residential property nearest to the school attended. No measurements are taken on private property. In calculating this distance, the single journey is used. In cases where the distance to and from school varies because of different routes (eg. one way roads), the average distance is taken.

Student Living Independently

A student living independently is a student who resides independently of a parent or adult carer. These students would be supporting themselves financially and would be responsible for their own transport costs to access the school attended.

Student Travel Capability Rating Scale

The Student Travel Capability Rating Scale is used to measure a student's travel capability. The scale has six levels ranging from Adult Travel to Most Dependent Travel.

Target Group

Students who have high support needs arising from an impairment recognised by the sector authorities for funding purposes. Nominated impairment categories are located in section 2.2 of these guidelines.

Temporary Residential Accommodation

Temporary residential accommodation is short-term accommodation provided for a student with a disability, for the purpose of providing relief for families from the intensive care and attention required by students in their normal home.

Travel Training

Travel training refers to the development of skills designed to increase a student's ability to move towards independent travel.

Urban Service Contract Areas

Refer to section 2.3.3 of these guidelines.

Verification

Refer to the website of the Department of Education and the Arts.

<http://education.qld.gov.au/students/disabilities/adjustment/pdfs/verification.pdf>

Weekly Threshold

The weekly threshold is the weekly amount the applicant is required to meet. The weekly threshold is determined on a per family basis, not on a per student basis. The weekly threshold is set by the Schools Transport Reference Committee each school semester. For applicants who have been granted a Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Veterans Affairs Pensioner Concession Card the threshold may be set at a slightly lower rate.