

FAQs for the roll-out of the Personal Learning Devices

Overview

Q1. What is the background of this PLD initiative and why are we accelerating its roll-out?

Under the National Digital Literacy Programme (NDLP) announced at MOE's Committee of Supply (COS) Debate in March 2020, we had originally planned to equip all secondary school students with a school-prescribed personal learning device (PLD) by 2028.

However, COVID-19 has accelerated the adoption of technology and its use in teaching and learning. Thus, to ensure that all students are well-equipped for digital learning, we have decided to advance the plan by seven years, such that all secondary school students will own a PLD by end of 2021.

Q2. How will the initiative impact teaching and learning?

Teaching and learning will be enhanced through:

- a) Supporting greater personalisation and differentiation in learning.
- b) Empowering students to engage in self-directed learning anytime and anywhere.
- c) Enhancing the development of 21st Century Competencies and digital literacies.
- d) Empowering teachers with deeper data-driven insights into student learning.
- e) Supporting pervasive use of the Singapore Student Learning Space (SLS) platform in schools and allowing students to have seamless access to online learning in and out of class.

Q3. How will the devices be used by students?

The devices will be used both in and out of class for learning, to promote active learning and greater personalisation. In class, the devices will be used to support learning of the curriculum subjects independently or collaboratively. Beyond the classroom, students will be able to use the device for home-based learning. Students can review past lessons, access digital resources on the Singapore Student Learning Space (SLS) platform and other digital platforms to enhance their learning or explore topics of their own personal interests using the device. They can also make use of digital tools such as calendaring and note-taking applications to enhance their personal productivity.

Q4. Will the devices and SLS resources replace textbooks?

The devices and SLS resources will not replace textbooks, as textbooks are currently designed as curriculum-aligned reference for students. However, students can use the devices to complement learning from textbooks with access to curriculum-aligned resources in the SLS.

Ownership of Devices

Q5. What is the chosen PLD bundle and how much does it cost?

The school's chosen PLD bundle is Microsoft Surface Go 2/3 Wi-Fi with 3- year warranty and 3-year insurance. The price of the bundle inclusive of GST is S\$907.

Q6. Is the price of the PLD similar or lower than market prices?

The prices are similar or in most cases, lower than market prices. MOE has a process to review the prices with contractors to keep the prices competitive.

Q7. Can my child opt not to purchase the device?

Every student is required to have a device for teaching and learning purposes and is encouraged to purchase one through the school via the MOE Device Bulk Tender. The device will come with the necessary warranty and insurance as well. Students who do not wish to purchase a device because they already have their own device will have to seek approval from the school before they can pursue this option. The school will ascertain whether the specifications of their existing device are on par with the chosen device model by the school. Upon approval, the school will assist to install the DMA in the student's existing device, which can be uninstalled from the device upon the student's graduation.

All Singaporean students are supported by MOE in purchasing a device. They can tap on their Edusave Account to reduce their out-of-pocket (OOP) expenses when buying a device. MOE has provided a one-off Edusave top-up of \$200 in April 2020 and will be providing another Edusave top-up of \$200 in May 2021 to all eligible Singaporean students in primary and secondary schools, including those in SPED schools. This is on top of the annual Edusave contribution of \$290 for secondary students and \$230 for primary students.

For students from lower-income households, MOE will provide further subsidies so that they do not have to incur any OOP expenses. Students may approach their schools if they require financial assistance.

Q8. Can students share one PLD with their siblings?

For a smooth learning experience, it is strongly encouraged that each student has his/her own PLD as prescribed by the school. This is because different schools may tap on specific PLD for teaching and learning. In addition, the student will be required to use the PLD in school daily and for their learning after school, hence it might not be practical to share the PLD with their siblings.

Q9. Do all students in a school have to use the same device? What about students who opt out of using the school-selected device and wish to use their own? How will this affect their learning?

Students are encouraged to use the model prescribed by the school for a smooth learning experience. If students wish to use their own devices, these devices must meet the necessary specifications stated by the school. They must also be willing to allow the school to install Device Management Application software to manage the device, similar to all school-selected devices.

To ensure that your child's/ward's device is able to support his/her participation in the school's teaching and learning programme, the school will conduct an assessment on the suitability of the device. Please have your child/ward bring the device to school for the assessment at computer Lab 2 after school hours. The school will assess the device for the following:

- a. device should not be older than 4 years from manufacturing date;
- b. battery should hold charge for at least 4 hours;
- c. operates on Windows 10
- d. Dual Core Intel® Pentium® Gold Processor 6500Y
- e. has inking functions (preferred)
- f. has good portability
- g. to be used in school daily

Q10. What will happen to the laptop if I were to use my own laptop instead of purchasing one through PDLP?

Your laptop will be wiped out to factory settings. Meaning all data inside will be lost. Then installation of DMA and other necessary software will be installed into your laptop.

Q11. If student has already bought a laptop from NEUPC-Plus program, can he still buy from PDLP?

School to assess if the NEU PC Plus devices are suitable for learning in school (when used alongside the school's prescribed device). If unsuitable, then school can let student to purchase another device under PDLP and provide the student with the required subsidy.

Q12. Where do we collect the device after the purchase?

The school will make arrangements for students to collect their devices in the school.

Care and Maintenance of Devices

Q13. What is the expected shelf life of the PLD? What happens to the device after my child graduates?

The PLDs have an average shelf life of 3-4 years, to cover the time a student is in a secondary school. The school will uninstall the DMA from the devices upon students' graduation, and students will have full control and personal ownership over their devices afterwards. If the student's device needs to be installed with DMA in JC/MI, it can be reinstated.

Q14. What is the battery life for the laptops?

The battery of a fully charged device will be sufficient for a typical day of school activities, with a mixture of active use and idle periods. Students are to ensure their PLDs are fully charged at home before bringing them to school.

Q15. When a student's device is not able to function or is lost, are they able to loan a school device from school for short-term use?

Schools will be provided short-term loans due to loss or repairs.

Q16. Will my child be allowed to store the device in school overnight? Where will students store their devices when they go for recess or PE lessons?

Students are expected to secure their devices in the common storage lockers and lock the classroom doors when they are away from their classrooms. Students should bring home the devices at the end of the school day so that they can utilise them for learning at home.

Q17. How frequently will the devices be used in class? Is there a recommended limit to screen time in class?

There is no recommended screen time as it depends very much on the nature of the activity. According to the American Academy of Paediatrics (2016), there is no one-size-fits-all approach to limiting the amount of screen time for teenagers. The academy recommends that screen time takes into consideration a child's developmental stage, how the technology is used, the quality of the content and design of the material. Schools will design their learning programmes to ensure that the students' use of PLDs is balanced in relation to other activities and modes of learning.

However, all PLDs will be installed with DMA, which allows teachers to manage students' screen time if they so desire. Teachers will also continue to ensure that the amount of assignments set (both online and offline) is guided by the school's homework policy.

Q18. Can parents approach the tenderer to make separate purchases?

No. The purchase of PLDs, and peripheral accessories, e.g., headphones and screens, riding on the MOE Device Bulk Tender has to be made through the schools. The schools will make their professional decision on the suitable specifications of the device model and accessories that best meets their teaching and learning requirements.

Q19. What if a student transfers school? Will the student need to get a new device that the new school is using as a cohort?

If the devices are similar, the student can continue to use his existing PLD. Otherwise, the school can provide support (e.g. loan a device to the student) on a case-by-case basis, so as not to exert unreasonable demands on students to purchase a new device when they already have a fully functional one.

Questions about the Warranty, Insurance and Security

Q20. What is covered by the insurance?

The PLD will come with a 3-year warranty and insurance coverage allowing for claims of two repairs or one replacement. The following events are covered by insurance:

- Fire
- Lightning
- Power Surges
- Accidental e.g water spillage, drop etc
- Theft due to forcible entry
- Robbery

Q21. What happens if the device is stolen/lost?

The insurance coverage is only applicable to situations of damages and loss where the student has taken all necessary precautions to safeguard the PLD. A police report will need to be made for the insurance claim.

Q22. Does a police report need to be made if a student loses his/her PLD due to negligence?

Accidental loss due to negligence is not covered by insurance and a new PLD will need to be purchased by the parent. The school will assist in purchasing a replacement PLD.

Q23. What if the PLD is faulty?

Technical support will be provided to students through:

- The School's Service Desk set up after school from 2 to 5pm daily .
- Microsoft Phone Support – 800 1013659 (SG)
- Microsoft Online Assisted Support (OAS) page via <https://support.microsoft.com/oas>

Q24. What happens if students damage their PLD accidentally?

If the PLD is damaged, the parents/student can report it to the school. The school will coordinate with the vendor on the assessment of damage and repairs. If there are additional costs incurred, the vendor will contact the parents/student before proceeding with the repair. All additional costs for repairs will be borne by the parents/student if not covered by insurance. Edusave funds cannot be used to pay for the cost of repairs. If the device is damaged beyond economical repair and is not covered by insurance (coverage against damage and loss/theft), the replacement device will have to be paid for by the parents/student.

Q25. Would it not be better if the devices could be insured/have a warranty period of 4 years as a standard?

Extended warranty beyond 3 years for computing devices is not available in the open market. It would be very costly to incorporate such a requirement and it makes more economical sense to replace the device when it is beyond economical repair after 3 years.

Q26. Does the Microsoft Surface Go hardware warranty coverage include the battery?

Yes.

Q27. Does the insurance cover the accessories (e.g. styluses, keyboard cases)?

Insurance coverage is for the main device only and does not cover accessories.

Q28. Can the student still send their device for servicing to their respective centres after the warranty lapses and how will the charges be imposed?

After the 3rd year, students can still send their device to the Service Centre for repair. The charges will be provided by the Service Centre and students/parents will have to assess the reasonableness of the charges and decide whether to take up the repair. Alternatively, students can consider going to other shops to perform the repairs after the warranty is over.

Questions about Student iCon

Q29. How can my child log in to Student iCON?

Details can be found on the school website at <https://www-bpghs-moe-edu-sg-admin.cwp.sg/bpghs/announcements-n-updates/student-icon>

Q30. How long can students use their Student iCON account?

The Student iCON account will be available as long as students are still studying in MOE schools (ie. Primary, Secondary and JC). These accounts will no longer be available to use once the students leave the school system.

Q31. How will my child's/ward's data be used in the PLD and IT Applications?

IT Applications. For the IT Applications (student iCON, Microsoft ProPlus and Zoom), the school will use your child's/ward's personal data such as her name, birth certificate number and class to set up user accounts. This data will also be used for the purposes of authenticating and verifying user identity, troubleshooting and facilitating system improvements. In addition, the commercial providers of these platforms (e.g. Google, Microsoft) will collect and deal with user data generated by your child's/ward's use of these applications. The collection, use and disclosure of such data are governed by the commercial provider's terms of use, which can be found here:

- Student iCON: https://workspace.google.com/terms/education_terms_japan.html
- Microsoft Pro Plus: <https://portal.office.com/commerce/mosa.aspx>
- Zoom: <https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/schools-privacy-statement.html>

Q32. For the apps like MS Office, will the school provide the licenses even to those who will not buy the PLD from the school?

School will not provide license for MS Office. However, each student will be given a school email account. With this school email account, students can access MS 365 Pro Plus that contain applications like Word, Excel and Powerpoint). Students using their own device need to download MS365 Pro+ to their laptop and can access MS365 Pro+ when they login with their school given email account.

Q33. Should students encounter technical difficulties while setting up the DMA who do the students approach?

The DMA vendor, ICT Associates / Managers and DEs will be assisting the students if they encounter any issues during the initial setup. Students can approach the school DE or ICT Associates / Managers for assistance to set up DMA if there are ad hoc device replacements.

Edusave, Subsidies and Payment

Q34. How do I make payment for the PLD bundle?

All Singapore citizens will need to complete the Annex E: Standing Order for Use of Edusave Account at <https://go.gov.sg/pdlpadmin>. Subsidies are given to FAS students and the balance is to be paid from the Edusave Account. The maximum out of pocket payment by a FAS student is \$0.

For students (SC) not on FAS, the payment will be from your Edusave Account. In the event of insufficient Edusave balance, a bill will be generated for you to make payment.

Q35. How do we check the amount of Edusave fund available in our child's/ward's (for Singapore Citizens) account?

You can call 6260 0777 (24-hour automated hotline) to check your child's/ward's Edusave balance.

Q36. How to make PLD device payment for IS/PR students?

You do not need to make payment now. A bill will be generated later and you will be informed to make payment.

Q37. Can students use their Edusave Fund to purchase PLDs from vendors not engaged by the school?

Edusave fund can only be used for purchases facilitated by the school through MOE's bulk tender.

Q38. Can Edusave be used to pay for purchase of accessories/peripherals for the PLD?

Edusave can only be purchased for accessories/peripherals that are bundled with the initial PLD. Edusave cannot be used for individual's purchase of optional accessories / peripherals from the vendor.

Q39. For students whose parents do not want schools to deduct their Edusave for the purchase of PLDs, can they pay cash instead?

It is compulsory for all MOE FAS students to use their Edusave to purchase the PLDs. This authorization is already covered in the 2021 FAS application form.

School-Based FAS students are strongly encouraged to sign up for the PDLP Standing Order so as to minimize the cash outlay.

For Singapore Citizen students who are not under MOE FAS or School Based FAS, parents may choose not to use the Edusave and pay the amount through AXS/AXS mobile app/cash upon receiving the school bill. Parents opting to pay cash and are onboard GIRO should ensure sufficient amount in their bank account.

Q40. Can Edusave be used to pay for insurance and warranty for the PDLP device?

The purchase of the device will include warranty and insurance coverage for the device. Edusave can be used to pay for either the basic (one-year warranty and insurance coverage) or enhanced (three-year warranty and insurance coverage) device bundle. Additional coverage purchased outside of these bundles cannot be paid for with Edusave.

Q41. I require financial assistance for the purchase of the PLD. How can I apply?

Singapore Citizens, Permanent Residents and International Students who require financial assistance and meet the income criteria of Gross Household Income (GHI) \$4,000 or less, or Per Capita Income (PCI) \$1,000 or less, may apply for financial assistance through the school's General Office.

If you are recently retrenched, please produce a "Letter of Retrenchment" from your company.

When assessing GHI and PCI of needy International Students, parent's income will be based on the income of parents who may be residing overseas, and not the local guardian's income. Electronic signatures are acceptable in the application if the parents are residing overseas.

MOE FAS and School-Based FAS students do not need to apply for subsidy.

Q42. Is there any help from MOE for students with no internet connectivity at home?

While secondary school students who are in PDLP schools cannot apply for devices or broadband connectivity under NEU PC Plus, MOE will work with IMDA to provide broadband for eligible students from low income households. Additionally, students can always make use of the free internet access available in school.

ICT-Related Provisions

Q43. Will Microsoft Office be provided, or will the school have to purchase the licence?

Microsoft Office ProPlus and Zoom will be available to students in 2021 progressively after Student iCON rollout. The Microsoft products available under the package are Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote and Publisher.

Q44. Will my child need to purchase software for their devices? If so, can these be paid for with Edusave?

The school may prescribe software that support the teaching and learning requirements. However, Edusave cannot be used for purchase of software (and relevant licences).

To support the development of digital literacy, MOE will also be rolling out the following applications in the Personal Learning Devices in early 2021: Google Suite for Education, Microsoft Office productivity suite which includes only Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote & Publisher, and Zoom.

Q45. Do the devices come with antivirus software preinstalled?

The operating systems in these devices have built-in security measures to defend against worms, viruses and similar malwares. DMA are installed in these devices to ensure that the security posture of these devices is maintained.

Q46. Can students upgrade the memory/RAM of the prescribed device on their own?

This is not possible due to the size of the PLD.

Q47. What is the expected weight of the device? Are there concerns that it may be too heavy for students to carry to and from their home on a daily basis?

MOE has taken factors such as size and weight of the devices into consideration when preparing the tender specifications for the Bulk Tender.

Q48. What if the school Wi-Fi fails?

If the network fails us, the teachers' knowledge of the curriculum and pedagogy will ensure a seamless flow of uninterrupted teaching and learning. Blended learning leverages technology to enhance teaching and learning but the teacher, who is the facilitator and the mediator of learning, will be the constant.