Dear Employers

COVID-19 TEMPORARY RELIEF SCHEME

Further to our communication of 9 April 2020, we have received numerous queries from employers regarding the application process.

Because of all the uncertainty, we are constantly in contact with the UIF to obtain clarity on issues as they arise.

We have forwarded some of the queries to the UIF, and have been advised as follows by them:

1. The application forms and process have been updated by the UIF. The following documents are now required from employers (sent to email address uifclaims@sarpbac.org.za):

   1.1. Spreadsheet 1 (attached) for the period 27 March 2020 – 16 April 2020. It is now no longer necessary for employers to complete spreadsheet 2. The following is important to take into account when completing/finalising spreadsheet 1:

      1.1.1. There is a new Guideline issued for completing spreadsheet 1. This is enclosed. This should be read by employers and complied with;

      1.1.2. The employer’s details should be inserted at columns A – G. Each employee’s details should be inserted from columns H – S. Each employee’s bank details are required in columns P – S;

      1.1.3. The employer details at columns A – G should be repeated in for each employee whose details are inserted into column H – S;

      1.1.4. At column N, employers should insert the SARPBAC minimum rate applicable to each job title (as prescribed in the SARPBAC Main Collective Agreement). The minimum rate should however be converted to a monthly rate. Note that this is different to what we communicated in our communication of 9 April 2020;

      1.1.5. The number “3” should be inserted in column T. This should be repeated for each employee’s details who are inserted into column H – S;

      1.1.6. Spreadsheet 1 must be converted to CSV format (see the attached Guideline in this regard). The spreadsheet must be sent to SARPBAC in both Excel and CSV format. We enclose a sample CSV file as provided to us by the UIF as a point of reference as to what the CSV document should look like. If employers are having trouble converting the document to CSV format, they should indicate as such in the email to SARPBAC and SARPBAC will do the conversion;

   1.2. A letter on the employer’s letterhead warranting that the complete or partial closure temporary closure of the employer’s business operations is as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and granting SARPBAC authority to log the claim for Covid-19 TERS benefits on their behalf. A draft of this letter is enclosed for employers to use;
1.3. Proof of payment to employees for the previous 3 months in the form of pay-roll and bank statements;¹

1.4. Confirmation of the employer’s bank details into which the Covid-19 TERS benefits must be paid (no need to certify); and

1.5. After employers have paid Covid-19 TERS benefits to employees, they are required to, within 5 calendar days of making these payments, submit to SARPBAC their bank statements confirming such payments.

2. We enquired from the UIF whether employers who gave their employees the opportunity to take annual leave over the period of lockdown and have already paid them for this annual leave can claim back from the Covid-19 TERS Scheme any part of the remuneration which they paid to these employees. The UIF has indicated that they have received differing opinions on this issue. We were accordingly advised to communicate to employers that those employers who have paid employees for annual leave should apply for Covid-19 TERS benefits for such employees, but to the extent that they do so, they should indicate in column U that such employee took annual leave by recording as follows “annual leave granted from [insert date] – [insert date]”. The amount paid to the employee should also be recorded in column O. The UIF will then decide whether it will pay such claims or not. If such claims are approved, employers must credit employees' annual leave balances commensurately;

3. We enquired from the UIF whether the Covid-19 TERS scheme would cover any further extensions of the lockdown period. We were advised that as per the Directive (as amended), employers can claim benefits for their employees for a period of up to 3 months. Should lockdown extend beyond 3 months, the Directive may well be amended;

4. We indicated to the UIF that the timelines for submission of documents to the UIF are very tight and almost unachievable. We accordingly enquired whether claims could be submitted at a later date. The response we received was that claims should be submitted at the earliest possible point to allow employees to get paid as soon as possible. We accordingly urge employers to as far as possible get the claims and required documentation to SARPBAC as soon as possible, but by no later than close of business on 14 April 2020.

We trust that the above provides some answers to the queries raised by employers. To the extent that we receive further information from the UIF, this will be communicated to employers. We will also after submission of claims for the period 27 March – 16 April 2020 send out a further communication to employers specifying what needs to be submitted for claims for the subsequent months for which the Covid-19 TERS Scheme extends.

Yours sincerely

Gary Wilson

General Secretary of the Council

¹ In terms of 13(2) of the UIF Act, if the remuneration of an employee fluctuates significantly, benefit calculations must be based on the average remuneration over last six months.