

Frequently Asked Questions

Foreign Employment Income Exemption (Section 10(1)(o)(ii) of the Income Tax Act, 1962)



An amendment to section 10(1)(*o*)(ii) of the Income Tax Act, 1962 (the Act¹) has been promulgated and came into effect on 1 March 2020. The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in this document have been compiled on the basis of questions that employees, employers and the public at large have about the implications of the amendment.

The FAQs are drafted purely to assist employees, employers and the public at large to obtain clarity and to ensure consistency on certain practical and technical aspects relating to the amendment. The FAQs are therefore not intended to be used as legal reference. You can find more information about some of the aspects discussed in this document in Interpretation Note 16 "Exemption from Income Tax: Foreign Employment Income".

The FAQs are also intended to solicit further questions regarding the amendment. The FAQs will therefore be updated periodically to address these questions, as well as any changes to the legislation. In light hereof, it is not envisaged that non-binding private opinions in relation to the amendment will be issued. Any questions that have not been addressed in the FAQs can be sent to ForeignEmployment@sars.gov.za, for consideration.

All other FAQs, forms, guides, interpretation notes, notices, and rulings referred to in these FAQs are available on the **SARS website**. Unless indicated otherwise, the latest issues of these documents should be consulted.

SOUTH AFRICAN REVENUE SERVICE

Date of 1st issue : 7 October 2019
Date of 2nd issue : 22 October 2019
Date of 3rd issue : 17 March 2020

All references to sections are to sections of the Act unless otherwise indicated.

Question		Answer
Section	on 10(1)(o)(ii) requirements	
1.	What does the foreign employment income exemption mean?	Section 10(1)(<i>o</i>)(ii) provides for an exemption for foreign employment income received for services rendered outside South Africa, provided the requirements are met.
		Before 1 March 2020, if the requirements regarding the exemption are met, all remuneration for services rendered outside South Africa is exempt.
		From 1 March 2020, if the requirements are met, the exemption is limited to R1,25 million. Any remuneration received in excess of R1,25 million will be subject to normal tax in South Africa, irrespective of whether tax is paid in another country.
		Relief from double tax is available under the domestic law by way of section 6 <i>quat</i> credit (subject to limitations) or by way of the treaty provisions (if applicable).
2.	What are the requirements	In order to qualify for the exemption, a taxpayer must –
	to qualify for the exemption?	• be a tax resident of South Africa (refer to Question 3);
		 earn certain types of remuneration (refer to Question 4);
		 in respect of services rendered by way of employment;
		outside South Africa;
		 during specified qualifying periods (refer to Question 5); and
		 not be subject to an exclusion (refer to Question 7).
		Refer to Interpretation Note 16 (IN 16).
3.	Who does the exemption apply to?	The exemption only applies to a tax resident of South Africa who is an employee and renders employment services outside South Africa and is subject to tax on his or her worldwide income. For more on tax residence refer to Questions 15 to 22 .
		The exemption does not apply to an individual who is a non-resident for tax purposes as foreign sourced income in relation to foreign services is not from a South African source and therefore not subject to tax in the hands of a non-resident in South Africa.
4.	What type of income	The following amounts fall within the scope of the exemption:
	qualifies for the exemption under section 10(1)(o)(ii)?	Salary
		Taxable benefits
		Leave pay
		• Wage
		Overtime pay
		Bonus

		 Gratuity Commission Fee Emolument Allowance (including travel allowances, advances and reimbursements) Amounts derived from broad-based employee share plans Amounts received in respect of a share vesting 	
5.	What are the qualifying periods (that is, the "days test") that need to be met for purposes of section 10(1)(o)(ii)?	An employee who is a tax resident in South Africa must be outside South Africa for a period or periods exceeding 183 full days (in aggregate) during any 12-month period, and a continuous period exceeding 60 full days during that 12-month period.	
6.	Does any of the requirements that applied before 1 March 2020 change going forward?	No , the requirements to qualify for the exemption remain the same. The only change that is effective from 1 March 2020 is that the exemption is now limited to a maximum of R1,25 million.	
7.	Who is excluded from the application of section 10(1)(<i>o</i>)(ii)?	 The following categories of individuals are excluded from the exemption: A public office holder appointed or deemed to be appointed under an Act of Parliament Employees who are employed in the national, provincial or local sphere of government, certain constitutional institutions, national and provincial public entities and municipal entities Independent contractors and individuals who are self-employed also do not qualify for the exemption as such persons are not in an employment relationship 	
8.	If I meet all the requirements for section 10(1)(o)(ii), is all my foreign employment income exempt?	The answer depends on the amount of remuneration you earn for the services rendered outside South Africa. If the amount of your remuneration is R1,25 million or less, the full amount will be exempt from normal tax in South Africa, provided the amount relates to services rendered outside South Africa. If the amount of your remuneration is more than R1,25 million, only R1,25 million will be exempt and any excess above R1,25 million will be subject to normal tax in South Africa. Also refer to Question 14 .	
9.	How should the taxable benefits received while rendering services outside South Africa be valued?	The provisions of the Seventh Schedule are applicable to the relevant taxable benefit provided. The cash equivalent of the value of the taxable benefit as calculated under the Seventh Schedule will be applicable. If paid in a foreign currency, the amount should be converted using the average exchange rate. Refer to Question 39 .	

10.	If I receive a travel allowance that falls within the R1,25 million exemption, can my taxable income be reduced in respect of my business kilometres travelled?	No, if the amount earned was exempt, the amount is not included in "taxable income". As there is no inclusion in taxable income there is nothing that can be reduced as a result of the business kilometres travelled that relates to the exempt amount. Also refer to Question 11.
11.	If I receive a travel allowance and a <i>portion</i> of the allowance is exempt under section 10(1)(<i>o</i>)(ii), can my taxable income be reduced in respect of all my business kilometres travelled?	Your taxable income can only be reduced in respect of business kilometres travelled during the period when the allowance was included in taxable income.
12.	If I received remuneration in excess of R1,25 million, which includes a travel allowance, how will the R1,25 million exemption be attributed on assessment in respect of	The R1,25 million exemption must be apportioned on a <i>pro rata</i> basis between the travel allowance and the total remuneration. For example, an employee receives total remuneration of R1,5 million which includes a travel allowance of R300 000 for the year of assessment. The exempt portion of the travel allowance is calculated as follows:
	the travel allowance?	Travel allowance / Total remuneration × R1 250 000 R300 000 / R1 500 000 × R1 250 000
		= R250 000 of the travel allowance will be exempt from normal tax
		on assessment.
		Thus, R50 000 will be included in taxable income.
		Any deductions claimed for the year of assessment will be limited to the amount of the allowance included in taxable income.
13.	Is the R1,25 million exemption allowed in respect of each year of assessment or should it be apportioned if I did not work a full year of assessment outside South Africa?	The R1,25 million exemption is available in respect of each year of assessment. This will apply even if you rendered services for only part of the year of assessment, provided the "days" requirements are met.
		Refer to Question 5 on the "days" requirements applicable under section 10(1)(<i>o</i>)(ii).
14.	Should my income be apportioned?	Yes, if you rendered services inside and outside of South Africa, the income received should be apportioned and only the income received in respect of work days outside South Africa during which services were rendered, will be exempt. From 1 March 2020, the exemption is limited to R1,25 million.
		See IN 16 for more guidance on the apportionment method that should be applied.

15.	Does the change to section 10(1)(o)(ii) result in a new "expat tax" being levied?	No , there is no new "expat tax" introduced. The only effect of the change relating to section $10(1)(o)(ii)$ is that the exemption is limited to R1,25 million. If the R1,25 million is exceeded, such excess is subject to normal tax according to a taxpayer's marginal rate of tax.	
Taxı	residence		
16.	Who is a tax resident in South Africa?	A person is a tax resident if he or she is ordinarily resident or becomes a resident by way of physical presence.	
		For more details on the different tests to become a tax resident in South Africa, refer to the following interpretation notes:	
		 Interpretation Note 3 "Resident: Definition in Relation to a Natural Person – Ordinarily Resident" (IN 3) 	
		Interpretation Note 4 "Resident: Definition in Relation to a Natural Person – Physical Presence Test"	
17.	Is tax residency based on citizenship?	No , citizenship is one of the indicators that may point to someone being ordinarily resident, but that is not conclusive. Various factors may play a role and must be taken into account to determine whether a person is ordinarily resident in South Africa. Refer to IN 3 for more detail in this regard.	
18.	How does "financial emigration" impact my tax residence?	The term "financial emigration" has been used in the public at large with reference to the process of acquiring approval from the South African Reserve Bank to emigrate from South Africa for exchange control purposes. Emigration is not connected to an individual's tax residence. It is merely one factor that may be taken into account to determine whether an individual broke his or her tax residence. An individual's tax residence is not automatically broken when he or she emigrates for exchange control purposes. The deciding factor remains whether an individual ceased to be ordinarily resident in the Republic.	
19.	Must I notify SARS if I cease to be a tax resident in South Africa?	Yes.	
20.	How should I notify SARS if my tax residence status changes?	SARS can be informed of a taxpayer's intention to cease to be a resident through the wizard on the income tax return where the taxpayer is asked whether he or she "ceased to be a tax resident". When a taxpayer ceased to be a tax resident it should be indicated on the income tax return together with the date on which it occurred. Alternatively, SARS can be notified when an application is made	
		for a tax clearance certificate via eFiling when emigrating from South Africa with the intention to cease to be ordinarily resident in the Republic (that is, not on the income tax return).	

21.	How should I notify SARS if my tax residence status changed in a prior year and I did not inform SARS during that year of assessment?	Refer also to Question 22 . If a capital gain was so deemed and you did not declare it, you can do it now through the Voluntary Disclosure Programme to eliminate any potential penalties and prosecution.
22.	What are the tax implications if I cease to be a tax resident in South Africa?	A deemed disposal for capital gains tax purposes takes place at the time when an individual ceases to be a tax resident. The individual will be deemed to have disposed of his or her worldwide assets, excluding immovable property situated in South Africa.
Doub	ele tax situation	
23.	Will the change to section 10(1)(o)(ii) result in a double tax scenario?	If an individual earns employment income in excess of R1,25 million and there is no tax treaty or the tax treaty between South Africa and the foreign country does not provide a sole taxing right to one country, both countries will have a right to tax the income. The portion of the income in excess of R1,25 million may end up being subject to double tax.
		Generally, under the provisions of the relevant tax treaty, if an employee renders services in a foreign country exceeding 183 days, both countries enjoy the right to tax the income. The country of source enjoys the first right to tax the employment income and the country of residence, in our case South Africa, will provide double tax relief in the form of a foreign tax credit to the extent that double tax arises, subject to limitations.
24	What remedies do I have to relieve the double taxation?	Section 6quat is the mechanism under South Africa's domestic law to claim relief from double tax where the amount received for services rendered outside South Africa is subject to tax in South Africa and in the foreign country. This credit may be claimed on assessment through an individual's income tax return, provided certain requirements are met. For more detailed information on the provisions of section 6quat, refer to Interpretation Note 18 "Rebate or Deduction for Foreign Taxes on Income".
		Alternatively, relief from double tax may also be sought by way of the treaty provisions.
		An employer may at his or her discretion, under paragraph 10 of the Fourth Schedule, apply for a directive from SARS to take into account the potential foreign credit to determine the employees' tax (PAYE) liability on a monthly basis. The employer will be able to apply for such a directive through a dedicated channel that will be made available to the public by SARS. Refer to Questions 43 to 47 .
		Even when a directive is issued to the employer that allows the employer to take into account a potential foreign tax credit on the payroll for PAYE purposes, the employee is still required to submit an income tax return in which the actual foreign tax credit under section 6quat has to be claimed.

25.	If there is no tax treaty applicable between South Africa and the host country, what legislation will be applied?	The domestic tax legislation of each country will be applied independently of each other. The employee will be able to claim a section 6 <i>quat</i> credit on assessment in respect of any double tax that arose, subject to certain requirements.
26.	Should an employer that has a PAYE withholding obligation take the provisions of a tax treaty into account in relation to employees rendering services outside South Africa?	Yes, it is important to take the treaty into account to be able to determine which country has a right to tax the income. This will determine whether an employee has a normal tax liability in South Africa in which case the employer is obliged to withhold PAYE. Refer also to Questions 34 to 42 that deal with various payroll issues.
27.	Will the tax treaty apply to the first R1,25 million of remuneration earned?	No , the tax treaty will not apply as there will be no double taxation due to the fact that the R1,25 million is exempt from normal tax in South Africa.
28.	Will the tax treaty apply to the amount of remuneration exceeding R1,25 million?	Yes , the tax treaty will apply as the portion of the remuneration in excess of R1,25 million may be subject to double taxation.
29.	Is the exemption under section 10(1)(o)(ii) dependent on the provisions of a tax treaty?	No , the R1,25 million is exempt under domestic law and not under a tax treaty. The exemption is therefore not dependent on the application of a tax treaty and applies irrespective of whether there is a tax treaty or not.
Comp	oliance matters	
30.	If I qualify for the exemption, do I have to submit an income tax return in South Africa?	Yes, the Public Notice issued under section 25 of the Tax Administration Act, 2011 read with section 66 of the Act specifically provides that an individual working outside South Africa is required to submit an income tax return.
31.	If I am employed, only get paid by one employer and earn <i>less than</i> R1,25 million, do I have a normal tax liability in South Africa?	No, provided you only receive employment income and no other income from a source inside or outside South Africa that may be subject to normal tax. To the extent that any employment income relates to services rendered inside South Africa, such income will be subject to normal tax in South Africa (see Question 14). As noted in Question 30, the individual is still obliged to submit a tax return.

FAQs:	FAQs: Foreign Employment Income Exemption [Section 10(1)(o)(ii)]			
32.	If I am employed and I earn <i>more than</i> R1,25 million remuneration, do I have a normal tax liability in South Africa? If so, how should my liability be settled?	If you are employed by a local employer, PAYE will be deducted from your remuneration in excess of R1,25 million. If you are employed by a foreign employer that has no representative employer in South Africa, no PAYE will be withheld from your remuneration in excess of R1,25 million. You will have to settle your tax liability by way of provisional tax in respect of all your taxable income. Refer to Interpretation Note 1 "Provisional Tax Estimates" (IN 1) for more details on provisional tax.		
33.	What is the impact on me if I work in a tax haven, being a low tax jurisdiction with a low tax rate or no tax?	The exemption under section 10(1)(<i>o</i>)(ii) will apply in respect of remuneration earned up to R1,25 million. Any income in excess of R1,25 million will become subject to normal tax in South Africa. If remuneration in excess of R1,25 million is received, there will not be a double tax situation in the foreign country if no taxes are imposed on income in that country. Since there will be no double taxation in this instance, no section 6 <i>quat</i> credit can be claimed at the end of the year of assessment. However, should a low tax rate be imposed in the foreign country, a rebate under section 6 <i>quat</i> may be claimed.		
Payre	oll related issues			
34.	How should the R1,25 million exemption be calculated to determine the PAYE withholding obligation?	The R1,25 million should be accumulated on a monthly basis in respect of all qualifying remuneration items. As soon as the R1,25 million limit is reached, the income in excess of R1,25 million becomes subject to normal tax. The R1,25 million cannot be smoothed or averaged over the year of assessment.		

It must be calculated by adding up all remuneration items received from the beginning of the year of assessment or applicable start date of an assignment until the R1,25 million limitation is reached.

The following example illustrates the cumulative basis on which the R1,25 million should be calculated.

An employee goes on secondment to a foreign country on 1 March 2020. The employer is satisfied that the employee will qualify for the exemption under section 10(1)(o)(ii) and exercises the discretion to apply the exemption through the payroll. The employee receives the following monthly remuneration:

Salary: R200 000 Travel allowance: R50 000 Accommodation benefit: R30 000

Items	March	April	Мау	June	July
Salary	R200 000	R200 000	R200 000	R200 000	R200 000
Travel allowance	R50 000	R50 000	R50 000	R50 000	R50 000
Accommodation benefit	R30 000	R30 000	R30 000	R30 000	R30 000
Accumulated total	R280 000	R560 000	R840 000	R1 120 000	R1 400 000
Exempt	R280 000	R280 000	R280 000	R280 000	R130 000
Subject to normal tax	R0	R0	R0	R0	R150 000

It is accepted that in the month of July, in which the R1,25 million limitation will be exceeded, the employer, from a payroll perspective, can follow various different options to make up the R1,25 million exemption in that month, for example:

Option 1

R130 000 salary

Option 2

- R50 000 travel allowance
- R30 000 accommodation benefit
- R50 000 salary

Option 3

- R80 000 salary
- R50 000 travel allowance

35. Does an employer have a choice to withhold PAYE from my foreign employment income?

The potential for an exemption under section 10(1)(o)(ii) does not automatically waive the obligation of an employer to deduct PAYE under the Fourth Schedule. An employer that is satisfied that the provisions of section 10(1)(o)(ii) will apply in a particular case may, however, elect not to deduct PAYE in such case. In the case where the exemption was not applicable, the employer will be liable for the employees' tax not deducted as well as the concomitant penalties and interest.

An employer that has deducted or withheld PAYE where it subsequently transpires that the remuneration qualifies for exemption under section 10(1)(o)(ii) may not refund overdeducted PAYE to an employee. The employee must claim a refund on assessment. Supporting documentation in the form of, for example, a travel schedule, a passport and an employment contract, may be requested from the employee to substantiate the exemption claimed on assessment.

36.	What is the impact of the exemption on SDL and UIF?	Any amount that is exempt under section 10(1)(o)(ii) no longer constitutes "remuneration" as defined in paragraph 1 of the Four Schedule. The reason for this is that "remuneration" is defined to mean "any amount of income". "Income" as defined in section 1(1) excludes exempt income. These exempt amounts are not subject to the deduction of UIF of SDL as they do not constitute "remuneration". Only the remuneration that remains taxable in South Africa will be subject to the deduction or withholding of levies or contributions under	
		these statutes.	
37.	Under which income source codes should the income be disclosed?	For employees' tax certificate (IRP5 certificate) purposes, each remuneration item in respect of foreign service income must be disclosed under the relevant foreign income source code. For example, foreign sourced salary income must be disclosed under code 3651, bonus payments under code 3655 and medical aid contributions under code 3860.	
		Code 3652 may not be used for any remuneration item that may qualify for exemption under section $10(1)(o)(ii)$ as there are specific foreign income source codes for each item that should be used. If an employer discloses any foreign sourced income under code 3652, the exemption under section $10(1)(o)(ii)$ will not be applied on assessment.	
		An employer that is satisfied that the employee qualifies or will qualify for the exemption under section 10(1)(o)(ii) and applies the exemption for PAYE purposes, should disclose the exempt portion of the remuneration under information source code 4587, limited to R1,25 million.	
		For example:	
		 Code 3601 – Gross salary earned in South Africa (if applicable), subject to normal tax. 	
		Code 3651 – Gross salary earned outside of South Africa.	
		Code 4587 – The portion of the remuneration qualifying for the section 10(1)(o)(ii) exemption as taken into account by the employer for PAYE purposes (limited to R1,25 million).	
		If the employer does not apply the exemption through the payroll, the information source code 4587 should be zero.	
		If there is no foreign income source code, code 4587 may not be used.	
		If the entire foreign sourced income is exempt and the employer applies the exemption through the payroll, the value of the information source code should not be more than the value of the foreign income source code.	
		Code 4587 – R900 000	

	T	
		For example, an employee receives a salary of R800 000 and a bonus of R100 000 and qualifies for the exemption which the employer applies through the payroll for PAYE purposes. The IRP5 disclosure is as follows:
		Code 3651 - R800 000
		Code 3655 – R100 000
38.	If I have a South African employer and earn South African sourced income as well as foreign sourced	SARS prefers a single certificate, where possible, but where separate certificates are issued, the PAYE, SDL and UIF liabilities must be calculated on the total amount that is subject to PAYE, SDL and UIF.
	income, should my income be disclosed on one or two IRP5 certificates?	If one IRP5 certificate is used, the employer must ensure the correct IRP5 source codes are used in respect of the South African and foreign sourced income. If two IRP5 certificates are used, one related to the South African sourced income and one related to the foreign sourced income, the employer must ensure the correct amount of PAYE, SDL and UIF is calculated and withheld on the combined income from the two IRP5 certificates.
39.	What foreign exchange rate should be used on a monthly basis if amounts paid from a foreign employer should be processed through the South African payroll?	Section 25D(1) provides that the spot rate should be used on a monthly basis by the employer as and when the amounts are received or accrued to the employees. The average exchange rate is catered for under section 25D(3) should an employee elect to do so.
40.	Should the amounts paid by the foreign employer, that is not required to be paid or processed by the South African employer, be taken into account to calculate the R1,25 million exemption?	Yes, for the determination of the R1,25 million exemption, the remuneration items provided by both the local and foreign employer must be taken into account. The R1,25 million exemption has to be determined with reference to all income received by the employee for the services rendered abroad irrespective of which employer (local or foreign) is making the payment.
41.	Does the foreign employer have a liability to withhold PAYE from the remuneration paid to a resident employee working outside South Africa?	The answer depends on whether the foreign employer has a representative employer in South Africa. If there is a representative employer in South Africa, such employer will have an obligation, subject to the provisions of a tax treaty, to withhold PAYE in South Africa on the remuneration in excess of R1,25 million. The remuneration not qualifying for the exemption will also be subject to SDL and UIF.
		If there is no representative employer in South Africa, the foreign employer does not have any obligation to withhold PAYE. Such employee will be required to register as a provisional taxpayer and settle any tax liability in South Africa by way of provisional tax payments. Refer to IN 1 for more details on provisional tax

42.	Does the South African employer have a responsibility to withhold PAYE from an amount paid by the foreign employer?	The obligation to withhold PAYE is determined by who is "liable" to pay the remuneration. The South African employer will only be liable to withhold PAYE if that employer pays or is liable to pay remuneration. If the South African employer acts as the representative employer of the foreign employer in South Africa, it will be required to withhold PAYE on behalf of the foreign employer.	
Direc	tive under paragraph 10 of	the Fourth Schedule (hereinafter referred to as "directive")	
43.	If I am in a double tax position, is there any relief available through the payroll if my employer has a withholding obligation in South Africa?	Yes, an employer may apply for a directive to vary the basis on which PAYE is withheld monthly in South Africa. This is not the actual granting of the section 6quat credit. The potential foreign tax credit is taken into account to determine a method on how the PAYE that has to be withheld for payroll purposes. The section 6quat credit will only be granted on assessment, provided the necessary requirements are met.	
44.	Can my foreign employer, who does not have a withholding obligation in South Africa, apply for a directive to provide relief for my double tax situation when my income exceeds R1,25 million and I pay tax on that excess in South Africa as well as the foreign country I work in?	The application for a directive can only be made if the employer has an obligation to withhold PAYE. In the case of a foreign employer who has no PAYE withholding obligation, there would be no need to vary the basis on which PAYE is withheld as no PAYE is withheld in the first place. A section 6 <i>quat</i> credit will have to be claimed on assessment.	
45.	Can an employer automatically apply a potential foreign tax credit through the South African payroll?	No , any possible relief should be applied for by the employer by way of a directive.	
46.	Are there any circumstances under which the directive will not be considered?	An application for a directive will not be considered if the following circumstances are applicable to an employee: • The employee is below the tax threshold • The employee's remuneration is exempt (less than R1,25 million) • The employee is not taxed in the foreign country	

47.	Which tax rate will apply to the income that is in excess of the R1,25 million exemption?	The income in excess of R1,25 million will be taxed at the normal tax rate up to 45%, whichever is applicable to the excess portion of the income.
		For example, an individual (below 65 years of age) earns foreign employment income of R1,5 million. Based on the tax rates applicable to the 2020 year of assessment, the normal tax liability is calculated below.
		 R1 250 000 will be exempt
		 R250 000 is subject to normal tax and calculated as follows:
		= R37 062 + [(R250 000 - R205 900) × 26%]
		= R37 062 + R11 466
		= R48 528
		= less the primary rebate of R14 958
		= R33 570