

Guide for teachers

Securing Jobs for Your Future



Changes to the training system

What teachers, trainers and course advisors need to know

Securing Jobs for Your Future – Skills for Victoria is a Victorian Government initiative to improve and refocus the training system. Many changes come into effect on 1 July 2009. This is to help you in your role in supporting and informing students.

The Victorian Training Guarantee

The main idea behind the changes is to encourage more people to undertake training and to become qualified at a higher level, especially in areas where employers face persistent and serious skill shortages. In addition to the immediate need to address these shortages, there is a broader concern to develop a culture of life-long participation in skills development.

The Government is expanding the number of places at TAFE Institutes, private training providers, and Adult and Community Education providers over the next few years.

A subsidised place is guaranteed to anyone who is eligible, as an entitlement, and people will be able to access this entitlement more than once, as long as they keep undertaking qualifications at successively higher levels. This is called the *Victorian Training Guarantee* and it is being introduced over the next two years, starting with Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas from 1 July 2009 and extending to programs at all other levels from January 2011.

In the meantime enrolments will take place as usual in programs below Diploma level, with government support, but there will be limits on the number of places available, as there are now.

The guaranteed places come with some new eligibility (entry) requirements – these are outlined later.

Competitive providers, funded according to demand

The Victorian Government is also changing the model of funding so that by 2011 all funding for subsidised training and further education will flow to where the demand is, rather than being allocated up-front on the basis of pre-arranged contracts. Private and public providers will compete directly for government funding, with individual students having a wider choice of providers. Students will need to be well informed about the training products, programs and services available, and the employment opportunities that become accessible through the qualifications they will gain.

New fees

Another change affecting students is a new schedule of fees for all training courses from 1 July 2009 (not just Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas). As currently, the government subsidy covers most of the cost for eligible students, but instead of the standard tuition fees which are currently the same for all courses, a new schedule of tuition fees will apply, based on categories of courses. Fees for some course categories will decrease, some will remain similar to the current rates, but some will increase, particularly at the higher levels, in line with the higher benefits people get from these qualifications. The Government has continued to set a minimum fee for each course and the maximum students can pay, but within those limits providers have some room to move in setting the tuition fee.

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New enrolments in Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas from 1 July 2009

Who is eligible for a subsidised place?

First, a person must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident, or hold a Special Category Visa (for New Zealand students). If they are also under 20 on 1 January in the year when they will be undertaking the course, there are no more requirements – they are eligible. If they are 20 or older on that date, their previous qualifications are taken into account. If they are enrolling in a course that is accredited at a higher level than the highest qualification they already hold, then they are eligible. For example, if they have completed year 12, that counts as equivalent to a Certificate II qualification. A Diploma or Advanced Diploma is higher than that, so they would be eligible. But if they already hold a Diploma or a Bachelor Degree, for example, they would not be eligible for a subsidised place in a Diploma course.

Guidance for applicants who are not eligible

For students who are not eligible for a government subsidised place in the course of their choice, there may be other options to suggest, for example a higher level course that would suit their needs just as well. Or they may prefer to enrol on a fee-for-service basis without a government subsidy especially if your provider offers financial assistance through VET FEE-HELP.

Are there any exemptions from these rules?

In a very limited number of cases, mainly to do with critical shortages in certain occupations or significant employment disadvantage, a provider might grant a subsidised place to a person who doesn't meet the eligibility requirements because of a prior qualification. Your local provider may well have a policy on the management of exemptions.

What fees apply?

For a subsidised place the tuition fee will be worked out for each individual student, based on the number of hours they are enrolling in and any other study they have already done in that year. The amount can vary for different students.

For the six months between July and December 2009, students will not pay more than \$750 in tuition fees for a Diploma or Advanced Diploma. For the 2010 year, the maximum will be \$2,000 for the year, no matter how many hours they study. As well as tuition fees, there will usually be some other costs, such as a services and amenities fee and equipment and materials fees. For more detailed information about fees visit www.skills.vic.gov.au/tafe_students/fees

What financial assistance is available?

If a student is enrolling as part of an Apprenticeship or Traineeship, a concession is available if they have a Commonwealth Health Care Card or meet certain other requirements. Indigenous students pay only the minimum tuition fee. Some courses also have special arrangements in place to reduce or remove tuition fees. For further information refer to

www.skills.vic.gov.au/tafe_students/financial_assistance

Your provider may also offer access to VET FEE-HELP. This is a Commonwealth Government Program and for further information refer to

www.deewr.gov.au/VET/VETFEEHELP

New enrolments in courses below Diploma level after 1 July 2009

Do the new entry requirements apply to these courses?

No. Unless students are enrolling through the special program *Skills for Growth* (more about this later) the changes to entry requirements will not apply until January 2011. They still have to meet citizenship and residency requirements, but the new requirements about qualifications already held will not affect them if they are commencing in 2009 or 2010.

Do the new fees apply?

The new tuition fees will apply to these enrolments. Students will pay different fees depending on the category of the courses they are enrolling in. Some other fees may also be required, such as a student services and amenities fee and fees to cover the cost of equipment or materials. For more detailed information about fees applying to different courses visit www.skills.vic.gov.au/tafe_students/fees

What financial assistance is available?

If students hold a Commonwealth Health Care card or meet certain other requirements, concessions on tuition fees are available for courses below Diploma level. The concession tuition fee is the same as the minimum fee; this varies from \$50 per year, up to \$120 per year, depending on the course. Indigenous students pay only the minimum fee. Some courses may have special arrangements for reduction or removal of fees. However, VET FEE-HELP is not available for courses at this level, so students will not be able to access this type of loan to pay their fees.



Skills for Growth – a special program

Under a special program some employees working in small and medium sized businesses will be participating in an assessment and analysis process to identify training that would be valuable both to them as individuals and to their employer. The new entry requirements will apply to all enrolments through this program, in all course categories. Specialist staff will be working with employers and employees participating in *Skills for Growth* and they can provide more detailed information.

Continuing students

What about students already enrolled – how are they affected?

Students already enrolled and started before 1 July 2009 will not be affected by the changes. Their tuition fees will stay the same, with only a minor adjustment for indexation each year, until they finish their courses or withdraw. If they want to take a period of absence they need to have the absence authorised by the provider, so that the arrangement is maintained when they return. Providers are not obliged to maintain the same fee rate for students transferring from a course elsewhere but may decide to do so. This arrangement (called 'fee maintenance') will last until the end of 2012, so continuing students have time to finish their courses. After that everyone will pay the new tuition fees.



Will non-tuition fees stay the same?

No, the other fees – student services and amenities, for example – may change. A provider is not obliged to keep everything exactly the same for continuing students.

What if the new fees are cheaper? Can students change over?

If a student is doing a Foundation Skills course, such as English as a Second Language or a Certificate in General Education for Adults, the fees will be cheaper after 1 July 2009. The provider may adjust the hourly rate for any hours a student is taking in the second half of 2009 so they can take advantage of this. In most other instances, there is not likely to be an advantage in changing over, but from the beginning of 2010 students may transfer to the new tuition fee rates if they wish. All tuition fees continue to be subject to fee caps.

Assistance available from the Australian Government – VET FEE-HELP

What is VET FEE-HELP?

VET FEE-HELP is an Australian Government loan scheme for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector that is part of the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP). Students studying at the Diploma and above level may be able to apply through their training provider for VET FEE-HELP assistance to defer the cost of their studies.

Who can get VET FEE-HELP assistance and where can I find out more?

VET FEE-HELP is currently available for full fee-paying (fee-for-service) students undertaking certain studies in the VET sector. However from 1 July 2009, students whose enrolments are Victorian Government funded may also be able to access VET FEE-HELP assistance.

You can find out more by talking to your training provider, by visiting www.deewr.gov.au/VET/VETFEEHELP or calling **13 38 73**.

More questions about the training system changes?

For broader information about the Victorian training system reforms, see the policy statement *Securing Jobs for Your Future – Skills for Victoria* at www.skills.vic.gov.au/corporate/directions/skillsreform or SMS 'skills' to **134688**, or call the Hotline on **131823**.

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Student eligibility at 1 July 2009

