

Skills First Program: Student Eligibility

This Fact Sheet explains how training providers should apply *Skills First* eligibility rules and includes helpful example scenarios.

OVERVIEW

The *Skills First* program provides government-subsidised training for students who meet the eligibility requirements.

The eligibility requirements currently prioritise training for young people (under 20), Apprenticeships and Foundation Skills and otherwise requires students to train in progressively higher qualifications ('upskilling').

There are core eligibility requirements and there are limits on how much *Skills First* funded training a student can do. This aims to maximise course completions and encourage students to make informed decisions about their training and employment opportunities.

This Fact Sheet describes:

- how to assess whether a student meets the *Skills First* eligibility requirements and limits
- exemptions from eligibility criteria that may be offered to students under particular initiatives AND
- four enrolment scenarios to show how the eligibility requirements and limits could apply to different students.

Eligibility requirements under the *Skills First* program are described in the 2018-19 VET Funding Contracts (the Contract) and the *2019 Guidelines about Determining Student Eligibility and Supporting Evidence* (the Guidelines). This Fact Sheet must be read in conjunction with the Contract and Guidelines.

WHAT CAN A STUDENT ENROL IN?

To be eligible for *Skills First* funding, a student must be either:

- an Australian citizen
- a holder of a permanent visa OR
- a New Zealand citizen

A student must also enrol in a course that will result in **'upskilling'**

THE 'UPSKILLING' REQUIREMENT

Requirement	Taking into account	But not taking into account	Why?
'Upskilling'¹ The individual must seek a qualification at a higher level than the highest qualification held at the time when training commences	the qualification(s) the individual has already <u>completed</u> <i>(including qualifications that were not government-subsidised)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• completed VCE/VCAL, International Baccalaureate and senior secondary certificates from other Australian jurisdictions• courses on the Foundation Skills List• VET certificates completed as part of a senior secondary qualification (including School Based Apprenticeships/Traineeships)• courses with the title 'Course in...' which are not aligned with a specified level within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) AND• Non-Australian qualifications, except where equivalency has formally been established with a qualification within the AQF.	To encourage students to obtain progressively higher skills

Note: If a student is seeking to enrol in a 'Course in...' that is not aligned with the Australian Qualifications Framework, if they hold a qualification up to a Certificate IV level (or if they don't hold any qualification), they will be considered to meet the 'upskilling' requirement.

Students do NOT have to meet the 'upskilling' requirement if they are:

- under 20
- over 20 and seeking to enrol in courses on the Foundation Skills List
(unless they hold a Diploma or above qualification, or are in the Commonwealth 'Skills for Education and Employment' program)
- over 20 and seeking to enrol in an Apprenticeship OR
- over 20 and seeking to enrol in VCE/VCAL.

¹ Refer to Clause 2.2(c)(v).of Schedule 1 of the VET Funding Contract

THE '2 X 2 X 2' LIMITS

In addition to the 'upskilling' requirement, there are **three limits** on how much training a student can do:

Limit	How many?	Of what?	Over what period?	At what level?	Not taking into account	Why?
<p>'2 in a year'</p> <p>The student may make a maximum of...</p>	2	<p>commencements</p> <p>(government-subsidised)</p>	in a calendar year	The limit applies regardless of the level of the commencements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if a student is moving from a superseded qualification to the current version of the same qualification if a student is recommencing training in the same qualification (at either the same or a different provider) if a student is seeking to enrol in an apprenticeship after having participated in one of the Pre-Apprenticeship and Pathway Qualifications listed in the <i>Guidelines About Determining Student Eligibility and Supporting Evidence</i> If a student has participated in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> '22469VIC - Course in Introduction to the National Disability Insurance Scheme' any course or skill set undertaken as part of the Department of Education and Training 'Skills Uplift Pilot Program' '22510VIC – Course in identifying and responding to family violence risk' 	<p>To maximise course completions</p> <p>To encourage students to make informed decisions about their training and employment opportunities</p>
<p>'2 at a time'</p> <p>The student may be undertaking a maximum of...</p>	2	<p>courses</p> <p>(government-subsidised)</p>	at any one time	The limit applies regardless of the level of the commencements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if a student is participating in '22469VIC - Course in Introduction to the National Disability Insurance Scheme'; or any course or skill set undertaken as part of the Department of Education and Training 'Skills Uplift Pilot Program' '22510VIC – Course in identifying and responding to family violence risk' 	<p>To maximise course completions</p> <p>To encourage students to make informed decisions about their training and employment opportunities</p>
<p>'2 at level'</p> <p>The student may make a maximum of...</p>	2	<p>commencements</p> <p>(government-subsidised)</p>	across the lifetime of the student	<p>at each level of the AQF</p> <p>OR</p> <p>in the 'Courses in' category (which are not mapped to the AQF)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCE/VCAL; International Baccalaureate; and non-Victorian senior secondary school certificates Courses on the Foundation Skills List VET certificates completed as part of a senior secondary qualification (including School Based Apprenticeships/Traineeships) if a student is transitioning from a superseded qualification to the current version of the same qualification if a student is recommencing training in the same qualification (at either the same or a different provider) if a student has participated in '22469VIC - Course in Introduction to the National Disability Insurance Scheme' any course or skill set undertaken as part of the Department of Education and Training 'Skills Uplift Pilot Program' '22510VIC – Course in identifying and responding to family violence risk' 	To encourage students to get progressively higher skills

ARE THERE ANY EXEMPTIONS FROM THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND LIMITS?

The eligibility requirements and limits apply unless there's an applicable exemption in Part C of Schedule 1 of the Contract.

To grant an exemption, you must:

- know whether your Contract allows you grant it (some exemptions can only be granted by particular types of training providers)
- understand the circumstances in which exemptions can be made under each initiative AND
- follow the Guidelines and sight and keep a copy of any evidence that a student has to provide to show they are entitled to an exemption.

The following table summarises the current exemptions available under particular initiatives. Where there is a tick '✓' against an eligibility criterion, a student may be exempt from that rule if they meet the requirements under that initiative.

Initiative	Citizenship/residency	Upskilling	'2 in a year'	'2 at a time'	'2 at level'
Asylum Seeker VET Program	✓				
Back to Work Scheme		✓			✓
TAFE and Learn Local Eligibility Exemptions for up to 20% of Commencements		✓			✓
LaTrobe Valley Initiative		✓			✓
TAFE NDIS Training Campaign		✓	✓	✓	✓
22510VIC – Course in identifying and responding to family violence risk		✓	✓	✓	✓

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

These four scenarios show examples of how to assess a student's eligibility based on information about their age and previous study.

Note: where a scenario indicates a student is not eligible, they may still be able to get *Skills First* funding if they are entitled to an exemption under one of the initiatives outlined in the previous section.

Example 1 — Sarah wants to enroll in a Certificate III in Baking (Apprenticeship)

<p>Sarah is 35</p> <p>She has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• commenced a Certificate III in Beauty Services, but withdrew (government-subsidised)• completed a Certificate III in Retail (government-subsidised).	<p>Is Sarah eligible?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NO. Even though the 'upskilling' requirement does not apply to Apprenticeships, Sarah is still not eligible because she has reached the '2 at level in a lifetime' limit.• Sarah can get <i>Skills First</i> funding for training at a Certificate IV level or above.
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Example 2 – Mohammed wants to enroll in a Certificate II in Ecology

<p>Mohammed is 18</p> <p>He has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• completed a Certificate II in Food Processing (government-subsidised)• completed a Certificate II in Auslan (government-subsidised). <p>Both Certificate II qualifications were completed in 2019.</p>	<p>Is Mohammed eligible?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NO. Mohammed has reached the '2 in a year' limit, so he can't get <i>Skills First</i> funding for any more training in 2019.• From next calendar year, he can do more <i>Skills First</i> funded training, but not at a Certificate II level, because he has also reached the '2 at level in a lifetime' limit.• As Mohammed will still be under 20 next year, he won't have to meet the 'upskilling' requirement, so he can also do training at a level lower than a Certificate II and still get <i>Skills First</i> funding.
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Example 3 – Stefan wants to enroll in a Certificate III in Tourism

<p>Stefan is 23</p> <p>He has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commenced a Certificate III in Pet Grooming (government-subsidised)• Completed a Certificate III in Science (NOT government-subsidised)	<p>Is Stefan eligible?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NO. Stefan is over 20 and he needs to be 'upskilling'. He can get <i>Skills First</i> funding for training at a Certificate IV level or above.• However, Stefan has not reached the '2 at level in a lifetime' limit, because only one of the Certificate III courses he did previously was government-subsidised.• Stefan could receive <i>Skills First</i> funding for another Certificate III level qualification if it is an Apprenticeship, as these are not included in the 'upskilling' requirement.
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Example 4 – Hien wants to enroll in a 'Course in Supported Playgroup Facilitation'

<p>Hien is 45</p> <p>She has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education (government-subsidised)• Completed a 'Course in Spoken and Written English for Job Seeking' (government-subsidised, and a course on the Foundation Skills List).• Completed a 'Course in English as an Additional Language.' (government-subsidised, and a course on the Foundation Skills List). <p>Hien completed all courses prior to the current calendar year.</p>	<p>Is Hien eligible?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• YES. Because Hien is seeking to enrol in a 'Course in...' and she does not hold a qualification any higher than a Certificate IV, she meets the 'upskilling' requirement.• Hien is not exceeding the 'two in a year' limit.• She has already completed two government-subsidised 'Courses in...', but she has not reached the 'two at level in a lifetime' limit, because both of these courses are on the Foundation Skills List and these are not counted towards the lifetime limit.
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