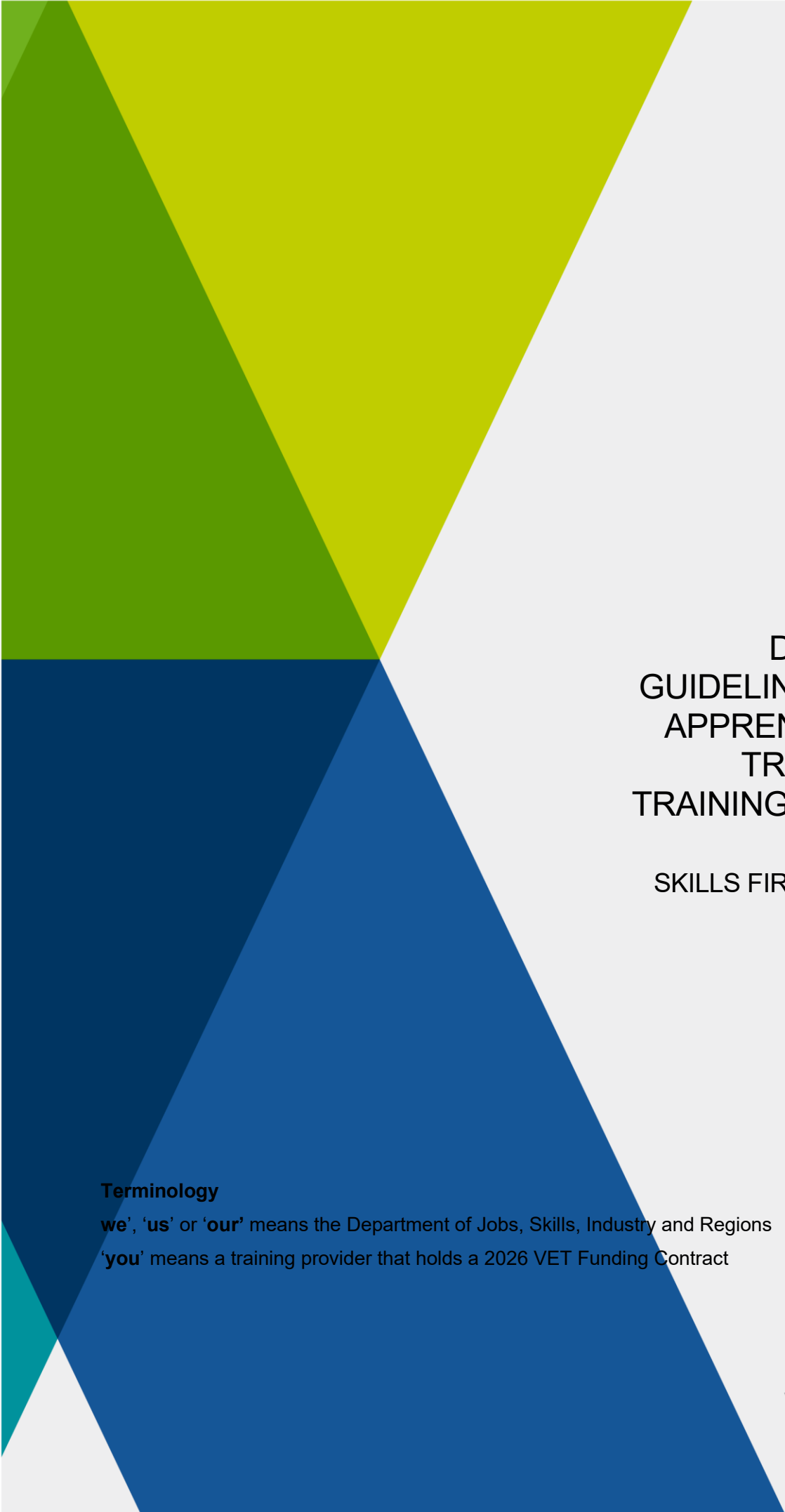




DRAFT 2026 GUIDELINES ABOUT APPRENTICESHIP/ TRAINEESHIP TRAINING DELIVERY

SKILLS FIRST PROGRAM

Terminology

we, **'us'** or **'our'** means the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions

'you' means a training provider that holds a 2026 VET Funding Contract

Purpose

These Guidelines detail additional requirements you must apply when delivering Skills First training to Apprentices and Trainees.

These Guidelines must be read in conjunction with the VET Funding Contract (the Contract).

Apprenticeships and Traineeships in Victoria

Apprenticeships and Traineeships combine paid work with structured training and on the job training to achieve a nationally recognised qualification in a trade or occupation. Apprenticeships and Traineeships can be undertaken on a full-time or part-time employment basis, or as school-based which integrates a part-time Apprenticeship or Traineeship with senior secondary schooling. Employers and their Apprentices and Trainees must enter into a Training Contract as required by the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

Apprentice Connect Australia

[Apprentice Connect Australia](#) providers assist employers to enter into a Training Contract with an Apprentice or Trainee. They are funded by the Australian Government to provide supports to Apprentices, Trainees and employers and assess eligibility for Australian Government financial supports.

Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority

[The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority](#) (VRQA) regulates Apprenticeships and Traineeships, including determining which Apprenticeships and Traineeships are available in Victoria (these are called [Approved Training Schemes](#)), approving employers and registering and regulating Training Contracts.

Apprenticeships Victoria

[Apprenticeships Victoria](#) (AV) within the Victorian [Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions](#) provides stewardship of the Apprenticeship and Traineeship system in Victoria. AV manages programs to create apprenticeship opportunities, such as the Priority Apprenticeships model, and to support Apprentices and Trainees, such as

- The [Apprentice Employee Assistance Program](#) which offers Apprentices and Trainees in Victoria confidential short-term counselling and coaching for a broad range of health and wellbeing matters. This is a free service, provided through an independent delivery service (Converge).
- The [Apprentice Helpdesk](#) which offers free information, support, and advice on any questions or concerns about apprenticeships or traineeships in Victoria. The helpdesk can be contacted on **1300 311 820** or apprenticehelpdesk@djsir.vic.gov.au. The helpdesk is a free service for:
 - apprentices and trainees
 - parents and guardians of apprentices or trainees
 - support workers
 - training and teaching staff
 - employers
- The [Apprenticeship Support Officer \(ASO\)](#) program which provides confidential support for Apprentices experiencing workplace, training or personal issues. For more information contact the program via the helpdesk on **1300 311 820** or apprenticeship.support@ecodev.vic.gov.au
- The [Retrenched Apprentices and Trainees Program](#), which provides assistance through an independent delivery service (the Apprenticeship Employment Network) for Apprentices and Trainees who have lost employment to recommence their apprenticeship or traineeship with a new employer.

1. General obligations

Context

After employing an Apprentice or Trainee, the employer must contact an Apprentice Connect Australia provider to initiate the signing and registration of the Training Contract. The Apprentice Connect Australia provider will facilitate the registration of the Training Contract, with the VRQA, in [Epsilon](#). Epsilon is Victoria's Apprenticeship and Traineeship register.

This section sets out general obligations related to the registration and regulation of Training Contracts including notification of specific events that must be made to the VRQA or Apprentice Connect Australia provider.

You must not impede the employer's obligations

- 1.1 Your timeframes must not impede the employer's ability to meet their obligation under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* to arrange training. The employer must, within 3 months of the Training Contract commencing (or within 2 months for school-based arrangements in accordance with the Approved Training Scheme):
 - a) arrange for their Apprentice or Trainee to be enrolled with a registered training organisation; and
 - b) have a Training Plan signed by the employer, the Apprentice or Trainee and the Registered Training Organisation.
- 1.2 All Approved Training Schemes are available on a full-time basis but can be undertaken part-time, subject to a suitable employment arrangement. The employer is responsible for establishing whether an Apprentice or Trainee is seeking a part-time arrangement, making a suitable arrangement and recording it on the Training Contract. You should not develop or market Apprenticeship or Traineeship programs that impede the employer's ability to comply with the requirement to offer part-time arrangements where this is suitable for the workplace.

The Training Contract

- 1.3 You must not commence training before:
 - a) the commencement date of the Training Contract, and
 - b) registration of the Training Contract by the VRQA (creation of the Epsilon record).
- 1.4 You should notify the relevant Apprentice Connect Australia provider if the time taken to register the Training Contract is delaying the planned commencement of training and request escalation of processing.

Notification of events

- 1.5 You must notify the VRQA, Apprenticeships Victoria or the Apprentice Connect Australia provider of specific events affecting Apprenticeships and Traineeships within the required time frames in paragraphs (a) to (k). You should retain the correspondence or a dated file note in the student file.

Email notifications to the VRQA should be sent to:

vrqa.apprenticeships@education.vic.gov.au

Email notification to AV should be sent to:

apprenticeship.support@ecodev.vic.gov.au

	Event:	Action:	Timeframe
a)	The qualification on Epsilon is not appropriate or relevant to the Apprentice or Trainee's work duties	Notify the relevant Apprentice Connect Australia provider and request that the employer and Apprentice or Trainee vary the Training Contract to reflect a suitable qualification	Immediately
b)	The death or serious injury of an Apprentice or Trainee	Notify both the VRQA and Apprenticeships Victoria by email	Immediately
c)	An Apprentice or Trainee's non-enrolment	Notify the Apprentice Connect Australia provider and the employer (and if not accepting enrolment, set the Epsilon record to "POL unknown")	Within 2 weeks
d)	A situation which may affect completion of the Training Contract including frequent or prolonged absences	Notify the VRQA by email (after attempting to resolve the matter via contact with the employer and the Apprentice or Trainee)	Within 2 weeks
e)	Withdrawal/non-start of enrolled Apprentice or Trainee	Notify the Apprentice Connect Australia provider and the employer	Within 2 weeks
f)	Loss of an Apprentice or Trainees' employment	Notify the Apprentice Connect Australia provider	Within 2 weeks
g)	Training is to continue following the loss of an Apprentice or Trainee's employment	Notify the VRQA by email	Within 2 weeks
h)	Change of employer for an Apprentice or Trainee	Notify the Apprentice Connect Australia provider of the change in employment	Within 2 weeks
i)	The requirements for issuing of a qualification to any Trainee or Apprentice are met	Notify the VRQA (update the Epsilon database by marking "Successful completion/POL complete", change the status to "Complete" and enter the actual completion date)	Within 2 weeks
j)	Change of address for an Apprentice or Trainee	Notify the Apprentice Connect Australia provider by email to enable update of Epsilon	Within 2 weeks

	Event:	Action:	Timeframe
k)	An employer/supervisor is not allowing the Apprentice or Trainee to be withdrawn from routine work duties for the applicable minimum specified time	If consultation with the employer/supervisor does not resolve the issue, report the non-compliance to the VRQA by email	Within 2 weeks

Australian Government incentives

- 1.6 If requested by the employer, the Apprentice or Trainee, an Apprenticeship Support Officer or an Apprentice Connect Australia provider, you should provide supporting documents or assistance to facilitate any claims for financial supports.

2. Planning for training

Context

Training Plans are used throughout the Apprenticeship and Traineeship to plan for training and track competency-based progression and completion. Requirements for Apprenticeship and Traineeship Training Plans are set out in Clause 6 of Schedule 1 of the Contract.

This section sets out additional requirements for Training Plans. Further requirements for Training Plans for school-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships, including Head Start are set out in section 6 of these Guidelines.

Planning for training

- 2.1 Where the Pre-Training Review indicates that training in the Approved Training Scheme nominated on the Training Contract is not suitable for the individual or is not relevant to their work duties, you should contact Apprentice Connect Australia provider to facilitate a discussion with the employer and Apprentice or Trainee about changing to a suitable qualification.
- 2.2 Before commencing training, your representative must explain the following to the Apprentice or Trainee's employer or workplace supervisor:
- the responsibilities of the supervisor;
 - how competency-based progression and completion works;
 - the schedule for planned contacts or visits by you and their purpose; and
 - the purpose of the Training Plan and how it will be developed.
- 2.3 Where the program includes workplace-based training, you are required to cover the items in Clause 2.2(a) to (d) in a workplace induction with the Apprentice or Trainee and supervisor.

Developing the Training Plan

- 2.4 You must develop a Training Plan in consultation with the Apprentice or Trainee and the workplace supervisor/employer. Once the Training Plan is agreed it must be signed by all parties. and submitted to the Apprentice Connect Australia provider.
- 2.5 You should identify elective subjects that are relevant to the work environment and qualification, and contribute to a valid, industry-supported vocational outcome.

- 2.6 The Training Plan must align to the maximum duration of the Apprenticeship or Traineeship in the Approved Training Scheme unless otherwise requested by the employer and Apprentice or Trainee.

Note Approved Training Schemes specify longer maximum durations for Apprenticeships and Traineeships undertaken part-time.

- 2.7 You must make all reasonable provisions for the Apprentice or Trainee to achieve all competencies required for the Structured Training identified in the Approved Training Scheme by the nominal completion date of the Training Contract. The Training Plan should provide for training at regular intervals across the duration of the Apprenticeship or Traineeship.
- 2.8 For part-time and school-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships, you must align training delivery with the minimum hours of training and work required by the Approved Training Scheme.
- 2.9 You should agree with the employer the process and timing for confirmation of competence in accordance with Clause 3.7 of these Guidelines and, as applicable, record employer confirmation in the Training Plan.
- 2.10 Where a subject (whether core or elective) is not performed in the workplace, this must be identified in the Training Plan, and you are not required to seek the employer's confirmation of the Apprentice or Trainee's competency in that subject.

3. Delivering structured training and monitoring progress

Context

Employers have an obligation to provide hands-on experience in the competencies set out in an Apprentice or Trainee's Training Plan. They must also allow Apprentices and Trainees to leave work or be withdrawn from regular work duties to participate in Structured Training and learning.

This section sets out requirements for regular contact with the Apprentice and Trainee and their employer or workplace supervisor to monitor progress with training and identify any issues with the workplace arrangements. This section also includes requirements for visits to deliver workplace-based training.

Contacts with the employer to monitor progress

- 3.1 You must make a minimum of four contacts per year with the employer to discuss the Apprentice or Trainee's progress against the Training Plan, including confirmation of competence. In person contacts are recommended however, contacts can also be made by email or by phone. You must keep a record of the contacts in the student file, such as an email or file note. In the case of Apprentices, these contacts should form part of ongoing communication to keep the employer up to date with progress in Structured Training.

Visits to deliver workplace-based training

- 3.2 Where a proportion of training and assessment is planned as workplace-based, you must make a minimum number of visits to deliver the training and assessment as follows:

	Proportion of program's nominal hours to be workplace-based	25% or less	26-50%	51-75%	Greater than 75%
a)	Minimum number of visits per year	one	2	3	4

- 3.3 You must document visits to deliver workplace-based training, including:
- a) the training and/or assessment delivered against the competencies in the Training Plan; and
 - b) the signatures of the employer/workplace supervisor and Apprentice or Trainee and the date.

- 3.4 The visits can also be used to:
- a) discuss progress against the Training Plan with the Apprentice or Trainee and/or
 - b) obtain employer sign off on competence.

If the visits are used this way, they may be counted towards the four contacts per year with the employer to monitor progress required by Clause 3.1 of these Guidelines.

Contacts to monitor withdrawal time for workplace-based training and learning

- 3.5 You must monitor whether the employer withdraws the Apprentice or Trainee from routine work duties to participate in Structured Training and learning activities according to the minimum times required by Approved Training Schemes. You must make monthly contact with both the Apprentice or Trainee and the workplace supervisor to:
- a) monitor and document the progress of training against the Training Plan;
 - b) monitor and document the training/learning activities undertaken during the withdrawal time for the previous month; and
 - c) document the dates and time periods logged as withdrawal time in the previous month.
- 3.6 Where an employer or supervisor is not allowing the Apprentice or Trainee to be withdrawn from routine work duties for the required minimum time, and consultation with the employer or supervisor does not resolve the issue, you should report the non-compliance to the VRQA within 2 weeks.

Obtaining employer confirmation of competence

- 3.7 You must obtain employer confirmation of competence in the workplace as follows:

	For a:	You must obtain employer confirmation of competence in the workplace:	In the following form:
a)	Trainee	Upon completion of training and assessment for the qualification where you have assessed the Trainee as competent	In writing (including email) If the employer is a Group Training Organisation (GTO), sign-off must be from the GTO, not the host employer.
b)	Apprentice	For each competency (or cluster of competencies) where you have assessed the Apprentice as competent	

You must retain the employer's written confirmation of the Apprentice or Trainee's competence for audit purposes unless the subject is not performed in the workplace (see Clause 2.10 of these Guidelines).

- 3.8 Some industrial arrangements increase an Apprentice's wages based on the Apprentice's progress through their Apprenticeship (typically at 25, 50 and 75 percent through the Apprenticeship). Most Modern Awards with these provisions require the employer to notify you within 21 days if they disagree with the assessment. These industrial arrangements relate to the employment relationship and do not override our requirement for you to continue to seek employer confirmation of competence.

Keeping the Training Plan up to date

- 3.9 You must ensure that the Apprentice or Trainee and employer always have access to an up-to-date Training Plan that shows the status of the Apprentice or Trainee's training including:
- a) the dates of planned and completed training
 - b) the Apprentice or Trainee's overall progress towards completing the program
 - c) any endorsed changes to the planned training, for example:
 - i) a change to a superseding program including any addition of subjects; and
 - ii) a variation request to extend the Training Contract.
- 3.10 If the Apprentice or Trainee has been able to successfully complete competencies ahead of schedule, the employer and Apprentice or Trainee can request that the Training Plan be updated to reflect a shorter duration for the Apprenticeship or Traineeship than originally planned. You should retain a signed copy of the request for audit purposes.

4. Completion of an Apprenticeship or Traineeship

Context

This section describes the administrative practices required to ensure Apprentices and Trainees get credit for the completion of their training and can rely on records of their qualifications being available through the regulator.

Extending the Training Contract

- 4.1 If the Apprentice or Trainee is unable to complete the Structured Training by the nominal completion date of the Training Contract, you should advise the Apprentice or Trainee and their employer that the employer must lodge a [variation request](#) to extend the term of the Training Contract prior to the nominal completion date. The request should be lodged with the VRQA via the relevant Apprentice Connect Australia provider.

Issuing a qualification

- 4.2 You may only issue the qualification when:
- a) the Apprentice or Trainee has achieved all competencies;
 - b) the employer has returned written confirmation of the Apprentice or Trainee's competence in the workplace; and
 - c) you have given clear advice to the employer and Apprentice or Trainee that final confirmation completes the Training Contract.
- 4.3 Qualifications issued following the completion of an Approved Training Scheme must contain on the certificate below the program title, the words 'achieved through Australian Apprenticeship arrangements'.
- 4.4 Once you have completed an Apprentice in Epsilon the VRQA will send a formal Letter of Completion, followed by a Trade Paper.

5. Support and training for unemployed Apprentices or Trainees

Context

This section sets out requirements for support and training when an Apprentice or Trainee becomes unemployed or moves to a new employer.

The [Retrenched Apprentices and Trainees Program](#) assists Apprentices and Trainees who have lost employment to recommence their apprenticeship or traineeship with a new employer.

Unemployed Apprentices

- 5.1 When an Apprentice becomes unemployed, you must notify the Apprentice Connect Australia provider of the loss of employment and whether the Apprentice has found a new employer.
- 5.2 If the Apprentice has not found a new employer, then you should:
 - a) encourage the Apprentice to register with the Retrenched Apprentices and Trainees program;
 - b) contact the [Apprenticeship Support Officer program](#) to report the loss of employment and access support to re-engage the Apprentice; and
 - c) encourage the Apprentice to access a [Victorian Skills and Jobs Centre](#) for re-employment or further training advice.
- 5.3 You can continue to deliver Structured Training to an unemployed Apprentice (and report the training under the same funding source code) and must notify the VRQA by email that training is continuing.
- 5.4 You may provide a result for outstanding subjects after at least two attempts (one verbal and one written) have been made to gain the former employer's confirmation of competence for those subjects. Evidence of these attempts should be kept on file for auditing purposes.
- 5.5 You should monitor the progress of unemployed Apprentices to avoid completion of the program before re-engaging with another employer. Apprentices must be advised of the potential negative consequences of completing a qualification outside of an Apprenticeship including exclusion from licensing requirements, reduced employment opportunities and ineligibility for trade papers.

Unemployed Trainees

- 5.6 Where a Trainee becomes unemployed, you must notify Apprentice Connect Australia provider of the loss of employment and whether the Trainee has found a new employer.
- 5.7 If the Trainee has not found a new employer, you should encourage the Trainee to register with the Retrenched Apprentices and Trainees Program.
- 5.8 You can continue to deliver Structured Training to an unemployed Trainee, (and report the training under the same funding source code) for three months, or to the end of the enrolment period for which tuition fees have been paid, whichever is the greater.
- 5.9 During this time you should provide additional support to help the Trainee to seek re-employment in order to complete their Traineeship, including by encouraging them to access a [Victorian Skills and Jobs Centre](#) for re-employment or further training advice.
- 5.10 If, and only as a last resort, a Trainee successfully completes the Structured Training while unemployed, the words 'achieved through Australian Apprenticeship arrangements' should be omitted from the certificate. The Trainee must be made aware of this before completing

their training, and that the VRQA will not recognise this as completion of a Traineeship in Victoria. You are not required to update Epsilon.

6. School-based and Head Start Apprenticeship and Traineeship delivery

Context

Senior secondary students can commence a school-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (SBAT) while enrolled in school and completing the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), VCE Vocational Major (VCE VM), or Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC).

The Head Start program provides support to students in Victorian government schools to do an SBAT. Head Start school-based staff engage regularly with the employer, school, training provider and other stakeholders.

This section sets out requirements for delivering SBATs.

Find more information about:

SBATs on the [Department of Education's website](#).

the Head Start program including contacts, on the [Head Start webpage](#)

Contact the program at head.start@education.vic.gov.au.

The Training Plan for SBATs

- 6.1 You must develop the Training Plan together with the employer and the Apprentice or Trainee and in consultation with the secondary school.
- 6.2 You must ensure that the Training Plan reflects the requirements of the Approved Training Scheme and VRQA [policy on minimum hours](#) per week of employment and training. Head Start arrangements may include increased paid employment over the required hours to facilitate increased workplace experience and competency development.
- 6.3 An authorised representative of the student's school must sign the Training Plan to confirm that the:
 - a) student is enrolled in VCE, VCE VM or VPC;
 - b) student's study, training and work commitments form an integral part of their school learning program and study timetable and are consistent with the student's career aspirations as outlined in their career action plan; and
 - c) Training Plan will not be detrimental to the student's overall education.
- 6.4 Your timeframes must not impede the ability of the school representative to sign the Training Plan within two months of the commencement of the Training Contract.
- 6.5 You should consult the school about any proposed amendments to the Training Plan that may affect the Apprentice's or Trainee's senior secondary program, including awarding of credit.

The pathway profile

- 6.6 The Department of Education recommends that the school's SBAT coordinator prepare a pathway profile to detail the SBAT arrangements including details of the employer, training provider, Approved Training Scheme and student's support needs. You may be asked to agree to a pathway profile as a party to the Training Contract.

- 6.7 Where a pathway profile is in place, the SBAT coordinator is responsible for updating the pathway profile including to reflect any changes to the training schedule and progress with training.

Reporting results

- 6.8 You must provide known results for SBAT subjects for the current enrolment year to the school. We recommend you report results progressively to ensure the school can track a student's progress and identify any necessary supports to help them successfully complete their training.
- 6.9 The latest date you can provide results is one week prior to the October cut-off date. The exact cut-off date each year is published in the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) Administrative Handbook on the [VCAA website](#).

School students doing a part time Apprenticeship or Traineeship

- 6.10 School students doing an Apprenticeship or Traineeship that is not integrated into their VCE, VCE VM, or VPC learning program and study timetable are undertaking a part-time Apprenticeship or Traineeship. A part-time arrangement is at the student's discretion and is not subsidised through Skills First.
- 6.11 A part-time Apprenticeship or Traineeship will provide credit for the student's VCE, VCE VM, or VPC if you record it on the Victorian Assessment Software System (VASS) but does not require school endorsement.