

DRAFT 2026 GUIDELINES ABOUT FEES

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 clauses describe requirements about tuition and other fees associated with Skills First training and the financial and accountability requirements for fees.

These Guidelines apply to all enrolments in Skills First training and must be read in conjunction with the VET Funding Contract (the Contract).

1. General Requirements

- 1.1 You are not required to charge a minimum or maximum tuition fee for Skills First training. However, you must grant any applicable Fee Waiver in accordance with section 2 and any applicable Fee Concession in accordance with section 3 of these Guidelines.

Fee and refund information

- 1.2 Prior to enrolment, you must give each student a clear refund policy that meets the standards of your regulator, is fair and reasonable and covers any costs and processes associated with:
- a) the student withdrawing; and
 - b) you cancelling a program, including in the event of your closure.
- 1.3 Prior to the commencement of training, you must give each Skills First Student documentation that includes, at minimum:
- a) that their program is subsidised through Skills First;
 - b) the total cost to them of their program including:
 - i) tuition fees, taking into account the government contribution and any Fee Concession or Fee Waiver entitlement; and
 - ii) any other applicable fees, such as student services, amenities, goods or materials.

VET Student Loans

- 1.4 Where a Skills First Student is also accessing VET Student Loans to pay their tuition fee, you must inform us and the Skills First Student if you charge a tuition fee in excess of your published standard tuition fee.

2. Fee Waivers

- 2.1 You must grant a Fee Waiver in the circumstances set out in Clause 2.3 of these Guidelines.
- 2.2 You must report all Fee Waivers you grant in accordance with the Victorian VET Student Statistical Collection Guidelines, or as we otherwise instruct.
- 2.3 You must sight and retain copies of any evidence (where required) of a student's entitlement to the Fee Waiver prior to the commencement of training, in accordance with the following.

	Circumstance:	You must grant a Fee Waiver if:	If the student is enrolling with:	You must sight:	You must retain:
a)	Judy Lazarus Transition Centre	the student is from the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre (as a prisoner within the meaning of the <i>Corrections Act 1986</i>).	any training provider	written confirmation from the management of the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre.	a copy of the written confirmation from the management of the Judy Lazarus Transition Centre.
b)	Young people on community based orders	the student is required to do training under a community based order made under the <i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i> (the CYF Act).	any training provider	written confirmation from the relevant Youth Justice Unit of the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety that the student is required to do training under a community based order made under the <i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i> (the CYF Act).	a copy of the written confirmation from the relevant Youth Justice Unit of the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety.
c)	Youth Access Initiative	the student is referred to training by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Department of Justice and Community Safety, or a referring agency. ¹	only a TAFE Institute, Dual Sector University or Learn Local Organisation	a validly endorsed referral form from either the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Department of Justice and Community Safety, or a referring agency.	the original referral form (and you must return a copy of the form to the relevant department or referring agency).

¹ A referring agency is defined for this purpose as an organisation that is based in the State of Victoria that currently receives funding or is contracted by the Victorian Government or the Commonwealth Government to provide services to children, youth or families.

	Circumstance:	You must grant a Fee Waiver if:	If the student is enrolling with:	You must sight:	You must retain:
d)	Free TAFE for Priority Courses	the student is enrolling in a program on the Free TAFE for Priority Courses List and meets the requirements to receive the Fee Waiver as per Clause 16 of Schedule 1 of the Contract.	only a TAFE Institute or Dual Sector University	N/A	a copy of the completed Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration Form (or a form that collects the same information) where the student has responded to questions about the Free TAFE for Priority Courses initiative.
e)	Enrolment in a Free TAFE Short Course.	the student is undertaking a Free TAFE Short Course as identified on the Funded Programs Report.	only a TAFE Institute or Dual Sector University	N/A	N/A
f)	Skills First Aboriginal access Fee Waiver'	the student self-identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (and is reported as such through the 'Indigenous Status Identifier' field of the Student Statistical Report) and is enrolling in a program at any level.	any training provider	N/A	a copy of the enrolment form on which the student self-identified as indigenous.

3. Fee Concessions

- 3.1 If a student has a Fee Concession entitlement in accordance with these Guidelines, you must apply a Fee Concession to standard tuition fees for enrolments in Skill Sets and qualifications at the Certificate IV level and below.
- 3.2 A Fee Concession must be no more than 20 per cent of your published standard tuition fee, being the fee that you would have charged a non-Fee Concession Skills First Student in the same program at that time.

- 3.3 You must report all Fee Concessions you grant in accordance with the Victorian VET Student Statistical Collection Guidelines.
- 3.4 You must check a student's entitlement for a Fee Concession as part of enrolment and this must occur prior to the commencement of training.

Concessions confirmed as part of enrolment

- 3.5 Where you confirm a student's Fee Concession entitlement as part of enrolment, you must apply the Fee Concession to all tuition fees you charge for the program. This is regardless of whether:
 - a) you charge all tuition fees in one instance at the start of the program, or in parts (for example, for each subject, semester, or year); and
 - b) the student's Fee Concession entitlement will expire before commencement of training or before they will complete their program.

Grace period

- 3.6 You may allow a student a grace period (for example, a week or a month after the commencement of training) to provide evidence of Fee Concession entitlement if they do not immediately provide it as part of enrolment. If you allow a grace period, you must have a documented business process for how you apply it. If a student provides evidence after the commencement of training, it must have a start date on or before the date their training commenced.

Concessions obtained after commencement of training

- 3.7 If you do not charge all fees for an enrolment in one instance at the start of the program, you must inform students that if they obtain a Fee Concession entitlement after the commencement of training they may present it to you, in which case you must charge a Fee Concession for any remaining fees not yet charged.

Fee Concession Entitlement

- 3.8 A student is entitled to a Fee Concession if they hold a current:
 - a) Health Care Card issued by the Commonwealth;
 - b) Pensioner Concession Card; or
 - c) Veteran's Gold Card.

A dependant spouse or dependant child of a card holder is also entitled to the Fee Concession.

- 3.9 Students may also receive a Fee Concession if they are eligible for one of the Government initiatives specified in Clause 3.12, regardless of whether they hold one of the cards specified in Clause 3.8.

Evidence of Fee Concession Entitlement

- 3.10 You must sight evidence of a student's entitlement to a Fee Concession and retain it for audit or review purposes in a way that meets the requirements set out in Clause 3.11 of these Guidelines. Unless you have another obligation to do so, you **must not** retain a copy of the concession card or the Centrelink Customer Reference Number when retaining evidence of concession entitlement for a Skills First student.

3.11 You may sight and retain evidence of Fee Concession entitlement by:

	Sighting:	Retaining:
a)	- the original card; - correspondence from the card issuer confirming a concession is granted to the student and they may commence claiming their entitlement; or - the concession card displayed on a Digital Wallet through a Centrelink Express Plus mobile application on the cardholder's mobile device. The digital card may not be sighted via a screen shot of the card that is e-mailed or otherwise reproduced.	a written declaration attached to the student's file stating that the evidence has been sighted, showing the: - name of your authorised delegate who sighted the evidence; - date the evidence was sighted; - concession holder's name; and - card type.
OR		
b)	the equivalent record of a concession card as extracted from Centrelink Confirmation eServices by you.	an extract from Centrelink Confirmation eServices showing the card type and the date the extract was made.
OR		
c)	- confirmation from a Gateway Service Provider² that it has connected to the Commonwealth Government's Document Verification Service (the DVS)³ and verified that the student's name and concession card number match a current and valid record of concession entitlement in the DVS; and - information from the student about the type of concession card they hold, to confirm it is a type accepted by us.	- a transaction record generated by securely logging in to the administrative platform provided by the Gateway Service Provider, that shows: - the concession holder's name; and - that their name and concession card number were verified to match a current and valid concession entitlement in the DVS; and - a record of the type of concession card the student holds, attached to the student's file⁴.

² A Gateway Service Provider is an organisation authorised to direct information match requests to and from the Commonwealth Government's Document Verification Service (the DVS).

³ The DVS is a national online system that allows organisations to compare an individual's identifying information with a government record.

⁴ If the student is a dependant spouse or dependant child of the concession card holder and the concession is verified for the primary card holder, also make a note on the student's file describing the student's relationship to the card holder.

Fee Concession entitlement under Government initiatives

- 3.12 The following students are entitled to receive a Fee Concession whether or not they hold one of the forms of Fee Concession entitlement specified in Clause 3.8 of these Guidelines.

	Under the:	a student can receive a Fee Concession for:	if they:	You must sight and retain:
a)	Asylum Seeker VET Program	an enrolment in a Skill Set and a program at Certificate IV level and below	- self-refer and are eligible to participate in the Asylum Seeker VET Program; or - are referred to training by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre or the Australian Red Cross.	N/A. The evidence the student is eligible to participate in the Asylum Seeker VET Program (as specified in the Guidelines About Eligibility) is the evidence of their entitlement to concession.

4. Accounts and Records of Tuition and Other Fees

- 4.1 You must keep accounts and Records in a way that clearly distinguishes income for fee-for-service training from Government-subsidised training.
- 4.2 You must establish and maintain a separate general ledger account to record receipt of income from tuition fees and the payment of refunds of tuition fees.