

# STUDENT ELIGIBILITY FOR *SKILLS FIRST*

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
- Foundation Skills.

Students 20 years of age or older who are seeking to enrol in AQF qualifications are required to train in progressively higher qualifications ('upskilling') to be eligible.

There are volume limits on how much *Skills First* funded training a student can do. This aims to maximise program 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
- five enrolment scenarios to show how the eligibility requirements and limits would apply to different students.

Eligibility requirements under *Skills First* are described in the VET Funding Contract (the Contract) and the *2021 Guidelines About Eligibility* (the Guidelines). This fact sheet must be read in conjunction with the Contract and Guidelines.

## WHAT CAN A STUDENT ENROL IN?

### Citizenship requirements

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

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

### 'Upskilling' requirements

To be eligible, a student seeking to enrol in an AQF qualification must enrol in a program that will result in **'upskilling'**

Requirement	Taking into account	But not taking into account	Why?
<p><b>'Upskilling'</b></p> <p><b>The individual must seek a program at a higher level than the highest qualification held at the time when training starts</b></p> <p><small>(see Clause 2.4(a), Schedule 1 of the Contract)</small></p>	<p>the program(s) the student has already <b>completed</b></p> <p><i>(including programs that were not government-subsidised)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completed VCE/VCAL, International Baccalaureate and senior secondary certificates from other Australian jurisdictions</li> <li>• programs on the Foundation Skills List</li> <li>• VET certificates completed as part of a senior secondary qualification (including School Based Apprenticeships/Traineeships)</li> <li>• skill sets</li> <li>• Non-Australian programs, except where equivalency has formally been established with a qualification within the AQF.</li> </ul>	<p>To encourage students to obtain progressively higher skills</p>

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

- under 20 (at 1 January in the year their training starts)
- 20 or over (at 1 January in the year their training starts) and seeking to enrol in:
  - a program on the Foundation Skills List (but if the student holds a Diploma or above qualification, or is in the Commonwealth 'Skills for Education and Employment' program' they aren't eligible for Foundation Skills programs).
  - an Apprenticeship
  - training in VCE or VCAL (intermediate or senior)
  - a skill set (subject to the student not having reached any of the volume limits on the amount of training they can do).

## THE VOLUME LIMITS

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

Limit	How many?	Of what?	Over what period?	At what AQF level?	Not taking into account	Why?
<b>'2 skill sets in a year'</b> The student may make a maximum of...	2	commencements in skill sets <i>(Skills First subsidised)</i>	in a calendar year	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>if a student is moving from a superseded program to the current version of the same program</li> <li>if a student is recommencing training in the same program (at either the same or a different provider)</li> <li>if a student has participated in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'22469VIC - Course in Introduction to the National Disability Insurance Scheme' prior to 1 January 2021</li> <li>any program undertaken as part of the Department of Education and Training's 'Skills Uplift Pilot Program', 'Funding to Deliver Infection Control Skill Sets' or 'Construction Industry Skill Sets' initiative</li> <li>'22510VIC – Course in identifying and responding to family violence risk'</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>To maximise program completions</p> <p>To encourage students to make informed decisions about their training and employment opportunities</p>
<b>'2 AQF qualifications in a year'</b> The student may make a maximum of...	2	commencements in AQF qualifications <i>(Skills First subsidised)</i>	in a calendar year	The limit applies regardless of the level of the commencements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>if a student is moving from a superseded program to the current version of the same program</li> <li>if a student is recommencing training in the same program (at either the same or a different provider)</li> <li>if a student is seeking to enrol in an Apprenticeship after having participated in one of the Pre-Apprenticeship and Pathway Programs listed in the <i>Guidelines About Eligibility</i></li> </ul>	<p>To maximise program completions</p> <p>To encourage students to make informed decisions about their training and employment opportunities</p>
<b>'2 at a time'</b> The student may undertake a maximum of...	2	programs (Skills Sets and AQF qualifications) <i>(Skills First subsidised)</i>	at any one time	The limit applies regardless of the level of the commencements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>if a student is participating in '22469VIC - Course in Introduction to the National Disability Insurance Scheme' and commenced the program prior to 1 January 2021</li> <li>any program undertaken as part of the Department of Education and Training's 'Skills Uplift Pilot Program', 'Funding to Deliver Infection Control Skill Sets' or 'Construction Industry Skill Sets' initiative</li> <li>'22510VIC – Course in identifying and responding to family violence risk'</li> </ul>	<p>To maximise program completions</p> <p>To encourage students to make informed decisions about their training and employment opportunities</p>
<b>'2 at level in a lifetime'</b> The student may make a maximum of...	2	commencements in AQF qualifications <i>(government-subsidised)</i>	across the lifetime of the student	at each level of the AQF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VCE/VCAL; International Baccalaureate; and non-Victorian senior secondary school certificates</li> <li>programs on the Foundation Skills List</li> <li>VET certificates completed as part of a senior secondary qualification (including School Based Apprenticeships/Traineeships)</li> <li>if a student is transitioning from a superseded program to the current version of the same program</li> <li>if a student is recommencing training in the same program (at either the same or a different provider)</li> </ul>	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 or under any special initiatives.

To grant an exemption, you must:

- know whether your Contract allows you to 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
- 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.

Initiative	Citizenship or permanent residence	Upskilling	'2 skill sets in a year'	'2 AQF qualifications in a year'	'2 at a time'	'2 at level'
Asylum Seeker VET Program	✓					
Eligibility Exemptions Initiative		✓				✓
22510VIC – Course in identifying and responding to family violence risk			✓		✓	
Covid-19 Response – Funding to Deliver Infection Control Skill Sets	✓		✓		✓	
JobTrainer		✓				✓

## EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

These five 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 enrol in a Certificate III in Baking (Apprenticeship)

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

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

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

<p>Hien is 45</p> <p>She has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Completed</b> a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education (government-subsidised)</li><li>• <b>Completed</b> a ‘Course in Spoken and Written English for Job Seeking’ (government-subsidised, and a program on the Foundation Skills List)</li><li>• <b>Completed</b> a ‘Course in English as an Additional Language.’ (government-subsidised, and a program on the Foundation Skills List).</li></ul> <p>Hien completed all programs prior to the current calendar year and isn’t currently enrolled in any other programs.</p>	<p>Is Hien eligible?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>YES.</b> Hien wants to enrol in a skill set, so the ‘upskilling’ requirement doesn’t apply and she hasn’t reached the ‘two skill sets in a year’ or ‘two at a time’ limits.</li></ul>
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#### Example 5 – Nisha wants to enrol in a ‘Course in Identifying, Reporting and Preventing Abuse and/or Grooming of People with Disabilities’

<p>Nisha is 25</p> <p>They have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Commenced</b> a Certificate II in Health Support Services (government-subsidised)</li><li>• <b>Commenced</b> a Course in Supporting People with Disability to use Medications (government-subsidised).</li></ul> <p>Nisha commenced both programs in the current calendar year and both programs are still in progress.</p>	<p>Is Nisha eligible?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>NO.</b> Nisha has reached the ‘2 at a time’ limit.’</li><li>• Because Nisha hasn’t reached the ‘2 skill sets in a year’ limit, they’d be eligible for the ‘Course in Identifying, Reporting and Preventing Abuse and/or Grooming of People with Disabilities’ after they either finish or withdraw from one of the other programs.</li></ul>
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