



# VET Student Loans (VSL) Provider Newsletter – February 2022

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## A word from Kathy

Welcome to the new year in what promises to be a time of reform both in the skills sector and in the VET Student Loans (VSL) program.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment is making a series of improvements to streamline the VSL program and optimise the user experience. These changes will make it easier for students to access a loan and for providers to become an approved VSL provider and meet their ongoing obligations under the program.

While VSL has been operating successfully for over 5 years, reviews and feedback have identified there are opportunities to improve, without compromising on the strong integrity measures that form the backbone of the program.

A key part of redesign will be making it easier and potentially less costly for providers to participate in VSL. The department has considered the input from providers in previous consultations and will build on that to implement program redesign. Further provider input and feedback on redesign proposals will be crucial in this process.

A collaborative approach to program redesign, in partnership with providers and students, is the best way to achieve meaningful and beneficial change, and to better position VSL within the broader reforms occurring in the skills and training sector.

To support this work, a dedicated [VSL Redesign](#) webpage has been established where a range of information will be posted. This will include updates on redesign, opportunities for providers and stakeholders to get involved, and materials and advice to support providers through the changes. Providers and stakeholders can also contact a dedicated mailbox to make contributions and provide feedback: [VSLredesign@dese.gov.au](mailto:VSLredesign@dese.gov.au).

We'll soon be circulating a consultation paper, which provides more information about the redesign project, seeks views on preferred consultation approaches and invites initial comment on a number of specific initiatives being explored as part of the redesign. This paper will be the first step in a range of consultation activities around redesign.

I encourage you to get involved and contribute throughout the process.

Kathy Dennis

## Announcements

### Ongoing Financial Performance Requirements for VSL Providers

A reminder, approved VSL providers with a financial year ending 31 December 2021, **must** submit audited general purpose financial statements **on or before 1 April 2022**.

In accordance with section 113 of the [VET Student Loans Rules 2016](#), an approved provider (other than a TAFE, university or government owned entity) must give the Secretary **audited** general purpose financial statements for each financial year of its approval period, within 3 months after the end of the financial year.

You are also required to provide a copy of your current workers compensation and public liability insurance policy.

Please submit all documentation via HELP IT Systems ([HITS](#)).

To ensure all required information is submitted, please refer to the [Ongoing Financial Performance Requirements for VET Student Loans Providers](#) fact sheet.

### 2021 VSL Tuition Protection Levy

The Government has waived the 2021 VSL tuition protection levy (the Levy), to assist the sector's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This represents a significant financial saving for providers and complements a range of other regulatory and fee relief measures the Australian Government has provided for the sector throughout 2020 and 2021.

While the 2021 levy collection has been waived, it's important for you to understand how the Levy is calculated, and how your future levy collections may change as your circumstances shift. To support this, the Tuition Protection Service will shortly send leviable providers a link to your organisation's 2021 levy calculation via a Tuition Protection Levy Estimator. The Levy Estimator provides you with a breakdown of your 2021 levy estimate calculation using information provided to the department. You can drill down into how this estimate was calculated and use the Levy Estimator to get a feel for how the levy calculation works and how your levy amounts may change as your circumstances shift.

Any correspondence in relation to the VSL levy will automatically be sent to the person identified with the contact type of CEO/VC in [HITS](#) and copied to any other contacts included in HITS with a contact type of Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Senior Authorised Officer (SAO), Primary Contact – VET (PCV) or Primary Contact HE (PVH).

To ensure future correspondence is received in a timely manner, providers are asked to review their current contacts in HITS and update if required. The [HITS User Guide](#) contains further instructions on how to add or update contacts in HITS.

If you have any questions in relation to the levy, please email the TPS Operations team at [operations@tps.gov.au](mailto:operations@tps.gov.au).

### More students can get the Tertiary Access Payment from 1 January 2022

The Tertiary Access Payment is a new payment that started in 2021. From this year, the payment is changing to help more students with the costs of moving for study.

From 1 January 2022, students from inner regional, outer regional and remote areas can get the payment.

Students who move from inner regional areas get a one-off lump sum of \$3,000. Students from outer regional and remote places get up to \$5,000 in two instalments.

To get the payment, students need to meet some rules. These include:

- starting their course directly after year 12 or equivalent
- moving to study at an education provider that's at least 90 minutes from their home by public transport
- enrolling in a full-time course that is a Certificate IV or higher.

Students can get the Tertiary Access Payment at the same time as other student payments like Youth Allowance and the Relocation Scholarship. Students don't need to get another payment from Services Australia to get this payment.

All students now claim the payment through Services Australia. Students starting study this year can claim any time until 31 December.

#### **What you can do**

- Tell eligible students to claim this payment now using their myGov account linked to Centrelink.
- Direct them to the full list of eligibility requirements about the [Tertiary Access Payment](#) on Services Australia's website.
- Help your rural students by displaying the poster from Services Australia's [School leavers resource eKit](#) about support for students from regional and remote areas.

## Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI)

### [New VSL approved providers – TCSI system training invitation – 24 February 2022](#)

All new providers will have received an invitation to attend a TCSI system walkthrough with our TCSI systems' experts.

If you are not a new provider but would like to attend, or have new staff who would benefit from attending, please let us know by emailing the VSL Program Operations and Payments team at [VETStudentLoans@dese.gov.au](mailto:VETStudentLoans@dese.gov.au).

## Reminder about students' access to a VET Student Loan

### [Accessing a VET Student Loan after a student achieves the qualification](#)

Allowing a student to access any remaining course cap after a course has been completed and the qualification attained is not permissible under the *VET Student Loans Act 2016* (the Act) and the VET Student Loans Rules 2016 (the Rules).

The maximum loan amount available applies per course (qualification) per student not per enrolment or per provider. Only one loan application (eCAF) is made by the student for the course. When the course is

complete, the qualification attained and testamur provided to the student for the qualification, the student may not access any leftover cap for additional single units, or to update an already achieved unit.

In accordance with section 7 of the Act, a VET Student Loan can only be approved for an eligible student in relation to an approved course. In accordance with section 8 of the Rules, an approved course must not include content or activities that do not contribute to achieving the relevant qualification. As such, a VET Student Loan cannot be approved for units of competency studied after the qualification has been achieved, as this study would not contribute to achieving the qualification concerned.

### Access to a VET Student Loan for a failed course/part of a course

We have recently received several enquiries regarding students being able to access a VET Student Loan to re-sit a failed unit of study or unit of competency. It is worth remembering we expect you to comply with the [Standards for Registered Training Organisations \(RTOs\) 2015](#), as well the VSL Program, regarding re-sits. It is a requirement of the VSL Program that you determine and publish unit and course fees before enrolment, with course fees charged over at least 3 fee periods/census days as the student progresses through the course. Any fees applied to failed units and re-sits should also be included in this upfront determination and publishing.

As outlined in section 4.7.4 *Students who fail a unit or part of a course* of the [VET Student Loans Manual for Providers](#), if a student accessing a VET Student Loan is required to re-sit the unit with charges to apply, the student may access a VET Student Loan in a subsequent attempt, if there is remaining VSL course cap and HELP balance available. For students who fail a small component of a unit of study, such as one or 2 units of competency and only need to re-sit those competencies, the student can access a VET Student Loan to re-sit those units of competency if there is sufficient cap and limit available. It is for you to determine the relevant charges and issue required notices.

As part of the information provided to students before enrolment, we expect you to address fee information when components of units of study are required to be redone. To allow students sufficient information to make their study and payment decisions, this information should be determined and published before a student enrolls. You must publish individual unit of competency charges, and in the case of when more than one unit of competency is required to be redone, unit charges can be reduced and levied on a pro rata basis.

You are also required to ensure students are provided the relevant notices - *VSL Fee Notice* and *Commonwealth Assistance Notice* - or that the unit is included on fee notices yet to be provided. In the circumstance of a re-sit, you may also issue the student with an updated *Statement of Covered Fees*, recognising the student's total tuition fees for the course have changed.

## February Spotlight

### Failed payment processing

It can be very frustrating if a unit did not get paid and you are unsure why. While circumstances are never the same, there are some common themes and we have compiled a few tips which may help you avoid this problem.

- Make sure the student ID and/or CHESSN in your TCSI reporting matches the eCAF. Otherwise, we cannot match the TCSI data to an eCAF and cannot make a payment. If you need to change the

student ID or CHESSN in the eCAF, issue an eCAF revision and ensure the student confirms the revision within 14 days.

- Ensure the census date is before the unit completion date in your TCSI reporting.
- Issue a progression when a student withdraws or resumes their study. Ensure the student responds to it and enters the correct dates. No payments will be made for census dates between the progression 'deferred/withdrawn' date and the 'resumed' date.
- Work with your students to ensure the progression responses are actioned, correct and up to date. If a student has not responded to several progressions (or if progressions have not been issued at all), payments may cease.
- Our payment system assesses reported units 3 times for payment. If payment has failed 3 times, the unit will be no longer assessed and will be 'invalidated'. You will need to re-report the data in TCSI if you would like an invalidated unit to be reassessed.
- Report data on time. Payments are assessed monthly. If you are late with reporting and are attempting to report several past census day units in a month, the summing of the total of the units may result in 'proportionate fee spreading' errors.
- If you are still experiencing difficulties, contact us at [VETstudentloans@dese.gov.au](mailto:VETstudentloans@dese.gov.au) or at [TCSIsupport@dese.gov.au](mailto:TCSIsupport@dese.gov.au) if your query is TCSI-related.

## Stakeholder engagement news

### Updates to VSL communication products

Minor updates to the [VET Student Loans Information Booklet](#) are currently being made and the latest version will be published on the VSL webpage shortly.

In previous newsletters we informed you of other updates to our webpage. We encourage you to review [Tuition Protection and Provider Default](#), [VET Student Loans Data Reporting Updates](#), [How to become a VET Student Loans provider](#) and the [VSL Manual for Providers](#) for recent updates.

New fact sheets that have been added to the list of resources include the [Data Provisions Fact Sheet 2022](#), [Statutory Declaration Form 2022 - VET FEE-HELP and VET Student Loans](#) and [VET Student Loans Course Caps Indexed Amounts \(for providers\)](#).

The list of [VSL Approved Course Providers](#) and the [VSL Non-approved Course Providers](#) was updated on 23 December 2021.

Recent VSL statistics that have been published include the [VSL Annual report January - December 2020](#), the [VSL Annual report January - December 2020 - Table 1 to Table 6 addendum](#), the [VSL Six-monthly report July to December 2021](#) and the [VSL Six-monthly report July to December 2021 - Table 1 to Table 6 addendum](#).

The [VET Student Loans](#) program page is regularly updated with the Latest News, Hot Topics and Key Dates.

### Key dates

Revocation of approval of all remaining VFH providers  
Reporting deadline for VFH units – census dates in 2018

1 July 2021  
31 December 2021

VSL Application Survey closed

28 January 2022

TCSI system training

24 February 2022

Submit applications to become approved VSL provider

1 March 2022 onwards

## Subscribing to the VSL Provider Newsletter and VSL Forums

Do you know someone who would like to subscribe to the VSL Provider Newsletter or receive invitations to the quarterly VSL Forum? The newsletter and the VSL Forum are how we let you know about program updates and reminders about the program administrative requirements.

Let your colleagues know they can subscribe the newsletter and VSL Forum invitations at [VET Student Loans – subscribe](#).