



VET Student Loans (VSL) Provider Newsletter – April 2022

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A word from Kathy

This month I would like to especially acknowledge the VET Student Loans (VSL) providers in New South Wales and Queensland who have been impacted, or continue to be impacted, by the recent floods. The effect on your businesses, your students and possibly even your own homes is immense. I encourage those of you adversely effected to contact the department to discuss options to alleviate concerns about payments, data reporting and compliance deadlines.

In February 2022 we commenced consultation on the VSL redesign work, releasing a paper seeking input on consultation preferences and several program settings. A big thank you to those that took the time to provide a submission. Submissions were received from public and private providers, and peak sector bodies, spanning multiple jurisdictions. Most respondents were public providers. A summary of the feedback is available on the [VSL Redesign](#) webpage. Further consultation is expected to be undertaken in the coming months.

I am pleased to let you know about the removal of data reporting statutory declaration requirements. This represents a tangible administrative saving for you and will help reduce the time and cost associated with participation in the VSL program.

As part of the 2022-23 Federal Budget, funding has been provided for critical maintenance and improvement to the VSL IT system. This funding will enable us to undertake more timely fixes and enable our IT systems to be more responsive to upcoming policy and redesign changes. Part of this work is to develop a provider approvals portal and remove the need to upload Excel workbooks. It will also lay the groundwork for a single-entry point for providers. I will keep you updated as this work progresses.

Kathy Dennis

Announcements

Removal of data reporting statutory declaration requirements

We have removed the administrative requirement for you to submit a statutory declaration as part of your data reporting requirements.

You are reminded that the data you submit must be complete and accurate and provided in line with the [Notice under Subsection 53\(1\) of the VET Student Loans Act 2016](#). Civil penalties and offences may apply if you fail to comply with the Notice or provide false or misleading information to us. The department's compliance team will review adherence with data reporting requirements through a range of monitoring and compliance activities.

An updated [VSL Data Provision Fact Sheet 2022](#) provides information to assist you to submit complete and accurate monthly data.

Improvements to VSL Student Progression Form and related materials

We have made improvements to the Student Progression Form and the supporting materials (including Form invite and submission confirmation emails, Progression Login page, and Fact Sheet) to simplify the language used, clarify the content and study status response options and enhance the visual appearance of the Form and materials.

These improvements will make it easier for your students to understand and navigate the Form and enable a higher rate of successful completion of the Form. This represents an administrative saving for you as it reduces the number of resources and time that you spend responding to student queries and following up with students to submit their Form.

The improved Form and materials will not impact on your systems as there has not been system functionality changes.

An updated [Progression Form Fact Sheet](#) provides information to further assist your VSL students in understanding how to complete and submit the Form.

Support for providers and students impacted by recent floods in NSW and QLD

For VSL approved providers that are directly impacted by floods with expected direct impacts on students, such as loss of campus infrastructure or delays or non-commencement of studies, please contact the department, once you can.

Email: Mr Zain Syed, A/g Director, VSL Program Operations & Payments (VETstudentloans@dese.gov.au)
Telephone: 02 6121 3587

For those providers affected, we wish to understand the impacts and alleviate your concerns about payment and data reporting deadlines at this time and understand what assistance may be needed from the department. We may be able to assist in the following ways:

- Providing additional time for submission of student data and payment information with consideration of cash-flow impacts.
- Giving extra time for payment of any provider debts and not charging interest on delayed payments for a reasonable period.

- Helping you to reconstruct lost or destroyed records from the data we hold.
- Assisting you in re-issuing any information required.
- Adopting a pragmatic approach to identity, citizenship and residency evidentiary requirements for students who no longer have access to these records. In some circumstances for flood impacted students a statutory declaration may be appropriate and sufficient for this period.
- Providing additional time for completion of audit or compliance related submissions required by the department.

Information for flood affected students is included on the [Information for VSL Students](#) page.

2022 update to VSL Courses and Loan Caps

The 2022 update for the VSL (Courses and Loan Caps) Determination was registered last month. Several new courses, increased loan caps and replacement courses for non-current VSL approved courses were added to the [VET Student Loans \(Courses and Loan Caps\) Determination 2016](#) (Determination). These changes came into effect on 8 March 2022. The list of amendments is available at the [Federal Register of Legislation](#).

Further information about the changes, including what you need to do to offer these courses using a VET Student Loan, and how to apply new loan cap bands, can be found in the [VSL 2022 Course List and Loan Caps](#) fact sheet published on the department's website. The changes to the Determination have been agreed to by Senator the Hon Stuart Robert, Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business.

Tuition Protection Review Final Report released

In May 2021, the Review of Australia's tuition protection arrangements across the higher education sector, the international education sector, and the VET Student Loans (VSL) program was initiated by the Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business and the then Minister for Education and Youth.

Government managed tuition protection provides significant surety to students and encourages them to invest in their education, contribute to the Australian economy and gain a qualification.

All VSL providers were invited to participate in the Review, and we thank those who contributed. The Review provides a useful overview of the Tuition Protection arrangements, including how these arrangements operate for the VSL program. We encourage you to read the [Tuition Protection Review Final Report](#) which was tabled in Parliament on 7 April 2022.

Tuition Protection Service Update

2021 Tuition protection levy estimates

Late last year the Australian Government waived the 2021 domestic tuition protection levies to assist the sectors' recovery from COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, Tuition Protection Service (TPS) advised we would send leviable providers a link to their organisation's 2021 levy calculation.

This information has recently been distributed via email with a link to the Tuition Protection Levy Estimator. The Levy Estimator provides a breakdown of your 2021 levy estimate calculation using information provided by your organisation to the department. Use the Levy Estimator to drill down into how this estimate was calculated and how your levy amounts may change as your circumstances shift.

If you did not receive this email, or have any questions in relation to the levies, please email the TPS Operations team at operations@tps.gov.au.

2022 Tuition protection levies for the domestic education sector

2022 is the first year since introduction, that domestic education providers will be expected to pay the tuition protection service levies. To support the sector understand how the levies are calculated, the process and timeline, the TPS will roll out an engagement campaign across the coming months.

On 23 March the TPS Advisory Board, comprising representatives from across the tertiary education sector, met and confirmed advice on domestic TPS levies in 2022. In mid-April the TPS Director will meet with peak bodies, International Tertiary Education Council Australia and Independent Higher Education Australia.

Expanded information regarding the domestic levies will be added to the [Tuition Protection Service](#) website and information packages will be distributed digitally. Once the draft TPS Advisory Board's levies advice is published, the TPS will consult with VSL and higher education providers on the 2022 domestic tuition protection levies' risk factors.

In May the TPS will conduct information sessions online and in person. We will email you about further details and update the TPS' [Announcements](#) page.

Payment reports

Payment rejections

When you receive your payment report you may find that a requested payment has not been made. The payment rejection in the 'Reason for Exclusion' column will indicate a possible reason. The [VSL Data Provision Fact Sheet 2022](#) has a table of error codes with an explanation and the remediation action you may be able to employ.

Compliance news

April focus

We measure the timeliness, completeness and accuracy of data submitted by you to ensure students are appropriately supported to access a VET Student Loan and are engaging with their course.

Through a range of monitoring and compliance activities, we review adherence with data reporting requirements to identify compliance issues.

We are currently surveying students seeking feedback on their enrolment experiences to identify concerns before students incur a debt. Students are asked about their level of satisfaction with the VSL enrolment process, their understanding of information they are given about the course and fees.

We will use this feedback to identify and further investigate compliance issues and educate providers and share findings with the department about key themes.

There are a number of reference guides available to assist you meet your VSL reporting obligations, including [Information for VET Student Loans Approved Providers](#), [VET Student Loans Data Reporting Updates](#) and the [HITS User Guide](#).

High level findings, including common themes from students about their enrolment experiences from the survey, will be included as regular feature articles in the VSL Provider Newsletter.

Redress for former VET FEE-HELP students – closing 31 December 2022

In 2019 the Australian Government introduced legislative measures to help students who:

- did a course under VET FEE-HELP
- did not complete units of study or the course and
- were subjected to inappropriate conduct by their provider.

These measures are set to close on 31 December 2022, which is the last date students can make complaints to the VET Student Loans Ombudsman.

We encourage you to help eligible students find out more by sharing the video about the measures, on the bottom of the page, at [Home - VET Student Loans \(ombudsman.gov.au\)](https://www.ombudsman.gov.au).

April Spotlight

Student Enquires

We have analysed recent student enquiries and identified recurring questions. There are resources that would assist students to address some of these issues. You can help your students become aware of useful fact sheets and tools by linking your webpages to [Information for VET Student Loans Students](#).

Eligibility and the application process

You should provide information about who to contact in your organisation when students have questions about the application process. You may also like to direct students to the VET Student Loans videos which are designed to answer common questions.

The VET Student Loans Video – Part 1 provides advice about using the [Eligibility Tool](#) on the My Skills website. The video explains how students can track their HELP balance on [myHELPhelp](#) and how their loan is repaid through the taxation system.

The VET Student Loans Video – Part 2 provides advice about applying for a VET Student Loan through the eCAF system, explains why students need a tax file number and why students are required to complete progression forms.

The eCAF portal and Progression Forms

We have made changes to the eCAF portal and the Progression Form. The [eCAF Fact Sheet](#) and the [Progression Form Fact Sheet](#) have also been revised. Please make your students aware of these resources.

Please remind your students:

- that if they have not received the progression form, their passkey or are unable to log into the eCAF system, they should contact you to have the form or passkey re-triggered
- that their date of birth in the eCAF system must be correct
- of the importance of the progression forms and how often they will receive an invitation
- that the progression forms may be received in their email spam folder.

Withdrawals and deferrals

It is important that students understand their responsibilities in relation to closing their VET Student Loan.

Explain that to defer, or withdraw from their course, students must follow your organisation's withdrawal procedures **and** complete a progression form to advise of their status for loan purposes.

Refunds and fees charged

Please ensure that your procedures for refunding, re-crediting and re-scheduling of fees are readily available on your website so that students can easily access this information.

Stakeholder engagement news

We welcome the opportunity to engage with our stakeholder groups. Over the past 2 years we have been invited to the Business Summits and the VSL Interest Groups hosted by ITECA. In February we met with TDA members to talk about the strategic direction of the VSL program and the VET sector.

Also, in February the VSL Provider Reference Group (PRG) met. The PRG comprises representatives from the peak bodies - ITECA, TDA and IHEA - as well as private and public training providers. The PRG have been consulted on numerous VSL program issues and have provided valuable feedback. PRG input has led to many of the changes that have already been incorporated by the program.

Ongoing input from our stakeholders will build on the consultation process to implement program redesign.

Key dates

Submit applications to become approved VSL provider	1 March 2022 onwards
VFH units with census dates in 2018 - deadline for reporting	31 December 2021
Remaining VFH providers – revocation of approval	1 July 2021

Subscribing to the VSL Provider Newsletter

Do you know someone who would like to subscribe to the VSL Provider Newsletter? The newsletter is how we let you know about program updates and reminders about the program administrative requirements.

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