

Guide for students

Securing Jobs for Your Future



Changes to the training system

What new and continuing students need to know

Securing Jobs for Your Future – Skills for Victoria is a Victorian Government initiative to improve and refocus the training system. Many changes come into effect on 1 July 2009. This is to help you understand the changes.

The Victorian Training Guarantee

The main idea behind the changes is to encourage more people to become qualified at a higher level, especially in areas where employers find it hard to find enough staff. The Government is expanding the number of places at TAFE institutions, private training providers, and Adult and Community Education providers over the next few years. A subsidised place is guaranteed to anyone who is eligible and you can access this entitlement more than once, as you move up the qualification scale. This is called the *Victorian Training Guarantee* and it will come in for Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas from 1 July 2009.

The guaranteed place comes with some new eligibility (entry) requirements.

Guaranteed places will be extended to all other training programs from January 2011. In the meantime you will still be able to enrol in programs below Diploma level at your chosen training provider, with government support, but there will be limits on the number of places available, as there are now.

Fees

Another change affecting students is the schedule of fees for new enrolments in all training courses from 1 July 2009 (not just Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas).

If you are eligible for a government subsidised place, the Government pays most of the cost of your course, but you will still pay some fees, according to the new fee schedule. If you are not eligible for a subsidised place, you might still undertake a course, but would have to pay on a fee-for-service basis, which costs more.

New enrolments in Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas from 1 July 2009

How do I know if I'm eligible for a subsidised place?

If you are an Australian citizen or permanent resident, or a holder of a Special Category Visa (for New Zealand citizens), you have met the first eligibility requirement. If you are also under 20 on 1 January in the year when you will be undertaking the course, there are no more requirements – you are eligible!

What if I've already turned 20?

If you are 20 or older on that date, your provider will ask you what qualifications you already hold. If you are enrolling in a course that is accredited at a higher level than the highest qualification you hold, then you are eligible. For example, if you have completed year 12, that counts as equivalent to a Certificate II qualification. Or you may have completed a Certificate III qualification. A Diploma or Advanced Diploma is higher than these, so you would be eligible.

But you would not be eligible for a subsidised place in a course at the same level. So if you have already completed a Diploma, you would not be eligible for a subsidised place in a Diploma course.

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What happens if I'm not eligible?

If it turns out that you are not eligible for a government subsidised place in the course of your choice, your provider may have other options to suggest that would suit your needs just as well. Or you might choose to take a place without a government subsidy.

Are there any exemptions from these rules?

In a very limited number of cases, mainly to do with critical shortages in certain occupations or significant employment disadvantage, a provider might grant a subsidised place to a person who doesn't meet the eligibility requirements.

What fees will I pay?

For a subsidised place you will pay a certain amount as a tuition fee. This is worked out for each individual student, based on the number of hours you are enrolling in and any other study you have already done in that year. The amount can vary for different students.

The Government sets a minimum and the maximum you can pay each year. For the six months between July and December 2009, you will not pay more than \$750 in tuition fees for a Diploma or Advanced Diploma. For the 2010 year, the maximum will be \$2,000 for the year, no matter how many hours you study.

As well as tuition fees, there will usually be some other costs, such as a services and amenities fee, to cover things like access to a student canteen and library; and you may have to buy some equipment.

For a non-subsidised (fee-for-service) place, you will pay higher fees. Your provider can tell you the fees that apply to the course of your choice.

For more detailed information about fees visit www.skills.vic.gov.au/tafe_students/fees

What financial assistance is available?

For enrolments in a Diploma or Advanced Diploma as part of an Apprenticeship or Traineeship, a concession is available to anyone who has a Commonwealth Health Care Card or meets certain other requirements. Indigenous students pay only the minimum tuition fee. Some courses also have special arrangements in place to reduce or remove tuition fees.

If these circumstances don't apply to you, find out if your provider offers access to VET FEE-HELP. This is a Commonwealth Government program that pays tuition fees for you, and then you repay the Government later, after you have started to earn a salary above a certain amount – at the moment, about \$41,000. Until you reach that salary, you would not have to make any repayments. If you are enrolling at a VET FEE-HELP provider, this kind of

loan is available to cover your fees whether you are paying the government subsidised rate or fee for service.

Just one more thing, VET FEE-HELP has its own eligibility requirements. Your provider can explain whether or not you are eligible

New enrolments in courses below Diploma level from 1 July 2009

The main change affecting courses from Certificate I up to Certificate IV from 1 July is the new tuition fees. Currently all students in government funded training pay the same hourly rate (\$1.37), regardless of the program. From 1 July, the amount will vary depending on which level of course you do. Lower level courses are generally cheaper, because the fees increase as the value of the qualification increases. For example, for a Foundation Skills course you will pay up to \$1.08 per hour; for a Certificate I or II or any course done as an Apprenticeship or Traineeship, the cost is up to \$1.37 per hour; for a Certificate III or IV, the cost is up to \$1.41 per hour. The fee maximums vary from \$500 per year up to \$1,000 per year.

Do the new entry requirements apply to these courses?

No. Unless you are enrolling through the special program *Skills for Growth* (more about this later) the changes to entry requirements will not apply until January 2011. You will still have to meet citizenship and residency requirements, but the new requirements about qualifications already held will not affect you if you are commencing in 2009 or 2010.

What fees will I have to pay?

You will pay tuition fees either as a government-funded enrolment or on a fee-for-service basis. Some other fees may also be required, such as a student services and amenities fee and fees to cover the cost of equipment or materials. For more detailed information about fees visit www.skills.vic.gov.au/tafe_students/fees

What financial assistance is there?

If you hold a Commonwealth Health Care card or meet certain other requirements, concessions on tuition fees are available to students enrolling in courses below Diploma level. The concession tuition fee is the same as the minimum fee; this varies from \$50 per year up to \$120 per year, depending on the course. If you are an Indigenous student you will pay only the minimum fee. Some courses may have special arrangements for reduction or removal of fees. But VET FEE-HELP is not available for courses at this level, so you will not be able to access this type of loan to pay your fees.



Skills for Growth – a special program

Under a special program some employees working in small and medium sized businesses will be participating in an assessment and analysis process to identify training that would be valuable both to them as individuals and to their employer. If you are enrolling through this program, in a course at any level, the new entry requirements will apply. Specialist staff will be working with employers and employees participating in this program and they can provide more detailed information.

Continuing students

I am already enrolled – how am I affected?

If you are already enrolled and have started your course before 1 July 2009 you will not be affected by the changes. If you go on enrolling in the same course leading to the same qualification, your tuition fees will stay the same, with only a minor adjustment for indexation each year. If you want to take a period of absence from your course you will need to discuss this with your provider to see if they will maintain the same arrangement when you return. If you transfer from one provider to another you should check with the new provider to see if they will keep the same fee rate. This arrangement (called ‘fee maintenance’) will last until the end of 2012, so you have time to finish your course. After that everyone will pay the new tuition fees.

Will all my fees stay the same?

The other fees – student services and amenities, for example – may change. Your provider is not obliged to keep everything exactly the same, just to keep your tuition fees at the same level.

What if the new fees are cheaper? Can I change over?

If you are doing a Foundation Skills course, such as English as a Second Language or a Certificate of General Adult Education, the fees will be cheaper after 1 July 2009. Your provider may adjust your hourly rate for any hours you are taking in the second half of 2009 so you can take advantage of this. In most other instances, there is not likely to be an advantage in changing over, but from the beginning of 2010, students may transfer to the new tuition fee rates if they wish.

All tuition fees are subject to fee caps (upper limits), to make sure that your expenses don't become too heavy for you to keep on with your training. During the transition period, while the new fees are coming in, your provider will make sure that you pay no more than the correct maximum over the period of your enrolment.

More questions about the changes coming in on 1 July?

If you are already enrolled at a training provider, the appropriate staff will be able to answer many of your questions. Other ways of getting information are to visit the Skills Victoria student website at www.skills.vic.gov.au/tafe_students or SMS ‘skills’ to **134688**, or call the Hotline on **131823**.

Ready to get started in training?

Depending on your interests and abilities, and the employment opportunities you are looking for, there are many courses and providers to choose from. To get started, you can search for courses and providers online at www.skills.vic.gov.au/tafe_students/directory



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Student eligibility at 1 July 2009 for subsidised places in Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas

