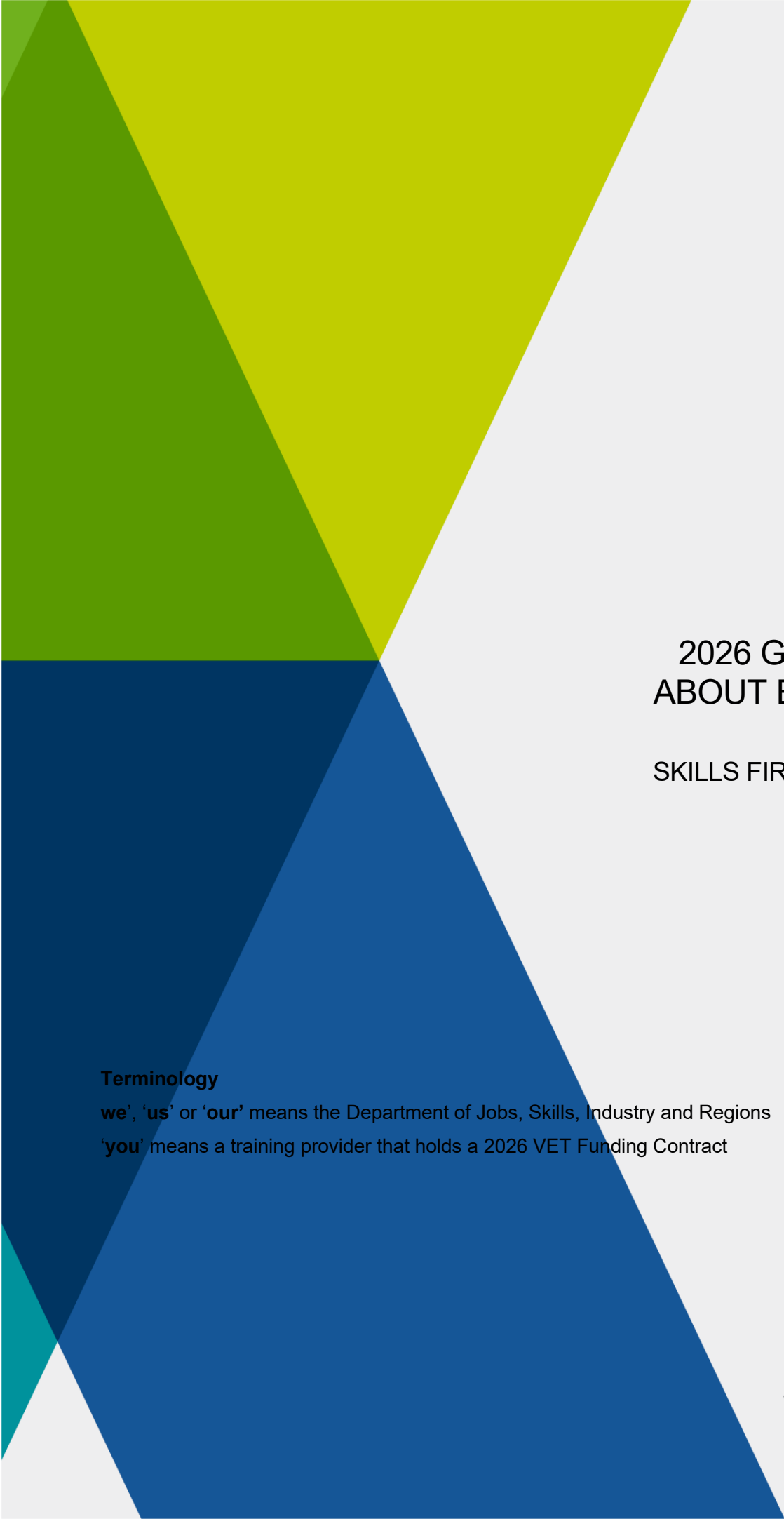




2026 GUIDELINES ABOUT ELIGIBILITY

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 Guidelines describe the requirements you must apply in assessing and evidencing a student's Skills First Entitlement.

You must have a clear and documented business process for determining a student's eligibility, as required by the VET Funding Contract (the Contract). This business process must include the collection of evidence of eligibility.

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

1. Determining eligibility for the Skills First Program

1.1 You must assess a student's eligibility against the requirements outlined in this section 1.

Citizenship/residency

1.2 A student must be either:

- a) an Australian citizen;
- b) a holder of a permanent visa; or
- c) a New Zealand citizen,

as evidenced by one of the documents described in the Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration form at **Attachment 1** to these Guidelines.

Physically present in Victoria or a border region

1.3 A student must be undertaking all training and assessment while physically present in:

- a) the State of Victoria; or
- b) a border region with one of the following postcodes:

NSW	SA
2546	5262, 5263
2548 - 2551	5267 - 5272
2625 - 2633	5277 - 5279
2640 - 2648	5290, 5291
2650, 2651, 2653, 2655, 2656	5302 - 5304
2658 - 2660	5311, 5333, 5340
2700, 2707	5342 - 5345
2710 - 2717	
2720	
2730 - 2739	

The '2 Skill Sets in a year' and '2 AQF qualifications in a year' limits

1.4 In a calendar year, a student may only commence a maximum of 2:

- a) Skills First subsidised Skill Sets; and
- b) Skills First subsidised programs that are AQF qualifications.

1.5 **Do not** count the following when determining if a student meets these limits:

- a) transitioning from a superseded program to the current version of the same program;

- b) recommencing training in the same program (at either the same or a different provider);
- c) enrolling in an Apprenticeship (not Traineeship) after having participated in one of the programs identified as a 'Pre-Apprenticeship and Pathway Program' on the Funded Programs Report;
- d) participation in '22660VIC – Course in Identifying and Responding to Family Violence Risk';
- e) participation in literacy, numeracy and digital support subjects; or
- f) participation in 'Plumbing Licence' Skill Sets as identified on the Funded Programs Report.

The '2 at a time' limit

- 1.6 A student may only commence a maximum of 2 Skills First subsidised programs at any one time.
- 1.7 **Do not** count the following when determining if a student meets this limit:
 - a) '22660VIC – Course in Identifying and Responding to Family Violence Risk'; or
 - b) literacy, numeracy and digital support subjects.

Eligibility for Foundation Skills programs

- 1.8 A student is not eligible for a Foundation Skills Program if they:
 - a) hold an AQF qualification issued by an Australian VET or higher education provider that is at AQF level 5 (Diploma) or higher.
 - b) are enrolled in the Commonwealth Government's 'Skills for Education and Employment' program.

Eligibility exemptions

- 1.9 You may only exempt a student from the eligibility requirements in accordance with Part C of Schedule 1 of the Contract. You must sight and retain evidence of a student's eligibility to receive an exemption as specified in Part C of Schedule 1 of the Contract or in Clause 2.7 of these Guidelines.

2. Sighting and retaining evidence of eligibility

Completing the Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration form

- 2.1 Your eligibility assessment processes must involve informative discussions with applicants, as well as comprehensive assessments of the circumstances against the eligibility requirements of the Contract, including any variations to that Contract.
- 2.2 Prior to the commencement of training, for each student who is assessed to be eligible, your authorised delegate must complete the information and declarations in the Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration form at **Attachment 1** to these Guidelines, or in a form that collects the same information.
- 2.3 An authorised delegate means:
 - a) employee/s to whom your CEO (or equivalent) has formally delegated this function (written evidence of such a delegation must be available at audit), or
 - b) an agent with whom you have a legally binding agreement (and this agreement must be available at audit).
- 2.4 You must make available to us for audit or review purposes the completed Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration form (or an equivalent form that you use) and any of the evidence that is sighted and retained in relation to any individual student.

2.5 The evidence of eligibility specified in the Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration form must be sighted and retained by:

	Sighting:	Retaining:
a)	a hard copy original.	a photocopy or electronic copy of the hard copy original.
OR		
b)	a certified photocopy (not in electronic form) of the hard copy original. <i>(refer to Attachment 2 for information about document certification)</i>	a photocopy or electronic copy of the certified copy, or the original certified copy.
OR		
c)	confirmation from a gateway service provider ¹ that it has verified that the student's name, (where applicable) date of birth and document number match a current and valid record in the relevant government database	a transaction record generated by securely logging in to the administrative platform provided by the gateway service provider, that shows: - the type of document that was checked; - that their name, date of birth and document number were verified to match a valid and current document in the DVS; and (where applicable) the student holds a permanent visa.
OR		
d)	a digital green Medicare card displayed on a digital wallet on the cardholder's mobile device through: - Express Plus Medicare mobile application; or - MyGov mobile application. 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 digital green Medicare card has been sighted. The declaration must include the: - name of the authorised delegate who sighted the card; - date the card was sighted; - document number of the card; and - name of the card holder.
OR		

¹ 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) or the Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) system.

	Sighting:	Retaining:
e)	a record from the Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) system generated by the student; and an original or certified copy of their foreign passport or ImmiCard that matches the name, date of birth and document number shown in the VEVO record.	a copy of the VEVO record that includes: • Department of Home Affairs logo; • the student's name and date of birth; • document number of the student's foreign passport or Immicard; and • confirmation the student holds a permanent visa and a copy of the original - or certified copy of the student's foreign passport or ImmiCard.
OR		
f)	a record from VEVO generated by you (if you are registered with the Department of Home Affairs to access the VEVO system and have permission from the student to check their visa status)	a transaction record from VEVO that shows: • the student's name, date of birth and document number of their foreign passport or Immicard were verified to match a record in the VEVO system; and • they hold a permanent visa.

- 2.6 Where a student objects to you retaining evidence of eligibility for privacy reasons, you must attach a written declaration to the student's file stating that you have sighted the evidence. The declaration must include the:
- name of the authorised delegate who sighted the evidence;
 - date it was sighted;
 - type of document that was checked; and
 - student's name.

Additional evidence to be sighted and retained for Part C Initiatives

Asylum Seeker VET Program

- 2.7 Prior to granting an exemption from the citizenship/permanent residence eligibility criterion, you must sight and retain evidence the student is eligible to participate in the Asylum Seeker VET Program as follows:

	Sighting	Retaining
a)	a record from the Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) system generated by the student; and an original or certified copy of their foreign passport or ImmiCard that matches the name, date of birth and document number shown in the VEVO record; and	a copy of the VEVO record that includes: • Department of Home Affairs logo; • the student's name and date of birth; • document number of the student's foreign passport or Immicard; • confirmation the student has study and (if relevant) work rights; and;

Sighting	Retaining
in the case of a bridging visa, supporting evidence.	- confirmation the student holds, or is a dependant of an individual, who holds: - a valid humanitarian, protection, or refugee visa; or - holds a valid bridging visa. and - a copy of the original - or certified copy of the student's foreign passport or ImmiCard. and in the case of a bridging visa, a written declaration attached to the student's file stating you have sighted a document from the Department of Home Affairs acknowledging the student has lodged an application: - for a humanitarian, protection, or refugee visa; or - under section 417 or section 48B of the Migration Act 1958 (Cth) which is yet to be determined.
OR	
b) a record from VEVO generated by you (if you are registered with the Department of Home Affairs to access the VEVO system and have permission from the student to check their visa status); and in the case of a bridging visa, supporting evidence.	a copy of the VEVO record that shows: - the student's name, date of birth and document number of their foreign passport or ImmiCard were verified to match a record in the VEVO system, and - confirmation the student has study and (if relevant) work rights; and - the student holds, or is a dependant of an individual who holds: - a valid humanitarian, protection, or refugee visa; or - a valid bridging visa. and in the case of a bridging visa, a written declaration attached to the student's file stating you have sighted a document from the Department of Home Affairs acknowledging the student has lodged an application: - for a humanitarian, protection, or refugee visa; or - under section 417 or section 48B of the Migration Act 1958 (Cth) which is yet to be determined.
OR	
c) a signed letter of referral to government subsidised training from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre or the Australian Red Cross Support for Trafficked People Program.	a copy of the letter.

Electronic completion of the Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration form

- 2.8 If you complete, and have students complete, the Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration form electronically, you must ensure:
- that the information collected is the same as that which would have been collected in hard copy; and
 - an electronic action equivalent to a signature is undertaken in any instance where a signature is required on the form.
- 2.9 If you engage a Gateway Service Provider to access the DVS as part of obtaining and assessing evidence of eligibility and the DVS is unable to verify a student's document, then you must offer them the opportunity to provide their evidence of eligibility in an alternative format, prior to making an assessment of their eligibility.

Relying on information obtained about a student for a subsequent enrolment

- 2.10 If you have sighted and retained evidence of a student's citizenship (in accordance with the requirements of the Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration form), you may use this evidence for any subsequent enrolments by that student, with only you, provided that:
- the evidence, if verified by any means other than through the DVS, has not expired when a subsequent enrolment occurs;
 - the evidence, if verified through the DVS without retaining an expiry date, is only used for subsequent enrolments that occur within the same calendar year as the DVS check;
 - the evidence continues to be retained for audit, review or investigation purposes; and
 - you make all other assessments of the student's Skills First Entitlement for each subsequent enrolment.

Enrolment in literacy, numeracy and digital support subjects

- 2.11 If you have sighted and retained evidence of a student's citizenship (in accordance with the requirements of the Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration form) to enrol them in a Skills First program, you do not need to re-check evidence of citizenship to enrol them in literacy, numeracy and digital support subjects to supplement that program.

Additional evidence to be sighted and retained for students under 17 years of age

- 2.12 Prior to enrolling a student who will be under 17 years of age at the time their training commences, you must sight and retain evidence the student has been granted, an exemption from school attendance as follows:

	If the student:	You must sight and retain:	And ensure that it:
a)	has completed year 10	a copy of the signed and completed endorsement page from the 'Exemption From School Application Form'; OR correspondence or a certificate signed by the School Principal or a Department Regional Director.	identifies you as the training provider and the training to be undertaken; OR identifies the relevant employer if the student is to undertake an Apprenticeship / Traineeship.
b)	has not completed year 10	correspondence or a certificate signed by the Department Regional Director.	

	If the student:	You must sight and retain:	And ensure that it:
c)	is not currently, or has never been, enrolled in a Victorian School (for example, students enrolled in home schooling, or students who have moved to Victoria from interstate or overseas)	correspondence or a certificate signed by the Department Regional Director.	

- 2.13 An exemption from school attendance is granted on the basis that the student will undertake a specific program at a specific training provider, as identified in the exemption.

If the student is still under 17 years of age and wishes to enrol in a different program or enrol at a different training provider to what is identified in their exemption, the approver of the exemption must confirm that the proposed change is permitted. You must sight and retain this confirmation prior to enrolling the student in a different program, or prior to enrolling the student if they are not the training provider referred to in the original exemption.

Proxy declarations for students in exceptional circumstances

- 2.14 In exceptional circumstances, where a student is unable to provide any of the evidence documents specified in the Evidence of Eligibility and Student Declaration form, we may accept a proxy declaration, in the form of a signed declaration by your CEO or the CEO of a relevant government or community service provider attesting to the student's citizenship/residency.
- 2.15 You must make all reasonable efforts to help a student demonstrate their citizenship/residency through providing one of the accepted evidence documents and a proxy declaration can only be used in exceptional and specific circumstances.
- 2.16 Proxy declarations will not be accepted where a student has simply been reluctant to incur the cost or inconvenience of obtaining relevant documents.
- 2.17 You must present a robust case to us for approval (via the enquiry function of the Skills Victoria Training System (SVTS)) for the proposed use of a proxy declaration.
- 2.18 If we give approval, you must keep a copy of the proxy declaration and our SVTS enquiry response for audit or review purposes.

Section A – evidence of citizenship/residency

To be completed by an authorised delegate of the training provider – **do not leave any section blank.**

I confirm that for:
(student's full name)

I have sighted ONE of the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Australian Birth Certificate (not Birth Extract) | ☐ New Zealand Birth Certificate |
| ☐ current Australian Passport | ☐ New Zealand Citizenship Certificate |
| ☐ current New Zealand Passport | ☐ a proxy declaration for individuals in exceptional circumstances as per Clauses 2.14 – 2.18 of the Guidelines About Eligibility |
| ☐ Australian Citizenship Certificate | ☐ evidence that the student holds a permanent visa |
| ☐ current green Medicare card | ☐ confirmation that the student meets the eligibility criteria for the Asylum Seeker VET Program. |
| ☐ Australian Certificate of Registration by Descent | |

By either:

- ☐ viewing an original; or
- ☐ viewing a certified copy; or
- ☐ verifying via a gateway service provider [where it is possible to do so, and in accordance with Clause 2.5(c) of the Guidelines About Eligibility]; or
- ☐ viewing a digital green Medicare card on a digital wallet app on the card holder's mobile device [in accordance with Clause 2.5(d) of the Guidelines About Eligibility]; or
- ☐ relying on evidence sighted and retained as part of a previous enrolment [in accordance with Clause 2.10 of the Guidelines About Eligibility]; or
- ☐ verifying through VEVO, and viewing supporting evidence, if required [in accordance with Clause 2.5(e) or (f) or 2.7(a) or (b) of the Guidelines About Eligibility].

And I have retained ONE of the following:

- ☐ a copy of the original or certified copy; OR
- ☐ the certified copy; OR
- ☐ evidence as set out in Clause 2.5(c) of the Guidelines About Eligibility [where verified via a gateway service provider]; OR
- ☐ declaration of sighting a digital green Medicare card [as set out in Clause 2.5(d) of the Guidelines About Eligibility];
- ☐ evidence as set out in Clause 2.5(e) or (f) or 2.7(a) or (b) of the Guidelines About Eligibility [where verified through VEVO]; or
- ☐ declaration of sighting a document where a student has objected to their document being retained [as set out in clause 2.6 of the Guidelines About Eligibility].

Section B – student declaration

To be completed by the student – **don't leave any question blank unless you are asked to skip a question or go to the declaration. Please ask your training provider for help if you don't understand a question.**

Q1 Write the name of the course/s you're applying for

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Q2 Are you doing, or have you done any other Skills First training in 2026? Tick your response.

☐ No

☐ Yes - write the course name(s) below. Include training you haven't started yet.

--

Q3 Are you enrolled in a school, including government, non-government, independent, Catholic or home school?

☐ No

☐ Yes

Q4 Are you enrolled in the Commonwealth Government's Skills for Education and Employment program?

☐ No

☐ Yes

Student declaration – read and complete the declaration below.

- I understand that my enrolment may be subsidised by the Victorian and Commonwealth Government under the Skills First Program. I understand my enrolment may affect my eligibility for more Skills First training.
- I understand that the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions may contact me to participate in a survey or interview.
- I declare the information in this form is true and accurate.

Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Section B – Free TAFE [Questions 5-8 below are for TAFEs only, delete if n/a]**Q5** Are you applying for a Free TAFE course? Tick your response☐ No – go to Student Declaration☐ Yes – go to Q6**Q6** Do you want to use your Free TAFE fee waiver for this course? Tick your response☐ No – go to the Student Declaration☐ Yes – go to Q7**Q7** If you're applying for the Certificate IV in Cyber Security, do you hold a Certificate III in Information Technology?☐ No – go to the Student Declaration☐ Yes – go to Q8☐ N/A – go to Q8**Q8** Have you had a fee waiver for a Free TAFE course before? Tick your response☐ No - go to the Student Declaration☐ Yes - write the course name/s below

Course name	What year did you start this course?	Did you complete this course?
		☐ Yes ☐ No
		☐ Yes ☐ No
		☐ Yes ☐ No

Section C – training provider declaration

To be completed by the training provider – **do not leave any sections blank**

Program(s) the student is seeking to enrol in (include program code and name):

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Based on:

- the evidence I have sighted and retained in Section A;
- the information the student has provided, including in Section B; and
- any additional information I acquired and recorded in the 'notes' section below;

I confirm the student is eligible for Skills First funding for the program/s listed above because they:

- ☐ are an Australian or New Zealand citizen, or permanent resident of Australia, or eligible for the Asylum Seeker VET Program;
- ☐ are not enrolled in a school (except if they are doing a School Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship);
- ☐ will not be:
- commencing more than 2 Skills First AQF qualifications in the same year
 - commencing more than 2 Skills First Skills Sets in the same year
 - doing more than 2 Skills First programs at the same time; and
- ☐ (if applicable) are enrolling in a Foundation Skills Program, and they:
- do not currently hold a qualification at AQF level 5 (Diploma) or higher,
 - are not enrolled in the Commonwealth Government's 'Skills for Education and Employment' (SEE) program.

Authorised training provider declaration

By signing this declaration, I acknowledge that:

- I am responsible for ensuring that all parts of this form are complete.
- I have reviewed Sections A and B and have confirmed they have been completed in full.

Name:	
Position:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Notes

Record additional details or eligibility information, including information you used to verify the student's eligibility that is not captured in Sections A or B.

If there are no notes, write N/A

How to have a document certified

Bring both an original and a copy of the original to the certifier.

The certifier will:

1. examine the original to ensure it is not a copy or forgery
2. examine the copy to ensure it is identical to the original. A copy can be considered identical even if it is a different size or colour, so long as that does not result in the loss of any material information.

The certifier will then write or stamp the copy with the words: “Certified to be a true copy of the original seen by me.” They will sign and date the copy, and write or stamp their name, personal or professional address and qualification.

If there are multiple pages to the copy, the certifier will sign or initial and number all pages.

The copy has now been certified.

Who can certify a document

Under Section 39 of the *Oaths and Affirmations Act 2018* (as of 1 March 2019) the list of persons who may certify copies of original documents includes:

- A person currently licensed or registered to practice in Australia as one of the following occupations:
 - Architect
 - Chiropractor
 - Conveyancer
 - Dentist
 - Financial adviser or financial planner
 - Legal practitioner
 - Medical practitioner
 - Midwife
 - Migration agent
 - Nurse
 - Occupational therapist
 - Optometrist
 - Patent attorney
 - Pharmacist
 - Physiotherapist
 - Psychologist
 - Trade marks attorney
 - Veterinary surgeon
- An accountant who meets at least one of the following criteria:
 - Fellow of the National Tax Accountants’ Association
 - Member of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand
 - Member of the Association of Taxation and Management Accountants
 - Member of CPA Australia

Attachment 2 – Document certification

- Member of the Institute of Public Accountants
- Agent of the Australian Postal Corporation who is in charge of an office supplying postal services to the public
- Australian Public Service employee engaged on an ongoing basis with 5 or more years of continuous service who is not otherwise authorised
- Australian Consular Officer or Australian Diplomatic Officer
- Bailiff
- Bank officer with 5 or more continuous years of service
- Building society officer with 5 or more years of continuous service
- Chief executive officer of a Commonwealth court
- Clerk of a court
- Commissioner for Affidavits
- Commissioner for Declarations
- Credit union officer with 5 or more years of continuous service
- Employee of a Commonwealth authority engaged on a permanent basis with 5 or more years of continuous service who is not otherwise authorised
- Employee of the Australian Trade and Investment Commission who is authorised in writing by the Secretary of DFAT to collect fees under s 3(d) of the Consular Fees Act 1955, if at a place outside Australia and in the course of the employee's duties at that place
- Employee of the Commonwealth who is authorised in writing by the Secretary of DFAT to collect fees under s 3(d) of the Consular Fees Act 1955, if at a place outside Australia and in the course of the employee's duties at that place
- An engineer who meets at least one of the following criteria:
 - A member of Engineers Australia, other than a student
 - A Registered Professional Engineer of Professionals Australia
 - Registered as an engineer under a law of the Commonwealth or a State or Territory
 - Registered on the National Engineering Register by Engineers Australia
- Finance company officer with 5 or more years of continuous service
- Holder of a Commonwealth statutory office not otherwise specified
 - For example, Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies
- IBAC Officers
- Judge
- Justice of the Peace
- Local government Councillor
- Magistrate
- Registered marriage celebrant
- Master of a court
- Member of the Australian Defence Force who meets at least one of the following criteria:
 - An officer
 - A non-commissioned officer with 5 or more years of continuous service

- A warrant officer
- Member of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy
- Member of the Governance Institute of Australia Ltd
- Member of the Parliament of a State
- Member of a Territory legislature
- Member of a local government authority
- Registered minister of religion
- Notary public, including a notary public exercising functions at a place outside either the Commonwealth or the external Territories of the Commonwealth
- Permanent employee of the Australian Postal Corporation with 5 or more years continuous service who is employed in an office providing postal services to the public
- Permanent employee with 5 or more years of continuous service who is not otherwise specified, if employed at one of the following:
 - State
 - Territory
 - State authority
 - Territory authority
 - Local government authority
- Police officer
- Police reservist
- Protective service officer (PSO)
- Registrar, or Deputy Registrar, of a court
- A school principal
- Senior executive employee of a Commonwealth authority
- Senior executive employee of a State or Territory
- Senior Executive Service employee of the Commonwealth
- Sheriff
- Sheriff's officer
- State Trustees officer or employee with a classification level of 2 or above
- Teacher employed on a permanent full-time or part-time basis at a school or tertiary education institution
- Transport Accident Commission officer or employee with a classification of level 2 or above
- VicRoads officer or employee with a classification of level 2 or above
- Victorian Inspectorate Officer
- A Victorian Public Service employee with a prescribed classification level of 2 or above
 - For example, a project officer employed as a VPS4 or an administrative assistant employed as a VPS2
- Victorian WorkCover Authority officer or employee with a classification of band 2 or above
- Any authorised affidavit taker, including:

Attachment 2 – Document certification

- A judicial officer
 - For example, a judge or magistrate
- An associate to a judicial officer
- An honorary justice
- The prothonotary or a deputy prothonotary of the Supreme Court
- The registrar of probates or an assistant registrar of probates
- The registrar or a deputy registrar of the County Court
- The principal registrar, a registrar or a deputy registrar of the Magistrates' Court
- The principal registrar, a registrar or a deputy registrar of the Children's Court
- The principal registrar, a registrar or a deputy registrar of VCAT
- The principal registrar or a registrar of the Coroners Court
- A member of VCAT
- A member or former member of either House of the Parliament of Victoria
- A member or former member of either House of the Parliament of the Commonwealth
- A public notary
- A senior officer of a Victorian municipal Council who meets one of the following criteria:
 - Chief Executive Officer
 - A member of Council staff with management responsibilities and reporting directly to the Chief Executive Officer
 - Any other member of Council staff earning a salary of at least \$124,000 (or a higher threshold, if specified by the Minister under s 97B of the Local Government Act 1989)
- A fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives (Victoria)
- A person acting judicially
 - For example, an arbitrator or any person or body with authority to hear, receive and examine evidence
- Any other officer or person empowered, authorised or permitted by or under any Act or rules of a court or rules of a tribunal to administer affidavits

Source: Department of Justice and Community Safety

Further information: <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/certifiedcopies>