

CAREER START PROGRAM POLICY 2025-28

Introduction

Career Start is one of the Queensland Government's core funded vocational education and training (VET) programs, managed by the [Department of Trade, Employment and Training](#) (DTET).

The core VET programs provide subsidised training opportunities for Queenslanders aligned to the priorities set out in the DTET Training Priorities Plan.

This document informs Skills Assure Suppliers (SAS) and other stakeholders of program requirements.

What is Career Start?

Career Start provides individuals with the skills and support to start their career.

The program provides training to help individuals find a job and supports those already employed to move into more skilled roles or full-time employment, including after completing an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Career Start supports delivery of entry-level training to students, apprentices and trainees aligned with the skill outcomes required by industry.

Career Start offers either a general training pathway **or** employment-based apprenticeship or traineeship pathway.

A prospective student chooses their preferred provider from a list of registered training organisations (RTOs) approved as Skills Assure Suppliers (SAS). Only SAS approved to deliver the individual's chosen qualification or skill set and training pathway (general pathway, apprenticeship or traineeship) can provide training and assessment services under Career Start.

The SAS framework is designed to support training and assessment aimed at building new skills and capabilities for Queenslanders. Therefore, RTOs that focus primarily on providing recognition of prior learning (RPL) are not eligible to participate in these arrangements.

What are the training pathways?

General Training Pathway

Qualifications and introductory skill sets delivered through a general training pathway are available for direct enrolment and do not require the student to enter into a training contract (apprenticeship/traineeship) with an employer.

Apprenticeship/traineeship pathway

For apprenticeships and traineeships, an individual must be employed as an apprentice or trainee. This pathway is part of the Australian Apprenticeships system and requires all parties to sign an Apprenticeship and Traineeship Training Contract (the Contract) as defined by the *Further Education and Training Act 2014* (the Act).

The employer of an apprentice/trainee must provide or arrange to provide adequate facilities, range of work, supervision and on-the-job training required by the Act and training plan.

The Supervising Registered Training Organisation (SRTO) is required to review these employment arrangements, complete an Employer Resource Assessment and develop the training plan in consultation with the employer and apprentice or trainee to ensure compliance with the Act. More information about apprenticeships and traineeships is available on the DTET website.

Eligibility

Under Career Start, an eligible individual **may** access up to **two subsidised training places** through one of the following options:

- a qualification typically at the certificate III level under a general training pathway and an apprenticeship/traineeship – noting that if the apprenticeship/traineeship is done first, the individual is no longer eligible to access a

general training pathway qualification under Career Start;

OR

- two apprenticeships/traineeships at either certificate II or III, including School-based Apprenticeships or Traineeships (SATs).

In addition, under Career Start, eligible individuals **may** access **one subsidised introductory-level ('induction') skill set**, subject to any listed student eligibility restrictions, regardless of whether they have already used their qualification entitlement or the training pathways they have undertaken.

Exceptions

- **Please note** an individual (where eligible) can complete up to two government-funded apprenticeships/traineeships within a 10-year period. This cap of two may be undertaken either:
 - (a) across different core programs i.e. SAT, Career Start, and Career Boost (for example, one under a SAT and one under Career Boost); **OR**
 - (b) under Career Start which is the only program that allows two apprenticeships/traineeships.

In all cases, no more than two government-funded apprenticeships/traineeships can be completed within a 10-year period (this includes those funded under previous iterations of DTET funded programs e.g. User Choice program).

- An individual cannot do two general pathway qualifications under Career Start.

These rules aim to support equitable access to training opportunities for all eligible Queenslanders.

General Training Pathway

To access a subsidised training place under Career Start, a student must meet the following criteria:

- aged 15 years or older;
- not be a school student;
- permanently reside in Queensland;

- be an Australian citizen, or Australian permanent resident (includes humanitarian entrant), or a temporary resident who holds a valid visa and working rights on the pathway to permanent residency, or a New Zealand citizen;
- not already have a certificate III or higher qualification completed within the last 10 years immediately preceding the individual's enrolment (qualifications completed as a school student and foundation skills qualifications do not impact eligibility);
- not be enrolled in another DTET-funded qualification, even if it is on hold or deferred, (foundation skills qualifications and self-funded/fee-for-service qualifications do not impact eligibility).

Note: When determining eligibility for a general training pathway, qualifications completed within the last 10 years include qualifications funded under previous iterations of the program (e.g. Certificate 3 Guarantee program).

Along with the eligibility criteria above, specific entry restrictions or exemptions may apply to certain subsidised qualifications and skill sets. These are set by industry or sector requirements, as well as national training package guidelines. For more information, please refer to the "What training is available?" section.

Apprenticeship/traineeship pathway

To be eligible to receive government subsidised training, the apprentice or trainee must:

- not be a school student;
- be currently employed as a Queensland apprentice or trainee (under a registered training contract) in an eligible apprenticeship or traineeship qualification funded through this program;
- not be enrolled in another DTET-funded qualification, even if it is on hold or deferred, (foundation skills qualifications and self-

funded/fee-for-service qualifications do not impact eligibility);

- not have already completed two government-funded apprenticeship/traineeship qualifications (including SATs) within the last 10 years immediately preceding the individual's enrolment.

Note: School students can only access funded apprenticeships and traineeships through a registered SAT. This ensures a school student does not exhaust their entire apprenticeship/traineeship entitlement while at school.

Where a school student completes a DTET-funded certificate I, II or III through a general training pathway while at school, this does not impact their eligibility to access subsidised training under Career Start or Career Boost. Whereas completion of a subsidised SAT exhausts one apprenticeship/traineeship pathway entitlement under Career Start and Career Boost.

DTET may amend student eligibility requirements at any time based on factors such as budget, emerging priorities, and the need to ensure a pipeline of workers for critical occupations and improved access to job opportunities for identified priority cohorts.

Co-contribution Fees

General Training Pathway

Co-contribution fee amount

Given the benefits of training, including improved job opportunities and higher earnings, students enrolled in certificate III qualifications and skill sets, and non-concessional students in lower-level qualifications, are required to contribute to the cost of training through a co-contribution (student) fee.

This fee can be paid by an employer, a family member, a friend, or another organisation, but it cannot be paid or waived by the SAS or any person or entity associated with the SAS.

The fee amount is set by the SAS. This fee must be published on the SAS' website and must represent the total costs to the student for the qualification, including materials costs.

The SAS cannot charge the student for creating a Training and Assessment Plan or Training Record. The SAS also cannot charge students for additional materials once enrolment has occurred.

Apprenticeship/traineeship pathway

Co-contribution fee amount

For apprenticeships and traineeships, the fee is different as both the employer and SAS share responsibility for training. The fee is set at \$1.60 per nominal training hour for each unit of competency and is the same across all SAS providers. Only DTET can adjust the fee amount, which is reviewed each year. This fee must be published on the SAS' website.

However, a SAS must charge only 40% of the standard fee if an apprentice/trainee meets any of the following criteria: under 17 years of age at the end of February in the year training is provided, is not at school and has not completed Year 12; **or holds concessional status as defined in this program policy.**

If an apprentice or trainee is experiencing serious financial difficulties and can demonstrate this, they may qualify for a full fee exemption.

What training is available?

Eligible Career Start qualifications and introductory skill sets are listed on the Queensland Subsidised Training List (QSTL). This list also includes any entry restrictions or exemptions, based on requirements determined by industry and national training packages.

Please note some qualifications are only available through a specific training pathway (general pathway, apprenticeship or traineeship), based on the preferred delivery methods of the industry or sector.

Foundation skills

Career Start also offers foundation skills training for students who require support in Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital (LLND) skills. This training can be delivered as a single unit of competency or multiple units, either before or as part of the vocational qualification, depending on student needs.

Funding is directed to formally recognised, assessable training outcomes, ensuring clear, measurable pathways to vocational qualification completion and employment outcomes or further study.

Only SAS approved by DTET to provide foundation skills can deliver this training. See the [Department's Foundation Skills Funding Policy 2026-2028](#) for more information.

If a student needs more intensive LLND assistance before enrolling, there are several Australian Government programs available, including [Language and literacy classes](#), the [Adult Migrant English Program \(AMEP\)](#), and [Skills for Education and Employment \(SEE\)](#).

DTET also offers [Skilling Queenslanders for Work \(SQW\)](#), which provides foundation skills and vocational training. Students requiring a full foundation skills qualification and wrap around support may wish to consider participating in a SQW program.

Lower-level qualifications

Career Start also supports access to certain lower-level qualifications including pre-apprenticeships, qualifications for SQW projects, qualifications for adult prisoners and young people in detention, and qualifications defined by industry as the entry point for jobs in the sector (e.g. Certificate II in Maritime). Funded lower-level qualifications are identified on the QSTL.

Where a student completes a lower-level qualification as either a pre-apprenticeship qualification or as part of a SQW project, they may be eligible for a second subsidised training place in an aligned certificate III qualification.

Note: Eligible individuals are unable to complete more than one lower-level vocational qualification funded under Career Start or previous iterations

of the program (e.g. Certificate 3 Guarantee program).

This also means that an individual who has completed a department-funded lower-level vocational qualification within the last 10 years, which is directly aligned to an employment outcome and recognised as a pathway into jobs within that industry, is not eligible to undertake another lower-level qualification under Career Start. Individuals cannot access more than one government-funded certificate II qualification through a post-school training program, except for qualifications undertaken through SQW.

If a lower-level qualification delivered through local, community-based support would better suit a student's needs, the student may wish to consider a SQW program.

What funding is available?

The Queensland Government will pay a subsidy for the qualification directly to the SAS. The amount of funding depends on the qualification's complexity, duration, and how well it aligns with workforce skills needs.

Queensland's annual Training Priorities Plan outlines how government supports skills development across the state. Each year, the plan highlights important skill areas and guides funding decisions including training subsidies, to benefit individuals, local communities, and employers.

Student support

The Queensland Government provides higher subsidies to SAS to help identified students, apprentices and trainees participate in training. These include:

- individuals who need foundation skills training;
- concessional students undertaking vocational qualifications, including those who:
 - hold a Health Care, Veteran, or Pensioner Concession Card, or are the partner or dependent of someone with such a card and are named on the card;

- have a Commonwealth form confirming eligibility for concessions under a Health Care, Veteran, or Pensioner Concession Card;
- identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (First Nations people);
- have a disability;
- are adult prisoners;
- apprentices or trainees from Priority Population Groups (PPGs), as identified in the Contract, e.g. individuals from non-English speaking backgrounds or with a disability;
- students, apprentices and trainees enrolled in fee-free training initiatives, such as Free Apprenticeships for under 25s, which focus on specific priority qualifications.

In addition to training subsidies, location loadings are paid to SAS to support face-to-face training in specific regional and remote areas of Queensland, including Cape York and the Torres Strait.

These loadings help fund training delivered in local areas, addressing community skill needs and supporting residents to secure local jobs.

Expected outcomes

By participating in Career Start, students can expect to build the skills and confidence needed to complete a qualification and take meaningful steps toward their career goals.

After completing a qualification under a general training pathway, the SAS should support a student's transition into the workforce, further education or training, or more skilled job roles. This support may include career advice and facilitating connections with potential employers.

As part of receiving a subsidised training place, students may be asked to complete a DTET survey. This helps ensure students have an effective and supportive training experience and will also improve outcomes for other Queensland students.

Information for employers

While industry is primarily responsible for training its workforce, the government supports this effort by investing in training that addresses emerging needs and strengthens Queensland's economy.

Career Start can help by providing subsidised training for employees through apprenticeships, traineeships, or general training pathways that support skills development and career progression, benefiting both employees and the business.

Employers must ensure employees understand program conditions, including eligibility requirements, and have given consent to enrol.

A SAS may discuss additional training costs with an employer or an industry representative beyond the co-contribution fee requirements, however, employers are not required to accept these charges. All fees and charges must be clearly explained, documented, and agreed upon by all parties and the SAS before an employee enrolls.

For more information

DTET will contact approved SAS directly. RTOs (non-SAS) can find further information on the DTET website.

Prospective students can call 1300 369 935.

Prospective apprentices, trainees and employers can call [1800 210 210](tel:1800210210).

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