



VET FEE-HELP opt-in

From 1 January 2017, the VET Student Loans program will begin, replacing the current VET FEE-HELP scheme. This is a new vocational education and training student loans program, provided to give eligible students access to quality higher level VET qualifications, particularly to those students who could not otherwise afford to pay upfront.

To minimise disruption to existing students, a phased approach is being taken to transition from VET FEE-HELP to the new VET Student Loans program. Students wishing to continue their studies under the existing VET FEE-HELP arrangements will need to opt-in via an online form.

Where records indicate the student has not completed their course, VET FEE-HELP students will be contacted by the Department of Education and Training (the department). Contact will be made via postal or electronic mail, with students who have an email address being contacted first.

For students that do not have an email address on our records, the department will be sending a letter in the postal mail. It is intended the majority of students will receive their letters by the end of December 2016. However those students where their provider is yet to report their data to the department may need to wait until early February 2017 to receive their opt-in letter.

Which students will have the option to opt-in?

To be eligible for VET FEE-HELP opt-in transition arrangements a student must:

- be enrolled in VET courses prior to 1 January 2017, and
- have already received VET FEE-HELP assistance for units of those courses (must have been engaged in training and had at least one census date before 31 December 2016), and
- remain enrolled in those courses with their original provider (or with a replacement provider following activation of tuition assurance arrangements).

These students will be given the opportunity to continue their studies under the existing VET FEE-HELP arrangements for units with census dates* to 31 December 2017[#].

Students will need to opt-in, letting the department know they wish to continue to access the VET FEE-HELP loan for the course detailed in their opt-in letter.

If you are a VET FEE-HELP student and will finish your studies in 2016, you are not be required to opt-in to VET FEE-HELP. Please consider the correspondence as information only and you do not need to take any action. If you have mistakenly 'opted-in' even though your studies will finish in 2016, this does not matter. You do not need to opt-out or notify the department.

*The census date is the date used by your VET FEE-HELP provider as the last date for students to either submit a *Request for Commonwealth assistance* form to access a VET FEE-HELP loan to pay for your study, or withdraw your enrolment without incurring the fees for that unit. Students should check with their providers to determine if they have any remaining census dates for their course.

[#]See heading below "Can I opt-in to VET FEE-HELP in 2018?"

What do students need to do to opt-in?

Students will be sent an email or letter from the department for each course, if they have applied for a VET FEE-HELP loan for studies since the commencement of the program in 2009 and records indicate the student has not completed their course and they meet the criteria above.

The letter will contain the information required for the student to opt-in for each course:

1. Go to the VET FEE-HELP opt-in portal <https://ecaf.education.gov.au/vfh>.
2. Sign in using the passkey number provided from your email/letter and your date of birth.
3. Check the prefilled details and complete the form.
4. Press the submit button.
5. A confirmation email will be sent to you which will confirm the opt-in process has been accepted.
6. Take this confirmation email to your provider so that you can continue to receive VET FEE-HELP.

What should students do if they have not received an email/letter with their passkey by early February 2017?

If a student has not received a letter by early February 2017, please fill in the enquiry form on www.education.gov.au/vet-student-loans/vet-fee-help-opt-in and select "Requesting passkey" in the "What is your question regarding?" field.

Students will not receive an email or letter if:

- your provider is yet to advise the department you are a student of that provider*,
- your course of study commenced after 31 December 2016,
- you are not in receipt of VET FEE-HELP,
- you have not had at least one census date before 31 December 2016, or
- you have completed your study.

*If you commenced studying later in 2016 it is likely you are one of these students and providers will not report your data to the department until mid January 2017.

What do I do if some of my details are not correct in my opt-in letter?

If a student presents an opt-in confirmation email that has incorrect information such as typographical errors in address details or old superseded course information, a provider can accept this opt-in confirmation. The provider must update the student's personal details and course information in their administration system and report the correct details in their first submission for the student in 2017.

What do I do if I have received a letter to opt-in and my provider has closed down?

Students should ensure that they have opted-in using the letter sent by the department. This will allow your replacement VET FEE-HELP provider (following activation of tuition assurance requirements) to take you on as a student for any remaining parts of your course. Information about providers that are closing will be updated on the VET Student loans website. Students should refer to the **Tuition assurance factsheet** available at www.education.gov.au/vet-student-loans.

What if the course in my opt-in letter is for a course that has been superseded? What do I do?

Superseded courses will be recognised as the same course for continuing students. Providers will need to report the superseding course in their course submission for 2017 and ensure the student's data references the new course. VET FEE-HELP students must have opted-in to continue to access VET FEE-HELP into 2017 and provided their confirmation letter to their provider.

What if I have received a re-issued opt-in letter from the department? How do I complete this form?

Students should follow the instructions in the re-issued (replacement) opt-in letter. The replacement opt-in letter will include a new passkey. Students will need to enter this passkey into the online opt-in form and provide the confirmation email to their provider.

Can I opt-in to VET FEE-HELP for 2018?

In certain circumstances some students may be eligible to extend their VET FEE-HELP assistance beyond 31 December 2017. Such circumstances may include, for example, illness or caring responsibilities, or part-time students. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Details on these arrangements about how students can request VET FEE-HELP for 2018 will be published on the website in early 2017.

How can your VET FEE-HELP provider assist?

VET FEE-HELP providers cannot submit the opt-in form on your behalf. However, providers may be able to provide you with advice about the dates that you enrolled, census dates, and if you meet the criteria to be eligible to opt-in. For students who commenced studying later in 2016 where census dates occurred towards the end of 2016, who have not received their opt-in letters from the department, providers may be able to advise when they submitted your data to the department.

Students who have received an email or letter from the department must follow the steps outlined in the document to opt-in.

Once students have completed this online opt-in form, a confirmation email will be sent to the student. This confirmation email will need to be given to your VET FEE-HELP provider for their records. They will be able to conduct further eligibility checks to ensure you meet all their course requirements for your ongoing study.

These are the eligibility checks a provider may undertake:

- that the student's course details recorded in the confirmation email match/align with their course records (particularly where a course has been superseded)
- that the student meets the provider's requirements for continued study
- that the student has future census dates* relating to their course.

* If there are no further remaining census dates after 1 January 2017, but a student has some remaining class time to finalise their studies, a student is not required to opt-in.

Do I have to opt-in before returning to my studies in 2017?

Students are strongly encouraged to complete their opt-in form for VET FEE-HELP before returning to their studies. Providers are aware there are some students who are still waiting to receive their opt-in email or letter in the post. Students can check with their provider if they are unsure if they are eligible for the VET FEE-HELP transitional arrangements. Providers will not receive payment for census dates that pass for their continuing students unless the students have opted-in following the opt-in process.

For any further concerns, please submit an enquiry at www.education.gov.au/vet-student-loans/vet-fee-help-opt-in.

***Please note:** The purpose of this factsheet is to give you a snapshot of the arrangements applying to current students. It is not inclusive of all requirements of the new VET Student Loans program. The factsheet has been updated with some further technical advice around census dates, mail out dates and who to contact.*

Updated 23 December 2016