

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.

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

- a general qualification at certificate III and an apprenticeship/traineeship, **noting** that if the apprenticeship/traineeship is done first, the individual is no longer eligible to access a general 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, individuals may access **one subsidised introductory-level skill set**.

An individual cannot do two general pathway qualifications under Career Start. This is to ensure equitable access for all eligible Queenslanders to a training opportunity.

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.

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 assess these employment arrangements, complete an Employer Resource Assessment and develop the training plan in consultation with the employer, apprentice and/or trainee to ensure compliance with the Act. More information about apprenticeships and

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traineeships is available on the DTET website.

Please note an individual may complete either two apprenticeships/traineeships across the suite of core programs **or** two apprenticeships/traineeships under this Career Start program only. However, the total number of subsidised apprenticeships/traineeships across all programs cannot exceed two per individual.

A student chooses their preferred training provider from a list of pre-approved RTOs, called SAS. Only SAS approved to deliver the student's chosen qualification and training pathway (including general, skill sets, apprenticeship or traineeship) can provide training and assessment services under Career Start.

Who is eligible?

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 with the right visa and work permits 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 (qualifications **completed** as a school student and foundation skills qualifications do not count);
- not be enrolled in another qualification, even if it is on hold or deferred, whether funded by DTET or not (foundation skills qualifications do not count).

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

School students can only access apprenticeships and traineeships through a registered SAT. This is to ensure a school student does not use their entire apprenticeship/traineeship entitlement while at school.

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

- have entered into a Contract (training contract) for a qualification that is funded by DTET and be registered on DTET's training database;
- if from overseas, have a visa allowing them to work in Australia; and
- not have already completed two apprenticeship/traineeship qualifications (including SATs) within the last 10 years.

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 connected to the SAS.

The fee amount is a decision for the SAS. This fee must be published on the SAS'

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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.

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; holds a Health Care Card or Veteran or Pensioner Concession Card, or is the partner or dependent of someone who does; or identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (First Nations people).

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

What a SAS must provide

General Training Pathway

Before enrolling, the SAS must provide the student (or parent/guardian, if applicable) with the following information to support informed decision making:

- qualification (or Skill Set) Fact Sheet (a summary of their training offering) that includes:

- a breakdown of total costs, including co-contribution fee (fees must also be clearly published on the SAS' training website), and how and when fees will be charged and collected, noting it is not permissible to offer or publish fee-free training;
- information on delivery mode, training timelines, assessment methods, delivery locations, and all requirements for successful completion of the qualification, including licensing and vocational placements if applicable (**note:** vocational placements must be arranged by the SAS);
- details of student support services available;
- Privacy Notice;
- complete Refund Policy, including conditions for full and partial fee refunds; and
- confirmation the student understands their entitlement to a subsidised training place under Career Start and when this will be exhausted (as outlined under "What is Career Start").

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, 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

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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.

Only SAS approved by DTET to provide foundation skills can deliver this training.

If a student requires foundation skills training, the SAS will develop a tailored Training and Support Plan that includes the vocational qualification under the general training pathway, or will incorporate the training into the existing Training Plan for an apprentice or trainee.

If a student is eligible for a Career Start Program and 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 specific groups (e.g. adult prisoners or 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 falls into one of these supported lower-level qualification categories, they may be eligible for a second subsidised training place in an aligned Certificate III qualification.

Note: Individuals are unable to complete multiple lower-level vocational qualifications under Career Start.

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 specific student groups participate in training. These include:

- students 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;

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- 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 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 training, 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 enrols.

For more information

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

Prospective apprentices, trainees, students and employers can call 1300 369 935.