

CERTIFICATE III UPSKILL SUPPORT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Department of Education (the department) offers financial support to encourage you to advance your career in early childhood education in Victoria.

About the program

The Certificate III Upskill Support Program (CUSP) offers financial support to educators who currently hold a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and wish to upskill to a Diploma of ECEC. The program is supporting growth in the supply of Diploma-qualified educators in Victoria.

You can access up to **\$7,000** (before tax) in financial support payments under this program. You can use these payments to contribute to any expenses while studying and working, particularly while on placement.

Eligibility requirements

To apply for financial support under this program, you must:

- be an Australian citizen, a New Zealand citizen or the holder of a permanent residency visa
- be a Victorian resident
- hold a CHC30121 – Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care or equivalent ([Training.gov.au](https://training.gov.au))
- be accepted into a CHC50121 – Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care OR already studying CHC50121 – Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, at a training provider that is Skills First contracted at the time of application ([VET Funding Contracts | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au/vet-funding-contracts))
- be employed in a fixed-term or permanent role at a Victorian early childhood education service delivering a funded kindergarten program
- not be receiving any other scholarship, financial support or grant from the department for the CHC50121 – Diploma of Early Childhood Education (**with the exception being Free TAFE, which can be accessed concurrently with this financial support**)
- have repaid any funds owing to the department if you previously withdrew from the Early Childhood Scholarships Program, Early Childhood Aboriginal Pathways Scholarships Program, or a scholarship for [an early childhood innovative initial teacher education course funded by the department](#), before applying.

Application process

Applications are now open and will close on Friday 13 June 2025, or when all program places are filled.

Places are limited and will be filled on a rolling basis. Please submit your application as soon as possible to improve your chances of receiving support under this program.

As part of the application process, you will need to provide BUSY At Work with evidence to show you have met the eligibility requirements listed above (e.g. an employment contract or letter from your employer confirming you are employed in a fixed-term or permanent role at a service delivering funded kindergarten).

CUSP Regional Stream

A CUSP Regional Stream has been introduced to prioritise places for eligible educators residing in regional and rural Local Government Areas (LGAs). These places will be filled on a rolling basis.

To determine whether your application will be considered under the CUSP Regional Stream, check whether your LGA of residence is listed in [Victoria's regions and regional cities - Regional Development Victoria](#).

Recipient Agreements

If you are successful, you must accept and sign a Recipient Agreement to receive the financial support payments. The Recipient Agreement is a legal document that contains your rights and obligations, **so please read it carefully before signing**.

Support under this program is paid in the form of Financial Support Payments.

The Recipient Agreement includes:

- the milestone conditions (including evidence required) that you must meet to receive each Financial Support Payment
- the repayment requirements if you do not meet these milestone conditions.

Financial Support Payments are divided into payments during your study period and payments during your employment period. Refer to [Appendix 1](#) and the [Milestone Conditions and payments](#) for more information.

Considerations before applying

- Please consider your personal financial circumstances as you will be responsible for paying any costs associated with your approved course (for example, course fees if enrolling at a non-TAFE provider or ineligible for Free TAFE).
- The financial support payments listed in these guidelines is before tax. Please seek independent advice regarding the impact of a payment on taxation and Government benefit schemes, including, but not limited to, those administered through Centrelink.
- You are responsible for meeting employment milestone conditions under this program. The department does not guarantee employment in the early childhood sector; however, it does provide further supports to help you find work, if required (refer [Further information](#)).

Milestone conditions and Financial Support Payments

The support listed in these guidelines is paid in the form of multiple Financial Support Payments during your study period and employment period (refer [Appendix 1](#)).

To receive each payment, you will need to provide BUSY At Work with evidence to show you have met the milestone conditions outlined in your Recipient Agreement.

Failure to meet milestone conditions may result in an obligation for you to repay some or all Financial Support Payments.

The evidence required to meet milestone conditions in the study period and employment period are different.

- Milestone conditions for the study period – evidence to show you first enrolled in, and later completed, a CHC50121 – Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care at an approved training provider such as a Victorian TAFE or a Skills First contracted provider (listed here: [\(VET Funding Contracts | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)\)](#))
- Milestone condition for the employment period – evidence to show you are working as an educator in an approved role at an approved employer.

You are encouraged to secure employment as a Diploma-qualified educator during your employment period, but this is not a milestone condition.

You can continue to receive Financial Support Payments if you change employment but should first notify BUSY At Work to confirm your new role and employer is approved. Additionally, approved roles are fixed-term or ongoing roles; however, the department will consider requests to receive Financial Support Payments for casual roles, on a case-by-case basis.

The timing of milestone payments can be found at [Appendix 1](#), and detailed information about milestone conditions (including evidence) is provided in the Recipient Agreement.

Compassionate consideration

Where unforeseen exceptional circumstances prevent you from meeting your milestone conditions, you may request (via BUSY At Work) that the department waive some, or all, of the repayment obligation. The department will assess such requests on a case-by-case basis and may require evidentiary documentation.

Update of guidelines

These guidelines, including program settings and eligibility, may change. Updated guidelines will be published on the [department's website](#).

Further information

About the program

- Information about the Certificate III Upskill Support Program is available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/financial-support-study-and-work-early-childhood>.
- You can also contact BUSY At Work for more information (including for help checking your eligibility) at EC.Financial.Support@education.vic.gov.au or 1300 161 396.
- If you wish to provide feedback on the CUSP program, please contact the department directly at early.childhood.iite@education.vic.gov.au.

Department initiatives to support searching for employment

- Use the department's Early Childhood Jobs site to find roles in Victorian early childhood services: <https://jobs.earlychildhood.education.vic.gov.au/>
- Get in touch with the department's panel of specialist recruitment agencies for assistance with finding a job: <https://www.vic.gov.au/register-recruiter-find-early-childhood-teacher-jobs>

Appendix 1: Milestone conditions and Financial Support Payments

The table below lists the Financial Support Payments that will be paid after you submit the evidence required to meet milestone conditions.

Some milestone conditions do not trigger immediate payments but are important for future payments.

The evidence required is detailed in the Recipient Agreement and is received, and verified, by Busy At Work.

Qualification	During study period		During employment period		Total value (up to)
	Milestone Condition 1 (Signing the Recipient Agreement)	Milestone Condition 2 (Course completion)	Milestone Condition 3 (Confirmation of continued employment as an educator)	Milestone Condition 4 (One year after Milestone Condition 3)	
Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0	\$1,000	\$7,000