# Coronavirus (COVID-19) Frequently Asked Questions

Higher education, training and skills

## General Questions

**What is the latest advice?**

The Department of Education and Training (the Department) is working closely with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Victorian Chief Health Officer to monitor and respond to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Universities, TAFEs and training organisations continue to operate.

The Department is communicating regularly with universities, TAFEs and training organisations to ensure they have the most up-to-date information from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and the Australian Chief Medical Officer.

**What is Working for Victoria?**

On 21 March 2020, the Premier announced a $500 million [Working for Victoria](https://www.vic.gov.au/workingforvictoria) Fund.

The fund will connect workers with new jobs that will support our state’s response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

This program includes retraining and certifying workers for direct employment now and to have skills for the post- coronavirus (COVID-19) economy.

Those wanting to register their interest in jobs or training should visit the [Working for Victoria website](https://www.vic.gov.au/workingforvictoria).

**Why are universities, TAFE and training providers open?**

In line with the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, universities, TAFEs and training providers are continuing to operate.

To make sure training continues safely, the Department has strongly encouraged all TAFEs and training providers to deliver training remotely wherever possible, and to support staff to work from home.

Some training, such as trades, may still need to occur face-to-face. Where face-to-face training must occur, this must follow strict [physical distancing guidelines](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-transmission-reduction-measures#actions-for-tafe-colleges-and-universities) in line with advice from the Victorian Chief Health Officer.

**How will I know if there is a confirmed case at my training provider?**

If there is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19), DHHS undertakes contact tracing to identify anyone who may have been in contact with the confirmed case. If you are impacted, you will be informed as soon as possible by DHHS or your training organisation.

**How is the Victorian Government monitoring the viability of private training organisations?**

The VET Funding Contract obliges training providers to advise the Department about major changes affecting their operations, including financial viability.

The Department also routinely provides information and guidance to training providers in response to enquiries submitted through the Skills Victoria Training System.

**How is the Victorian Government ensuring funded training provision remains high quality as training delivery moves online?**

Under *Skills First*, the Victorian Government has set a high benchmark for training quality and qualifications that will lead Victorians to employment. *Skills First* includes significant investment in the ongoing monitoring of the quality of training by the Department.

The Department continues to examine training data and will monitor any evidence of non-compliance under the VET Funding Contracts to reinforce expectations about quality training and expenditure at this time.

The Victorian Government is making a concerted effort to ensure that its training providers understand their obligations to deliver quality training through a range of measures, including better information, free professional development training to be delivered online, facilitating best-practice guidance and hosting quality workshops.

## For students

**Can I still go to my classes at TAFE, college or university?**

Yes, if classes are still being conducted.

However, if classes are available online, you should carefully consider whether you need to physically attend the campus. Avoid spending time in shared facilities such as libraries and campus study areas. Collaborative assignments and team study projects should be done using online tools. Study at home.

**Will my student placement be affected?**

If you have concerns about your placement, contact your training organisation in the first instance.

The Department is aware of, and is monitoring, the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on student placements and is working with universities, TAFEs and training organisations to provide advice and support.

**Will there be an impact on when I can complete my course?**

At present, the Department does not expect there to be any impacts on when you can graduate.

The Department is working with providers to monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on the timing of course completions and will update advice if necessary. Contact your training provider for more information.

**What support and information is available for international students?**

We encourage international students to get the most up-to-date information by:

* regularly checking in with your education provider. [Visit the Study in Australia website](https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/english/study-in-australia-student-support/australian-education-provider-list) to see a list of coronavirus (COVID-19) information pages for universities, TAFEs and schools.
* visit the [Study Melbourne’s COVID-19 webpage](https://www.studymelbourne.vic.gov.au/help-and-support/support-for-students-coronavirus)
* visit the [Study in Australia website](https://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/English/student-support) for additional information and advice about health, education, travel and visas.

The [DHHS website](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/translated-resources-coronavirus-disease-covid-19) provides information about coronavirus (COVID-19) in many languages.

The Department is working closely with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, and universities, TAFEs and training providers to understand and respond to the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) on international students.

## For apprentices/trainees

**Who can be contacted for further advice and support regarding apprentices and trainees?**

Apprenticeship Support Officers

Apprentices and trainees who need advice and assistance can contact the Apprenticeship Support Officer program on 1300 311 820 or email [apprenticeship.support@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:apprenticeship.support@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Group Training Organisations

If you are an apprentice or trainee employed by a Group Training Organisation (GTO) you can contact the GTO directly for advice and support. A list of recognised GTOs is available on the [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority website](https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/apprenticeships/Pages/recognised-GTOs.aspx).

**What support is being offered for employers of apprentices and trainees?**

The Commonwealth Government administers employer incentives and training contracts through its Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) providers. The Commonwealth Government has implemented two new programs that support employers to pay the wages of apprentices and trainees – *Supporting Apprentices and Trainees* and the *JobKeeper Payment*.

Advice on accessing these payments is available from your AASN provider. In most cases the relevant AASN provider is the one that processed your apprentice or trainee training contact. Contact information for AASN providers can be found on the [Australian Apprenticeships website](https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/).

The Commonwealth Government has a range of programs to assist businesses and individuals during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Information on these programs is available on the [Treasury website](https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus).

**What support is available for apprentices and/or employers who need to change their training contract?**

Employers, apprentices and trainees may need to change training contracts as circumstances change due to the current situation. Information about doing this, including frequently asked questions and contact details for further assistance, is available on the  [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority website](https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/apprenticeships/Pages/changing-an-apprenticeship-and-traineeship-training-contract.aspx).

**What support is available for apprentices or trainees who have been suspended or have lost their job?**

Apprentices and trainees who are not receiving the Youth Allowance (Apprentice) payment, and who have lost their job and are not receiving an income due to the the economic impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) can apply for the new [JobSeeker payments](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/affected-coronavirus-covid-19/if-you-need-payment-coronavirus-covid-19).

Apprentices and trainees seeking JobSeeker payments do not need to provide an employment separation certificate. This means that apprentices who have had their apprenticeship suspended, but not terminated, will be eligible for JobSeeker payments.

If you are seeking alternative employment, you can register with the Victorian Government’s [Working for Victoria](https://www.vic.gov.au/workingforvictoria) program and/or access the Commonwealth Government’s [Jobs Hub](https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/jobs-hub).

## For training organisations

**Should providers be excluding staff and/or students from campus if they are unwell?**

All unwell staff and students must stay home.

Students and staff are to be excluded from their school, TAFE, private training provider, university and Learn Local organisation if the following applies:

* The person is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19).
* The person is a close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the past 14 days.

A close contact is someone who has been identified by health authorities as having at least 15 minutes of face-to-face contact or the sharing of a closed space for more than two hours with a confirmed case.

If you think a student or staff member may meet one of the above criteria, please call the DHHS coronavirus hotline to discuss further actions on 1300 651 160.

The Department’s advice is in accordance with national public health guidelines and current information from the Australian Chief Medical Officer and Victorian Chief Health Officer. For the most current advice, visit the Department’s [coronavirus (COVID-19) advice webpage](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/coronavirus.aspx).

In the event of a student/staff member being a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19), DHHS will alert and discuss all necessary actions with the Department of Education and Training and the education setting.

**What should I do if I think a staff member or student at my training organisation has coronavirus (COVID-19)?**

If a student or staff member has a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) or is in close contact with someone who does, you should seek advice from DHHS on 1300 651 160.

**What support is available to training providers?**

The Department is communicating regularly with training organisations to ensure they have the most up-to-date information from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and the Australian Chief Medical Officer.

The Department also routinely provides information and guidance to training providers in response to enquiries submitted through the Skills Victoria Training System (SVTS). Submit immediate inquiries to SVTS via the dedicated enquiry category ‘COVID-19 (Coronavirus)’. A representative will then be in touch.

**What financial support is available for providers?**

The Department continues to meet its obligations to pay for eligible accredited training services under the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Funding contract. All providers should ensure their student and training data is updated and submitted on SVTS as early as possible to ensure scheduled payments can be made promptly.

If you are a small to medium enterprise, there are a number of financial supports that may be available to you from the Victorian Government and Commonwealth Government during this difficult period.

Submit immediate inquiries to SVTS via the dedicated enquiry category ‘COVID-19 (Coronavirus)’. A representative will then be in touch.

**How is the government supporting Learn Locals?**

The Department has implemented the following actions to support business continuity of Learn Local providers delivering pre-accredited training:

* release of the second pre-accredited milestone payment, scheduled for release on 15 April 2020, to all Learn Local providers with a 2020 pre-accredited contract regardless of reported delivery against the milestone target at this stage. This will ensure that staff and facilities can be maintained at this time
* assurance to Learn Local providers that due consideration will be given to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on provider delivery against pre-accredited 2020 contract targets
* approval and support for increased use of ‘take-home packs’, online and other non-face to face delivery methods to support continuity of provision of pre-accredited training, where Learn Locals have shown previous capability to deliver in this way
* a revision of some operational administrative requirements, to remove administrative burden wherever possible

## For TAFEs

**What support is available for TAFEs?**

The Department is working closely with TAFEs to ensure that students continue to have access to training. This includes:

* providing regular communications to ensure all TAFEs have access to the most up to date information from the Victorian Chief Health Officer and the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer.
* providing assurance to TAFE institutes that they will be financially supported by the Victorian Government throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to ensure they are able to continue to support the community in the delivery of training for jobs
* supporting TAFEs to transition to online delivery, particularly for critical courses, to help re-train and certify workers for direct employment now and to have skills for the post-coronavirus (COVID-19) economy
* working with TAFEs to make sure they have sufficient supplies of consumables, like hand sanitiser, to maintain a healthy training environment for all students and staff who need to remain on campus to continue face-to-face delivery.

**What support is available for TAFE staff?**

The Department is supporting TAFEs with guidance around employment and leave arrangements for all staff.

In the first instance, where TAFE and training staff can work from home they are encouraged to do so, and management teams are ensuring they have the appropriate resources to continue doing their normal work or other agreed tasks.

Any staff seeking clarification about leave or other arrangements should contact their employer in the first instance.

## For Universities

**What is the Victorian Government doing to support universities/dual-sector institutions?**

Victorian universities have a strong and consistent public health approach to operating in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) measures.

The Victorian Government is working closely with universities and the Commonwealth Government to support a coordinated, sector-wide approach.

Universities have undertaken comprehensive pandemic planning and have introduced measures to comply with guidelines in relation to physical distancing and community gatherings, to keep students and staff safe while on campuses.

All Victorian universities are delivering through online teaching and other modes of delivery, where possible, with as many staff as is practicable working from home.

The Department is in regular communication with Victorian Vice-Chancellors to closely monitor the changing situation on individual campuses and help as required.

## Where can I go for further information?

The most up-to-date guidance regarding the government’s response to coronavirus (COVID-19), and associated public health directions, is available from the [DHHS website](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus). For detailed guidance for contracted training organisations, please read the fact sheets in the documents section of SVTS.

For other assistance, you can contact the DET general enquiries line: 1800 338 663

The DET general enquiries line is available from 8.30 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday.

Alternatively, you can email: [COVID19.tafe@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:COVID19.tafe@edumail.vic.gov.au)