



# Government eCAF fact sheet

## For Higher Education Providers

### Summary

This fact sheet is intended to be a guide for higher education providers (HEPs) on administrative obligations when managing student electronic Commonwealth Assistance Forms (eCAFs).

### Using the correct form

The only approved Commonwealth Assistance Forms (CAFs) that a student must complete to be eligible for a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) and/or a Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) loan are the approved 2022 Government eCAFs or non-Government eCAFs that replicate the approved 2022 Government eCAFs.

- Hard-copy forms have not been issued by the department since 2020. All existing hard-copy forms should be discarded. If a student's circumstances prevent them from accessing an electronic form, HEPs will need to contact the department via [HEenquiries@dese.gov.au](mailto:HEenquiries@dese.gov.au) requesting a hard-copy CAF and include a strong business case to support the request.
- HEPs who do not use the Government eCAF system should ensure that their non-Government eCAFs replicate the approved 2022 Government eCAFs as per the Government eCAF website. The information contained in the Government eCAFs represent the minimum mandatory information required for non-Government eCAFs to be valid.

### Tax file number (TFN) requirements

Students who do not have a TFN by the census date are able to provide a Certificate of Application for a TFN when they submit their eCAF prior to census date. The student must then provide their TFN to the provider within 21 days of receiving it from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

- An Australia Post receipt is NOT acceptable evidence of an application for a TFN.
- If a student does not receive a Certificate of Application for a TFN on application, they can contact the ATO on 13 28 61. Similarly, if they do not receive a TFN within the standard 28 days they can contact the ATO for an update on their application.

### Record management of eCAFs

To meet record retention requirements under the *Archives Act 1983* all HEPs are required to keep a copy of a student's eCAF for a minimum of seven years.

- HEPs must ensure that electronically stored copies are an unamended version of the original form and a clear and accurate representation of the document signed by the student.

- HEPs should be able to supply the eCAF to the department on request, as per the Administration Information for Providers section 9.6.
- A student must be provided with a printable receipt upon submission of their eCAF. A provider may determine the format of this receipt.
- The Government eCAF system emails all students a copy of their eCAF once they have submitted it. We strongly encourage HEPs to replicate this process in their own eCAF system.

## Keeping up-to date with the Government eCAF

- Each year the Government eCAFs are updated to include updated information relevant for the upcoming year. The approved and updated forms for the upcoming year are released into the Government eCAF training system around October/November of each year.
- HEPs can access the Government eCAF training site to view the upcoming forms to ensure your non-Government eCAFs are compliant with replicating the Government eCAFs for the upcoming year. HEPs can request access by emailing [HEenquiries@dese.gov.au](mailto:HEenquiries@dese.gov.au)
- Throughout the year there could be other changes, perhaps due to a policy or legislation change. The eCAF team email the 'eCAF developers' group' mailbox regarding the rollout plan of these mid-year changes, as well as communicating them via HELP provider website updates or via the quarterly HELP Communications working group meetings, so please ensure someone from your eCAF area are on one or both of these mailing lists. You can request to join by emailing [HEenquiries@dese.gov.au](mailto:HEenquiries@dese.gov.au)

## Census dates and administrative errors

Students are not able to submit an eCAF after the census date unless exceptional circumstances apply.

- There is no provision in the legislation for the department or the Minister to provide an exception to the requirement that a student must meet all eligibility criteria on census date.
  - Students need to meet all of their obligations prior to census date, and cannot apply for a TFN, a USI, or meet citizenship requirements after census date.
- Where the HEP has realised an administrative error occurred, disadvantaging a student, and the census date has passed, please contact the department by emailing us at [HEenquiries@dese.gov.au](mailto:HEenquiries@dese.gov.au). A strong business case will need to be provided to support your request.
- If a HEP requires an eCAF to be deleted or edited, a business case will need to be provided to support your request.
- Students whose citizenship changes after the census date must submit a separate eCAF prior to the next applicable census date to ensure their request for Commonwealth assistance is correct at each census date.

This information is provided as advice only and does not constitute specific legal advice. The *Higher Education Support Act 2003* takes precedence if there is any discrepancy with the advice provided in this document. HEPs are encouraged to seek independent legal advice on interpretation of the legislation.

## Timely issuing of eCAF

All students enrolling for the first time in CSPs, or a course of study or unit of study that is eligible for HECS-HELP or FEE-HELP, or wanting to access a SA-HELP loan to pay for their student services and amenities fee, should have access to the relevant eCAF at the same time or as soon as practicable as other enrolment documents. The OS-HELP debt confirmation form should be issued to eligible students after they have received a preliminary assessment by their provider and are assessed as eligible to receive OS-HELP.

## Eligibility

A reminder to all providers that the department expects that providers will collect information from students to assess student eligibility for CSP or HELP loans prior to the census date. This extends to confirming a student's citizenship.

If after a census date has passed, a student has been found to be ineligible for a HELP loan, then the provider must correct this information with the department through a 'Revisions File' lodged in TCSI. The student's HELP debt will be removed, and the provider **must repay to the Commonwealth** any amounts of HELP they received from the Commonwealth in relation to that student. If the student has successfully completed their course of study, then the provider is unable to recoup the funds from the student.