

CHANGING PUBLISHING DATE AND SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTER REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHEDULES OF TUITION FEES AND STUDENT CONTRIBUTION AMOUNTS

AN INFORMATION PAPER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS AND VET PROVIDERS

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July 2013

PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

This purpose of this information paper is to describe the planned changes to the administration of publishing unit of study information, including schedules of tuition fees, student contribution amounts, census dates and EFTSL, and submitting this information to the department.

The planned changes apply to both higher education providers (HEPs) and VET providers approved under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA).

The paper sets out timeframes for implementing the changes, and information on how providers may submit feedback to the department.

PLANNED CHANGES

REMOVING THE STRICT TIMING REQUIREMENT OF 1 APRIL AND 1 OCTOBER AND SCHEDULE COMPLEXITY

Under current requirements, providers must submit schedules to the Minister and publish them by 1 April for units of study with a census date falling 1 July to 31 December of the same year, and 1 October for units of study with a census date falling 1 January to 30 June of the following year.

Under the planned changes, providers will only be required to publish schedules before the earliest enrolment date for units of study. Providers may publish schedules at any time earlier than this date according to business or marketing needs.

Further, the detailed regulations (ministerial determinations) relating to the content of VET provider schedules will be removed.

This planned change aims to remove administrative pressure on providers to develop and publish schedules many months before the units of study begin. Additionally, as providers will be able to manage how far in advance unit of study information is published before enrolments open, the need for providers to vary published information is likely to reduce.

Under the planned changes, there will be no barriers to providers continuing to publish schedules on or before the traditional 1 October and 1 April dates, as long as the unit of study information is published prior to the earliest enrolment date for the relevant unit.

REMOVING THE REQUIREMENT FOR PROVIDERS TO SUBMIT SCHEDULES TO THE MINISTER

Under current requirements, providers must submit schedules to the Minister by emailing them to the department or uploading them to the HELP IT System (HITS).

Under the planned changes, this requirement will be met by the publishing of schedules on the provider's website. Providers will no longer be required to send schedules to the department by 1 October and 1 April, either via email or HITS.

Providers will need to retain point-in-time records of their tuition fees and on occasion, the department may request that previously published unit of study information be provided.

REMOVING THE REQUIREMENT FOR PROVIDERS TO NOTIFY THE DEPARTMENT OF SCHEDULE VARIATIONS

Currently providers are required to notify the department of variations to published schedules and send the varied schedules to the department.

Providers will no longer be required to notify the department of variations to published schedules that occur before the earliest enrolment date for the affected unit of study.

Variations to published information that do not disadvantage students, for example by reducing the tuition fee or moving the census date to a later date, may be made up to the census date for that unit of study. Variations that do not disadvantage students do not require notification to the department.

Variations required after the earliest enrolment date for a unit of study that do disadvantage students, for example by increasing the tuition fee or moving the census date to an earlier date, will still require Ministerial approval.

INCREASED FLEXIBILITY IN THE PUBLISHING OF CENSUS DATES

Currently providers must publish a calendar date for each census date for each unit of study. This presents some complexities and administrative burden for flexible or rolling enrolments.

Under the planned changes, providers will be able to publish a statement regarding the calculation of census dates for these types of units of study, rather than specifying multiple census dates.

Providers must still determine a census date for flexible or rolling enrolments, calculated as no less than 20 per cent of the way between the unit of study start and end dates, and make this date available to students.

WHY CHANGE?

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Throughout various consultation processes, stakeholders, particularly state and territory governments, HEPs and VET providers, have indicated that administrative requirements under HESA are overly burdensome.

GOVERNMENT DECISIONS

In May 2013, the then Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research, the Hon Dr Craig Emerson MP outlined a series of measures to reduce red tape burden on higher education providers. The removal of the requirement to submit schedules is one of the measures.

TIMING OF CHANGES

Applying the planned changes will require the relevant ministerial determinations to be revoked and the relevant guidelines to be amended.

Subject to the need to amend the VET Guidelines, Higher Education Provider Guidelines and the Administration Guidelines to give effect to the changes, the department will strive to implement the changes as soon as possible after the Tertiary HELP Provider Forum in early July this year.

Providers will be informed as soon as possible whether or not they still have to meet the 1 October publishing and submission requirement.

FEEDBACK

A session on the planned changes is scheduled for the Tertiary HELP Provider Forum on 15 – 16 July 2013.

Questions and Answers developed regarding the planned changes are attached.

Providers are encouraged to submit any feedback or questions on the planned changes with the subject line 'Planned changes to HELP administration 2013' to tsenquiries@innovation.gov.au by 11 July 2013.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS REGARDING THE PLANNED CHANGES TO PUBLISHING DATE AND SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTER REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHEDULES OF TUITION FEES AND STUDENT CONTRIBUTION AMOUNTS (SCHEDULES)

Q: Will higher education providers and VET providers still have to publish schedules?

A: Yes. The requirement to publish schedules by 1 April and 1 October is planned to be changed. Providers will still have to make unit of study information available to students.

Q: Will there be a new publishing date requirement?

A: Yes. The new publishing date is planned to be the earliest enrolment date for the particular units of study.

Under the planned changes, providers will be required to publish unit of study information, tuition fees, census dates and EFTSL (and student contribution amounts for higher education providers) no later than earliest enrolment date for those units of study.

Q: Will we have to publish before enrolments for the course open?

A: No. Unit of study must be published before the earliest date that students can enrol in that unit of study.

Q: How will the period for publishing schedules change?

A: The publishing period is planned to be determined by the earliest enrolment date for units of study rather than in which half of the year census dates fall.

Q: Will providers still have to give schedules to the Minister/the department periodically?

A: No. Under the planned changes, publishing schedule information on the provider's website satisfies the requirement of providing the schedule to the Minister.

Providers will need to retain point-in-time records of their tuition fees and on occasion, the department may request that previously published unit of study information be provided as part of student support activities.

Q: Will there be a minimum/maximum period of time, before the date of earliest enrolment, that schedules must be published?

A: No. Providers will be able to determine how far in advance of a unit of study's earliest enrolment date to publish the relevant schedule. Providers may continue to adopt the 1 April and 1 October publishing dates if preferred.

Under the planned changes, providers will be required to publish unit of study information before the earliest enrolment date for that unit of study, ensuring students have the tuition fee, census date, EFTSL or student contribution amount information available to them before being able to enrol in that unit of study.

Under the planned changes, there will be no barriers to providers continuing to publish schedules on or before 1 October and 1 April, as this will meet the requirement to publish prior to the earliest enrolment date for the relevant unit.

Q: Will providers still be able to vary published schedules?

A: **Yes.** Under the planned changes, a provider may still vary published unit of study information.

Q: Are there changes planned to make administering of variations easier?

A: **Yes.** The requirement to notify the department (and submit varied schedules) for variations that do not disadvantage students is planned to be removed.

Variations with no disadvantage to students will be able to be made before the census date for that unit of study, for example, reducing tuition fees or moving the census date to a later date.

Variations that do not disadvantage students will not require Ministerial approval. A provider may make the variation and publish the new unit of study information without notifying the Minister or the department.

Providers will need to retain point-in-time records of changes to tuition fees and on occasion, the department may request that variation information be provided as part of student support activities.

Variations after the earliest enrolment date for a unit of study, which disadvantage students, for example, increasing tuition fees or moving census dates to an earlier date, will still require Ministerial approval.

A provider will still be required to seek Ministerial approval for a variation proposed to be made after the earliest enrolment date for that unit for a change that:

- increases the unit's published tuition fee or student contribution amount; or
- brings the unit's published census date forward in time.

Q: How will a provider seek Ministerial approval for a variation to a schedule that will cause disadvantage?

To seek Ministerial approval for a variation, a provider should contact the department via tsenquiries@innovation.gov.au in the first instance.

Q: Will the requirement for publishing a unit's census date be changed?

A: **Yes.** Under the planned changes, providers will be able to publish a statement regarding the calculation of census dates for these types of units of study, rather than publishing multiple census dates in advance. The census date formula will satisfy the census date publishing requirement.

Providers must still determine a census date for rolling enrolments calculated against the unit of study start date, and make this date available to students.

Q: Will the requirement for determining a unit's census date be changed?

A: **No.** The requirement for calculating a unit's census date has not changed. A census date for a unit of study will still be required to be not less than 20 per cent of the way through that unit of study.

Q: Will the requirement for publishing a unit's EFTSL value be changed?

A: **No.** Higher education providers must still publish an EFTSL value for units of study. As with census dates under the planned changes, the EFTSL value can be defined by a statement or formula, if preferred by the provider.

Q: Will the requirement for determining a unit's EFTSL value be changed?

A: **No.** The requirement for determining a unit's EFTSL value will not be changed.

Q: Will providers ever be required to give schedules directly to the Minister/the department?

A: **Yes.** The Minister/the department may request that providers give current or previous schedules or student contribution amounts by request.

Q: Will VET providers be required to give the Minister/the department schedules via the HELP Information Technology System (HITS)?

A: **No.** Under previous requirements, only VET providers were required to give the Minister/the department tuition fee URLs via the VET Information Technology System, the predecessor of HITS. Under the new changes, providers will not be required to give the Minister/the department schedules and amounts periodically via HITS.

Q: Will providers be required to publish schedules for employer reserved or restricted access courses?

A: **No.** Providers will not be required to submit to the Minister/the department schedules for employer reserved or restricted access places. Providers will still have to make this information available to students.

The department may on occasion request that unit of study information provided to students be provided as part of student support activities.

Q: Will all schedules be required to be publicly available?

A: **No.** A planned change will allow providers to put in place systems that only allow potential or current students access to schedules.

Q: Requirements for VET providers to publish detailed unit of study information at a fixed or hourly rate as well as tuition hours for state and territory subsidised places is planned to be removed. What does this mean?

A: NVR-registered VET providers, as well as providers registered in non-referring jurisdictions, are required to make fee information available to students under the applicable standards (SNR 11 and SNR 22 of the Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2012, or under the AQTF Essential Conditions and Standards for Continuing Registration, respectively).

It is planned to remove the requirement under HESA to provide to the Minister detailed information regarding state and territory subsidised places.

The manner in which subsidised fee information is provided to students, including eligible VET FEE-HELP students, will be determined by VET providers.

Q: Do the planned changes affect SA-HELP requirements?

A: **No.** SA-HELP is a loan related to higher education student services and amenities fees.

Q: Do the planned changes affect OS-HELP requirements?

A: **No.** OS-HELP is a loan related to higher education students undertaking study overseas.