Welcome

Welcome to the 2016 April Edition of the HELP Newsletter.

If you have questions about the information contained in this newsletter, please email HEenquiries@education.gov.au.

It is important to note that people who receive this newsletter are listed as contacts in the HELP IT System (HITS). If an employee in your organisation would like to receive this newsletter please have their details added as a contact in HITS. For instructions on how to add a contact in HITS, please refer to the HITS user guide.

The following is applicable to both higher education and VET providers

New Zealand Special Category Visa holders – update

The *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures) Act 2015* was passed by the Australian Parliament on 24 November 2015. From 1 January 2016 the Act extends access to student loans to eligible New Zealand citizens who have been long-term residents of Australia since childhood.

There has been considerable interest in how providers should administer the eligibility criteria. In response, the department has created an addendum to the Higher Education *Administrative Information for Providers* (AIP) manual to address these issues. It is located at: https://docs.education.gov.au/node/39346.

For more general information, please refer in the first instance to the Higher Education AIP manual, available at: https://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers.

For specific enquiries please email CGS@education.gov.au.

HELP forms for eligible New Zealanders

The department has developed a range of Commonwealth Assistance forms (CAFs) to be used for eligible New Zealand citizens. These CAFs are available in small numbers and can be ordered by emailing HEenquiries@education.gov.au, they are not available to order through HITS.

The CAFs – which have been issued to providers since January 2016 – have recently been updated with a change to clarify and simplify the NZ citizen eligibility section. Providers who wish to obtain sample PDFs of the updated NZ CAFs to update their eCAFs can email HEenquiries@education.gov.au. (Please note that any previously provided CAFs are still correct and can continue to be used.)

More information for providers on a range of issues, including clarification on who is an SCV holder, evidence required and reporting data, please see this FAQ document or email HEenquiries@education.gov.au.

Due date for Submission of Annual Financial Information

All FEE-HELP and VET FEE-HELP providers who have an annual financial reporting period which concluded on 31 December 2015 are reminded that their annual financial information submissions are due by 30 June 2016. Please

ensure that all information has been provided as there is no scope for the provision of extensions in relation to these reporting requirements. Providers who fail to submit all of the required information on time may face a suspension of payments.

Providers are required to upload all necessary documentation and complete a Financial Performance in HITS as the department no longer provides work books or accepts submissions made via email.

Please ensure that your submission is complete and that the information uploaded into your Financial Performance aligns with the information included in your audited financial statements. If you have any queries regarding the information you are required to provide, please consult the financial viability information checklist for providers, which can be found at Appendix 8 of the Financial Viability Instructions on the department's website at: https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/financial_viability_instructions_may_2015_docx_416_kb2.pdf.

Once you have completed a Financial Performance and uploaded all of your documentation, you will also need to edit the milestone relating to the submission of your financial information to confirm the completion of this process. Please refer to pages 156-159 of the HITS user guide for detailed instructions.

If you require any additional information or assistance to complete your annual submission of financial information please email: TSenquiries@education.gov.au.

Verification of 2015 data commences 15 April 2016

Verification of 2015 data commences on 15 April 2016 and is finalised on 15 May 2016.

Providers have four weeks in which to check and formally verify 2015 student data. Formal verification certifies that the data reported for 2015 is complete and accurate.

This is the busiest time of your reporting year. Please ensure you have the staff and resources available to report, check, revise and verify your data before 15 May 2016. It is also the busiest time of our reporting year and enquiries will be answered on a first in, best dressed basis. Leaving your data checks or enquiries until the last minute and running out of time to correct your data is not an acceptable justification for missing the deadline.

While the HEIMS Data Collections team will make every effort to assist you, the department will treat late verification of data as a serious compliance issue. Non-compliance may affect your funding and continued approval as a HELP provider.

HEIMSHELP has a wealth of verification support material and resources. The Verifying your data toolkit on HEIMSHELP provides you with all the information you need to successfully verify your data. The department is also running two webinars in April and May to help you through this process.

If you have any questions relating to your data or verification please email HEIMS.datacollections@education.gov.au as early as possible.

Career Expos

The department is attending career expos in capital cities around Australia in April, May and June 2016. Departmental staff at career expos will provide potential students, current students and their parents with information about HELP loans and the *Study Assist* website which contains up-to-date information about financial assistance for tertiary study. Staff will be distributing brochures, outlining the assistance available and answering any questions that may arise. Please feel free to introduce yourselves and direct enquires to our booth.

Event dates

10 and 11 April 2016	Tertiary Studies & Career Expo Adelaide	http://www.careersevent.com/tscea/
5, 6, 7 and 8 May 2016	VCE and Careers Expo 2016	http://www.vceandcareers.com.au/

2, 3, 4 and 5 June 2016	HSC and Careers Expo 2016	http://www.hscandcareers.com.au/
16, 17, 18 and 19 June 2016	Western Sydney Careers Expo 2016	http://www.westernsydneycareerexpo.com.au/

Government electronic Commonwealth Assistance form (eCAF) project – update

The development of the Government eCAF is progressing well. Recently the project team ran a system demonstration via webinar to providers who had nominated their interest, and received some very constructive feedback from those involved. A copy of the webinar recording is available by emailing HEenquiries@education.gov.au.

The department will host an Application Programming Interface (API) information session (also via webinar), in April 2016 and are happy for external eCAF/Student Management System (SMS) providers to be involved in this. If you would like to register interest (including on behalf of your eCAF/SMS provider) in attending the API webinar, please contact us at HEenquiries@education.gov.au.

The department also conducted HELP provider User Acceptance Testing sessions in Canberra on 30 and 31 March 2016 and will host additional sessions for students in early April 2016.

If you have any questions about the Government eCAF, please email HEenquiries@education.gov.au.

HITS/I:AM

The HITS user guide was updated in December 2015. The new version can be found at: http://education.gov.au/help-it-system-hits-user-guide.

In addition to the HITS user guides there are also online HITS training videos. These videos provide step by step instructions on how to perform specific tasks in HITS and the I:AM system. Videos are available on the department's website at: http://education.gov.au/help-it-system-hits-user-guide.

The following is applicable to VET providers

Change of Minister responsible for Vocational Education and Skills

On 18 February 2016, Senator the Hon Scott Ryan was appointed as Minister for Vocational Education and Skills. Minister Ryan is focused on supporting high quality training that ensures good outcomes for students and employers. One of his key priorities is VET FEE-HELP. The recent changes to the VET FEE-HELP scheme will benefit students by aiming to control the growth of training providers in the sector, and existing and new training providers will also be required to improve their student outcomes. The Government is also looking at a redesign of the VET FEE-HELP scheme, to ensure that the loan scheme supports affordable and quality training that meets the needs of students and industry.

Allocation of VET providers' VET FEE-HELP notional loan accounts

Concerns have been raised that some VET providers may not be giving priority to existing continuing students when distributing notional loan amounts (loan cap). Whilst amendments to the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* imposed a freeze on VET FEE-HELP loans at 2015 levels to halt growth, the intention was not to impact on the entitlement of existing continuing students to access VET FEE-HELP loans (those enrolled on or prior to 11 December 2015).

It is expected a provider gives priority access under its loan cap to existing students so they can continue and complete their studies without additional financial burden. An entitlement of a new student (enrolled from 12 December 2015) to access VET FEE-HELP is dependent on a provider's remaining loan cap. If a provider is having significant issues supporting existing continuing students within its loan cap it should write to the Secretary, Department of Education

and Training, c/- Branch Manager, VET FEE-HELP Branch via TSenquiries@education.gov.au providing details of the dates of enrolment of existing continuing students and course fees from 2014 to 2016.

The department has prepared guidelines to assist providers seeking to have their notional VET FEE-HELP loan account increased. The guidelines set out where and how requests can be submitted, and the objective criteria against which they will be assessed. The guidelines have been published on the department's website at: https://www.education.gov.au/help-resources-providers.

Introduction of the Language Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) tool

From 1 January 2016, providers must now use an approved LLN testing tool to assess students' academic suitability for VET FEE-HELP when students are unable to provide a copy of an Australian year 12 certificate. Providers wishing to have their tool approved for use in the assessment of students can apply to the department. Information on the LLN tool approval process is available on the department's website at: https://www.education.gov.au/approved-vet-provider-information.

Marketing, advertising or promoting VET FEE-HELP

As significant changes have been introduced to the VET FEE-HELP loan scheme in relation to the marketing, advertising and promotional rules, providers are reminded to refer to both Section 25 of the *Higher Education Support (VET) Guideline 2015* and the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* for guidance around this area.

This means that:

- VET providers and their agents are no longer allowed to:
  - make unsolicited contact through cold calling activities and raise the possible availability of VET FEE-HELP loan assistance;
  - imply that VET FEE-HELP assistance is not a loan;
  - offer inappropriate inducements to sign up for VET FEE-HELP assistance for the unit or course or imply that a loaned item, such as a laptop, will be provided to another person if a person enrols in a unit of study and this suggestion would induce the student to enrol or request a VET FEE-HELP loan; and
  - accept a *Request for VET FEE-HELP loan* form from a person unless two business days have passed from the date the person has enrolled.

- VET providers must ensure that all marketing, advertising or promoting of any of its VET units of study or VET courses of study clearly and prominently mention the VET provider's name, registered business name (if any), any other business name it uses and the maximum VET tuition fees payable for the units or courses.

- as stricter requirements apply to VET providers' relationships with their agents/brokers, VET providers will now need to ensure:
  - a written agreement is entered into with any agents or brokers that specifies the responsibilities and requirements the agent must comply with in carrying out activities on behalf of the provider, including providing the full, accurate up-to-date information on VET FEE-HELP;
  - they have clearly and prominently published on their website a list of all its current and past associates, and the list must include, for each agent or associate, the period the agreement with the agent or associate is in force; and
  - when contacting prospective students, that the agent approaches in a way that does not involve cold-calling and the agent must disclose to the prospective student:
    - ➢ the name of the VET provider that the prospective student would be referred to;
    - ➢ the VET course of study to which the referral relates;
    - ➢ the agent will receive a fee or commission should the student enrol with the VET provider; and
    - ➢ full, accurate and up-to-date information about VET FEE-HELP assistance.

The department is in the process of updating the *VET Administrative Information for Providers* to reflect legislative changes. Providers will be advised when this document is available. In the meantime, providers can access the [Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document](#) and [Addendum to the VET Administrative Information for Providers](#) for clarification on some of these measures or email [TSenquiries@education.gov.au](#).

Providers wanting to restructure

VET FEE-HELP providers are reminded that clauses 25 and 25A of schedule 1A to the [*Higher Education Support Act 2003*](#) require the department to be notified of any events that affect a provider's ability to comply with VET quality and accountability requirements or to provide a copy of any notice given to the National VET Regulator about material changes to your organisation.

VET FEE-HELP approval is not transferable in all circumstances and it is recommended that providers contact the department should they be planning on restructuring their business or making any changes to the legal entity approved.

Contact details in HITS

The HELP IT System (HITS) assists approved providers with ongoing compliance and administrative activities. The department utilises the functions and facilities made available by the system to complete our business, including payments and contacting providers.

As HITS is a conduit to effective, streamlined communication and reduced red tape, providers are reminded of the increasing need to incorporate HITS into their regular activities. Providers are requested to:

- update your entity, contacts, parent organisation and commercial partnership information on the "Organisation" tab;
- check that your current course delivery and tuition assurance arrangements are properly reflected on the "Courses" tab;
- monitor the Notifications Centre, with particular attention to Action notifications; and
- make use of the web links to HELP program resources; publications and user guides.

The department uses contact details listed in HITS to contact providers on a variety of HELP matters, including important information with regards to the recent reforms.

Providing up-to-date contacts information ensures that the department is able to reach the appropriate person in your organisation. Providers should review all contacts in HITS including persons of influence and update accordingly. By making full use of HITS, providers can reduce the number of extra requests from the department to meet procedural and compliance requirements.

VET Providers are reminded that until a VET course within your delivery scope has been marked as "Active" in HITS, you will not be able to report on that course. Providers must ensure courses that are currently with the status "Details required" are updated to reflect what is currently being delivered by your organisation. Superseded courses that are no longer being delivered must be changed from Active to Inactive. This does not affect reporting of students in that course where census dates occurred during the period the course had an 'active' status.

The following is applicable to higher education providers

Higher Education Datamart

The Higher Education Datamart was released on 3 March 2016 and is available via the recently established [Education Portal](#). The datamart aims to provide higher education providers with a single point of online access to various higher education data collections. The datamart demonstrates the Australian Government's ongoing commitment to implementing recommendations from the [*Review of Reporting Requirements for Universities*](#).

What is in the datamart?

University Institutional Performance Portfolios (IPPs)

Generation of individual university's IPPs from the datamart enables access to future editions of their IPP earlier and remove the need for reviewing draft editions before final versions become available.

Bulk downloads of higher education data sets (Data Downloads)

This function is available to organisations (Universities Australia and member universities, state/territory governments and TEQSA) that have existing arrangements with the department for the download of bespoke aggregated and unit record data sets.

Over time, the datamart will look to incorporate various data collections held by the department, in order to streamline the reporting process for all higher education providers.

How can I get access to datamart?

Universities can apply for datamart access via the registration form on the Education Portal. For datamart enquiries, please email HigherEDDatamart@education.gov.au.

Masters by coursework 2016

In 2016, the Department of Social Services (DSS) will run two Masters by coursework assessment processes. Applications for the first round are now open and Higher Education Providers are invited to submit their professionally oriented Masters by coursework programmes for assessment and potential approval for student payment (Youth Allowance and Austudy) purposes.

DSS will assess submitted courses against the criteria set out in the *Guidelines for the Approval of Masters Courses for Student Payments* and recommend appropriate courses for possible approval by the Minister for Social Services. For further information regarding the Masters by coursework process or to access an application form and copy of the guidelines, please visit www.dss.gov.au/masters.

Applications must be received by DSS no later than COB Friday 29 April 2016 via email to: mastersapps@dss.gov.au. Please note that DSS is unable to accept late applications. It is anticipated that the outcome of the first round will be formally communicated to institutions prior to 1 July 2016.