

VET STUDENT LOANS

FAQs for students

Question 1: What is VET Student Loans?

The VET Student Loans program is the Commonwealth Government loan scheme for vocational education and training (VET), it replaced the VET FEE-HELP program on 1 January 2017.

Under this program, eligible students studying in approved Diplomas or Advanced Diplomas may be able to defer their tuition fees through a student loan.

Your loan is repaid through the Australian tax system when you reach the minimum income threshold for repayment. There is a loan fee of 20% for full fee-paying students.

Question 2: Am I eligible?

To be eligible, you must either:

- be an Australian citizen, or
- hold an eligible permanent humanitarian visa and usually reside in Australia, or
- be a New Zealand citizen on Special Category Visa (SCV subclass 444) who grew up here. See FAQ 15.

Holders of other permanent visas and temporary visas are NOT eligible for a VET Student Loan.

You must also:

- have a tax file number or have lodged an application
- have a USI (see FAQ 4)
- be assessed as academically suitable to undertake a high level vocational qualification (see FAQ 5)
- have a Commonwealth Higher Education Support Number (CHESSN) (see FAQ 6)
- have not met your lifetime Commonwealth student loan limit (see FAQ 10)

Question 3: Is my course eligible?

The Commonwealth selects eligible courses in line with industry needs and employment outcomes and approves providers to run those courses. The list of courses approved for ACMUSE to offer VET Student Loans are **CUA51015 Diploma of Screen and Media (Specialist Make-up Services)** and **CUA60715 Advanced Diploma of Visual Art.**

Question 4: What is a USI?

A USI is a Unique Student Identifier. From 1 January 2015, the Commonwealth has required all students studying in a nationally recognised training course to have a USI. If you already have one, please ensure you use this same USI whenever you enrol for any training. If you don't yet have a USI, you can go to <https://www.usi.gov.au/> to register before you apply to enrol. Alternatively, you can do this as part of your enrolment.

Question 5: What is academic suitability?

All students wishing to apply for a Commonwealth VET Student Loan must be assessed for academic suitability to undertake a high level VET qualification. This is aimed at ensuring you have the skills and knowledge to succeed in your course. Academic assessment is in addition to any other entry requirements for your course, or any other additional selection criteria. Refer to the *VET Student Loans Student Entry Procedure* on the ACMUSE website.

To be assessed as academically suitable, you must either:

- provide a copy of your senior secondary certificate of education (that has been awarded by an Australian authority or agency) or
- provide evidence of attainment of an Australian Qualification Framework qualification at Certificate IV or above that was delivered in English. You may provide a Certificate or transcript from your previous provider or a transcript from the national [USI register](#) (for qualifications attained from 2015), or
- undertake an approved literacy and numeracy assessment and be competent at Exit Level 3 or above in reading and numeracy. The College will assist you through the process to undertake this assessment if you need to. It's free of charge.

Question 6: What is a CHESSN?

A CHESSN is a Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number which is allocated to all students when they first access a Commonwealth loan. Any Commonwealth student loan you take is recorded against your CHESSN. If you already have a CHESSN, please supply that number. Otherwise, ACMUSE will provide you with one.

Question 7: How will my course fees be charged?

Fees for courses eligible for VET Student Loans are charged by unit / clusters of study, with your payments spread across the duration of your course.

Each unit of study has a census day, set at no less than 20% into the unit of study. You will be sent an **Invoice Notice** to your personal email address 14 days before each census day, indicating your fees and census days.

Your debt is incurred on the day after the census day. After a census day has passed, ACMUSE will also send you a **Commonwealth Assistance Notice (CAN)** for that unit/s of study. The CAN will provide you with information about your debt, including the loan fee if applicable. If you believe your CAN is incorrect, you should contact the College immediately.

For the Diploma and Advanced Diploma at ACMUSE, there will be a gap between the course fee and the loan that the Commonwealth will allow for your course (the loan cap), which you need to pay. We will let you know the gap payment when you enquire (which includes the course kits), and payment options that may be available.

Question 8: How do I apply for a VET Student Loan?

A VET Student Loan is an agreement between you and the Commonwealth. You apply for a loan through the **Commonwealth Government's Electronic Commonwealth Assistance Form (eCAF)**.

If you have been accepted into your course, met all the loan eligibility and academic suitability requirements (including providing any required evidence) and wish to apply for a loan, we will advise the Commonwealth.

They will then send you an email with your log-on details and a passkey to access the loan application. You must complete the online application before the first census day of your course; otherwise you are not eligible for a loan for that unit and will need to pay.

Your loan application is separate to your enrolment with ACMUSE. The Commonwealth requires that there is a two business day cooling off period between when you first enrol with ACMUSE and when you apply to enrol. When you complete the form and have been approved for a loan, your college will be advised and your enrolment can be finalised.

Question 9: Are there further requirements to maintain eligibility for my loan?

Yes. You must continue to participate in your study and progress through your course.

The Commonwealth will contact you two or three times per year by email and ask you to complete some questions and a student survey to confirm that you are still studying and wish to continue to access a loan to cover your course fees. This process will happen in February, June and October. Keep an eye out for the emails. Failure to comply with the request could result in the cancellation of your loan.

In addition, if you are not progressing through your course, ACMUSE may also cancel your enrolment to ensure that you are not unnecessarily incurring debt.

Question 10: When do I repay my debt?

You start repaying your debt through the tax system when your income is **above the minimum repayment threshold**. Repayment thresholds are adjusted each year to

reflect changes in average weekly earnings. The minimum repayment income threshold for 2017-18 is \$55,874. For more information, go to [Study Assist](#).

Question 11: Is there a limit to how much I can borrow?

Yes, from 1 January 2017, the Commonwealth has set a loan cap for each course. Course loan caps for each ACMUSE approved course is set at \$10,000.

There is also a lifetime loan limit per student. This loan limit is the total amount available to you in your whole lifetime under any Commonwealth student loan scheme – whether it is FEE-HELP (in Higher Education), VET FEE-HELP or a VET Student Loan. It is indexed each year, in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). In 2017, the Commonwealth loan limit is \$100,879 for most students.

Question 12: Is there an age limit for applying a VET Student Loan?

There are no age restrictions, though the intent is that your study will have a vocational outcome. That is, it will enable you to get a job or support your career progression.

Parental consent is required for students who are under 18 years old, unless you are receiving Youth Allowance (on the basis that you are independent). You must provide a copy of your Centrelink Income Statement noting your independent assessment. Otherwise, you must have your parent or guardian complete the Commonwealth's Parental Consent Form and return it to the College. Please ask the College for this form.

Your parent or guardian will not be responsible for making loan repayments and it will not affect their credit rating. You will have to make the relevant repayments once your income reaches the minimum payment threshold.

Question 13: I have a student debt already. How do I find out my total debt?

Log in to myUniAssist on the [Study Assist](#) website. You will need your Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number (CHESSN) to log in.

Question 14: Can I make an upfront payment?

Yes. If you have future fees, you can make any upfront payments you can afford. This will save you the 20% loan fee that is applied to all fee-for-service loans.

If all your census days have passed, you can make payments direct to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

Question 15: What are New Zealand Citizen Eligibility criteria?

New Zealand citizens who hold a Special Category Visa (SCV Subclass 444) and meet the residency criteria are eligible to apply for a loan. The residency requirements are:

- you first began living in Australia at least 10 years before applying for a loan, and at that time, were a child under 18 years of age and did not have a spouse or de-facto partner; and
- you have been in Australia for at least eight of the 10 years immediately prior to applying and at least 18 months of the last two years.

You will need to provide evidence to the College of your eligibility before requesting a loan.

Question 16: I'm receiving Centrelink benefits. Does this affect the amount of VET Student Loan assistance I can access?

No—Centrelink benefits do not affect your eligibility or the amount of assistance you can access.

Question 17: What if I want to withdraw from my study?

You must withdraw in writing by completing the *VET Student Loan Withdrawal form*, available from the ACMUSE website or from the College. The loan amount you incur will depend on the timing of your withdrawal. There are no penalties if you withdraw on or before the census day. However, once a census day has passed, the loan amount for the unit of study is incurred.

In some special circumstances, you may apply to have your debt reversed. Please talk to the College or go to the ACMUSE website for more information.

Question 18: What happens to my debt if I move overseas?

Legislation has been passed to require all HELP debtors (from any Commonwealth student loan program) who move overseas to make compulsory HELP repayments. This began on 1 July 2017 and applies to all existing HELP debts.

The first step is to notify the ATO before you travel, or within 7 days of leaving Australia, if you intend to move overseas for 183 days (around 6 months) or more in any 12 month period. For more information on how to register with the ATO, go to [Study Assist](#).

Question 19: Where can I find more information about VET Student Loans at ACMUSE?

Go to the ACMUSE website. For general information, visit the [Commonwealth Government Study Assist website](#).

The information in this flier is correct as at 9 December 2017