

DJSIR Program Guidelines

Asylum Seeker Vocational Education and Training (ASVET) Program



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BACKGROUND

The ASVET Program

The ASVET Program provides eligible asylum seekers and refugees granted temporary residence with an exemption from the usual citizenship or residency eligibility criteria required for participation in a government-subsidised Skills First training course or Free TAFE course.

The Victorian Government has funded and supported the ASVET program since its establishment in 2011.

The ASVET program began as a limited trial, where a capped number of eligible Bridging Visa E holders were referred to Government-subsidised training courses. This initial trial led to the first substantial funding agreement in 2013, spanning until 2016. Changing federal policy settings then saw the introduction of Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV) and the reissuing of Temporary Protection Visas (TPV), which were incorporated into the program in late 2016.

The biggest change to the program's operation was the decision to allow eligible asylum seekers and refugees with granted temporary protection to self-refer to TAFEs and Learn Local Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), effective from January 2017. This decision also saw concessional rates applied for all participants up to the diploma level.

To ensure that ASVET participants could identify their own preferred provider and engage in training-to-employment pathways themselves, the requirement for private RTOs to retain a referral form from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) as evidence of eligibility was removed in August 2021. This change allowed for eligible asylum seekers to self-select and self-enrol with their provider of choice.

The ASVET Program has historically adapted to changing federal migration policy settings in response to world events. As of 1 January 2022, asylum seekers placed on a Temporary Humanitarian Stay (Subclass 449) visa were included in the eligibility criteria in response to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Subsequently, asylum seekers placed on a Temporary Humanitarian Concern (Subclass 786) visa were included in response to displacement caused by the war in Ukraine. Asylum seekers on these visas were also granted access to the [Reconnect](#) program, which assists people experiencing disadvantage to overcome the barriers preventing them from engaging in education and training and provides additional support into further study and employment pathways.

Link to Strategic Priorities

The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (the Department) is committed to supporting economic and social prosperity across Victoria by supporting industries, sectors and businesses and creating opportunities for Victorians to build skills and find secure employment. The Department meets this commitment by increasing participation in training, skills and higher education, building awareness of the value of learning pathways and ensuring that learning is accessible to all.

Central to breaking the link between disadvantage and poor educational outcomes is ensuring that individuals are supported to engage in training and employment and reach their potential for improved life opportunities. The Department's Skills First initiative aims to increase access to training, support, and other essential service needs for disadvantaged and high-needs learners.

ACCESSING THE ASVET PROGRAM

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility for the ASVET Program is available to **individuals** or **dependants of individuals** who meet the following criteria:

- hold any humanitarian, protection of refugee visa in Australia, or
- have applied for a humanitarian, protection or refugee visa and hold a bridging visa for this purpose, or
- have made an application under s. 417 or s.48b of the *Migration Act 1958 (Cth)* which is yet to be determined and hold a bridging visa.

Individuals must have study rights, and work rights are required for programs that include work placement.

How to Check for Eligibility

There are three (3) ways to check for eligibility to participate in the ASVET program:

1. Providers can ask for the individual's permission to check the type of visa they hold and the status of their work and study rights through the Department of Home Affairs' (DHA) Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) system.
2. Providers can accept a VEVO record that a student has generated themselves. Providers will need to check that the details on the record match the name, date of birth and document number of the individual's foreign passport or Immicard.
3. Providers can accept a letter of referral from the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC).

When an individual has a bridging visa, providers will need to sight additional evidence that they're applying for a humanitarian, protection of refugee visa or making an application under s. 417 or s.48b of the *Migration Act 1958 (Cth)*.

Confirmation of eligibility

Whether through referral from the ASRC or direct enrolment (refer to **ENROLMENT** section), it is the training organisation that provides confirmation that a person's eligibility meets the current Skills First VET Funding Contract Guidelines.

What training and courses are asylum seekers eligible to do?

Individuals who are eligible for the ASVET Program may choose courses under the following criteria:

- government-subsidised Skills First training courses at TAFE, private Registered Training Organisations with a current VET Funding Contract and Learn Locals registered with the Adult, Community and Further Education Board offering accredited courses.
- eligible courses include the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Foundation Studies, VET Certificate levels I to IV, Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas.
- courses offered through the Free TAFE for Priority Courses initiative at TAFE institutes.
- pre-accredited training is available through the Jobs Victoria Employment Network which supports clients in getting work. This includes job search support, work preparation, active engagement with employers to identify suitable employment opportunities and placement into jobs.

FUNDING

Funding Background

The Victorian Government committed a total of \$6 million in the 2021/22 budget to provide further subsidy funding for participants of the ASVET Program, which is allocated over 4 years (\$1.5 million annually). This funding arrangement is intended for asylum seekers to receive an exemption from the usual citizenship/residency requirements for undertaking post-secondary education or training.

Historically, the Victorian Government had committed \$10 million in subsidised, concessional and fee-free government funded courses from 2018 - 2021. From 2016, the ASVET program was in receipt of \$15 million in funding over 3 years, with an allocation of 3,000 *Skills First* places for the eligible visa holders.

Role of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) in the ASVET Program

The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) provides additional funding to the ASRC to offer a range of supports to asylum seeker students and the TAFEs, RTOs and Learn Local providers that they engage with. These activities result in increased enrolments and completions of eligible students, improved student experience and supported training pathways to further study and employment.

The funding gives the training organisations access to a range of supports to assist asylum seekers achieve their education and training goals, including:

- a help desk service aimed at providing guidance about verifying visas and other information for the purposes of validly enrolling students.
- a dedicated internet site of resources that provides readily available and up to date information to inform their decisions about supporting asylum seeker students on campus.
- professional development workshops for staff.
- The establishment and facilitation of an RTO community-of-best-practice network to share examples of leading practice in the education and training support of asylum seeker and refugee students.
- up-to-date advice to the cohort via the help desk, which relays information regarding visa requirements, educational opportunities and pathways to employment.
- referral of eligible students into Skills First courses via the 'Referral to Government Subsidised Training – Asylum Seekers' form or a similar mechanism.

ENROLMENT

Participant enrolment in education and training

Individuals who are eligible for the ASVET Program can apply and enrol in training via two (2) ways:

1. Enrolment via the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre's Referral service:

The ASRC manages a service for eligible asylum seekers that provides vocational education and training advice and referral assistance to people seeking to enrol in an accredited course.

Students who know which TAFE, Registered Training Organisation (RTO) or Learn Local provider they would like to study with can enrol directly with the training provider. However, the ARSC will prepare a referral letter if requested.

You can access the ASRC's referral service [here](#).

2. Direct enrolment in training

Individuals who are eligible for the ASVET Program can enrol in accredited and pre-accredited training. Individuals may directly enrol in an accredited course with a TAFE Institute or Registered Training Organisation (RTO), or enrol in a pre-accredited course delivered by a Learn Local provider.

At the enrolment stage, the training provider will ask the student for visa details to verify visa eligibility. The visa will be checked via the Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) system.

Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) System

Through the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs website (homeaffairs.gov.au), the [VEVO system](#) allows visa holders, education providers and other organisations to check visa details and conditions.

VEVO tells you details relating to your current in-effect visa, including:

- which visa (e.g., visa type and subclass).
- the 'expiry date'.
- the 'must not arrive' after date.
- the 'period of stay' (how long you can stay).
- the visa conditions (what you can and can't do).

VEVO is not able to provide any details relating to visas that are not 'in-effect'. For example, if you hold a Bridging visa but your substantive visa has not yet expired.

REPORTING

Information for Training Providers

Pursuant to the ASVET Program Guidelines, a training provider may exempt a student from the citizenship/permanent residence requirements for participation in education and training if:

- a. The student is referred to training via the ASRC or Australian Red Cross Victims of Human Trafficking Program and they present a 'Referral to Government-Subsidised Training – Asylum Seekers form; **or**
- b. The training provider is a TAFE Institute, an RTO or a Learn Local organisation offering *Skills First* accredited courses, and the training provider confirms that the student holds a valid visa via the VEVO system.

The training provider must sight and retain evidence of the student's entitlement to receive an exemption in accordance with the *Skills First Guidelines Abouts Eligibility* (more information [here](#)).

The training provider **MUST** grant a Fee Concession to a *Skills First* student enrolled under the ASVET Program.

Training Provider Reporting via the Skills Victoria Training System (SVTS)

The Training Provider must report training activity via the SVTS for a student granted an exemption with:

- a. The Eligibility Exemption Indicator in the NAT00120 file set to 'Y'; and
- b. One of the following Funding Source Identifiers – State Training Authority:
 - a. 'ASL' (Apprentice//Trainee); or
 - b. 'ASP' (General – non-Apprentice/Trainee).

The only exemption is where the student is also participating in another program or initiative for which a different Funding Source Identifier – State Training Authority must be reported. If this is the case, the Fee Exemption/Concession Type Identifier must be set to 'A' to attract the Fee Concession Contribution payable under this program.

Refer to [Skills Victoria Training System \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au)

USEFUL LINKS

- Asylum Seeker Resource Centre - [ASVET for people seeking asylum - Asylum Seeker Resource Centre \(asrc.org.au\)](https://www.asrc.org.au)
- Australian Government Department of Home Affairs - [Check visa details and conditions \(homeaffairs.gov.au\)](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au)
- Reconnect program - [Reconnect Program 2021-2024 | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au)
- Skills First - [Skills First | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au)
- Victorian Skills Gateway - [Victorian Skills Gateway](https://www.vic.gov.au)

CONTACT

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