Using electronic signatures

This fact sheet explains how the department expects you to electronically sign or obtain an electronic signature on a document, including common methods and some practical example scenarios.

You can use an electronic signature on all documents

We accept electronic signatures for all documents that need to be signed to meet a VET Funding Contract (the contract) requirement. This includes your own signature, signatures of your employees or signatures of third parties such as students.

For example:

- practical placement agreements
- the evidence of eligibility and student declaration form
- teacher endorsement of an attendance roll for evidence of participation.

The only exception is where there is another law or regulatory obligation you must comply with that says you can't use an electronic signature.

What method to use

We don't prescribe how you make the electronic signature or endorse specific electronic signature software products. You'll need to research and investigate what's available and decide what will work best for your business.

But any method you use must satisfy these 3 principles:

- **identity** – clearly identify the person who signs.
- **consent** – clearly indicate the person's agreement to the information.
- **reliability** – be 'as reliable as appropriate in light of all the circumstances' so we can rely on the signature at audit or review as showing the person's agreement.

We expect you to have a business process or rationale for choosing when to use an electronic signature. This applies to each situation where you collect signatures electronically.

You should use a method that is proportionate to the risk of what is being agreed to or endorsed.

In general, the higher the risk of an invalid or unenforceable signature, or potential security breach, the more robust your electronic method needs to be.

Common electronic methods

The table on the next page identifies common methods for obtaining electronic signatures. It includes a rating of how robust we think they are in meeting the requirements of the contract.

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Common electronic signature methods – from most to least robust

Method	Description	Application to contract
Graphical signature	Such as using an electronic pen or finger to make a signature directly onto an electronic device.	Using one of these methods is likely to be robust for most purposes.
Encrypted codes	When a unique code or encryption key is sent to a user and they must enter the code to sign the document by ticking a box or entering their name.	
Electronic signature software	Commercially available software that send a request for signature to a user's email address. The software requires the user to authenticate their identity using methods such as an access code, SMS authentication, phone authentication or identity checks against publicly available information. The programs also keep electronic records of the signatures and protect signed documents from unauthorised alteration.	
Tick box	Ticking a box in an online form.	**Higher risk**
Online form	Typing one's name in an online form.	A combination of these methods might be needed for a higher risk application. For example, a student signature on the evidence of eligibility and student declaration form.
Email from a verified address	Sending or receiving an email from an address that is verified to belong to that person. For example, an email from your employee from their password-protected company email address, or an email from a student from an address recorded in their student file as their primary contact.	**Lower risk**
Electronic workflow	Completing a step in an electronic workflow.	ng one of these methods may be sufficient for lower risk applications, or for actions occurring within a secure system, such as within an online platform that includes both **authentication** (secure login) and **authorisation** (restricts particular actions to authorised users).
A scanned ink-based signature	An ink-based signature that is scanned into an electronic format and cut and pasted into a document.	
Phone message	Phone conversation. Text message or another digital message.	Do not use these methods. They are not appropriate or sufficiently robust.

Example scenarios

Fully online enrolment process

Aliah wants to enrol with Essential College in a Diploma of Nursing. It uses a fully online enrolment process.

Online enrolment

Aliah completes an online form that includes an electronic version of the evidence of eligibility and student declaration form.

Through its 'back-end' administrative process, Essential College then uses Aliah's information to assess her eligibility and processes it through a workflow.

Obtaining the student's signature

Essential College opts to use a commercially available electronic signature product for getting Aliah's signature. This covers the requirements for identity, consent and reliability in one step and provides an electronic audit trail.

Essential College chose this safe and robust option because checking eligibility is a fundamental requirement of Skills First and involves making decisions about large amounts of taxpayer funds.

Obtaining Essential College's signature

Essential College's signature was obtained when an authorised delegate completed a step within a workflow. It has a clear business process in place that prevents anyone without the required authorisation from completing this step in the workflow.

It can demonstrate that its delegate's 'sign-off' can only be achieved by them logging-in to its system with a unique ID and password **(identity).**

Only specific people are authorised within the system to review and approve student information and decide student eligibility **(consent** and **reliability)**.

Electronic endorsement of an attendance roll

Billy is undertaking a Certificate IV in Music at Cadence College. It uses a classroom-based delivery model. To improve efficiency they use an online administration system to collect information about student attendance.

Cadence College uses this information as evidence of participation.

Obtaining the teacher's signature

To record student attendance, the teacher logged-in to a secure administrative platform using their unique ID and password **(identity)**.

Cadence College has a business process in place that shows this is a recognised method for collecting student attendance information. It makes sure the minimum information needed for evidence of participation is recorded in the one place (the student's name or student ID, the subject identifier and the date) and that any clustered delivery information is provided.

The teacher recorded Billy's attendance by completing a 'tick box' process to confirm he attended the class. The teacher then endorsed the information **(consent** and **reliability)**.

Further information

- Submit an enquiry via SVTS
- Fact sheet: Sighting and retaining evidence of eligibility
- Fact sheet: Recordkeeping requirements

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