



Higher education relief package - Frequently Asked Questions

On 12 April 2020, the Hon Dan Tehan MP, the Minister for Education and Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business, announced the Higher Education Relief Package.

The package will support workers displaced by the COVID-19 crisis to upskill or retrain, and support universities and other higher education providers to continue teaching.

This page covers frequently asked questions about the package:

- Funding guarantee
- Deferral of HELP recoveries
- Short online courses
- Loan fee exemption
- Regulatory fee relief
- Changes in cost recovery arrangements

Funding Guarantee

The Government has guaranteed Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS (Commonwealth Grant Scheme)) payments for all higher education institutions in 2020.

While institutions continue to teach students, CGS (Commonwealth Grant Scheme) payments will be paid throughout 2020, regardless of any change in enrolments due to COVID-19.

This measure requires an amendment to the Other Grants Guidelines.

Will this guarantee affect my enrolment?

The Government wants students to stay enrolled and engaged in their studies. The guarantee gives higher education providers the certainty they need to continue to deliver quality education to students this year.

How do institutions apply for this funding?

Institutions do not need to apply for the CGS (Commonwealth Grant Scheme) guarantee. Instalments will continue to be paid throughout 2020.

Will university staff be eligible for JobKeeper payments?

The funding guarantee does not remove eligibility for JobKeeper payments and is designed to be complementary so universities will be able to benefit from one or the other.

How does this apply to private higher education providers?

The funding guarantee applies to all providers currently getting CGS (Commonwealth Grant Scheme) funding, including non-university higher education providers currently allocated Commonwealth supported places (CSPs) – that is a place at a university or higher education provider where the Government pays part of a student's fees.

Private higher education providers will be supported through access to the JobKeeper arrangements.

Deferral of HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) recoveries

The Government will also guarantee 2020 HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) advance payments to higher education providers based on the estimates provided late in 2019.

With enrolments expected to fall due to COVID-19, the repayment of any excess advances can be deferred over the period 2022 to 2029.

This complements the Government's CGS (Commonwealth Grant Scheme) funding guarantee, giving providers certainty about their teaching and learning resourcing for 2020.

Do providers need to do anything?

All providers currently getting [HELP \(Higher Education Loan Program\)](#) advances will automatically enter these arrangements.

What if my actual enrolments are higher than my advances?

As per existing arrangements, providers can contact the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to seek a variation.

Will providers also be able to access JobKeeper payments?

Yes, as long as they meet the eligibility criteria for those payments. More information on JobKeeper is available [here \[https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/JobKeeper_frequently_asked_questions_1.pdf\]](https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/JobKeeper_frequently_asked_questions_1.pdf).

The maintenance of [HELP \(Higher Education Loan Program\)](#) advances, together with the [CGS \(Commonwealth Grant Scheme\)](#) guarantee will help universities remain viable and make sure they can continue to employ their staff.

Short online courses at higher education levels

To support workers displaced by the COVID-19 crisis, the cost to study short online courses at universities and non-university higher education providers will be significantly discounted.

The Government has asked providers to develop short, focused, online courses that can be offered for six months from 1 May.

Students who complete a short course will be awarded a higher education certificate, with courses to focus on identified national priorities such as teaching, health, science and information technology.

Providers will have the flexibility to design and deliver these courses to help support local industry and increase employment opportunities.

The Government will work with universities to give them flexibility to adjust between bachelor places and sub-bachelor and postgraduate places, pending legislative reform to lock in a more flexible model.

The Government will also fund 1000 students to study for six months at non-university higher education providers.

Study can take place at Australian Qualification Level (AQF) level 5 (Diploma) to 9 (Masters Degree), but must only be offered online to support students in isolation.

The maximum student fees for the first six months of these courses have been set at significantly discounted rates for students starting their higher education certificates, and they will still be able to defer payment through [HECS \(Higher Education Contribution Scheme\)](#)-[HELP \(Higher Education Loan Program\)](#).

Discounted student courses fee for first six months

Field of education	Fee	CGS (Commonwealth Grant Scheme) subsidy
Teaching	\$1250	\$5,630
Nursing	\$1250	\$7,429
Psychology	\$1250	\$6,654
English	\$1250	\$3,058
Mathematics	\$1250	\$5,411
Foreign Languages	\$1250	\$6,654
Agriculture	\$1250	\$12,007
Allied Health	\$2500	\$6,654
Other Health	\$2500	\$5,411
Information Technology	\$2500	\$5,411
Architecture and Building	\$2500	\$5,411
Science	\$2500	\$9,460
Engineering	\$2500	\$9,460
Medical science	\$2500	\$12,007
Environmental studies	\$2500	\$12,007

I'm considering enrolling for a short online course. Where can I get information about what courses are available and how to enrol?

Visit www.courseseeker.edu.au [<http://www.courseseeker.edu.au>] or contact higher education providers direct for information about course options, how to enrol, and prerequisite requirements.

Some providers already offer short online courses. The Government however is asking all providers to quickly develop short, online courses that can be offered from 1 May 2020 for six months.

Will these higher education certificates be accredited qualifications?

Study undertaken as part of a Higher Education Certificate must contribute to a qualification recognised under the AQF, meaning students are already part of the way through completing a higher education qualification when they receive their Higher Education Certificate.

By giving a student a higher education certificate when they complete their six months of study, providers will be giving individuals a tangible benefit from their study.

I'm currently at university studying a teaching degree. Am I able to pay this discounted rate for my teaching units?

This policy was introduced to support workers affected by the economic impact of COVID-19 crisis, and who are looking to upskill or retrain.

Discounted student fees will only be available to students starting a higher education certificate.

Only courses starting after 1 May 2020 will be eligible for Commonwealth supported places. Up to four units will be supported, provided delivery is completed before 1 December 2020.

What's the difference between a higher education certificate and a Cert III from TAFE (Technical and Further Education)?

A higher education certificate is a short course of up to four units that must be, or contribute to, a higher education award at the AQF 5-9 level.

A certificate III from a TAFE (Technical and Further Education) is a vocational education and training (VET (Vocational Education and Training)) qualification at the AQF 3 level. VET (Vocational Education and Training) courses are accredited by one of the VET (Vocational Education and Training) regulators and are subsidised based on state or territory policies.

If I start a Masters Degree under this policy, completing the first four units, will I be guaranteed a place to finish this Masters Degree?

Yes. You will still need to meet the course progression requirements set by your provider, as you will be enrolling in a Masters Degree, but you will be able to finish this degree as a Commonwealth supported student. This applies to any higher education award (Diploma, Advanced Diploma, etc.).

If your study continues beyond 2020, your student contribution rate will revert to the standard rate.

Can I complete a Graduate Certificate at these discounted rates?

Yes, as long as your provider has a graduate certificate that takes six months to complete.

Can the Government provide CGS (Commonwealth Grant Scheme) subsidies for 'higher education certificates'?

The certificates will be part of a qualification in the higher education sector at the Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Bachelor Degree or Masters Degree level.

Why have the student contribution amounts been discounted?

Discounted student fees reflect the financial hardship faced by students who are affected by the economic impact of COVID-19 crisis, and who are looking to upskill or retrain.

How will the pool of 1000 places be distributed to non-university higher education providers (NUHEPs)?

NUHEPs, including those that do not currently receive CGS (Commonwealth Grant Scheme) funding, will be able to apply for an allocation of Commonwealth supported places through a competitive bidding process.

The department will announce details of the allocation process shortly, including NUHEP eligibility, the process and timing for submitting an application, selection factors, and timing of awarded places notification.

How will the added flexibility of a funding envelope for universities work?

The department will negotiate new CGS (Commonwealth Grant Scheme) funding agreements with universities for 2020 that specify an overall funding amount, within which a designated MBGA will be set out. The overall funding amount is equal to the sum of a university's current 2020 designated MBGA and non-designated MBGA. For example, if a university underenrols in designated places (postgraduate and sub-bachelor), they can use this funding for non-designated (bachelor) places, up to the overall funding cap.

If a university believes its designated MBGA should be increased to provide additional places to deliver short online courses, the university should contact the department by email on cgs@dese.gov.au.

What will people who want to study have to do? Will the entire course be provided online?

People who want to study short online courses should contact their higher education provider for more information on course pre-requisites. Courses must be delivered online to ensure social distancing rules are observed.

If a person's study continues beyond 2020, their student contribution rate will revert to the standard rate.

Loan fee exemption

Under current arrangements, higher education students and vocational education and training students who access FEE-HELP or VET (Vocational Education and Training) Student Loans (VSL) to defer their tuition fees are subject to a loan fee of 25 per cent and 20 per cent respectively. In contrast, students accessing HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme)-HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) at a public university and VET (Vocational Education and Training) students subsidized by their state or territory do not incur a loan fee.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government is helping these students to continue their study or engage in new study during this time by providing a six-month exemption from loan fees.

This measure is subject to the passage of legislation.

Do students need to apply for the exemption?

The loan fee exemption will be automatically applied when your loan is submitted by your provider to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment – subject to the passage of legislation. Loans undertaken between 1 April 2020 and when there is a change in legislation will be adjusted accordingly.

Who will this help?

The loan fee exemption will help undergraduate students who are accessing FEE-HELP, and VSL students over the period from 1 April to 30 September 2020. It will also help full fee-paying undergraduate students enrolled at a public university or a non-university higher education provider.

Do providers need to apply for the exemption for their students?

Institutions do not need to apply for the loan fee exemption. It will be applied automatically when providers report their student loan data to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment – subject to the passage of legislation.

Regulatory fee relief for education and training providers

To be able to offer education and training to domestic students, Australia's education providers pay registration fees to ASQA, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (training providers), or TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency), the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (higher education providers).

Education providers that wish to offer training to international students must also be registered on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions for Overseas Students (CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students)), which is maintained by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

To reduce the regulatory and cost burden on Australia's education and training providers at this time, the Government will waive the majority of fees and charges currently charged by these agencies, returning almost \$72 million to the sector.

Payment of Tuition Protection Service levies by CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) registered providers will also be deferred to a later time.

Who is eligible to receive a refund of the DESE CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) Annual Registration Charge and/or Entry to Market Charge?

CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students)-registered education providers that paid an Annual Registration Charge in 2020, or an Entry to Market Charge invoiced and paid from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2020, will be eligible for a refund.

How will registered providers receive a refund of the DESE CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) Annual Registration Charge and/or Entry to Market Charge?

The department will contact all eligible CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) providers through their registered Principal Executive Officer (PEO) before 30 April 2020 with advice on receiving the refund.

CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) providers should check their PEO details are up to date on cricos.education.gov.au [<http://cricos.education.gov.au>]. Please contact your regulator to update PEO details.

How much will the refund be?

The department will advise PEOs on the amount to be refunded. Amounts will be equal to the amount paid for the Annual Registration Charge in 2020 or the Entry to Market Charge invoiced and paid from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2020.

When will I receive the refund?

The department will be in touch to advise PEOs on the timing of refunds.

Will CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) providers have to pay an Annual Registration Charge and/or an Entry to Market Charge in 2021?

No, all CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) registered providers will be exempt from the 2021 Annual Registration Charge collection and exempt from Entry to Market Charge payments due from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Which TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency) fees will be refunded?

Any fees paid by a higher education provider from 1 January 2020 to TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency) will be refunded.

How will registered providers receive a refund of the TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency) charges?

TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency) will contact providers that have paid fees in 2020 to arrange a refund.

How will TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency) re-registration or course reaccreditation applications due between now and 30 June 2021 be deferred?

TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency) will contact providers that have provider re-registrations and course re-accreditation applications due during this period and work with them to determine the arrangements for the deferral.

Can a provider bring forward their registration or course accreditation assessment to take advantage of the fee waiver?

Only providers that have provider re-registration or course reaccreditation applications due during the waiver period will be eligible for possible deferral or a fee waiver.

How do ASQA-registered providers apply for a waiver of fees and charges due between now and 30 June 2021?

ASQA will contact providers with advice on the fee waiver arrangements as soon as possible. Information will also be made available on the ASQA website.

Which ASQA fees will be refunded?

Fees and charges for providers currently registered with ASQA, issued or due to be issued from 1 January 2020 through to 30 June 2021 will be waived.

ASQA will reimburse organisations that have already paid these fees.

Fees related to initial registration as a new RTO (Registered Training Organisation), initial registration as a new CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) provider and initial accreditation of new VET (Vocational Education and Training) courses are excluded from this relief waiver. Invoices already issued for these services require payment in full, and payment of fees for these services will continue to be applied. Further details will be provided on the ASQA website.

What does the deferral of Tuition Protection Service levies mean for CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) registered providers?

In recognition of the current challenges facing Australia's international education sector, the Tuition Protection Service is deferring its collection of levies for the international education sector, scheduled for collection in May and June 2020, to a later time. The Tuition Protection Service will continue to work with the sector and assess the impact of the COVID-19 situation over the coming months, to determine the appropriate timing for the 2020 levy collection. The Tuition Protection Service Director has written to all CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) providers regarding the levy collection deferral, and will continue working with providers and students to support ongoing access to high quality education.

CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) providers are reminded that they must submit their income declaration, if they have not already done so. The TPS has extended the deadline for this submission to 30 June 2020 – no further extensions will be considered.

The Tuition Protection Service is an initiative of the Australian Government to assist and support international students, and domestic students accessing a VET (Vocational Education and Training) Student Loan, HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme)-HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) or FEE-HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) loan, in the event that their education provider is unable to fully deliver their course of study. The Tuition Protection Service provides a single service for international students studying at around 1200 providers, and domestic Commonwealth loans student studying at around 250 providers, and is primarily funded through levies from its serviced sectors.

For further information about the Tuition Protection Service, visit the **TPS** [<https://tps.gov.au/Home>] website.

What other regulatory relief is the Government providing?

The Government is taking a flexible regulatory approach to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on staff, students and operations – helping providers to maintain quality of education delivery and outcomes. This includes:

- allowing compassionate and compelling circumstances provisions to be applied to student enrolment deferrals or suspensions
- minimising and deferring requests for information and notifications
- extending timeframes for regulatory obligations and supporting continued training delivery and assessment through adaptive measures where possible.

Regulators are also supporting providers transitioning to online course delivery in Australia or offshore by offering advice, guidance and access to materials.

Changes to cost recovery arrangements

Why is the Government changing cost recovery arrangements for TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency), ASQA, HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) and CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students)?

The Government is reducing administrative pressure on the tertiary education sector during a time of unprecedented impact from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Why will TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency), ASQA, HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) and CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions Courses for Overseas Students) cost recovery changes only be deferred by 12 months?

Delaying these changes by 12 months will ensure tertiary education providers are not further affected financially as they face the revenue impacts caused by the pandemic.

When will providers be consulted about future increased cost recovery arrangements?

ASQA has already consulted providers about proposed increases to its charges. TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency) will consult stakeholders about changes to its fees and charges toward the end of 2020.

In this section

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

- Schools and students
- Early childhood education and care providers and services
- Higher education providers

- Higher education relief package - Frequently asked questions
 - Vocational education and training (VET) providers
 - Job seekers
 - Employment service providers
 - Employers
 - International students

Last modified on Thursday, 16 April 2020 - 6:05pm [120|857]