



Free TAFE

This fact sheet explains student entitlement to Skills First Free TAFE programs.

Student entitlement

Any student eligible for Skills First can get a tuition fee waiver for a Free TAFE program at a TAFE or dual sector university.

Attachment 1 shows examples of student eligibility for Free TAFE.

2 types of Free TAFE fee waivers

Students can get fee waivers for Free TAFE priority courses and Free TAFE short courses.

Free TAFE priority courses

Free TAFE priority courses are Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications on the Free TAFE for Priority Courses list.

There is a **one in a lifetime limit** for Free TAFE priority courses. But there are exceptions.

Free TAFE short courses

Free TAFE short courses are high priority skill sets. They don't count towards the one in a lifetime limit on fee waivers for Free TAFE priority courses. Students can do multiple Free TAFE short courses and receive fee waivers.

But they are treated as skill sets for the '2 at a time' and '2 in a year' training limits under Skills First. The only exception is the limits don't apply to:

- Course in Identifying and Responding to Family Violence Risk
- the Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Support program
- Plumbing Licence Skill Sets

One in a lifetime limit

The general rule is that a student can only get a fee waiver for one Free TAFE priority course in their lifetime. But there are exceptions.

Exceptions to the one in a lifetime limit

JobTrainer

A student's fee waiver for a Free TAFE priority course under the JobTrainer initiative doesn't count toward their one in a lifetime limit.

Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

Students who have completed any Free TAFE program can get an additional Free TAFE fee waiver to do the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE).

This is to encourage industry-qualified people to consider a career in VET training.

It doesn't matter if they:

- completed the earlier program as Free TAFE, Skills First or fee-for-service.
- already received fee waivers under Free TAFE, JobTrainer or Free TAFE pathways.

The additional fee waiver only applies if the student's first Free TAFE fee waiver was not used for the TAE. They must do their vocational program first, then they can get an additional Free TAFE fee waiver for the TAE.



Free TAFE priority pathways

Students can get additional fee waivers to do more than one Free TAFE priority course within specified occupational pathways. This supports students to get the skills they need and to address key workforce shortages.

You can find out what Free TAFE priority courses are in pathway programs on the funded programs report or on the [Free TAFE website](#).

Pre-training review for pathways

Even though a student may be entitled to do multiple programs in a pathway, you must determine that each program is suitable and appropriate as part of a pre-training review.

The rules for pathways

- A student must complete each pathway program before they can get another fee waiver.
- You can rely on the information in the pre-training review and evidence of eligibility and student declaration form as evidence that a student has completed a program.
- A student can't get more than one fee waiver for a pathway program at a time, even if they're within the '2 at a time' volume limit.
- A student who holds a completed pathway program can get another fee waiver if they do additional subjects that make up a stream. For example, a student completes the Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing), then re-enrols in it to do the disability specialisation.
- A student doesn't have to complete pathway programs in a set order. For example, they could do a diploma, then a certificate IV. This is subject to training package rules, including prerequisites.
- In the case of the Information Technology pathway only, we require that a student must hold a Certificate III in Information Technology to get a fee waiver for the Certificate IV in Cyber Security. But this doesn't apply if they're recommencing training in the Certificate IV that they started before 1 January 2025.
- It doesn't matter how a student completes a pathway program – whether it's Free TAFE, Skills First or fee-for-service – they can get a fee waiver for another pathway program.
- A student who has used their Free TAFE entitlement for a non-pathway program could still get a fee waiver for a pathway program. To do this, they need to first complete a pathway program – either as Skills First or fee-for-service. Then they can get a fee waiver for another program in that pathway.
- It doesn't matter how old a student's completed pathway program is, as long as a current or previous version of it is on training.gov.au.
- The Auslan pathway is open to any student, even if they've already accessed Free TAFE for a non-pathway program.

Students restarting Free TAFE

If a student doesn't complete their Free TAFE priority course, they can restart it (or the superseding version of it) and continue to receive their fee waiver. This applies even if they continue at a different TAFE or dual sector university.

Students who withdraw early from a Free TAFE program

You can choose to reinstate a Free TAFE entitlement if a student withdraws very early and wants to enrol in a different Free TAFE program with you. You must have a documented policy and process for how you will apply this, and you must reverse any claims for payment.

If a student withdrew early at another TAFE and wants to re-enrol with you, check with that TAFE or us via SVTS to confirm if their entitlement can be reinstated.

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Attachment 1 - example scenarios

Example 1 – Nigel wants to do the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work

Nigel completed the Certificate IV in Community Services in 2022 under Free TAFE and wants to do the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work.	Nigel can commence the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work with a Free TAFE fee waiver as it is a program in the community services pathway, and he has completed a program in this pathway. Nigel can continue to do further programs in the pathway and get a fee waiver, provided he completes each one.
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Example 2 – Oliver wants to pursue a career in agriculture

Oliver completed the Certificate II in Agriculture fee-for-service in 2017. He then completed Certificates II and III in Horticulture in 2022 under Free TAFE and JobTrainer. Oliver wants to do the Certificate IV in Agriculture.	Even though Oliver already received fee waivers for 2 Free TAFE programs, because he completed a program in the agriculture pathway, he can now start another program in that pathway and get an additional fee waiver.
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Example 3 – Lara wants to teach in the ageing support sector

Lara has worked in this sector for many years. She completed the Certificate IV in Ageing Support as fee-for-service in 2016. She wants to do her Certificate IV in Training and Assessment so that she can teach in the sector. She started, but didn't complete, the Certificate IV in Work Health and Safety under Free TAFE in 2023.	Lara can commence the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) and receive another Free TAFE fee waiver. Because Lara received a Free TAFE fee waiver in 2023 for a program she didn't complete, she wouldn't normally be entitled to another fee waiver. But, as she previously completed the Certificate IV in Ageing Support, which is a Free TAFE program she can now receive an additional fee waiver for the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.
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Example 4 – Karen wants to do the Certificate IV in Accounting and Bookkeeping

Karen completed the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing in 2022 under Free TAFE. Karen has not completed any other study.	Karen is not eligible for a Free TAFE fee waiver because she received a fee waiver for the Certificate IV in Veterinary Nursing, which isn't part of the accounting and bookkeeping pathway. Karen could do the Certificate IV in Accounting and Bookkeeping under Skills First or fee-for-service. Once completed, she could do the Diploma of Accounting with a fee waiver, as it's in the accounting pathway.
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Example 5 – Soren wants to do the Certificate IV in Ageing Support

Soren wants to do the Certificate IV in Ageing Support and then eventually the Diploma of Nursing. They used their Free TAFE fee waiver entitlement in 2022 for the Certificate III in Individual Support but did not complete it.	Soren is not eligible for a Free TAFE fee waiver because they didn't complete the Certificate III in Individual Support. Soren can either: - complete the Certificate IV in Ageing Support subsidised under Skills First or fee-for-service. After that, they can do the Diploma of Nursing with a fee waiver because it's in the same pathway. - complete the Certificate III in Individual Support under their original Free TAFE enrolment, then get a fee waiver to do the Certificate IV in Ageing support as it is another program in the nursing and personal care pathway.
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