

Skills Assure Supplier framework

Frequently asked questions

GENERAL

What is the Skills Assure Supplier framework?

This is Queensland's framework for contracting and quality-assuring registered training organisations (RTOs) that deliver subsidised training, known as Skills Assure Suppliers (SAS). It gives students, parents and employers confidence that their funded training providers can deliver high-quality, industry-standard training that best meets learner needs and supports employment opportunities.

Why do we need a new Skills Assure Supplier framework?

A new SAS framework is being developed to ensure Queensland grows the priority skills it needs and maximises outcomes from government's investment in training.

A key initial action of the *Good Jobs, Great Training: Queensland Skills Strategy 2024–2028*, released in May 2024, the new SAS framework is helping to shape the modern, responsive and accessible training system needed to achieve national and state priorities into the future.

The new framework responds to what was heard during consultation informing the skills strategy – sharpening focus on funding the right skills, where they are needed, while maximising outcomes for students in particular. Key drivers for change include calls for more local delivery and targeted support for diverse and disadvantaged learners, greater links to industry and employers, a funding model and information about training pathways that is easier to understand, more evidence-informed investment decisions, and a greater transparency and accountability regarding the quality of funded training and programs, and the outcomes they deliver.

Reform of the SAS framework is also needed to introduce new contracting and performance arrangements supporting short and long-term priorities, including critical skills delivery aligned to Queensland's economic priorities such as the growing health workforce, construction, agriculture, manufacturing, digital and technology to name just a few.

Queensland benefits from its healthy mix of training providers – and we are committed to maintaining a network of quality SAS to deliver outcomes for students and for Queensland's economy.

What is the new framework?

The Queensland Skills Strategy recognises that all types of RTOs (public, private, not-for-profit, group training organisations, and dual-sector universities) contribute to Queensland's solid and vibrant VET sector and is committed to maintaining a network of quality SAS providers to provide funded training when and where it is needed.

To deliver on the Queensland Skills Strategy principles and actions, key elements of the new SAS framework include:

- a managed approach to guide investment to the right training where it is needed including ensuring statewide regional coverage and equitable access for Queenslanders



- one simplified funded course list ([proposed Queensland Subsidised Training List 2025-26](#))
- consideration of delivery locations based on regions, Remoteness Areas and local government areas (LGAs)
- application via an open and transparent two-stage Expression of Interest (EOI) process
- quality training provision supported by merit-based selection of SAS providers
- increased data and evidence-based inputs to inform decision making (e.g. expanded industry advice, supply and demand analysis, regional and local intelligence)
- strong employer/industry and community connections for training relevancy and currency
- enhanced quality requirements including training required in inclusive practices and cultural awareness to support diverse student cohorts and contracting directly with RTOs who will deliver the training
- a revised SAS Agreement with longer term period where appropriate, to ensure continuity of student enrolments and support provider commitment to high-quality training (trainers, teaching materials and resources), incorporating the above key elements of the new SAS Framework.

The above elements are collectively referred to as the **new SAS Framework** throughout this document.

The implementation of new funded training arrangements will enable a stronger focus on student outcomes and quality training in priority qualifications aligned with current and projected workforce needs, as well as provide increased access to locally-delivered and relevant training in regional, rural and remote communities.

When will things change?

The delivery of funded training under the new SAS framework for the Career Start and Career Boost programs will commence from 1 July 2025, with VET in Schools (VETiS) delivery under the Career Ready program from the start of the 2026 school year.

Contracting for SAS Agreements has been extended to 30 June 2025, with VETiS arrangements to be extended to the end of the 2025 school year.

What is staying the same?

We will continue to fund training that is aligned to priorities and based on industry advice, with dedicated Contract Managers for SAS providers and quality assurance monitoring activity.

We are focused on quality and job outcomes, so it will continue to be important for providers to maintain currency and have strong links to industry and employers.

For more information about the development of the new SAS framework, visit www.desbt.qld.gov.au/sas-framework.

What will be different?

Our subsidies are changing to better meet customer needs. There will be three subsidy programs aligned to career stages – Career Ready (for school students), Career Start (for job seekers) and Career Boost (career advancement) – making it easier for Queenslanders to understand and navigate their subsidised vocational education and training (VET) options and pathways.

The three new programs will replace Certificate 3 Guarantee, User Choice, Higher Level Skills and VET in Schools programs. Former programs will be grandfathered, meaning continuing students will be able to complete their funded course with the same provider and will not be disadvantaged by changes.

Government investment will be actively targeted, with evidence and data informing what qualifications will be delivered by what providers and where. Key considerations include current and projected skills needs, supply and demand, provider performance and job outcomes, and regional coverage.

TAFE public providers are expected to lead the way on our priorities, supported by a network of quality SAS.

We are opening up, inviting all eligible RTOs to express their interest in working with the department to achieve the objectives for publicly funded training in Queensland.

There will be a new expression of interest (EOI) process open to all eligible RTOs, including current SAS and those that are not currently SAS. All RTOs must apply to deliver under the new SAS framework, including public providers and current SAS.

SAS will have single contracts (no more multiple agreements for different subsidised training programs) and longer term agreements as standard and appropriate, providing greater year-to-year continuity for students and providers.

Queensland will work towards a single funded course list (no more multiple lists), which will identify what courses are delivered as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Funded training must be delivered by SAS, with third-party delivery by exception and limited changes of control.

There will be enhanced focus on quality training that delivers results. SAS must meet new standards for delivery to improve equity, access and outcomes for students, including those in regional Queensland, with added reporting requirements and more outcomes-focused performance monitoring by the department.

NEW EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) PROCESS

What is the new expression of interest (EOI) process?

There will be a new expression of interest (EOI) process open to all eligible RTOs, including current SAS and those that are not currently SAS. All RTOs must apply to deliver under the new SAS framework, including public providers.

A new two-stage EOI process is now open for all eligible RTOs that want to apply to deliver on our training priorities through the new Career Start and Career Boost subsidy programs. These programs will come into effect from 1 July 2025.

Contracting under the new Career Ready VET in Schools program will be through a separate EOI process later in the year 2024, with delivery through this program commencing 1 January 2026 (with the start of a new school year).

Applications for the Career Start and Career Boost programs will be through a two-stage EOI process:

- Stage 1: mandatory eligibility
- Stage 2: formal assessment against criteria.

Applicants must meet the requirements of the Mandatory Eligibility Criteria at the EOI Stage 1 in order to progress to the EOI Stage 2.

Assessments for the EOI Stage 2 applications will be undertaken by an independent panel.

Applicants will be notified of outcomes in writing after each stages, and will be advised of the appeals process and information on next steps.

Learn more online at www.desbt.qld.gov.au/sas-framework about the new SAS framework and EOI process.

Who can submit an EOI Stage 1 application?

The SAS EOI Stage 1 is open to RTOs approved by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) or the jurisdictional equivalent to deliver and assess training in Queensland including current SAS providers.

All RTOs will need to apply through this EOI Stage 1 to be considered for a SAS Agreement for delivery of Career Start and/or Career Boost under the new SAS framework from 1 July 2025. This is because the new SAS Framework (including application and assessment process) and new core VET programs are changing from 1 July 2025 in accordance with the principles and objectives of the new Queensland Skills Strategy.

Contracting for delivery under a new Career Ready VET in Schools program will start later in 2024, for delivery commencing at the start of the 2026 school year.

Who is ineligible to apply?

The following RTOs are ineligible to apply:

- RTOs not approved to deliver training in Queensland
- RTOs with only Units of Competency on registration scope (i.e. no qualifications)
- RTOs with a registration of RTO Type – School.

When can I submit an application for the EOI Stage 1?

The EOI Stage 1 round will open to accept applications from 30 September 2024. Applications will close 5.00pm AEST (Queensland time) on Friday 8 November 2024.

Can I submit an application after the EOI Stage 1 closing date?

Late applications will not be accepted. RTOs must submit their applications through Partner Portal at www.desbt.qld.gov.au/training/providers/partnerportal by 5.00pm AEST (Queensland time) Friday 8 November 2024.

If the RTO does not submit an EOI Stage 1 application by the closing date and time, they will not be considered and assessed for a SAS Agreement from 1 July 2025.

What is the application process?

At this first stage, the RTO is required to submit an online application through Partner Portal to confirm they meet the [EOI Stage 1 Guidelines](#).

This stage will allow the Department to determine if the RTO meets the Stage 1 Mandatory Eligibility Criteria for the new SAS Framework. If the RTO meets the Stage 1 Mandatory Eligibility Criteria, they will be invited to prepare a more detailed response at Stage 2.

RTOs who have been invited to progress to Stage 2 will be provided with next steps information in their outcomes advice in writing after EOI Stage 1.

Stage 2 involves formal assessment against pre-determined criteria. Information about what will be assessed will be provided to RTOs that process to Stage 2, with information also published online.

What are the mandatory eligibility criteria?

To be eligible, RTOs must:

- hold current registration with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (or ASQA) or the relevant jurisdictional regulator, and have done so for at least the last 2 years
- have relevant scope of registration with ASQA and/or relevant jurisdictional regulator for the qualifications they would like to deliver. These qualifications will be listed in the online form and will be the basis of the [proposed Queensland Subsidised Training List 2025-26](#)
- have 12 months delivery history in the full qualification or industry area they are applying for
- have sufficient delivery history to Queensland students
- have a place of business in Queensland
- have RTO compliance history
- produce an ASIC current and historical extract dated within the last 30 days, and;
- provide employer referees (these cannot be schools or labour hire companies).

For more on these requirements, refer to the [EOI Stage 1 Guidelines](#).

Will there be exemptions to the mandatory eligibility criteria relating to physical place of business in Queensland? (8/10/2024)

The department has received a number of questions regarding whether exemptions will be provided for any mandatory requirements (such as the requirement to have a physical place of business in Queensland).

Section 8 (Assessment Process) of the *New Skills Assure Supplier Framework Expression of Interest – Stage 1 Guidelines* identifies that “*The assessment process will also include confirmation of training priorities and delivery locations by independent industry and regional stakeholders, and consideration of student cohorts and small and niche industries*”. In addition, Schedule B (Terms and Conditions) reserves the Department’s right to “*consider a EOI STAGE 1 response submitted other than in accordance with the requirements of this EOI STAGE 1 document*”. In accordance with these, the Department may exercise its right to accept a response that does not conform with all of the requirements (i.e. grant an exemption) where it is considered necessary to ensure adequate training supply in regional, rural and remote locations or for niche industry areas. The decision of whether an exemption will be granted will be made during the assessment process depending on whether there are sufficient conforming offers to adequately meet the requirements, as such the Department is unable to provide any prior indication as to whether an exception will be granted. This decision will be undertaken in accordance with the probity requirements.

EOI Stage 1 – what should I do first?

If you don't have a Partner Portal account, you will need to apply for one to gain access to the portal's Purchasing Online (POL) application. The POL app is where EOIs will be submitted. Steps can be found in the '[How to submit – using Partner Portal](#)' section below.

If you already have an account, you might just want to check the right people in your organisation are authorised to act on the organisation's behalf. Learn more about [setting up authorisations](#) through the Relationship Authorisation Manager (RAM) system.

You might also like to start by gathering information required for stage 1, such as:

- NAT files for submission of AVETMISS data
- employer referee details for each industry training group, including ABNs and contact details.

Queensland Subsidised Training List

Where do I see the list of subsidised qualifications that I can register my interest to deliver in Queensland?

The list of the Priority qualifications for this EOI process can be found in the POL application form. The [proposed Queensland Subsidised Training List 2025-26](#) will also be added online. This is an initial list of qualifications that may be subsidised under Career Start and Career Boost. The final list of qualifications will be informed by the 2025-26 Training Priorities Plan, which will consider new and emerging industry priorities.

What if the system is not showing qualifications I would like to apply for? (8/10/2024)

If a specific qualification is not autogenerated for you in the response form, it is likely that:

- this qualification has not been identified as a priority by the department
- this qualification does not appear on your scope of registration with ASQA
- your scope of registration does not include Queensland as a delivery location for this qualification.

If you believe an error has been made, please email SAS.EOI@desbt.qld.gov.au.

What if the proposed Queensland Subsidised Training List 2025-26 does not contain a qualification that I have on my scope of registration? How do I get my qualification/s added to this list? (8/10/2024)

The annual Training Priorities Plan outlines how the Queensland Government targets investment in qualifications to deliver high-quality job outcomes - drawing on data, analysis and industry advice. The [Queensland Subsidised Training List](#) is informed by and supports the objectives identified in the Training Priorities Plan. The list is dynamic and will change as industry identifies new and emerging training needs that require the addition of new qualifications or the phasing out of training that is no longer required or deemed a priority as industry workforce needs evolve.

RTOs are not able to request the addition of qualifications to the Queensland Training Subsidies List.

Employer referees

The application guidelines state that a minimum of three referees are required for each qualification/ITG. I'm trying to work out how many referees I need. What are the different ITGs? (8/10/2024)

The ITGs are listed on the proposed [Queensland Subsidised Training List](#). On this list, you will see that there can be multiple ITGs in a specific industry area, for example:

- Primary Industry – Agriculture
- Primary Industry – Forestry
- Primary Industry – General
- Primary Industry – Horticulture
- Primary Industry – Land Management.

If you were applying to deliver a qualification in each of these 5 ITGs, you would need to submit a minimum of 15 employer referees (3 from each ITG). If you were applying to deliver 4 qualifications from the Agriculture ITG and 2 qualifications in Horticulture, you would need to submit a minimum of 3 referees for each ITG (minimum of 6 in total). **Please note that schools will not be accepted as an employer referee.**

What evidence do I need to provide relating to employer referees? (8/10/2024)


Section 9 of the Application Guidelines details the required documents and information to be submitted through Partner Portal for the EOI Stage 1. You must provide contact details for three Queensland based employer referees for each qualification/ITG area relevant to your Evidence of Training Activity data attached and EOI Stage 1 Response. As referenced in Schedule A of the Application Guidelines, referee contacts must be independent from the RTO, be aware and available for the Department to contact them and have engaged the RTO's services or employed participants who completed training with the RTO in Queensland. Additionally, the "How to use the POL application to submit a EOI Stage 1 response" provides details of how to create employer referee contacts electronically as part of your EOI Stage 1 Response.

My students are self-employed. Can I include them as employer referees? (8/10/2024)

RTOs must provide a minimum of three employers per qualification/ITG. Employer referees must be Queensland based, and have engaged the RTO's services for training delivery and/or employed participants who completed training with the RTO.

I am interested in applying for an education related qualification that leads to employment in schools. Can I provide schools as my referees? (8/10/2024)

The department has discretion to accept schools as referees in limited circumstances. Where schools are provided as employer referees for education related qualifications (e.g., Certificate III in School Based Education Support), they must be able to comment on training delivered to employees or graduates of the RTO employed by the school in a position relevant to the education related qualification. In all circumstances, RTO applicants must provide the minimum number of referees for



each qualification or ITG requested, and supply all Queensland Employer referee contact information requested.

I am interested in delivering training to adult prisoners. Can I list key contacts from the Correctional Centres in which we currently work? (8/10/2024)

The New Skills Assure Supplier Framework Expression of Interest – Stage 1 Guidelines Schedule B (Terms and Conditions) reserves the Department’s right to “consider a EOI STAGE 1 response submitted other than in accordance with the requirements of this EOI STAGE 1 document”. In accordance with these, the Department may exercise its right to accept a response that does not conform with all of the requirements (i.e. grant an exemption) where it is considered necessary to ensure adequate training supply for specific cohorts such as adult prisoners. Contacts from Correctional Centres may be considered in evaluating relevant industry connections and training and assessment experience in relation to this cohort.

The decision on whether an exemption will be granted will be made during the assessment process depending on whether there are sufficient conforming offers to adequately meet the requirements, as such the Department is unable to provide any prior indication as to whether an exception will be granted. This decision will be undertaken in accordance with the probity requirements.

What if I am unable to provide the required employer referee contacts? (8/10/2024)

New Skills Assure Supplier Framework Expression of Interest – Stage 1 Guidelines Schedule B (Terms and Conditions) reserves the Department’s right to “consider a EOI STAGE 1 response submitted other than in accordance with the requirements of this EOI STAGE 1 document”. In accordance with these, the Department may exercise its right to accept a response that does not conform with all of the requirements (i.e. grant an exemption) where it is considered necessary to ensure adequate training supply.

The decision of whether an exemption will be granted will be made during the assessment process depending on whether there are sufficient conforming offers to adequately meet the requirements. As such, the Department is unable to provide any prior indication as to whether an exception will be granted. This decision will be undertaken in accordance with the probity requirements.

What information is required in the Queensland Employer Referee Contact Form for the section called "Number of employees/apprentices/trainees"? (8/10/2024)

The Queensland Employer Referee Contact Form asks for the services your organisation has provided to the employer and for those services you must supply the "Number of employees/apprentices/trainees" for that employer that your RTO has assisted.

Training history requirements

What is a NAT file? (8/10/2024)

NAT files are text files that contain your training activity and client data. All AVETMISS compliant software applications have the functionality to extract the eleven AVETMISS data files required for validation by the department's internal data system. Each of the eleven NAT files contains specific information.

For the purposes of submitting an EOI application through EOI Stage 1, you must provide information on training and assessment delivery to Queensland residents over at least a 12-month period, including the qualifications that have been awarded. To ensure your VET Activity Data is accurate and complete, the NAT130 file will need to reflect that the qualification was awarded to the student to meet the requirements of the EOI process.

What evidence of training activity do I need to provide? (8/10/2024)

Section 9 of the Application Guidelines details the required documents and information to be submitted through Partner Portal for the EOI Stage 1. Twelve months of your Queensland AVETMISS training activity (calendar data of 2024, 2023 or 2022) to Queensland residents, including qualification completions for the same time period, must be uploaded electronically as part of your EOI Stage 1 Response. Additionally, the "How to use the POL application to submit a EOI Stage 1 response" provides details of how to attach your training and assessment activity.

Can I include skill clusters/skill set outcomes in my Total VET Activity data submission as part of my SAS EOI application? (8/10/2024)

The department will consider all Total VET Activity data submitted, not just government subsidised training data. RTO applicants can submit outcomes including skill clusters/skill sets however, RTOs must also be able to meet the Queensland training and assessment delivery history as set out in the *New Skills Assure Supplier Framework Expression of Interest - Stage 1 Application Guidelines*.

If the application is not approved, can a review of the decision be requested?

If your application has been assessed as not meeting the Mandatory Eligibility Criteria, the applicant will be notified it has not been approved. Applicants may request a review of the decision. Requests must be lodged in writing within 28 days of receiving written notice of a decision to

SAS.Appeals@desbt.qld.gov.au.

Applicants will be notified in writing of the review outcome within 21 business days from receipt of the RTO's request for review.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the EOI process?

You can email us at SAS.EOI@desbt.qld.gov.au.

Please note that our advice is limited to the EOI process. To ensure the process is fair and equitable, the Department is unable to help compile applications.

How can I learn more about the new Skills Assure Supplier framework?

Learn more online at www.desbt.qld.gov.au/sas-framework and www.desbt.qld.gov.au/sas-contracting. You can read the strategy and learn more online at www.qld.gov.au/SkillsStrategy.