



**Australian Government**

**Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities**

# Norfolk Island Vocational Education and Training Financial Assistance Initiative

## Guidelines

|                               |                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Opening Date:                 | 2 January 2019  |
| Date Guidelines Released:     | 1 December 2018 |
| Type of Financial Assistance: | Reimbursement   |

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## 1 About the Norfolk Island Vocational Education and Training (VET) Financial Assistance Initiative

The Norfolk Island VET Financial Assistance Initiative will promote growth in economic productivity and social wellbeing on Norfolk Island through increased access to quality VET.

The Norfolk Island VET Financial Assistance Initiative is being delivered by the Australian Government to fill an assistance gap on Norfolk Island as residents are unable to access subsidies provided by state and territory governments.

The Norfolk Island VET Financial Assistance Initiative supports students to manage the costs of studying at TAFE or at a vocational education and training institution while living on Norfolk Island.

The financial assistance will be for reimbursement of the difference in course fees incurred by a Norfolk Island resident and what a resident of the state or territory of the institution would be required to pay.

Financial assistance is available to support students studying full-time or part time, through online and distance education or as block work on the mainland while the work component of an apprenticeship is undertaken on Norfolk Island.

In order to be eligible for financial assistance, the course must be a vocational education and training course with training in job related and technical skills that can be applied to employment on Norfolk Island. These parameters cover a large number of careers and industries like trades and office work, retail, hospitality and technology.

Financial Assistance is available from 2 January 2019.

These Guidelines may be updated from time to time.

## 2 Norfolk Island VET Financial Assistance Process Map

### THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OPENS

We publish the guidelines and advertise on the Department's website.

[www.infrastructure.gov.au/norfolk-island-vet](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/norfolk-island-vet)



### YOU COMPLETE AND SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FORM

Your application should align with these Program Guidelines.

Applications are submitted to PeoplePlus.



### PeoplePlus WILL ASSESS ALL APPLICATIONS

PeoplePlus will assess the application against the eligibility requirements. Assessment will include an interview with you.



### APPLICATION DECISIONS ARE MADE

PeoplePlus will make a decision on an application's suitability for funding and the amount of financial assistance to be paid.

PeoplePlus may consult with the Department on an application.



### PeoplePlus NOTIFIES YOU OF THE DECISION

PeoplePlus will advise you of the decision of your application and the amount of financial assistance.



#### **WE ENTER INTO AN ARRANGEMENT FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES**

You and PeoplePlus will enter into a Letter of Offer.



#### **DELIVERY OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

You undertake the VET course as identified in your Letter of Offer.

On payment of VET course fees, you submit a claim/s for payment.



#### **EVALUATION OF THE NORFOLK ISLAND VET FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE INITIATIVE**

The Department, in partnership with PeoplePlus, will evaluate the Norfolk Island VET Financial Assistance Initiative as a whole.

The evaluation will be based on information you provide to us and that we collect from various sources.

### **3 Financial Assistance Benefits**

The Financial Assistance Initiative will reimburse students the difference in course fees incurred by a Norfolk Island resident and what a resident student of the state or territory of the institution would be required to pay as at enrolment.

### **4 Financial Assistance Eligibility**

#### **4.1 Student eligibility**

To be eligible to receive Financial Assistance the student must be:

- 15 years or older
- an Australian Citizen
- a resident of Norfolk Island at registration
- not receiving any other Commonwealth or state or territory financial support towards the course (VET Student Loan are not considered financial support under this Initiative<sup>1</sup>)
- not receiving VET Financial Assistance subsidies for more than two separate courses of study in each four year period, except in exceptional circumstances.

#### **4.2 Eligible courses**

Courses eligible for financial assistance include:

- training in job related and technical skills that can be applied to employment on Norfolk Island
- a qualification level as defined by the Australian Qualifications Framework of:
  - Level 1 - Certificate I
  - Level 2 - Certificate II
  - Level 3 - Certificate III

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<sup>1</sup> VET Student Loans <https://www.education.gov.au/vet-student-loans>

- Level 4 - Certificate IV
- Level 5 – Diploma
- Level 6 - Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree
- study undertaken for an apprenticeship as block work on the mainland where their employment is on Norfolk Island
- the course must be accredited and the eligible provider must be accredited.

### 4.3 Eligible providers

An eligible provider is either a:

- Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institution, or
- Registered Training Organisation (RTO) registered with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) or the Western Australian Training Accreditation Council (WA TAC).

### 4.4 Mode of study

Students may undertake study on a full-time or part-time basis. A full-time study load is as defined by the Eligible Provider of the Eligible Course of Study.

Students may change from full-time to part-time study, or vice versa. Students must notify PeoplePlus within four weeks of the change.

The mode of study may be face-to-face or online, but must be undertaken in Australia.

## 5 Financial Assistance Application Process

### 5.1 When to apply

Students must apply for Financial Assistance within four weeks of registering for a VET course.

Students may register for a VET course at any time in accordance with the requirements of the TAFE or RTO.

### 5.2 How to apply

Before you apply, you should read and understand these guidelines, the Application Form and the draft Letter of Officer that are available online at [www.infrastructure.gov.au/norfolk-island-vet](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/norfolk-island-vet) or in hard copy from PeoplePlus.

Students must complete the Application Form and submit all relevant supporting documentation to PeoplePlus.

### 5.3 Supporting documentation

Examples of evidence to substantiate eligibility include:

- Norfolk Island resident:
  - Utilities bill confirming address
  - Superannuation statement
  - Drivers Licence
  - Bank Statement confirming address
  - Copy of a Centrelink letter, current Income Statement or other letter from a Commonwealth, state or territory agency with Norfolk Island address
  - Rent agreement, rates, mortgage documents

## 5.4 Questions during the application process

Should a student have any questions on the Financial Assistance Initiative, students should contact PeoplePlus:

- phone: 22562
- email to: [norfolkislandadmin@peopleplusaustralia.com.au](mailto:norfolkislandadmin@peopleplusaustralia.com.au).
- mail to: 115a Taylors Road, 2899 Kingston, Norfolk Island

## 6 Successful Financial Assistance applications

### 6.1 Letter of Offer

If you are successful, you must enter into a legally binding Letter of Offer with PeoplePlus.

A draft Letter of Offer is available on [www.infrastructure.gov.au/norfolk-island-vet](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/norfolk-island-vet) or from PeoplePlus. Standard terms and conditions for the Letter of Offer will apply and cannot be changed.

It is recommended that all students applying for financial assistance familiarise themselves with the conditions of the Letter of Offer or consider seeking independent advice on the implications of the conditions and their capacity to meet these conditions if financial assistance is approved.

PeoplePlus will develop the Letter of Offer based on the information you provide in your application. Should you propose any changes to these details, such as proposed course and course fees, we will review these against the application to ensure they do not impact the approval.

PeoplePlus will work with successful students to have Letter of Offers executed within four weeks of approval ('execute' means both you and PeoplePlus have signed the Letter of Offer). The offer may lapse if both parties do not execute the Letter of Offer within this time. PeoplePlus will not make any financial assistance payments until there is an executed Letter of Offer in place.

### 6.2 How the Financial Assistance will be paid

The Letter of Offer will state the:

- name of the VET course being undertaken
- maximum financial assistance amount to be paid
- amount, timing and requirements of each payment (payment schedule).

PeoplePlus will not exceed the maximum financial assistance amount under any circumstances. If you incur extra expenditure, you must pay it yourself.

A payment schedule will be negotiated with you. Grant funding will be paid either:

- in one payment once you have paid the full course fees upfront, or
- monthly on receipt of evidence of payments made towards the course fees during the calendar month.

When making a claim for payment, the student must complete the claim form attached to the Letter of Offer and provide evidence of payment, i.e. Receipt of payment for VET course.

In exceptional circumstances PeoplePlus, in consultation with the Department, may allow alternative payment arrangements.

### 6.3 Financial Assistance and taxation

For further advice on taxation matters related to financial assistance, please contact a taxation professional.

## 6.4 Financial Assistance and social security payments

Payments made under the Norfolk Island VET Financial Assistance Initiative are not considered income for the purposes of the social security income test.

For further advice, please contact Centrelink.

## 6.5 Letter of Offer variations

We recognise that unexpected events may affect a student's ability to complete a course within the expected timeframe. In these circumstances, you can request a variation to the Letter of Offer, including:

- changing financial assistance payment schedule
- changing mode of study from full-time to part-time or vice versa
- extending the timeframe for completing the course.

If you want to propose changes to the Letter of Offer, you must put them in writing before the Letter of Offer end date. Contact the PeoplePlus for further information. We will not consider changes after the Letter of Offer end date.

# 7 Delivery of Financial Assistance

## 7.1 Student responsibilities

You must let PeoplePlus know if anything is likely to affect your ability to complete the VET course for which you are receiving financial assistance.

PeoplePlus and the Department need to know of any key changes to your circumstances, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your course by the anticipated completion date or if you have decided to withdraw from the course.

You must also inform PeoplePlus of any changes to your:

- name
- address
- nominated contact details
- bank account details.

If you become aware of a breach of terms and conditions under the Letter of Offer you must contact PeoplePlus immediately.

## 7.2 Department responsibilities

The Department is responsible for:

- providing the PeoplePlus with funding for the Financial Assistance
- promoting the Financial Assistance, in partnership with PeoplePlus
- monitoring the performance of the PeoplePlus
- maintaining the Guidelines and Letter of Offer
- monitoring and evaluating the overall Financial Assistance performance.

### 7.3 PeoplePlus responsibilities

The Department has engaged PeoplePlus to deliver VET Financial Assistance on Norfolk Island. PeoplePlus will:

- receive and assess all applications from students seeking VET Financial Assistance
- negotiate and execute a Letter of Offer with successful students
- reimburse students on receipt of satisfactory claims for payment
- acquit financial assistance with students once VET course is complete
- provide support services to VET students including:
  - explanation of the VET financial support
  - linking students with other Government agency support services as required such as health, counselling and IT support
  - linking potential VET students to employment or apprenticeships
  - support and encourage students to complete courses
- arrange pro-rata reimbursement of Financial Assistance for incomplete courses from the student and back to the Commonwealth
- promote VET financial support through schools and other community organisations
- report quarterly to the Commonwealth on the Financial Assistance including uptake and performance.

### 7.4 Completion of course

On completion of the course you must notify PeoplePlus within one month that you have finished. To support your advice, you must provide a statement of achievement or certificate, or similar.

### 7.5 Non-Completion of VET course

Should you not complete the course, you must notify PeoplePlus that you have withdrawn from the course within four weeks.

You may have to repay a pro-rata amount of the financial assistance received. PeoplePlus, in consultation with the Department, may waive repayment of financial assistance in exceptional circumstances.

### 7.6 Acknowledgement and Publicity

The Department or the Administrator may wish to publicise the success of the Initiative or particular students. You will be contacted for permission should it be that your achievements and the financial assistance you received be recognised in the publicly.

### 7.7 Evaluation

We will evaluate the Initiative to measure how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. Your completion advice to PeoplePlus will be considered in this evaluation. You may be contacted to assist with the evaluation. The Letter of Offer requires you to provide information to help with evaluation.

## 8 Probity

The Australian Government will ensure that the process is fair, in line with the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct.

**Note:** These guidelines may be changed from time-to-time by us. When this happens the revised guidelines will be published on the Department's website at [www.infrastructure.gov.au/norfolk-island-vet](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/norfolk-island-vet).



## 8.1 Complaints process

Feedback, enquiries and complaints relating to the Program must be sent to PeoplePlus. Initial complaints must be lodged in writing by either:

- email to: [norfolkislandadmin@peopleplusaustralia.com.au](mailto:norfolkislandadmin@peopleplusaustralia.com.au).
- mail to: 115a Taylors Road, 2899 Kingston, Norfolk Island

PeoplePlus responds to all enquiries in the first instance. If PeoplePlus cannot resolve the matter, it will refer it to the Department for resolution.

In addition, the Department's Complaints Management procedures apply to complaints about the Program. All complaints about the process must be lodged in writing by either:

- using the online feedback and complaints form at [www.infrastructure.gov.au/utilities/feedback.aspx](http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/utilities/feedback.aspx)
- email to: [clientservice@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:clientservice@infrastructure.gov.au)
- mail to: Director, Governance Section  
Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities  
GPO Box 594  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Any questions you have about decisions for the Program should be sent to [norfolkislandadmin@peopleplusaustralia.com.au](mailto:norfolkislandadmin@peopleplusaustralia.com.au).

If you do not agree with the way we have handled your complaint, you may lodge a complaint to the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will not usually look into a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with us.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted on:

- Phone (Toll free): 1300 362 072
- Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au)
- Website: [www.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au)

## 8.2 Conflict of interest

### 8.2.1 Students

A conflict of interest could affect the performance of the financial assistance. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if our staff, staff of PeoplePlus and/or you or any of your family:

- has a professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer or employee of PeoplePlus;
- has a relationship with, or in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict the applicant from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently; or
- has a relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives funding under the Program.

You will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interest or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you later identify that there is an actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest or that one might arise in relation to a grant application, you must inform PeoplePlus in writing immediately. Employees of PeoplePlus and Departmental officials must also declare any conflicts of interest.

### 8.2.2 PeoplePlus

All personnel of PeoplePlus must declare, on an ongoing basis, any perceived or existing conflicts of interest to the Department.

A real or perceived conflict of interest may arise if any personnel of the PeoplePlus has a:

- professional, commercial or personal relationship with a student
- relationship with, or interest in, an organisation that is likely to interfere with or restrict the PeoplePlus from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently.

### 8.2.3 Department

The Department will be made aware of any conflicts of interest and will handle them as set out in Australian Government policies and procedures. Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff will be handled as set out in the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct (Section 13(7)) of the Public Service Act 1999. We publish our conflict of interest policy on the Australian Public Service Commission website.

## 8.3 Privacy: confidentiality and protection of personal information

We treat your personal information according to the 13 Australian Privacy Principles and the Privacy Act 1988. This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- who we give your personal information to.

You are required, as part of your application, to declare your ability to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988*, including the Australian Privacy Principles. You must ask for the Australian Government's consent in writing before disclosing confidential information.

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone else if you are given reasonable notice of the disclosure; where disclosure is authorised or required by law or is reasonably necessary for the enforcement of the criminal law; if it will prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to a person's life or health; or if you have consented to the disclosure.

The Australian Government may also use and disclose information about students under the Initiative in any other Australian Government business or function. This includes giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

We may reveal confidential information to:

- employees and contractors of our department or other Commonwealth agencies to help us manage the Initiative effectively
- employees and contractors of our department so we can research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities
- employees and contractors of other Commonwealth agencies for any purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery
- other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agencies in program reports and consultations
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- the responsible Minister, Assistant Minister or Parliamentary Secretary
- a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

We may share the information you give us with other Commonwealth agencies for any purposes including government administration, research or service delivery and according to Australian laws, including the:

- Public Service Act 1999
- Public Service Regulations 1999
- Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013

- Privacy Act 1988
- Crimes Act 1914
- Criminal Code Act 1995.

We will treat the information you give us as sensitive and therefore confidential if it meets all of the four conditions below:

1. you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
2. the information is commercially sensitive
3. revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else
4. you provide the information with an understanding that it will stay confidential.

The Agreement will include any specific requirements about special categories of information collected, created or held under the Letter of Offer.

## 8.4 Freedom of information

All documents in the possession of the Australian Government, including those about the Program, are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give members of the public rights of access to information held by the Australian Government and its entities. Under the FOI Act, members of the public can seek access to documents held by the Australian Government. This right of access is limited only by the exceptions and exemptions necessary to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

All Freedom of Information requests must be referred to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in writing.

By mail: Freedom of Information Coordinator

Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities  
 GPO Box 594  
 CANBERRA ACT 2601  
 Tel: (02) 6274 6495  
 Fax: (02) 6275 1347

By email: [FOI@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:FOI@infrastructure.gov.au)

## 9 Enquiries and Feedback

For further information or clarification, you can contact PeoplePlus on 33562 or at [norfolkislandadmin@peopleplusaustralia.com.au](mailto:norfolkislandadmin@peopleplusaustralia.com.au).

We may publish de-identified questions you ask us with our answer on our website as Frequently Asked Questions.

You can also contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman<sup>2</sup> with a complaint (call 1300 362 072). There is no fee for making a complaint, and the Ombudsman may conduct an independent investigation.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

## Appendix A: Definitions of key terms

| Term                     | Definition   |
|--------------------------|--|
| Administrator            | Norfolk Island Administrator   |
| AQF                      | Australian Qualifications Framework, the national policy for regulated qualifications in the Australian education and training system. It incorporates the quality assured qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework. |
| Conflict of Interest     | The exercise of a power or making of a decision by a person in a way that may be, or may be perceived to be, influenced by either a material personal interest (whether financial or non-financial) or a material personal association.  |
| Course Commencement Date | The expected date for commencing the VET course.   |
| Course End Date          | The expected end date for completion of the VET course.  |
| Department               | Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities  |
| Financial Assistance     | The funding made available by the Commonwealth to successful students.   |
| Initiative               | Norfolk Island VET Financial Assistance Initiative   |
| Letter of Offer          | A legally binding contractor between a successful student and PeoplePlus   |
| Program                  | Norfolk Island VET Financial Assistance  |
| RTO                      | Registered training organisation   |
| Successful Student       | A student that has been offered financial assistance and has an executed Letter of Offer in place.   |
| TAFE                     | Technical and further education institutions   |
| Us                       | Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities  |
| VET                      | Vocational Education and Training  |
| We                       | Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities  |
| You                      | Successful student   |