



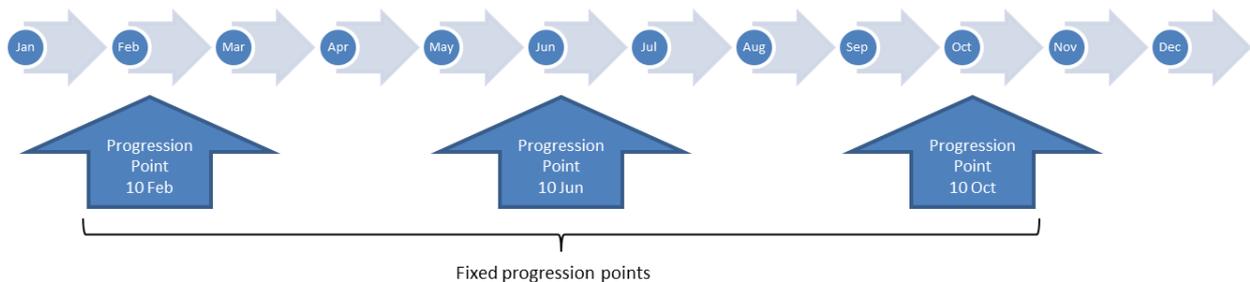
Student Engagement and Progression

Under paragraph 5(2)(g) of the VET Student Loan Rules 2016, students are periodically required to communicate their agreement to the Department of Education and Training (the department) that they intend to continuing accessing VET Student Loans to pay for the tuition fees of the course they are undertaking.

The department is implementing formal student engagement and progression arrangements with effect from 1 July 2017.

The process

The process being implemented uses the eCAF system, and has three fixed progression points through the year, at four month intervals – with delivery dates in February, June and October. Students will be allowed two weeks to complete and submit the form.



Progression points must be triggered by providers – this will be a quick, simple process consistent with eCAF (at the individual student level, by spreadsheet, or by application programming interface (API)). They must be triggered at some point within the identified month (exact timing at the discretion of the provider), or when a student returns from a break in their studies (e.g. deferral for a period of time, or return after ceasing study). The absence of a provider initiated progression point would indicate the student is no longer continuing, although as a general principle we will ask providers to trigger a progression for all students, because this will give those who left for reasons of dissatisfaction the chance for a voice.

Students would be required to indicate continuing engagement only after at least four months have elapsed since their eCAF application was submitted, or they last indicated engagement. A student doing a 12 month diploma, full time, would therefore be required to indicate progression twice. A student studying a course over multiple years would be required to indicate progression a number of times – however, it does not seem unreasonable, in circumstances where a student studies over an elongated period, to continue to confirm their engagement.

Note however, that particular arrangements apply for the commencement of the system. The first round must be run in **July 2017** for all students with eCAFs submitted **before 1 June 2017**. These students will then also be subject to the October 2017 progression point.

Students would be given a survey at each point, and asked to indicate continuing engagement – scope will also be provided for students to indicate cessation of studies, deferral of studies, or the intention to cease or defer.

Demonstration of engagement is required at the course, rather than at the student, level, i.e. a student studying two or more courses concurrently will have two or more loans and be required to complete two progression actions and surveys.

Students will be sent an acknowledgement of their completion and a copy of their responses, together with a reminder they are agreeing to a VET student loan being used to pay their tuition fees.

Providers will be able to see which students have completed the progression and their intentions for study, but will not have access to the survey responses.

Why are students being required to confirm their enrolment and continued course engagement?

Part of the student protection measures in place for VET Student Loans is to ensure loans are provided only to genuine students. In determining whether a student is a genuine student the department may take into account a number of factors, including whether the student is reasonably engaged in the course, and when required to do so, the student has communicated his or her agreement for the Secretary to continue to use the VET student loan to pay tuition fees for the course. Completion of a progression form is the way students may satisfy the department they continue to be genuine students.

How is the progression form provided to the student?

Providers are required to initiate the sending of the progression form to their students, using the eCAF system. This is a quick and simple process and can be done at the individual student level within the eCAF system from the student's eCAF, by spreadsheet upload, or from the provider's student management software by application programming interface (API).

When will providers need to generate a progression form?

Progression arrangements will be triggered by providers at the agreed times. There are three fixed progression points through the year, at four month intervals – with dates in February, June (to be July for 2017 only) and October. They will be triggered at some point within the identified month (exact timing at the discretion of the provider). This allows providers to better manage progressions in line with their usual census date patterns. For some students, providers may trigger a progression when a student returns from a break in their studies (e.g. deferral for a period of time, or return after ceasing study). Milestones will be set up in the HELP IT System (HITS) to remind providers when the progression surveys are to be triggered for students.

How long does a student have to complete a progression form?

Students have two weeks from the receipt of the invitation email to complete and submit the progression form.

What happens if a student does not complete a progression form when they have been sent the invitation email?

If the form has not been completed and submitted by the expiry date, the provider can generate a new form, but is not required to do so. However, failure to complete the action and survey by the next progression point may impact on a student's continued receipt of a VET student loan.

The point of this process is to allow the department to determine that a student is a genuine student. Specifically, one factor that may be taken into account is that, when required to do so, the student has communicated his or her agreement for the Secretary to continue to use the VET student loan to pay tuition fees for the course.

The department is undertaking a soft roll out, and payment arrangements are not, at this stage, directly linked to completion of the progression form.

However, where a student misses two consecutive progression points, the department will consider whether payments would be suspended pending a student response. Assuming a student response indicating ongoing engagement in due course, the department would anticipate that payments (past and future) would proceed.

Which students should the progression invitation emails be sent to?

Students are required to indicate continuing engagement only after at least four months have elapsed since their eCAF application was submitted, or they last indicated engagement. A student doing a 12 month diploma, full time, would therefore be required to indicate progression twice.

For example, a student commencing a 12 month course in January will have two progression points, first in June and the second in October. For a student commencing a 12 month course in July and in observing the 4 month elapsed rule, the two progression points will occur in February and June the following year.

However, in the first year of VET Student Loans implementation, the department requires providers that had commenced offering VET Student Loans from 1 January 2017 and have received full approval to **create the first progression form from 1 July 2017** for students who commenced studies in the period 1 January 2017 to 31 May 2017 inclusive.

Should students who have completed a course be sent a progression form?

Engagement and progression arrangements are primarily about continuing to provide the VET student loan.

The department would not typically expect a progression to be generated for a student who has completed a course and therefore has no subsequent planned census days contributing to the course.

If the period of study is short, under four months, then it would be feasible for a student never to need to complete a progression form.

Will a provider be able to claim payment up to the point where a student defers or withdraws after a census day and does not complete a progression form?

If a student fails to complete a progression form as they have deferred or withdrawn from the course, the provider should still receive payment for the portion of fees covered by census days prior to the student's deferral or withdrawal, subject to the complying with provisions of the *VET Student Loans Act 2016* and Rules.

Will providers see student responses?

The status of a progression form and a student's intentions about continuing are available to providers.

Where will providers see the survey outcomes?

Individual student survey responses will not be made available to providers. Aggregated student satisfaction information will progressively be made available on the My Skills website (www.myskills.gov.au) in accordance with the survey data use statement and Section 103 of the *VET Student Loan Act 2016*.

How can providers track outstanding progressions?

Providers can view this status on the eCAF Dashboard (Outstanding Progressions) or by going to the Progression tab, and selecting the 'Outstanding' radio button. Progressions that have been created, where the invitations have been sent and where the students have signed in the eCAF system but not completed the progression form will be counted as outstanding progressions.

What role do providers have in the process?

Progression points must be triggered by providers using the eCAF system.

Providers are not required, but the department recommends, they monitor completions and the intentions students advise about future study (particularly in relation to cessation and deferral).

The department asks that providers communicate to students about the arrangements, such as having to complete and submit the form within 2 weeks of receiving the invitation email, and encourage students to participate. It would of course however be inappropriate for providers to direct students about the responses to provide, or to put students in a position where they are otherwise compelled, or reasonably feel compelled, to answer in a particular way.

For more information

If you would like further information, please submit your enquiry to the **VET FEE-HELP provider online enquiry** form at www.education.gov.au/vet-fee-help-providers.

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