



Information Pack for Training Providers on Personal and Learning Supports for School Students

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Part One: An Introduction to Personal and Learning Supports

Personal and learning supports cover three broad areas that students enrolled in VET programs may need access to, for complex needs that are creating barriers to learning.

Living – these include personal, family, social, cultural, emotional issues that the student may be facing; in addition to challenges related to a disability, health issues, housing, income/finances, legal situations, transport.

Learning – these include attendance, classroom and campus issues, study skills, course expectations, student/lecturer interactions.

Transition – these include support for students who are transitioning into further study or employment.

What is Learner Support Services?

Learner Support Services (LSS) is an individualised student support service that is fee-free to the student and to training providers. It is available to any school student undertaking subsidised or fee-for-service training through any of the private training providers, for qualifications which are funded by the Department of Innovation and Skills (listed on the [Subsidised Training List](#)). Students enrolled in these same courses through TAFE-SA can access [Student Services](#) offered through [TAFE-SA](#).

If your RTO is identifying students that need the nature of supports that are beyond what your RTO can provide, they can be referred to one of the LSS service providers that your RTO has signed a service agreement with.

The LSS provider and your RTO work collaboratively plan, facilitate and deliver supports to students to address the specific barriers that they are facing while undertaking VET. As a wrap-around service, it is delivered by a primary case manager who works with the student from the time they enter VET, helping them to navigate their way through their studies and work placement until they move successfully into work or further study. It is important to differentiate this from clinical case management, which focuses on services to meet an individual's health needs.

- Living – Case managers provide support by offering information, guidance and skills development through one-on-one personal support meetings. Case managers will also refer and work with internal supports and external agencies (e.g. GPs, FoodBank SA, legal aid, housing services, etc.)
- Learning – Case managers provide support by working in classroom with students, in one-on-one or group settings, reviewing class materials and suggesting ways to approach work assignments. Case managers assist in suggesting reasonable adjustments to be made for students with disabilities, addressing issues in the classroom or on campus and in resolving student-staff issues. Case managers may also refer and/or liaise with internal supports and external agencies.

- Transition – Case managers assist students with Employment Service Provider and Centrelink issues. They also assist with guidance and planning, helping with vocational placements, mentoring students with their post-course options, updating resumes and preparing for job interviews. Case managers assist with adjusting to workplace environments and offer skills development to students to manage workplace behaviour.

How is LSS different to the educational supports and services expected of RTOs under ASQA?

Further supports for school students are available to students regardless of whether they are undertaking training at TAFE-SA or a non-government training provider. The training provider can facilitate access to these for school students.

([Hyperlink to FactSheet](#)). Provision of LSS does not remove the responsibility for providing supports for the student from the referring RTO.

LSS case managers work in the best interests of the student to determine what their support needs are, gathering information about their strengths, challenges, interests, concerns, family and personal circumstances. With this information, and understanding the student's aspirations for their study and employment, they work on a support plan with and for the student for while they are still studying, on completing their studies and while transitioning either to further study or employment. As part of their responsibilities, case managers will keep updated records on the student's progress for monitoring and reporting purposes.

Are there any differences in access or provision of LSS for school students?

Until 1 July 2021, school students were not able to access LSS if they were undertaking subsidised training. With the introduction of the VET for School Students policy and through consultation with the three schooling sectors, it has been agreed that school students enrolling with an RTO that has an Funded Activities Agreement with the Department for Innovation and Skills will be eligible for LSS.

Like with adult students, school students will have participated in an upfront assessment of need (called VET Readiness Orientation, VETRO) and an initial determination of individual support needs would have been completed. School students referred to LSS will still go through an intake interview, but for school students, this process may include the VET co-ordinator at the school and the vocational trainer to ensure that supports provided by the LSS service provider are complementary to existing supports offered by the school or the RTO.

Can school students access post course transition support too?

Yes, school students that have undertaken subsidised training and accessed LSS while in training will be able to access up to 12 weeks of support beyond the completion of their course.

What is the value of LSS for school students?

In many circumstances, the LSS provider (through the enrolling RTO) offer a complementary service to what the school already has planned as part of the student's individual education plan. However, it is recognised that in many circumstances, the school support officer or counsellor does not have the capacity to offer the level of individualised support that LSS provides. By ongoing communication with the school and the trainer/LSS provider, roles and responsibilities between the school supports and the LSS supports can be outlined and agreed upon.

Many schools will have support for students with identified needs that often cannot be extended off-site. The LSS provider may have more capacity and resources in place to support school students with assistance while attending training with the RTO and with accessing services such as Centrelink, obtaining food assistance, accommodation assistance.

What can LSS not do? And are there any exclusions that are particular to training school students?

For school students, it is important to recognise that LSS does not support the provision of foundation skills bridging units for closing gaps in literacy and numeracy identified through the VETRO process. The VETRO process will identify whether the gaps are minor and can be supported by the RTO or the school or both while in training. And this will be documented as part of this process. Please see Section 4 of the [VET for School Students Guidelines for Training Providers](#).

Learning skills for successfully navigating learning in a VET environment or communication skills for effectively being able to communicate in a workplace may arise during the process of training and can be facilitated through LSS.

It is important to note though that, for underage school students, the LSS provider cannot transport school students to/from training, nor to/from appointments with external services. Instead, the LSS provider can support the student to set goals for connecting with these services and checking that this is happening.

For students enrolled at TAFE-SA, what kind of supports are in place?

Student Support Services at TAFE-SA also provide a range of supports for enrolled students. Included amongst this package of supports are counselling services, career and pathway planning, disability support planning and general learning support. There is more available on the [website](#).

Part Two: How LSS fits with the VET training of school students

Secondary school students that have been accepted into a VET course as part of the VETRO process will be studying in an adult learning environment and may need additional supports to navigate the transition between a school-based environment and an adult learning environment.

Young people in school may struggle with some of the following elements of being in an adult training space or in the workplace (in the case of work placements):

- The rules of the workplace can be different to the typical rules in place in schools, with students needing to manage their behaviour differently
- Students are expected to be more independent and autonomous
- Learning is more self-directed in the VET environment, with trainers expecting students to keep up to date with learning materials and assessments, including logging hours etc (with little/no direct supervision)
- In this learning environment, school students need good organisational skills and time management and, in many cases, the enrolling RTO, the LSS provider and the school can provide supports and resources for the student to develop these capabilities. If well planned for, resources can be provided by the RTO to the schools to work on with students pre-enrolment.
- On a practical level, school students may require access to wi-fi/internet on site to complete assessment tasks

In addition to these transition and adjustment challenges, some school students also face significant wellbeing complexities. Some of these students may have plans in place to manage these already in school – and when in training or in the workplace may need a plan in place for a “big feelings day”. A discussion between the RTO (facilitated if need be by the LSS provider) and the school to agree on strategies to support the student is useful here. Disclosure conversations between the student and the RTO and the school are critical.

It is also important to recognise that some courses may present triggers for students, which may not have previously been identified by the school or the student. For example, students doing the Community Services course may have their own personal experiences of some of these challenges. And this may result in feelings that overwhelm the student while in training or placement.

It is also important to recognise that on the school grounds, many schools will have supports for students with identified needs. Often these supports cannot be extended off-site for most RTOs, and discussion on this upfront will be important to ensure better likelihood of success for the student.

What is the role of the school in supporting students undertaking VET training?

It is recognised that the school always retains primary legislative duty of care for the student while they are engaged in VET that is part of their education plan. This is even where this training crosses over with a training provider’s duty of care during training

and for parents outside of school hours. And is regardless of whether the student is a minor, has independent status or is over 18 years of age.

If there is an incident on the training provider site, or an issue disclosed by the student while in training or in work placement, the RTO will advise the school VET coordinator, but will not be responsible for contacting the parents. This will remain the responsibility of the school. Any contact with the school will be through the RTO, and the LSS provider will not contact the school without first letting the RTO know that they need to.

It is important for the enrolling RTO to know that there may be more than one contact person at the school that the student is attending. Many VET coordinators have a teaching load and may not always be immediately contactable. As such, the enrolling RTO needs to ensure that they have sufficient details for the school when enrolling the student.

What happens in the case of emergencies or significant issues that are disclosed?

The only exception to this would be when a school student is off-site (at a workplace or training provider site) after school hours, and there is an emergency, precarious situation, or mental health concern. In this instance, the RTO will make contact directly with the parent.

What kind of supports should schools commit to providing to ensure that the student will be properly supported to succeed?

Schools are in a good position to be able to support the student with developing good organisational skills to manage their learning.

As a recommendation, schools should provide a school-based mentor support so that the student has a go-to person while they are in training.

Schools should be available for consultation with the RTO when requested, so that training plans and learning plans and support plans can be coordinated.

What if students are undertaking training at TAFE-SA and need additional personal and learning supports?

(Use content from Sarah's FactSheet)

As with the LSS, TAFE-SA [Student Counselling](#) also provides free and confidential face-to-face or telephonic counselling support for students struggling with their studies because of issues that are affecting them in their daily lives. Support can also be accessed for [students with disabilities](#) and for students requiring [career planning](#) supports.

A dedicated [Student website](#) for TAFE-SA has specific links and resources for students needing help.

Part Three: How it will work

A Process flow map detailing the referral mechanisms and key stages in accessing and delivering LSS for school students is available (on this [page](#)).

How do RTOs delivering training for school students provide access to LSS?

To access LSS, as the training provider, you will need to have a LSS service agreement in place with at least one LSS provider – which is renewed annually. If you don't yet have a LSS provider, the first step is to undertake a self-assessment of your own organisational capability to provide student support services, identifying the types of typical support needs that your students have, and what you are doing already to close these gaps. This can be done in consultation with the LSS service provider of your choice. Once complete, send this to DIS for feedback and approval before you sign a LSS Service Agreement.

Please note the links for the [organisational self-assessment template and the review criteria](#) are provided in the right hand side panel of this page.

You can have more than one LSS provider at any one time, dependent on the needs of your RTO. Each of these LSS providers needs to be provided with a copy of your self-assessment and the Department's feedback so that they can provide you with support and work with you to close gaps you may have identified where possible.

How do RTOs promote and facilitate access to LSS for school students?

School students in VET can access personal and learning supports either through referral from the vocational trainer, their school, their parents and themselves.

School students should be encouraged by their school and by their trainer to self-refer to LSS or Student Services if they believe they need support. The VETRO online referral form and they VETRO process will provide the training provider with insight into issues students may be vulnerable to and may identify any learning and support needs the student is already being assisted with, triggering a referral to LSS as early as possible. However, it is likely that issues may arise during training. And in some cases, students may only disclose significant support needs once they have started training.

It is important for both RTOs and schools to reinforce the key message to school students that asking for help is not a sign of weakness, that it is evidence of self-awareness and shows courage and strength by taking responsibility to address your own needs.

RTOs should provide information to the students as part of the VETRO process about the Student Services they provide and where and how students can access LSS from the contracted LSS service provider. It is recommended that the LSS provider is invited to present at information sessions for all enrolling school student cohorts. The trainer can refer the school student directly, as can the school VET coordinator or the Student Support Officer (SSO) and can assist in making these appointments.

How will the provision of services be coordinated between the school, the training provider and the LSS case manager?

One of the elements that is critical in the partnership between the training provider, the LSS provider and the school is communicating the types of support that are available to students while studying. This includes outlining what supports the RTO themselves can provide under the provisions by ASQA, but should extend to the following elements that can be addressed through agreement between the school, the RTO or the LSS provider:

- Supporting a student to demonstrate their competency in the vocational qualification through coaching and mentoring support
- Adapting and using RTO-developed support materials to help build the student's literacy and numeracy capacity
- One-to-one support while learning if the student has gaps in their learning
- If the student has a known disability, mapping out what these support needs are and the implications of these for training
- Identifying any additional supports that the student may need that the school is best positioned to provide

Regardless of how or when the student accesses¹ LSS or Student Services, it is important that communication between the training RTO, the LSS provider and the school happens so that the relevant level of support is received by the student and there is no duplication in these supports. While the school may be the third party, duty of care remains with the school and they need to be kept informed of services that the student may be accessing.

The RTO needs to be clear on when the school needs to be advised that a student is accessing LSS/Student Services. Not all cases where students access LSS or TAFE-SA Student Services necessitate disclosure – for example, if the student accesses study supports. However, for more significant issues, a decision on when contact with the school is needed should be made by the RTO in consultation with the LSS provider, with the student's immediate needs and views considered.

If the student has identified as having a disability and requiring reasonable adjustment in training, how is this addressed?

The concept of “reasonable adjustment” in the VET sector is considered against the requirement that all students must demonstrate competency to successfully complete each unit. The required standard to which competency must be demonstrated cannot be modified. Where the training package specifies that competency must be demonstrated using specific equipment or under specific conditions, this cannot be modified. These requirements reflect the necessary competencies to perform the tasks on the job.

Within the constraints of training package essential requirements, reasonable adjustments can be made to delivery of learning materials and to how a student can

¹ (whether by self-referral or referred by RTO trainer/school VET Coordinator or SSO)

demonstrate competency. This can include such things as provision of assistive equipment, extra time to undertake assignments or assessments and alternative ways to demonstrate the same competency (for example, verbal descriptions, written descriptions, physical demonstration, etc).

RTOs need to plan early from the VETRO process for a learning, training and assessment plan to meet the needs of the student. And it is critical for RTOs to understand what they can offer in terms of accommodating for students with disabilities so that this can be clearly communicated to the schools and students/parents.

LSS and TAFE-SA Student Services can also provide additional supports depending on how a student's disability may impact on their training. For example, LSS provides support to many students experiencing mental health issues and TAFE-SA is experienced in organising provision of deaf interpreting. TAFE-SA, as a large government owned training provider has increased capacity to respond to support needs for students with disabilities.

Nonetheless, there is an expectation that schools will continue to support students with disability when they come into training – schools need to share the details of supports provided and what they know is required and what they are going to do to ensure the student continues to be supported while both in training and at school.

Must school students who agree to participate in LSS sign the consent form?

Yes, school students who take part in LSS must sign the consent form, even if they are under the age of 18. For school students who refuse to sign the LSS consent form, LSS services cannot be provided.

While the consent to access LSS is agreed to by either the parent or student if over 18yrs as part of VETRO, if a student seeks access to LSS, the LSS case manager who works directly with the school student will have a more in-depth conversation with the student about the nature of consent and confidentiality and the conditions under which confidentiality may need to be waived during the intake interview. The case manager and the school student will nominate who information will be shared with and these individuals/organisations will be listed on the consent form. This is a constantly evolving conversation through the duration of the training and provision of LSS. The need to share information with other people nominated on the consent form may change while the student is accessing LSS.

A fact sheet for school students and parents is available on the Training School Students page and agreement to access LSS will form part of the VETRO online referral form. This resource outlines what the student (if over 18) or parent is agreeing to the student receiving as support, details the nature of confidentiality and when a mandatory report will be made.

For students accessing Student Services at TAFE-SA, TAFE-SA has a standard set of terms and conditions for enrolment which covers access to these services and includes [information](#) about privacy and information sharing (scroll down the page).

Student Services will undertake a similar approach to LSS providers in discussing and ensuring students understand what consent to access the service includes in relation to privacy and the limits of confidentiality as well as who the student may like to nominate for information sharing.

Broadly, when providing consent to receive LSS, information will be kept confidential (not shared). Confidential information does not include information that:

- was in the possession of the LSS case manager prior to its being furnished by the student
- is generally known to the public, in the industry the student will be placed in, or the school
- is independently developed by the LSS case manager without use of, or reference, to the students' confidential information,
- or if another agency or party has requested information about the student, and the student has agreed and provided their written consent to this.

In addition, confidential Information does not include the following, which may also require a report to appropriate authorities:

- is required by law, pursuant to valid court order or subpoena
- is disclosed to the LSS case manager and as a result of such disclosure, the case manager reasonably believes there to be an imminent or likely risk of danger or harm to the student or others
- involves illegal activity
- if there is suspicion of child, elder or dependent adult abuse

Who should be listed as a minimum on the LSS Consent Form?

At a minimum, the trainer in the course and person responsible for course administration must be included on the LSS Consent Form so that they have the authority to contact the school or parent as required. This will be true in all cases, except where the VET trainer may be the subject of the school students' issues or progress in their studies. A copy of the LSS consent form should be provided to the trainer for information purposes, and the student needs to be advised by the LSS Case Manager that this is the requirement.

Will parents/guardians be informed if school students access LSS?

It is probable that some of the issues school students may present with are related to their parents or the family home.

The school remains the point of contact by the RTO in relation to school students accessing LSS or Student Services over the parent. Before contact is made with the parent, the school will be advised, unless in emergency situations.

Will the school be notified when a student is accessing LSS through the RTO or LSS provider?

In many instances, this may not be necessary and will depend on the nature of the supports or the seriousness of the issues and will be discussed with the student. For example, learning supports, such as study skills and career/training planning are unlikely to result in a notification.

In consultation with the LSS provider, it is the enrolling RTO that carries the responsibility to notify the school about issues surfaced through LSS provision that are deemed serious or require school or parent involvement. The RTO trainer usually has regular contact with the school VET coordinator, and it is their responsibility to report on progress of school students to the school.

Where the LSS provider is also the enrolling RTO, the standard process remains that the trainer is the key contact with the school, given that the trainer is monitoring the student's progress and the impact on their SACE and VET progression and completion (particularly critical when the VET completion goal is in jeopardy). The LSS case manager in this case would provide this feedback to the trainer.

What are the responsibilities of the school in supporting their students while in training?

RTOs should advise schools, as part of their ongoing communication and interaction with the enrolling RTO, that it remains their responsibility to follow up with the RTO, the LSS Provider on issues that may impact on the school students' completion of their VET course.

It also remains their responsibility to work with the RTO on providing supports while back at school to ensure the student is progressing or address any issues the RTO raises with the school such as behaviour or attendance issues.