

Principles for employment skills development programs

The following principles have been developed to help with interpreting the legislation relevant to employment skills development programs (ESDPs) and to explain the main features of an ESDP. These principles will assist organisations applying for recognition of a non-departmental ESDP.

Relevant legislation

The Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (EGP Act) defines the compulsory participation phase. The EGP Act states that ESDPs are an eligible option for young people covered by the compulsory participation phase.

The recognition of ESDPs are prescribed under the *Further Education and Training Act 2014* (FET Act).

Part 2 of the FET Act outlines that ESDPs can be provided by the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training. Part 3 of the FET Act describes the processes for the recognition of non-departmental ESDPs.

Principles

1. Primary target cohort or participant eligibility includes young people covered by the compulsory participation phase.

- The program seeking recognition is not necessarily limited to, but includes, young people 15–17 years who are covered by the compulsory participation requirements under the EGP Act.
- It is most likely that these young people are early school leavers. These young people are disengaged from earning or learning or at high risk of disengagement.
- For school students considered at risk, other learning options and school-based pathways should be explored prior to their enrolment in an ESDP. The program is a suitable option for a young person who, despite school-based interventions, remains determined to leave school or has already disengaged from school and is unlikely to be able to find employment without assistance.
- ESDPs should not be used by schools as a punitive action or as a behaviour management strategy.

2. The program seeking recognition as an ESDP is not already covered under the eligible option categories outlines in the EGP Act.

- School education, vocational education and training (VET) courses, university courses, apprenticeships and traineeships are already eligible options under the compulsory participation phase (Chapter 10, section 232 of the EGP Act).
- Where young people are not covered by these situations, the program owner should consider seeking recognition as an ESDP.
- Other activities/programs that young people may legitimately participate in as part of their obligations that do not require recognition as employment skills development program include:



- a. 'Recognised Studies' approved by the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority. These 'Recognised Studies' can include Structured Workplace Learning.
- b. 'Flexible arrangements' whereby a young person can participate in programs if still enrolled with a school and that participation is supervised by that school.
- c. Activities that young people may be specifically directed to participate in by Commonwealth legislation.

3. Program goals and outcomes are employment oriented

- Program content displays a clear link to work readiness. Assistance measures could include:
 - ✓ Vocational or career awareness and development
 - ✓ A range of employability skills
 - ✓ Accredited training with appropriate additional support
 - ✓ Personal and life management skills (must not be sole focus of program).
- Structured learning outcomes from the program is desirable. This is because the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority awards participants of ESDPs with 2 credits towards the Queensland Certificate of Education. Participants who complete a VET certificate as part of their ESDP will receive the credits associated with the qualification (ranging from 2 to 8 credits) instead.
- Structured learning outcomes can be preparatory in nature, being suitable for young people who are keen to work but not yet ready to participate in a VET certificate. It can include wrap-around support and work readiness skills as well as accredited training modules (skill sets) or a VET certificate.
- Gaining employment is the key outcome expected from undertaking the program; enrolment in further education or training or return to school are also positive outcomes.
- Post-program employment, training and further education outcomes for participants should be set — preferably in excess of 50 per cent.

4. Participation requirements provide effective engagement of young people

- A registration/enrolment process into the program and a mechanism to monitor participation/attendance exists.
- The program has an outline of activities and expectations regarding participants' participation or attendance for an averaged minimum of 25 hours per week. This minimum number of hours will mean increasing the likelihood that the ESDP may be recognised as a full-time approved activity for young people who are receiving Youth Allowance. The minimum of only 25 hours also recognises that participants may have personal issues that need to be dealt with outside of contact hours.
- An expectation is that participants will regularly attend to achieve prescribed learning outcomes or that participants attend for a specified period of time to complete program/individual activities.

5. Administrative safeguards for young people are evident

- The organisation/program clearly outlines the rights and responsibilities of young people, parents or guardians as well as those of the organisation. This would include as a minimum principles for:
 - ✓ Privacy and record keeping
 - ✓ A duty of care for young people
 - ✓ Behaviour management
 - ✓ Exclusion
 - ✓ Dispute resolution.
- All organisations already have the responsibility of determining who in their organisation needs a Working with Children Check. When developing processes for delivering an ESDP, organisations will need to pay particular attention to this requirement. Further information is available at www.bluecard.qld.gov.au.
- Relevant insurances are in place for conducting the activity, including public liability and accident insurance in accordance with the *Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003*.