



| NSW Department of Education

# **Return to Vocational Education and Training (VET) Guidelines**

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[education.nsw.gov.au](https://education.nsw.gov.au)



The Return to VET Guidelines provide a structure for the return to face-to-face training delivery for registered training organisations (RTOs), TAFE, community colleges, group training organisations (GTOs), learners and employers. The Guidelines provide clarity and flexibility to manage the needs of different local government areas in response to changes in health advice.

## The Return to VET Guidelines are underpinned by key preconditions set by NSW Health, the NSW Roadmap to Recovery and based on the Doherty Report for National Cabinet. The guidelines will be updated if NSW Health advice changes

- The NSW Government's Roadmap to Recovery provides clarity around eased restrictions at 70% and 80% double vaccination rates and on 1 December 2021. This Return to VET Guideline supports the safe, phased return of face to face training for the VET sector. Noting that "providers" is used to encompass the many elements of the sector in this guideline.
- The phased approach in the Return to VET Guideline remains subject to certain conditions, including:
- Specific sectors (aged care, disability, early childhood, NSW Health and NSW Police), and for those visiting schools during school hours require VET students and the VET workforce to be vaccinated when attending those workplaces.

### General principles: 70% double vaccination rate

- **Vaccination:** face to face training can mostly return (eg: critical skills training) for workforce and learners, with double vaccination strongly encouraged.
- **Mask wearing:** masks must be worn in all indoor settings. Masks are not required outdoors. Providers with outdoor hospitality facilities will need to comply with Public Health Orders regarding mask wearing.
- **Social distancing:** whilst education is exempt from the 4sqm rule, physical distancing of 1.5 meters is recommended where practicable to ensure safety.
- **COVID-19 safety plan:** must be in place to ensure the safety of students and staff.

### General principles: 80% double vaccination rate

- **Vaccination:** face to face training can return for workforce and learners, with double vaccination strongly encouraged.
- **Mask wearing:** masks must be worn indoors. Masks are not required in office settings for fully vaccinated people. Masks are not required outdoors. Providers with outdoor hospitality facilities will need to comply with Public Health Orders regarding mask wearing.
- **Physical distancing:** whilst education is exempt from the 4sqm rule, physical distancing of 1.5 meters should be followed where practicable to ensure safety.
- **COVID-19 safety plan:** must be in place to ensure the safety of students and staff.

### General principles: 1 December 2021

- **Vaccination:** face to face training can return for both vaccinated and unvaccinated workforce and learners.
- **Mask wearing:** masks indoors and outdoors are no longer required. Providers with outdoor hospitality facilities will need to comply with Public Health Orders regarding mask wearing.
- **Physical distancing:** whilst education is exempt from the 4sqm rule, physical distancing of 1.5 meters should be followed where practicable to ensure safety.
- **COVID-19 safety plan:** must be in place to ensure the safety of students and staff.



## Getting Ready for the Return to VET

The Return to VET Guidelines support the return of face to face training delivery in a safe and phased way. There are key requirements that all Providers need to undertake in preparation for, and delivery of face to face training regardless of location that all VET providers should have.

- **COVID-19 Safety Plan** – Providers will need to have an updated [Covid-19 Safety Plan](#) that outlines how they will ensure the safety of students and staff at their premises. Providers may choose to create one plan for each campus facility noting that specific COVID-19 Safety Plans are required where the Provider has public facing business operations including clinics for hair, beauty, massage or cafes and restaurants. A strong focus on adequate PPE, physical distancing, increased cleaning regimes and sanitising will be required.
- **Unvaccinated staff and student policy** – Providers may consider whether a workplace policy about coronavirus vaccinations is necessary for their workplace. Before implementing a new workplace policy or changing an existing policy about vaccinations, employers should consider their workplace circumstances and whether they need legal advice about their obligations
- **Ventilation** – a strong focus on ventilation is required including: open windows, overhead fans, consider HEPA filters added to air conditioning units, no reverse cycled air conditioning, extraction fans where installed, access to well ventilated outdoor areas. More information about [ventilation](#).
- **QR Code sign-in process for all staff, students and other visitors** – Mandatory QR codes must be displayed at site entry points. All staff and visitors permitted on premises will be required to check in and check out using the QR codes. A unique QR code for COVID-safe Check-in and COVID-19 resources can be accessed through [Service NSW](#), noting providers can support contact tracers with access to class roles in the event of transmission on site. Providers should ensure alternate check in methods for staff, students and other site visitors who do not have the Service NSW app or alternatively have their own staff to check visitors into the site through provider owned devices.

- **Vaccination tracker** – Workers, students or other visitors accessing a VET facility are encouraged to be fully vaccinated once NSW meets the 70% double vaccination threshold for those 16+. Service NSW is developing an update to its QR Code check-in app that would display a person's vaccination status when they check in to the RTO premises. Learners and teachers visiting specific workplaces will also require a mandatory vaccination in many instances. Information is [here](#).

- **Staff, students and other visitors who are unable to be vaccinated** – Providers should consider the management of VET staff and students that are unable to be vaccinated, noting that Service NSW will enable vaccination exemption certificates to be uploaded into the Service NSW app. Providers may choose to not permit unvaccinated individuals into a VET facility and should seek legal advice to support this decision. Providers will need to have procedures in place to support students who cannot be vaccinated because of a medical contraindication. Providers should consider alternate methods of training delivery (e.g. online) for these cohorts, noting that they may not be able to attend some workplace components of their training.

### Providers should:

- Develop policy and procedure for ensuring the safety of unvaccinated staff, students and visitors
- Support students on a case by case basis in sectors where vaccinations are mandated.
- Manage face to face assessments for critical skills and practical based learning and assessment where it cannot be conducted online
- Minimise student cohorts for practical training and assessment that cannot happen online
- Implement safe rostering to reduce staff and student mingling.

- **Vaccinations for international students** – A purpose-built website can assist international students to easily find the information and help they need to get vaccinated  
[www.scfintakesupport.org.au](http://www.scfintakesupport.org.au).
- **Masks** – staff, students and visitors will need to comply with mask wearing directions aligned with each phase of return as noted in the Public Health Order.
- **Cleansing regimes** – Providers should consider enhanced cleaning regimes and sanitising across the indoor and outdoor elements of the training site. It is recommended that cleaning staff are encouraged to be vaccinated if conducting cleaning services.
- **Staggered break times** – Providers should consider staggering break times for learners to minimise mixing and exposure at common break out areas.

## VET Delivery in School Settings

VET staff delivering face to face training in schools will need to be double vaccinated from 25 October 2021. They will also be required to wear masks, check in via QR code and follow any other requirements under the COVID safe plan for the school site.



# Return to VET Scenarios

The following outlines a series of phases, and the type of return settings that the VET sector should follow:

## Phase one:

NSW reaches 70% double vaccination rates

Principles	Safety measures
<p>TAFE, ACE and VET providers can deliver courses face to face, with providers encouraged to return teachers who are double vaccinated to deliver face to face training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unvaccinated teachers should continue to deliver training online where reasonably practicable.</li> <li>Consider how unvaccinated students will be supported.</li> <li>Continue to deliver content online wherever possible.</li> <li>If you choose to return to face to face delivery this must be subject to a current COVID-19 Safety Plan, and in compliance with the public health orders.</li> <li>Return of workplace assessment and training can occur in compliance with the public health orders. Providers should consider limiting this to critical industry sectors in the first instance.</li> <li>Partial student cohorts attending face to face delivery in the first instance.</li> <li>Partial staff contingency is possible, but safe rostering should be implemented.</li> <li>Workforce and learners, with double vaccination attending the site is strongly encouraged.</li> <li>Preference for face-to-face training is for critical industries* only at this stage where online or virtual training cannot take place.</li> </ul>	<p>Providers are required to have a COVID-19 Safety Plan focusing on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All operating procedures complying with Public Health Orders.</li> <li>Access to PPE, sanitising, additional cleaning regimes.</li> <li>Mask wearing is mandatory for all indoor activity. Hospitality staff will be required to wear a mask while outdoors – relevant where providers have onsite catering facilities.</li> <li>Ventilation: open windows, overhead fans, consider HEPA filters added to air conditioning units, no reverse cycled air conditioning.</li> <li>Scheduled breaks for common break out areas – minimise mingling of students/staff (max 30 people gathering in outdoor settings). Tea rooms/ staff common rooms require 1.5m physical distancing at all times, mandatory mask wearing and minimum timeframes allowed for mingling.</li> <li>Vaccination: vaccinated students where Public Health Orders mandate: aged care, early childhood education, disability care, health care and NSW Police and construction (for people from LGAs of concern).</li> <li>Small class cohorting to enable containment and tracing and the minimisation of movement.</li> <li>Record Keeping: QR codes provide a record of who is entering the site.</li> <li>Providers need to have a contingency plan to manage COVID-19 cases. The plan should include how they will respond to COVID-19 outbreaks, procedures to reduce transmission, an isolation strategy for close contacts, how they will support contact tracers and return to training strategies for students and staff who have COVID-19.</li> </ol>

# Phase two:

NSW reaches 80% double vaccination rates

Principles	Safety measures
<p>TAFE, ACE and VET providers can deliver courses face to face, with providers encouraged to return teachers who are double vaccinated to deliver face to face training. Unvaccinated teachers should continue to deliver training online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to deliver content online wherever possible.</li><li>• Consider how unvaccinated students will be supported</li><li>• If you choose to return to face to face delivery this must be subject to a current COVID-19 Safety Plan, and in compliance the public health orders. It is recommended that those returning to face to face delivery be double vaccinated.</li><li>• Return of workplace assessment and training can occur in compliance with the public health orders. Providers should consider limiting this to critical skills or practical industry sectors in the first instance.</li><li>• Partial student cohorts attending face to face delivery in the first instance.</li><li>• Partial staff contingency is possible, but safe rostering should be implemented.</li><li>• Employers must continue to allow employees to work from home, if reasonably practicable. Employers must require employees who are not fully vaccinated to work from home, if reasonably practicable.</li><li>• All VET workforce, students and site visitors are encouraged to be double vaccinated.</li></ul>	<p>Providers are required to have a COVID-19 Safety Plan focusing on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. All operating procedures complying with Public Health Orders.</li><li>2. How they will manage and support staff, students and visitors to the site who are not vaccinated.</li><li>3. Access to PPE, sanitising, additional cleaning regimes.</li><li>4. Mask wearing is mandatory for some indoor activity. Masks are not required in office settings for fully vaccinated people Only hospitality staff will be required to wear a mask while outdoors – relevant where Providers have onsite catering facilities.</li><li>5. Ventilation: open windows, overhead fans, consider HEPA filters added to air conditioning units, no reverse cycled air conditioning.</li><li>6. Scheduled breaks for common break out areas – minimise mingling of students/staff (max 30 people gathering in outdoor settings). Tea rooms/ staff common rooms require 1.5m physical distancing at all times, mandatory mask wearing and minimum timeframes allowed for mingling.</li><li>7. Vaccination: vaccinated students where Public Health Orders mandate: aged care, early childhood education, disability care, health care and NSW Police and construction (for people from LGAs of concern).</li><li>8. Small class cohort-ing to enable containment and tracing and the minimisation of movement.</li><li>9. Record Keeping: QR codes provide a record of who is entering the site.</li><li>10. Providers need to have a contingency plan to manage COVID-19 cases. The plan should include how they will respond to COVID-19 outbreaks, procedures to reduce transmission, an isolation strategy for close contacts, how they will support contact tracers and return to training strategies for students and staff who have COVID-19.</li></ol>

## Phase three:

From 1 December 2021 onwards.

Principles	Safety measures
<p>TAFE, ACE and VET providers can deliver courses to face to face. Vaccinated and unvaccinated teachers are able to deliver face to face training and attend the workplace.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face to face delivery is fully enabled, to a current COVID-19 Safety Plan, and in compliance with the public health orders.</li> <li>• Return of full workplace assessment and training can occur in compliance with the public health orders.</li> <li>• Full student cohorts attending face to face delivery.</li> <li>• Full staff contingency is possible, but safe rostering is recommended.</li> <li>• Working from home will be at the employers discretion under the NSW Roadmap to Return, from 1 December 2021</li> </ul>	<p>Providers are required to have a COVID-19 Safety Plan focusing on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All operating procedures complying with Public Health Orders.</li> <li>2. How they will manage and support staff, students and visitors to the site who are not vaccinated.</li> <li>3. Access to PPE, sanitising, additional cleaning regimes.</li> <li>4. Mask wearing is no longer required. Providers with outdoor hospitality facilities will need to comply with Public Health Orders regarding mask wearing.</li> <li>5. Ventilation: open windows, overhead fans, consider HEPA filters added to air conditioning units, no reverse cycled air conditioning.</li> <li>6. Scheduled breaks for common break out areas – minimise mingling of students/staff. Tea rooms/ staff common rooms require 1.5m physical distancing at all times, with set timeframes allowed for mingling.</li> <li>7. Vaccination: vaccinated students where Public Health Orders mandate: aged care, early childhood education, disability care, health care and NSW Police.</li> <li>8. Record Keeping: QR codes provide a record of who is entering the site.</li> <li>9. Providers need to have a contingency plan to manage COVID-19 cases. The plan should include how they will respond to COVID-19 outbreaks, procedures to reduce transmission, an isolation strategy for close contacts, how they will support contact tracers and return to training strategies for students and staff who have COVID-19.</li> </ol>



# Increased Restrictions:

Increased infection numbers in an LGA or region and NSW Public Health Orders restrict face to face VET or higher education delivery

Principles	Safety measures
<p>TAFE, ACE and VET providers cease face to face training and move to online delivery where possible. Training that cannot be moved to online is deferred.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to deliver content online wherever possible.</li><li>• No face to face delivery can occur.</li><li>• Workplace assessments cease until further notice</li><li>• Skeleton staff at training facilities are double vaccinated.</li></ul>	<p>Providers are required to have a COVID-19 Safety Plan focusing on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. All operating procedures comply with Public Health Orders.</li><li>2. Access to PPE, sanitising, additional cleaning regimes.</li><li>3. Skeleton staff on site must be vaccinated</li><li>4. Mask wearing is mandatory for all indoor and outdoor activity</li><li>5. Ventilation: open windows, overhead fans, consider HEPA filters added to air conditioning units, no reverse cycled air conditioning.</li><li>6. Providers need to keep a record of who is entering the site to support contact tracers if needed.</li><li>7. Providers must have a contingency plan to manage return to full operation when Public Health Orders change.</li></ol>

## Critical skills industries

- Nursing and Allied Health
  - Pathology
  - Aboriginal Health
  - Nursing
  - Dental
  - Community pharmacy
- Community Services
  - Community services
  - Mental health
  - Alcohol and other drugs
  - Counselling
  - Financial counselling
- Early Childhood Education
  - Early childhood education
  - Education support
  - Child protection
- Energy and Electrotechnology
  - Electrotechnology Electrician
  - Air Conditioning and Refrigeration
- Construction
  - Brick / block laying
  - Carpentry
  - Wall and floor tiling
  - Formwork / Falsework
  - Carpentry and Joinery
  - Plumbing
  - Roof plumbing
  - Fire protection
  - Painting and decorating
  - Scaffolding
  - Civil Construction
- Engineering
  - Engineering – Mechanical
  - Engineering – Fabrication
  - Laboratory skills / techniques
- Heavy Vehicle
  - Mobile Plant technology
- Security

# Industries where practical based learning and assessment is required

## ظ Individual Support

- Aged Care / Disability
- Home and Community

## ظ Community Services

- Community services
- Education support

## ظ Hospitality

- Food and Beverage
- Commercial Cookery
- Baking
- Bread Baking
- Cake and Pastry
- Food Processing

## • Agribusiness

- Vet Nursing
- Arboriculture
- Conservation Land Management
- Horticulture

## ظ Electrotechnology

- Electrical Fitting
- Electrotechnology Career Start

## ظ Construction

- Roof Tiling
- Construction Pathways
- Shop Fitting
- Wall and Ceiling Lining
- Plastering
- Construction Waterproofing
- Brick Block Laying

- Creative design
- Hairdressing
- Beauty Services

We acknowledge the homelands of all Aboriginal people and pay our respect to Country.

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## Say hello

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 @NSWEducation  
 training.nsw.gov.au

GPO Box 33  
Sydney NSW 2001  
Phone: 13 28 11  
NSW Department of Education

