

Unique Student Identifier (USI)

Information:

Dept. Innovation.

<http://www.innovation.gov.au/Skills/National/UniqueStudentIdentifierForVET/Pages/InformationForTrainingOrganisations.aspx>

Task Forces

USI@innovation.gov.au

Phone 1300 770 217

Q & A:

1. Why is this new initiative being introduced?

The USI will allow capture of a record of enrolment and achievement across the lifetime of individual VET students, and will provide significant benefits for students, training organisations and governments.

The initiative will make it easier to find, collate and authenticate students' VET achievements into a single portable record. This will benefit training organisations and students—when they undertake VET training, they will be able to produce an authenticated transcript to access credit for study previously undertaken.

2. What difference will the new initiative make?

Presently only three states in Australia use student numbers to track education achievement: Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. Whilst these systems are effective, they differ in scope from the USI in that they do not cover all students irrespective of age, who enrol in VET training.

Currently, it is not possible for all students to get a complete record of their VET enrolment and achievement history from one place.

With the USI, for the first time, every student who undertakes nationally recognised vocational education and training (VET) in Australia (or overseas from an Australian-registered provider) will be able to access his or her enrolment and achievement record from a single authoritative source. Students will be able to get a full transcript of all the accredited VET training they undertake. The transcript will include all the VET training a student does from 1 January 2014.

3. How and when will the new initiative be developed?

A range of consultations has already been held in every state and territory and feedback from these sessions has been very valuable.

Further work is now underway to ensure that the needs and concerns of all stakeholder groups are identified and addressed. This will be achieved through a range of consultation and communication activities in 2012 and 2013. These will include face to face meetings, attendance at Industry forums and conferences and ongoing multi-media activities.

A Reference Group comprised of representatives of key interest groups has been established and is providing on-going information and guidance about design and implementation. If you would like information on consultations or would like to be kept informed of developments please contact us with your corporate details via email: USI@innovation.gov.au or phone 1300 770 217.

4. Is this new initiative just for the VET sector?

Initially, the requirement to have a USI will only apply to VET students. However, as part of their consideration of this project, COAG indicated an interest in having a whole-of-education number that included early childhood, schools, VET and higher education. While any extension to other education sectors would be subject to future decisions, the design of the USI for VET is taking this into account.

5. Who will be affected by the requirement to have a USI?

The USI will be mandatory from 1 January 2014 and it will apply to all students who commence or continue accredited VET courses and training from that date. The training can be either full-time or part-time, either publicly or privately funded, and with either a public or a private training provider. This will include students who enrol with an Australian training provider overseas whether or not they are Australian citizens. It will also include students who undertake training as part of the VET in Schools program.

6. How will the USI work?

The USI will be a ten character alpha-numeric code, which every student participating in accredited VET training from 1 January 2014 will need.

Students will need to apply for their USI. They will need to provide proof of their identity via a drivers' licence number, Medicare card number or other official document, and will then be issued with a USI.

In order to allow for flexibility there will be several options when applying; for example, a student may apply for their number directly via the USI Agency portal or a student may authorise an training organisations other agent to apply on their behalf.

The USI system will be designed so that personal information will be quarantined and stored separately from education and training records. The USI will be stored with a student's personal information (such as name and address). The USI will also be attached to a student's training records which will be held by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). Using the USI, the personal information would only be linked to the educational information when a student asks to see his or her own records or when a student authorises someone else to do so (such as a training organisation).

Protecting the privacy and security of information is a priority in the design of the USI system: the legislative framework for the new initiative will include safeguards in relation to the storage, access and use of student information.

7. Will the new initiative be linked to other student numbers?

The USI Taskforce is working with jurisdictions to maximise the interoperability of the USI and local identifiers such as the VSN in Victoria, the LUI in Queensland and the Skills for All Student Number in South Australia. The taskforce is aiming to minimise the impact on those individuals who will require two numbers.

However, each of these existing numbers has been designed for a specific purpose. While the USI will overlap some of these purposes and target groups – it is not completely coextensive with any of them. Introducing a new identifier that is national from the outset, VET sector wide in scope and owned by all jurisdictions is more likely to achieve the objectives set by COAG, with less disruption to the existing functions of the existing numbers than attempting to retrofit the existing identifiers.

8. What will the new initiative mean for training organisations?

There will be significant benefits to training organisation from the introduction of the USI, especially around assessing students for admission to courses. Training organisations will have better access to student VET records which will simplify the process of assessing pre-requisites, credit transfer, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and entitlement to funding for training. Having access to a student's training history will also streamline the management of VET records when students move between institutions.

In the longer term, training organisations will benefit from longitudinal data on course completions which will inform the development of future VET sector policy initiatives.

All training organisations are required to be able to provide AVETMISS compliant data to their VET Regulator on request: the USI will become a mandatory data collection requirement within AVETMISS 7.0 which is due for release in December 2012 and due to come into effect on 1 January 2014. This timeframe will enable software providers adequate time to make the required changes to existing Student Management System software. The introduction of the USI will coincide with new VET data collection and reporting requirements (AVETMISS Standard 7.0), making it easier for training organisations to report USI data to NCVER as part of their normal cycle of data collection.

To assist training organisations with managing the required changes to their Student Management Systems, ongoing consultations are being held to introduce the USI project and generate feedback. The

USI Taskforce will work with training organisations to support them with updating their business systems to meet the new requirements.

9. How will this work for dual providers (VET and higher education)?

Further consultations will help to identify particular issues for different groups of training organisations. At first, the new USI will only apply to all students in the VET sector. The new system will take account of the need to provide appropriate future linkages across the VET and higher education sectors.

10. How will the initiative work for enterprise training organisations?

Further consultations with enterprise training organisations will help to identify any particular issues that these organisations might have so this can be incorporated into the development and implementation of the new initiative.

If you have any questions or need more information, you can email the USI Taskforce at: USI@innovation.gov.au or phone 1300 770 217.