



Australian Government  
Department of Education

# Startup Year Provider Handbook

July 2024



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# Overview

1. The Australian Government has established Startup Year to support students' participation in startup courses at Australian higher education providers, to encourage innovation and support Australia's startup community, including social innovation and community-based entrepreneurship.
2. The October 2022-23 Budget provides \$15.4 million over four years from 2022-23 to establish Startup Year. It establishes a new income contingent loan program to support student participation in Startup Year courses (also known as accelerator program courses) providing up to 2,000 loans a year to recent graduates, postgraduate and final year undergraduate students through the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP). This loan will be known as **STARTUP-HELP**. It also extends eligibility for student payments (such as Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY) to students who participate in a Startup Year course, access a STARTUP-HELP loan, and meet other eligibility requirements.
3. Higher education accelerators enhance and develop student skills, capabilities, and networks, and foster greater levels of entrepreneurialism and talent within the Australian innovation ecosystem. STARTUP-HELP will fund the educational experience of students and provide future pathways for graduates.
4. The Government wants to see more students across a wide range of backgrounds become founders of startup companies and innovation leaders in the workforce. Startup Year will prioritise support for First Nations Australians, people with disability, and women, along with startups solving regional and rural issues, ensuring there is increased engagement from people from these important groups.

## Startups and the accelerator ecosystem

5. Startups have an important role in job creation, commercialising ideas, solving social and community-based issues, and strengthening links between universities and the broader community. On average across OECD countries, young firms account for approximately 20 per cent of employment and create almost half of all new jobs.<sup>1</sup> In Australia, startups have a high impact on the creation of new jobs. Research suggests that job creation is highly concentrated. In 2020, an increase of over 3,000 employees could be attributed to Australia's eight most successful startups.<sup>2</sup> The Tech Council of Australia estimates new technology startups can contribute 30,000 new jobs and \$7 billion in value by 2030.<sup>3</sup> Supporting startup creation and the entrepreneurial skillset will play a role in growing productivity and incomes and build a workforce with the skills and capabilities to adapt and thrive in the future labour market.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD (2022), *DynEmp: Measuring Job Creation by Start-ups and Young Firms*, [www.oecd.org/industry/dynemp.htm](http://www.oecd.org/industry/dynemp.htm).

<sup>2</sup> G20 Entrepreneurship Roundtable (2021), *Entrepreneurship in Australia: Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Startups in the Digital Area*.

<sup>3</sup> Tech Council of Australia (2021), *Roadmap to Deliver One Million Tech Jobs*, [How to Deliver One Million Tech Jobs by 2025 – Tech Council of Australia](#).

6. Beyond job creation, startups have a role in driving research translation and commercialisation across a range of industries, particularly in the deep tech industry.<sup>4</sup> This has been supported by the emergence of university-based accelerator programs, bringing together industry, academic expertise, and resources to build and accelerate startup ideas. According to Universities Australia, there are more than 100 hubs in Australian universities.<sup>5</sup> These accelerator programs offer immersive, wraparound services to support students and first-time entrepreneurs with their startup ideas.
7. Course content will be available to a wider range of students, and with firm foundations, resulting from the Startup Year program. Content currently in use provides examples of the kinds of course content that is expected to be further developed and more widely deployed, including:
  - a. workshops, resources, and educational elements,
  - b. mentoring and networks,
  - c. access to facilities, equipment, and co-working spaces, and
  - d. funding components.

## Workshops, resources, and education

8. Workshops, resources, and education within an accelerator program often focus on business skills and media and public relations. The University of Wollongong, through its iAccelerate program offers a robust education component through the pre-acceleration program – Activate. Activate is an educational program focusing on themes such as lean methodology, marketing and branding, basic business, pitches and turning ideas to Minimal Viable Products.<sup>6</sup> An educational component to accelerator programs helps to build important skills learners need to build their startups.

## Mentoring and networks

9. Research from Startup Muster (2018), an Australian survey on the startup ecosystem, found that 58.5 per cent of startup founders have accessed mentorship since founding their startup. Meaningful mentorship and access to a network of innovators and entrepreneurs is a key feature of an accelerator program (see RMIT University's LaunchHUB,<sup>7</sup> GRIST: The Mill House Social Enterprise Accelerator Program<sup>8</sup> and the BETA Pre-Accelerator Program<sup>9</sup>.) Wide exposure to business networks is important for founders and researchers looking to test their ideas, overcome challenges, find capital, build a team, create or reach new markets and grow their business.

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<sup>4</sup> Startup Muster (2018), *Startup Muster Annual Report*, 19, <https://startuppublisher.com/reports/Startup-Muster-2018-Report.pdf?key=d3fcf8771af17253b761c908b5f7abe8b407c5c671bbafb74cf51c09414efec>.

<sup>5</sup> Universities Australia (2022), *University Startup Hubs*, [www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/our-universities/university-startup-hubs/](http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/our-universities/university-startup-hubs/).

<sup>6</sup> iAccelerate (2022), *Accelerate Your Idea. Grow Your Impact with iAccelerate*, [www.iaccelerate.com.au/](http://www.iaccelerate.com.au/).

<sup>7</sup> RMIT University (2022), *LaunchHUB*, [www.rmit.edu.au/partner/hubs/activator/startups/launch-hub](http://www.rmit.edu.au/partner/hubs/activator/startups/launch-hub).

<sup>8</sup> The Mill House Ventures (2020), *Mill House Social Enterprise Programs*, [www.millhouseventures.com.au/social-enterprise-programs/](http://www.millhouseventures.com.au/social-enterprise-programs/).

<sup>9</sup> Victoria University (2022), *BETA 2022 Pre-Accelerator Program*, [www.vu.edu.au/vu-rise-recover-innovate-sustain-evolve/about-vu-rise/beta-2022-pre-accelerator-program](http://www.vu.edu.au/vu-rise-recover-innovate-sustain-evolve/about-vu-rise/beta-2022-pre-accelerator-program).



## Access to facilities, equipment, and co-working spaces

10. Universities are developing state of the art facilities, co-working spaces, and innovation precincts, available to students to access as part of an accelerator program. Through the Melbourne Accelerator Program, students have access to the University of Melbourne's innovation hub that brings together research, industry, government, higher-degree students and other elite thinkers in a purpose-built precinct to foster collaboration and amplify innovation.<sup>10</sup> The University of Technology Sydney's UTS Startups program is a notable example of the creation of new startups at scale, with visits to 100 schools each year around NSW, and workshops for 5,000 UTS students each year. This program then provides free space and support to 490 active student-launched startups, in return for these startups participating in peer mentorship, providing internships and in-subject projects, and helping to inspire the next generation of founders.<sup>11</sup> These shared spaces and access to world-class facilities helps to strengthen concepts and build prototypes to get startups market ready.

## Pilot

11. Startup Year is commencing with a targeted pilot to test aspects of program design, gauge student demand, assess providers' capacity to deliver the program, and give providers (especially those in regional Australia and those with newer innovation and accelerator ecosystems) time to develop and accredit their accelerator courses prior to the full rollout of the initiative.
12. Startup Year pilot courses commence in 2024.
13. The Department of Education (the Department) has appointed a Startup Year Working Group, comprised of representatives from the university, business, and government sectors, to monitor the implementation and operation of Startup Year during the pilot. The Working Group's role includes providing advice to the Department on the Startup Year program settings and any other matters affecting program outcomes and objectives.
14. The Department will also work closely with participating providers to understand implementation challenges, the student experience, and areas for future improvement. The Department may call on participating providers to provide information to the Startup Year Working Group, including details of participant diversity, course attrition/completion rates, participant destination and outcomes information, and course evaluations.
15. Participating providers will be consulted on any changes to the policy in advance of the full rollout.

## Legislation

16. Part 3-7 of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) provides the legislative basis for STARTUP-HELP assistance.

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<sup>10</sup> The University of Melbourne (2022), *Australia's Leading Startup Accelerator*, [www.themap.co](http://www.themap.co).

<sup>11</sup> UTS (2022), *Techcelerator*, [www.uts.edu.au/about/faculty-engineering-and-information-technology/research-faculty-engineering-and-it/funding/ttechcelerator](http://www.uts.edu.au/about/faculty-engineering-and-information-technology/research-faculty-engineering-and-it/funding/ttechcelerator).

17. The *Higher Education Support (STARTUP-HELP) Guidelines 2023* (STARTUP-HELP Guidelines) provide further requirements on providers in relation to the operation of STARTUP-HELP.
18. The *Higher Education Support (Administration) Guidelines 2022* (Administration Guidelines) and the *Higher Education Provider Guidelines 2023* (HEP Guidelines) also impose requirements on providers in relation to the provision of accelerator program courses and STARTUP-HELP assistance.
19. This Handbook is not a legal document and does not create legal obligations. It should be read in conjunction with Part 3-7 of HESA, the STARTUP-HELP Guidelines, the Administration Guidelines and the HEP Guidelines, which place obligations on providers in relation to accelerator program courses and the provision of STARTUP-HELP assistance.

## Terminology

20. HESA refers to courses under the Startup Year program as “accelerator program courses.”
21. For the purposes of this handbook, any reference to “startup year courses” is interchangeable with “accelerator program course” as defined in HESA.

# Designing Startup Year courses

## Eligible providers

22. Only higher education providers that are registered by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency as Australian Universities or University Colleges are eligible to bid for and receive allocations of STARTUP-HELP places.

## Eligible Startup Year courses

23. HESA defines an “accelerator program course” as:

*A structured and integrated program of education and mentoring designed to develop a person’s skills, capabilities, and connections for startup businesses.*
24. Startup Year courses must:
  - a. Be at least 0.5 Equivalent Full Time Student Load (EFTSL) and no more than one EFTSL.
  - b. Not exceed the prescribed course costs for a Startup Year course (see below).
  - c. Lead to the award of a qualification accredited by the higher education provider.
  - d. Include assessment of student learning and performance.
  - e. Have a course description that includes learning outcomes.
  - f. Be designed to develop a person’s skills, capabilities, and connections for the purposes of startup businesses by satisfying (g) and (h) below.



- g. Develop student capabilities in financial literacy, communication, resilience, understanding business and markets, intellectual property management, and understanding domestic and international environments for startup success.
  - h. Create industry connections for the student, which may be through mentoring, work integrated learning or access to networks.
  - i. Incorporate arrangements to manage the intellectual property rights of students. These arrangements must provide that the intellectual property brought into the course or developed during the course by a student, remains with the student, unless otherwise agreed by the student, and include confidentiality requirements for Startup Year course students.
  - j. Include content designed to facilitate the participation of, and to support the learning of, groups that are underrepresented in startup businesses, which include, but are not limited to First Nations Australians, people with disability, and women.
  - k. Not be delivered to a student who is in receipt of FEE-HELP assistance for the course.
25. Providers have discretion in how they structure their accelerator program course and the qualification that it confers on students.
26. Providers must determine the EFTSL value of a Startup Year course based on the amount of time taken to complete the course on a full-time basis.

## Accreditation

- 27. Successful completion of Startup Year courses must result in the award of a qualification. This qualification should reflect the skills and knowledge the student has obtained over the duration of the course. This credentialling outcome should be an asset to participants as they move into the employment market.
- 28. Providers are required to self-accredit their Startup Year course using their standard accreditation procedures as far as practical.
- 29. Courses do not need to meet a specific level within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and can be a non-AQF qualification.

## Partnerships

- 30. Providers should build and leverage relationships with industry, non-government organisations and the broader startup ecosystem to support the delivery of Startup Year courses. These relationships will be essential to ensuring the skills delivered in the courses meet the sectors' requirements and that participants have access to networks, mentors, and expertise.

## Course costs

- 31. HESA sets the maximum course fee for Startup Year courses.

32. In 2024, a Startup Year course fee must not exceed \$12,720 for a course with an EFTSL value of one. This amount is linked to the legislated maximum student contribution amount specified for a place for a non-grandfathered student in a unit of study in Medicine, Dentistry or Veterinary Science. Startup Year courses do not attract an additional Commonwealth contribution.
33. As required by HESA, providers must charge all students in a Startup Year course the same course fee, whether or not the student is receiving STARTUP-HELP assistance in relation to the course.
34. For a course that has an EFTSL value of less than one EFTSL, the maximum course fee will be calculated using the same percentage as the EFTSL value. That is, if an accelerator program course has an EFTSL of 0.5, the maximum course fee will be 50% of \$12,720 (i.e. \$6,360).
35. Different service offerings and target cohorts will likely result in variable course costs between providers.

## Census date

36. Startup Year courses must have a census date no earlier than 20 per cent of the way through the program from commencement to completion date. There is only one census date for a single Startup Year course.
37. If a student withdraws from the Startup Year course after the census date, they are still required to pay the course fees. They will still have a STARTUP-HELP debt to repay and will lose any upfront payment made.
38. A student may apply to the provider for course fees to be repaid and/or for their STARTUP-HELP debt to be remitted, if the student's reason for not withdrawing by the census date is due to special circumstances. The student will need to provide evidence to prove that:
  - a. the special circumstances were beyond their control
  - b. the full impact occurred on or after the census date of the course, and
  - c. it was impracticable for them to complete the course.
39. Details of requirements relating to withdrawal from Startup Year courses are outlined in the HEP Guidelines and further information about special circumstances (and when certain elements of the special circumstances test are satisfied) are outlined in the Administration Guidelines.

## Course duration

40. There is no expectation that all Startup Year courses will be a full year in duration. Startup Year courses should be structured to have a duration that is no shorter than a semester and no longer than an academic year.



# Registration and application for STARTUP-HELP places

41. The Department invites providers to apply to register their Startup Year courses and bid for an allocation of STARTUP-HELP places. These processes will happen concurrently under the one application process.

## Pilot

42. Providers will bid for an allocation in 2024.
43. No more than 1,000 STARTUP-HELP places will be allocated in 2024.
44. Places will be allocated through a merit-based process. There is no guarantee that every EOI will be allocated places.

## Allocation to regional universities

45. As far as reasonably practicable, at least 25 per cent of all students selected for receipt of STARTUP-HELP assistance must be enrolled at a regional university.
46. As such, as far as reasonably practicable, at least 25 per cent of STARTUP-HELP places will be allocated to regional universities. HESA provides a list of regional universities at subsection 128B-40(2), and a regional university may also include a university, or a particular campus of a university, which is specified in the STARTUP-HELP Guidelines and is located in a Remoteness Area categorised under the ABS Remoteness Structure (as defined in HESA) as Inner Regional Australia, Outer Regional Australia, Remote Australia or Very Remote Australia.

## Application overview

47. All applications must be submitted through the form provided by the Department.
48. An accessible word version of the application form will be made available for application rounds.
49. The application form will require higher education providers to provide information about their proposed Startup Year course as outlined in Table 1.
50. Providers can apply to deliver more than one Startup Year course (that targets different needs or priorities, for example), so long as each course meets all course requirements.



**Table 1. Information about proposed Startup Year courses**

Feature	Description
1. Intended curriculum and structure of course	<i>Please limit your response to 500 words.</i>
2. Learning outcomes and skill development	<i>Set out the skills that students can develop through your program. This should read like a Learning Outcome section of a university course guide. Please limit this to <u>five</u> individual dot points.</i>
3. Participation by under-represented groups	<i>How will your Startup Year course facilitate and support the participation of underrepresented groups in the startup ecosystem, such as First Nations Australians, people with disability and women?</i>  <i>Please limit your response to 250 words.</i>
4. Location of course	<i>Where will your Startup Year course be delivered? Will your course support startups solving regional and rural issues?</i>
5. Partnerships	<i>Please list any partners, including industry, social venture, or non-government partners, who will be involved in the Startup Year course, and their contribution to the course.</i>
6. Qualification	<i>Please provide the name of the qualification a student will obtain from completing the Startup Year course.</i>
7. Course's EFTSL value and mode of delivery	<i>EFTSL value must be between 0.5 and 1.</i>
8. Course duration	<i>Please provide the duration in weeks.</i>
9. Expected contact hours per week	<i>This should only refer to teaching time (not any additional reading time).</i>
10. Anticipated course cost	<i>Provide an estimated figure to the nearest dollar. The Department understands that the final dollar figure may change between now and the course rollout, noting that fees cannot exceed the maximum course fee set under HESA.</i>
11. STARTUP-HELP places	<i>How many STARTUP-HELP places are requested:</i> <i>I. Preferred</i> <i>II. Minimum for viability</i>



**Table 1. Information about proposed Startup Year courses**

Feature	Description
12. Capacity to deliver	<p><i>Describe either:</i></p> <p class="list-item-l1">I. Your track record in providing accelerator or incubator support services and fostering entrepreneurial skills acquisition; or</p> <p class="list-item-l1">II. Your ability to deliver the proposed Startup Year course.</p> <p><i>Please limit your response to 250 words.</i></p>

## Assessment

51. The Department will convene an assessment panel, including representatives with industry, startup or venture capital experience, and government experience, to assess the Startup Year course and make recommendations about registration of Startup Year courses and allocation of the limited number of STARTUP-HELP loans available.
52. The following matters will be considered in determining the allocation of STARTUP-HELP places:
  - a. The number of places requested.
  - b. The value proposition to students, including: the skills, knowledge, experiences, and qualification they will obtain; the extent to which the course content has practical application i.e., Test, Trial and Learn; and the cost of the course.
  - c. The networks and engagement opportunities (for students) with key agents in the startup ecosystem such as venture capital fund managers, angel investors, successful entrepreneurs, and other industry partners (domestic and overseas).
  - d. The likelihood that the plan to support participation by underrepresented groups, (such as First Nations Australians, people with disability and women) or startups solving regional and rural issues, will achieve increased engagement from cohorts and areas that are traditionally underrepresented in the startup ecosystem. This will include consideration of course marketing and recruitment as well as course content and partnerships.
  - e. Experience or track record in providing accelerator or incubator support services and fostering entrepreneurial skills acquisition or the ability to do so.
  - f. The accelerator ecosystem and the diversity of program offerings in the marketplace, including supporting innovative approaches to delivery and ensuring additionality to pre-existing course offerings.
  - g. Any program alignment to the National Reconstruction Fund's priority areas.
  - h. The geographic spread of Startup Year courses and students across Australia with a focus on regional and rural areas, and areas of low higher education participation.



53. These matters will not be used as weighted selection criteria. They reflect the span of matters that will be considered when assessing a proposed Startup Year course.

## Outcome of application

54. All providers will be advised of the outcome of their application via email from the Department.

## Allocation beyond the pilot period

55. The Department will allocate STARTUP-HELP places to successful universities annually for the first two/three years of the program.

# Selecting students for STARTUP-HELP

## Selecting students for Startup Year courses and STARTUP-HELP

56. The provider must maintain a STARTUP-HELP policy, and select students for STARTUP-HELP in accordance with that policy. This policy must be publicly available.
57. The provider must use open, fair, and transparent procedures for making decisions about the selection of students for STARTUP-HELP assistance.
58. The provider's STARTUP-HELP policy must facilitate the participation of groups that are underrepresented in the startup ecosystem.
59. A provider is not prevented from taking into account educational disadvantages a student has experienced when selecting students for a Startup Year course and STARTUP-HELP assistance.
60. If enrolling full-fee paying students in their Startup Year course, providers will need to ensure they are meeting the relevant legislative requirements (for example, the requirements found in the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011*, the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*). Enrolling in a Startup Year course ('accelerator program course') would also need to be consistent with an international student's visa status and requirements.
61. Providers can accept and enrol students into Startup Year courses from other institutions.
62. There is no requirement for students to be pursuing a specific startup venture for entry into Startup Year courses. This remains at the discretion of the provider.



## Student eligibility

63. Student eligibility for STARTUP-HELP will operate in a similar manner to existing HELP types, with additional requirements.<sup>12</sup>
64. These additional requirements are that the student:
  - a. Be either:
    - ii. Enrolled in the final year of an undergraduate course on and after the census date for the Startup Year course
    - iii. Enrolled in a postgraduate course on and after the census date for the Startup Year course, or
    - iv. A recent graduate awarded an AQF qualification at level 7, 8, 9 or 10 no more than 36 months prior to commencing the Startup Year course.
  - b. Not have received STARTUP-HELP assistance more than once before
  - c. Be selected by the provider for receipt of STARTUP-HELP assistance.
65. If a student is enrolled in two or more Startup Year courses at the same time, the student is entitled to STARTUP-HELP assistance for only one course.

## Determining STARTUP-HELP eligibility

66. A provider must not select a student for STARTUP-HELP unless the provider is satisfied the student meets all of the eligibility criteria.
67. Providers can access information using the Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI) on how many STARTUP-HELP loans have been reported to the Department for a student.

## Notifying students of their STARTUP-HELP application outcome

68. Providers must notify students who apply for STARTUP-HELP assistance of the outcome of the selection process, in writing on a university letterhead.

## Commonwealth Assistance Notice requirements

69. Providers must give any students who receive STARTUP-HELP assistance a Commonwealth Assistance Notice (CAN) within 28 days of the census date for the Startup Year course. The CAN must include the:

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<sup>12</sup> Other eligibility requirements are that the student meets the citizenship and residency requirements, is primarily studying on an Australian campus, is assessed by the provider as a genuine student and academically suitable for the course, is enrolled in the Startup Year course on or before the census date, has a unique student identifier, meets tax file number requirements, and submits a *Request for STARTUP-HELP loan form* to their provider by the census date. Requirements for determining 'genuine students' are outlined in the HEP Guidelines.

- a. course identification code
- b. course census date
- c. course EFTSL value
- d. course fee amount
- e. amount of any up-front payments
- f. amount of STARTUP-HELP assistance, and
- g. amount of STARTUP-HELP debt.

70. Details of CAN requirements are outlined in HESA and the Administration Guidelines.

## Managing your allocation

- 71. A provider cannot select a greater number of students for STARTUP-HELP assistance than the number advised by the Department, even if the provider has a sufficient amount of funding to do so.
- 72. Providers may enrol students into their course who have not been selected for STARTUP-HELP assistance. These students will not be able to defer their course costs. They must pay upfront the full fee costs of participation. A provider must require any domestic or international student enrolling in a Startup Year course to pay the same fee for the course as those in receipt of STARTUP-HELP assistance.
- 73. The Department will conduct a reconciliation of STARTUP-HELP funds/places allocated in the previous year, and unused STARTUP-HELP funds will be recovered.

## Information about loans

- 74. Like other types of HELP, students eligible for STARTUP-HELP assistance will incur a debt to the Commonwealth of the amount of assistance on a pre-determined census date. A student's STARTUP-HELP loan will be included in their accumulated HELP debt. Students repay their accumulated HELP debt through the taxation system once their repayment income is above the minimum repayment threshold for compulsory repayments.
- 75. STARTUP-HELP is not included in the combined HELP loan limit, which caps what students can borrow from the Australian Government.
- 76. Students undertaking Startup Year courses can be charged a student services and amenities fee (SSAF) and are therefore entitled to receive SA-HELP assistance.
- 77. Students can find information about STARTUP-HELP on the Study Assist page at [www.studyassist.gov.au](http://www.studyassist.gov.au). Students will be able to view information about their personal STARTUP-HELP loans at [www.myHELPbalance.gov.au](http://www.myHELPbalance.gov.au).
- 78. Students must read the STARTUP-HELP information booklet before applying for STARTUP-HELP assistance.

# Publication requirements

## Information to be published about Startup Year courses

79. Providers must publish the following information about Startup Year courses on their website:
  - a. census date
  - b. EFTSL value, and how it was determined
  - c. mode of delivery
  - d. whether the course will be delivered by the provider or a third party
  - e. the availability of STARTUP-HELP assistance
  - f. any limits or conditions on the STARTUP-HELP assistance available that have been imposed on the provider
  - g. the course fee, or a schedule of the course fees for all Startup Year courses offered by the provider.
80. This information must be prominent, easily accessible, and published before the earliest enrolment date and remain published until the end of the course at a minimum.
81. The provider's STARTUP-HELP policy must also be publicly available.
82. Details of publication requirements are outlined in HESA and the HEP Guidelines.

# Course audit requirements

## Startup Year course audit requirements

83. If 20 per cent or more of students in a Startup Year course have made a complaint about the course within 12 months of the end date of the course, the provider must conduct an internal audit, or arrange for an audit to be conducted, of the course's compliance with the requirements for accelerator program courses included in the STARTUP-HELP Guidelines.
84. Details of audit requirements, including the circumstances in which they must be conducted or arranged and when and how they must be undertaken, are outlined in the STARTUP-HELP Guidelines.
85. If an audit finds any material non-compliance with Startup Year course requirements in the STARTUP-HELP Guidelines, the amount of STARTUP-HELP assistance that a student has received will be reversed and the provider must repay the Commonwealth and/or the student any amounts paid to the provider for the course.
86. Details of requirements for Startup Year course grievance procedures are outlined in the HEP Guidelines.



## Student support payments

87. Students entitled to STARTUP-HELP assistance may qualify for relevant student support payments, including Youth Allowance, Austudy and Pensioner Education Supplement as well as ABSTUDY (should they meet other eligibility requirements) while undertaking a Startup Year course.
88. For other courses of study at a higher education provider, such as an undergraduate degree, a student's entitlement to student support payments is not contingent on their HELP loan status. For Startup Year courses, entitlement to a STARTUP-HELP loan is a key eligibility requirement.

## Evidence requirements

89. Students will need evidence of their entitlement to a STARTUP-HELP loan for Services Australia to process a claim for student support payments. Ideally this would occur prior to course commencement so the student has financial support from the earliest possible time.
90. Once a student's loan status is confirmed in the TCSI system (Unit enrolment packet: E384, E381, E529, E558), Services Australia will have access to that information and be able to validate a student's STARTUP-HELP loan status. Providers are encouraged to report STARTUP-HELP loan information as soon as practicable. Despite this, the Department is aware that there is often a delay between when an enrolment is reported and when the loan details are known and reported.
91. To ensure students are not unfairly disadvantaged by delays in reporting, providers must also provide students with written advice that they have been offered a STARTUP-HELP loan. This advice can be incorporated into the letter of offer to the Startup Year course.
92. Written advice must be provided on a university letterhead and signed by an academic registrar or equivalent.

## Part-time students

93. A student cannot combine part-time participation in a Startup Year course with part-time participation in an undergraduate/postgraduate course to meet the participation requirements for student support payments. This is consistent with the current rules for participation in multiple undergraduate degrees on a part-time basis.
94. Given this, providers should give due consideration to how they structure their course offerings. The following are examples of where an undergraduate student would be eligible for student support payments:
  - a. The student is undertaking at least 75% of a normal full-time study-load in at least one of the Startup Year course or the degree (75% of the normal amount of full-time study is considered a full-time study-load for income support purposes);
  - b. The Startup Year course is offered as Honours study following an initial degree; or

- c. The Startup Year course is offered as part of a combined course (this course must have a **unique** course code and be included in the university handbook).
95. The Department notes that the onus is on the student to understand the requirements of their student support payment and to consider the implications of enrolment in Startup Year courses on any income support entitlements they may have.
96. At the provider's request, the Department can work with the Department of Social Services to assist a provider to understand the implications of proposed arrangements on student payment eligibility.

## System requirements and reporting

### Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI)

97. The Department has integrated STARTUP-HELP into TCSI to support providers to meet their reporting obligations under HESA and reporting of student STARTUP-HELP debt through the taxation system.
98. Providers allocated STARTUP-HELP places will be required to take any steps, including ICT upgrades, necessary to ensure they successfully provide and report loans to students.
99. Providers must not bid for STARTUP-HELP places if they cannot commit to making the requisite ICT upgrades or having other arrangements in place in time to meet their reporting obligations.
100. Providers with queries about TCSI reporting and the TCSI system can contact [TCSIsupport@education.gov.au](mailto:TCSIsupport@education.gov.au).

### Electronic Commonwealth Assistance Forms (eCAF)

101. The Department has developed a new eCAF for STARTUP-HELP assistance.
102. If a provider does not have access to the Government eCAF system they can request access by emailing [HEenquiries@education.gov.au](mailto:HEenquiries@education.gov.au), and further information will be provided on how to use the eCAF system. Once access is granted a provider can choose to link their student management system via API or manual upload of student data. Providers using a non-Government eCAF will still require access to the Government eCAF system to build their STARTUP-HELP eCAF.
103. All providers that receive an allocation of STARTUP-HELP places will be granted access in the HELP IT System (HITS) to offer this new loan type.



## Additional information

104. The Department welcomes questions, feedback, or comments on the Startup Year initiative.
105. You can submit them via email at [Startup.Year@education.gov.au](mailto:Startup.Year@education.gov.au).

