



Factsheet – Recognition of Pathways Arrangements

The Australian Government recognises the importance and value of embedded university pathways providers (EUPPs or “pathways providers”) to the Australian higher education sector and is supporting their high-quality partnership arrangements with universities in a way that ensures long-term stability and sustainability.

The Government also wants to support partnerships between TAFE providers and universities that promote a more joined-up tertiary system and help Australia meet its skills challenges.

In May 2025, the Department of Education formed the University Pathways Working Group, comprising Government and sector representatives, which provided advice on treatment of international pathways students progressing to a university course under managed growth settings.

Through consultation with this group, Government has developed an approach to support high-quality partnership arrangements between pathways providers and universities.

Embedded University Pathways Provider NOSC Exemption

From 2026, a student starting a higher education course at a publicly-funded university will be exempt from the National Planning Level (NPL) and will not count as a new overseas student commencement (NOSC) where that student has recently completed a higher education course at an embedded university pathways provider affiliated with the university.

This means an overseas student will count as a NOSC against the EUPP’s allocation upon commencement of a higher education course at that EUPP but will not count against the affiliated university’s allocation upon commencement of the degree qualification.

The university and the EUPP will also have the flexibility to agree a redistribution of their respective NOSC allocations by notifying the department.

The exemption does not apply if the student has undertaken a course at the embedded university pathways provider that is outside the NPL (e.g. non-award foundation studies or ELICOS).

Embedded University Pathways Provider definition

To be eligible for the NOSC exemption, the EUPP must meet the following definition.

An embedded university pathways provider:

- prepares students for entry into degree programs at the affiliated university (whether, for international students, under the same CRICOS registration, or a separate CRICOS registration to the affiliated university), and
- delivers programs* which are:
 - principally intended as a pathway to degree programs at the affiliated university, and
 - developed in conjunction with the affiliated university, and
 - integrated into the affiliated university's operating model (i.e. students from these pathway programs represent a consistently significant component of the relevant university degree programs and are factored into the university's business and academic delivery planning), and
 - accredited or otherwise recognised by the affiliated university; and
- has an enforceable, established agreement in place with the affiliated university which demonstrates a shared commitment to high quality delivery and the close integration of the pathway programs with the university's operations through:
 - joint academic, governance or business structures with the affiliated university (for example, oversight of pathways provider program design and delivery by the university academic board or similar arrangement with substantial representation from the university, or approval from the affiliated university to include the university's name in their trading name), or
 - evidence of partnership arrangements with the affiliated university for third party academic delivery which have been reported to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Authority (TEQSA) in accordance with Section 5.4 of the [*Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021*](#).

*This includes non-award foundation programs, ELICOS programs, higher education diploma programs and pre-masters programs.

Typically, each university will only have one embedded university pathways provider, outside of exceptional circumstances (e.g. university merger, transfer of contract arrangements) or arrangements with TAFE providers.

The exemption only applies:

- When the student completes their higher education pathway course and continues on to commence a program at an affiliated university.
- The student continues to count as a NOSC if they were to commence at a non-affiliated university.



- Where pathway providers operate under a separate CRICOS code to the university.
 - In cases where an EUPP operates under the same CRICOS code as the university, the student is already only counted as a NOSC once.
- When the EUPP satisfies the criteria outlined in the above definition.
 - The exemption is not intended to capture all articulation arrangements between providers.
- If the student commences at the affiliated university within 12 months of completing their course at the EUPP.
- In respect to the first course undertaken by the student at the affiliated university that would otherwise count as a NOSC (e.g., if a student undertakes subsequent courses following completion of the course for which the university received a NOSC exemption, the subsequent qualifications will count as a NOSC).

TAFE Arrangements

The Government also highly values TAFE partnerships with universities. To make more seamless transitions possible between VET and higher education and vice versa, the Government is establishing equivalent arrangements where there is a strong pathway relationship for international students between TAFE study and a university course.

Recognition of TAFE arrangements in relation to international students could occur when there is a written agreement in place between the TAFE and the affiliated university that

- specifies the relevant TAFE and university courses and the associated articulation arrangements, and
- involves further commitments from the TAFE and affiliated university in relation to matters such as any shared curriculum or joint academic delivery, application and admissions processes, agent relationships and administration of student records in PRISMS.

Action Required

Public universities will receive correspondence from the department inviting them to nominate their affiliated EUPP. Provided the nominated EUPP satisfies the criteria outlined in the definition, the department will apply the NOSC exemption upon the student's commencement at the affiliated university.

Please note that the department may conduct further enquiries to ensure the nominated pathway relationship satisfies the definition for the purpose of the NOSC exemption.

