

Frequently asked questions - masters by coursework application and assessment process

1. When should higher education providers (providers) submit applications for Masters courses to be approved for student payments eligibility purposes?

Applications for the Masters by coursework assessment process must be received by DSS on or before the closing date specified in the letter of invitation at at www.dss.gov.au/masters. It is important that providers submit new masters courses or those requiring reassessment as part of the assessment round conducted prior to the academic semester/year that the new or revised course will commence. Students enrolled in unapproved Masters courses are not eligible for student payments such as Youth Allowance or Austudy.

2. What information should be provided with an application?

Providers should complete a separate application form for each new course submitted for assessment. Evidence of accreditation must be provided.

3. Can providers submit late applications, or obtain an extension to submit an application?

Contact mastersapps@dss.gov.au if you require a reasonable extension.

4. Do providers need to reapply for approval of their Masters courses each year?

No. Masters courses that have already been approved and are listed under Schedule 3 of the Student Assistance (Education Institutions and Courses) Determination 2019 (the Determination) under Section 5(D) of the *Student Assistance Act 1973* continue to be approved for student payment purposes.

5. Why aren't all Masters courses approved for student payments?

Student payments are intended to support students to gain an initial qualification to enter the workforce. A course considered desirable for professional development but not required for an entry level position will not meet the criteria for approval. Courses may also be approved where they are the fastest pathway or the only pathway to a profession offered by the higher education provider.

Masters courses are considered on a course-by-course and institution-by-institution basis. Masters courses that are approved at one institution will not necessarily be approved at another institution given variations in course structures, duration and other course offerings at the institution.

6. Can Masters courses with early exit points ('nested' qualifications) be approved for student payment purposes?

Masters courses with 'nested' qualifications allow students to exit early and be granted a lower level award, such as a Graduate Diploma. If the lower level award is sufficient for professional entry, the masters course will not meet the criteria for approval.

If a student is enrolled in a Masters course that is not approved for student payments purposes then they are not eligible for student payments for any component of their study. To be eligible for student payments, the student must be enrolled in the lower level award.

7. How do providers demonstrate that a Masters course is required for entry to a profession?

When demonstrating that a Masters course is essential for entry to a profession, providers must submit documentary evidence that the qualification is a legal requirement

to practice in the field, or a professional pre-requisite for registration with the relevant professional body.

8. Does a Masters course need to be accredited prior to being approved?

If a masters course is a pre-requisite for registration for professional practice, the course must be fully accredited by the relevant accreditation/registration authority. Applications for courses with qualifying, provisional or conditional accreditation cannot be accepted. Relevant proof of full accreditation must be provided for the application to be approved. If full accreditation has not yet been granted but is likely to be granted four weeks after applications close, please contact mastersapps@dss.gov.au for further advice.

9. What does 'fastest pathway to entry into a profession' mean?

Fastest entry to a profession means that a masters course is the fastest pathway for a student to attain an entry level formal qualification for professional practice offered by the provider. For example, a person with a three-year undergraduate degree wishing to change careers may be eligible to receive student payments to undertake a two-year Masters by coursework degree as opposed to another undergraduate degree, as this would be the fastest pathway to professional entry.

10. Are masters by research courses eligible for approval?

No. Only Masters by coursework level qualifications that meet the selection criteria will be approved.

11. Are Honours courses eligible?

Integrated Masters (Honours) courses may not be approved if the corresponding non-honours Masters course is already included in the Determination. This is because the non-honours course will provide a faster pathway to professional entry.

12. Does my combined Bachelor/Masters course need to be submitted for approval?

All Bachelor courses offered by a HELP approved higher education provider are already approved for student payment purposes under social security law.

Where a Masters courses is offered individually and as a combined Bachelor/Master, only the Masters component needs to be submitted for assessment under this program. However, if the Masters course is only available as a combined Bachelor/Master, the combined course should be submitted for assessment.

12. Do providers need to advise DSS when a course name changes?

Yes. Any course which has changed name must be notified through the course approval process. Providers should complete and submit the Masters by Coursework - Change of course name available at www.dss.gov.au/masters.

Approved Masters courses have the specific name of the course and the provider listed under Schedule 3 of the Determination. Any variance in course name or provider to that listed under the Determination will mean the course is not approved for student payment purposes. If the name of a course changes, the only way for a student to continue receiving student payments is to remain enrolled under the course which already appears on the Determination until it is updated

It is important to note on the change of name application form if there are still students enrolled under the old course name and when they last cohort is likely to complete the course.

13. Should providers notify DSS when an approved Masters course has been discontinued?

Yes. If a Masters course has been discontinued the provider must notify DSS. Students currently receiving payments who are still enrolled and completing their studies will continue to be eligible for student payments until the course is completed, or there is a break in their entitlement.

While policy is for students still undertaking discontinued courses to continue receiving student payments, this can affect eligibility for payment, for example if there is a break in study or a student becomes eligible to receive student payments during the course. Therefore, providers should wait for all students to complete a discontinued course before requesting the course be removed from the Determination.

14. How and when will providers be notified of the outcome of their application?

Notification will be provided in writing to the Vice-Chancellor or CEO of the institution.

15. Where can providers find more information regarding the assessment processes?

Information regarding the process is available in the Guidelines for the Approval of Masters Courses for Student Payments at www.dss.gov.au/masters. For more information and assistance, providers should email their queries to: mastersapps@dss.gov.au.