

Guidelines for Issuing NSW Tertiary Student Concessions

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1. Preamble

This document sets out the following:

- (a) mandatory guidelines in respect of registration of tertiary institutions registered under either the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (Cth)* or the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cth)* (**Institutions**) with Transport for NSW (**TfNSW**) for participation in the Scheme (as defined in section 2 below);
- (b) eligibility criteria for concession travel entitlements on public transport in NSW for tertiary students; and
- (c) how concession travel entitlements, proof of entitlement cards and concession Opal cards (**Concessions**) should be verified and issued to eligible tertiary students, where relevant.

Institutions will not be authorised to issue, or verify eligibility for, Concessions unless they agree to comply with the guidelines contained within this document, and varied from time to time by TfNSW, and such other documents as notified to Institutions. Failure by an Institution to comply with these Guidelines may result in the cancellation of the Institution's registration in the Scheme.

Tertiary students must meet the eligibility criteria for Concessions - see sections 5 to 9 of this document and must comply with the terms and conditions of use for Concessions as notified by TfNSW, on application.

2. Background

TfNSW is responsible for delivering the NSW Government's vision of creating an integrated transport system focused on the customer. As part of this task, TfNSW administers a number of schemes approved by the Minister for Transport for subsidised travel on passenger services, including a range of transport concessions for certain target groups.

Transport concessions are a valuable benefit provided to eligible recipients at the expense of NSW taxpayers. It is therefore important that TfNSW manages the issue of transport concessions in a way that ensures access for persons who are entitled to a transport concession, while reducing the risk of transport concessions being provided to persons who do not meet the relevant eligibility criteria set by the NSW Government.

To achieve this, TfNSW requires customers purchasing or using concession tickets to prove their entitlement to this transport concession.

For tertiary students, Concessions are available to students who meet the eligibility criteria set out in this document.

In order to make applying for Concessions an easy and positive experience for customers, and to reduce the cost of the administration of Concessions for NSW taxpayers, TfNSW authorises certain Institutions to participate in its scheme to:

- (a) assess and verify students' eligibility for Concessions on behalf of TfNSW;
- (b) provide TfNSW with certain students' personal information to allow TfNSW to verify students' identity, assess their eligibility for Concessions and approve of the issuance of Concessions to students

((a) and (b) together being the **Scheme**).

2.1. Registration of Institutions

Institutions must:

- (a) be registered under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (Cth)*; or
- (b) be a "NVR registered training organisation" as defined in the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cth)*; and
- (c) register with TfNSW to participate in the Scheme; and
- (d) comply with the requirements set out in this document and other terms and conditions as notified to the Institution by TfNSW.

An Institution's authorisation to assess and verify students' eligibility for Concessions may be revoked if it does not comply with these guidelines or other applicable Scheme documents.

An Institution must not engage another agency or commercial organisation to assess and verify students' eligibility for Concessions, or to comply with any other obligations of the Scheme, on its behalf.

3. Students' privacy

3.1. Students' privacy consents (not applicable to students at Web Services Institutions described at Section 4.2)

Students who may apply for Concessions must agree to the release of certain personal information from the Institution to TfNSW for the following purposes:

- (a) to determine whether the student meets the eligibility requirements for Concessions, as set by TfNSW pursuant to relevant legislation such as the *Transport Administration Act 1988 (NSW)* and other legislation;
- (b) to validate applications from students for Concessions;
- (c) to support the administration of Concessions by TfNSW; and
- (d) such other directly related purposes relating to the issuance and maintenance of Concessions such as audit, management and operational activities in respect of Concessions by TfNSW.

Students who do not agree to the disclosure of their personal information by their Institutions to TfNSW for these purposes cannot have their eligibility for Concessions assessed.

The form of privacy consent will be provided by the Institution to students, either in an online or paper form.

A copy of the paper form can also be downloaded from the TfNSW Concessions website at <http://www.transportnsw.info/document/1806/tertiary-student-concession-card.pdf>. When submitting consent forms, students must have completed all relevant details before their eligibility can be assessed.

Students must consent to the disclosure of personal information by their Institution before applying for Concessions.

On receipt of the student's consent to the disclosure, Institutions must provide TfNSW with the student's relevant personal information to allow TfNSW to check the eligibility of students who apply for Concessions.

The Institution must check the applicant's enrolment status against its student database, and only verify eligibility for Concessions for applicants who meet the eligibility criteria.

4.2 Web Services Institutions

Web Services Institutions are listed at <https://transportnsw.info/tertiary-students>.

Web Services Institutions validate a student's eligibility using a web services validation process.

Students of Web Services Institutions, when applying for a Concession via TfNSW, consent to TfNSW sharing personal information with Web Services Institutions for the purpose of verifying eligibility and issuing and managing Concessions.

5. Eligibility criteria

Concessions must only be issued to students who meet the eligibility criteria for concession travel entitlements specified below (or the alternative criteria in sections 6 to 9). Concessions are not an automatic entitlement for all tertiary students.

A Concession may be issued to a student who:

- (a) is an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia; and
- (b) resides in New South Wales; and
- (c) is enrolled in a VET accredited course (as defined in the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cth)*) with the Institution; or
- (d) is enrolled in an accredited course of study with a registered higher education provider (as defined in the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011(Cth)*); and

- (e) is a full-time student enrolled on an internal basis (except where a person, by reason of disability, is enrolled on a part-time basis and/or on an external basis); and
- (f) has agreed to the terms and conditions for use of a Concession and has consented to the disclosure of certain personal information to TfNSW by their Institution.

For the purposes of administering Concessions, 'a full-time student' means:

- (a) a university student who is considered to be enrolled on a full-time basis by their university; or
- (b) a student at an Institution other than a university who is enrolled in an accredited course of study requiring at least 16 hours per week of classes for a continuous period of at least six weeks.

Where an Institution is uncertain about an applicant's status, clarification should be sought from TfNSW. Where the matter remains unclear, the Institution should submit a formal request for clarification to TfNSW, along with relevant background information.

6. Eligibility criteria for students in prevocational courses

Students who are enrolled in certain prevocational courses, which are funded by the NSW Government, may be eligible for Concessions.

A Concession may be issued to a student who:

- (a) is an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia; and
- (b) resides in New South Wales; and
- (c) is enrolled in an Australian Qualifications Framework accredited higher education or vocational education and training course at an Institution authorised by TfNSW to participate in the Scheme; and
- (d) is enrolled in a prevocational course funded by a NSW Government agency, requiring attendance of 16 hours per week (which may include a compulsory, unpaid work experience component) for at least six weeks; and
- (e) has agreed to the terms and conditions for use of a Concession and has consented to the disclosure of certain personal information to TfNSW by their Institution.

7. Exemptions for students with disability

Students who, because of their disability, are unable to undertake studies on a full-time basis and/or an internal basis may be eligible for Concessions.

A student is eligible for an exemption if, following an application by the student, an appropriately qualified disability support officer, employed by the Institution, certifies that the applicant's disability prevents them from being able to undertake a full-time study load and/or to enrol as an internal student. This certification must be based

on the Institution's disability support officer's professional assessment of the student's disability and whether it prevents the student from meeting the requirement to be enrolled full-time and/or as an internal student.

Any student applying for a Concession on this basis must still satisfy all other eligibility criteria for a Concession, as set out in section 5 of these guidelines.

Where a student is eligible for an exemption, and subject to the student meeting other eligibility criteria, Institutions are authorised to:

- confirm the eligibility of the student to TfNSW for the purpose of TfNSW issuing a Concession.

Institutions must retain complete and accurate records of all students deemed eligible for a Concession because their disability prevents them from meeting the requirement to be a full-time student and/or enrolled as an internal student, this must include the disability support officer's assessment and certification.

8. NSW residency criterion

To be eligible for a Concession, a student must reside in NSW. As a general rule, students are considered to meet this criterion if they habitually sleep at and return to a residence within NSW on days when they are attending classes.

Institutions should take reasonable steps to apply this rule, which may include:

- (a) verifying that each student's primary or residential address, as recorded by the Institution, is in NSW;
- (b) verifying that each student's mailing address, as recorded by the Institution, is in NSW; or
- (c) asking students applying for Concessions where they are residing on days when classes are held.

Students who are residing in another State or Territory on days when classes are held and returning to a residence in NSW at other times (such as on weekends and during breaks between semesters) are not considered to be NSW residents for Concession eligibility.

Institutions that have concerns about how to apply this criterion should contact TfNSW to discuss appropriate procedures.

9. International students' scholarships and exchange program coverage

Overseas students on temporary visas are only eligible for Concessions when they meet all eligibility criteria set out in section 5, excluding permanent residency, and are in receipt of an approved Australian Government scholarship or exchange position, fully-funded by the Australian Government. Scholarships under the programs specified below are those currently approved for access to Concessions:

The **Australian Government Scholarships** program, comprising:

- The **Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarships** funded by the Department of Education for full research scholarships
- The **Endeavour Postgraduate Scholarships and Vocational Education and Training Scholarships**
- The **Australian Awards** (two scholarship streams) funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for full scholarships.

TfNSW receives applications, from time to time, to approve certain Australian Government scholarships or exchange programs so that the student holding the scholarship or participating in the exchange program is eligible for Concessions. Where TfNSW approves a new scholarship or exchange program, Institutions will be notified at the e-mail address provided as part of their application for registration.

Students holding scholarships and exchange places are not eligible to apply for Concessions where:

- (a) They have not met the same entry standards as a resident student for the same course.
- (b) Their course is not being funded by the Australian Government, such as:
 - Australian Institutions using funding sources other than from the above-specified Australian Government programs; or
 - Governments other than the Australian Government.
- (c) Students are enrolled in non-government organisations operating within Australia and/or external to it, such as:
 - Private/commercial organisations; or
 - International, charitable and religious organisations.
- (d) They are recipients of scholarship and exchange places who also receive supplementary funding from sources such as:
 - A salary, part salary or other financial benefit paid by their home country, sponsoring organisation or scholarship provider;
 - A part scholarship funded by an Australian institution or group of institutions, in combination with the student's home country or other country or other organisation; or
 - Income arising from compulsory work experience undertaken while in Australia (for example, a medical intern).
- (e) They are volunteer placements of international students by Institutions or research institutions.

- (f) They are paid research positions under funding programs operated by Commonwealth or State agencies, such as the Department of Industry.

10. Types of Concessions

Eligible students may be issued with the following Concessions:

Concession proof of entitlements

Within the Opal network:

- an approved tertiary institution student identification card, issued by tertiary institutions (see section 11) or,
- a transport Concession Entitlement Card.

Outside the Opal network:

- A Transport Concession Entitlement Card which is issued by TfNSW through the TfNSW website.

Note: Tertiary institution student ID cards are not valid for use in rural and regional areas; a transport Concession Entitlement Card must be obtained for travel.

Concession Tickets

- A **Concession Opal card**, issued by TfNSW through the TfNSW website.

(Note: A proof of entitlement, for instance a Transport Concession Entitlement Card or an Approved Form of Student ID will need to be carried at all times when travelling with a Concession Opal card).

- A concession rural and regional ticket, issued by rural and regional transport operators.

11. Approved Forms of Student ID Cards

An Approved Form of Student ID can be used by students as their proof of entitlement to concession travel within the Opal network.

TfNSW will issue a list of Institutions that have approved Student ID cards at www.transportnsw.info/tertiary-students. Students of these Institutions will be able to use their Student ID as proof of entitlement to concession travel within the Opal network.

For a Student ID Card to be considered as an Approved Form of Student ID:

- (a) the Student ID must meet the minimum standards for acceptable Student ID cards as set out in Section 11.1 and 11.2; and
- (b) the Student ID must have been evaluated and approved by TfNSW as meeting these criteria (see Section 11.3).

11.1 Approved Student ID minimum standards criteria

The minimum standards for an acceptable Student ID are set out below. The card must:

- be printed on PVC credit card stock;

- display the first name and last name of the student;
- display the name of the Institution the student is attending;
- display the student's Student ID Number; and
- include a photo of the student.

11.2 Approved Student ID minimum standards criteria for digital apps

The minimum standards for an acceptable Student ID within a digital app are set out below.

- The digital ID must be displayed in an app;
- display that the digital document is a student card;
- display the first name and last name of the student;
- display the name of the institution the student is attending;
- display the student's Student ID Number;
- include a photo of the student; and
- include a security feature which verifies that the student card is active, such as:
 - If housed in a tertiary institution issued app, it must include a moving hologram and provide real-time validation through updates to the date and time displayed; or
 - If housed in the digital device's wallet, it must be active and have an interactive feature (such as the ability to display additional information if requested)

11.3 Student ID evaluation and approval process

The evaluation and approval process for Student IDs are as follows:

- For initial evaluation and approval:
 - Institution to submit samples of all existing Student IDs to TfNSW for evaluation against the minimum standards criteria.
 - TfNSW to evaluate the Student ID samples against the criteria in 11.1 and 11.2 as applicable; and
 - TfNSW to issue a letter to the Institution confirming if the Student ID has been approved, and if approved TfNSW will update the list of Institutions that have approved Student IDs and the format in which these IDs are approved.
- For on-going Student ID approvals:
 - Institution to submit samples of Student IDs if any changes are made to the design that will affect the Student ID's approval status to TfNSW for re- evaluation against the minimum standards criteria; and
 - TfNSW will contact Institutions annually to remind them of the requirement to submit Student IDs when changes are made.

Note: For travel outside the Opal network, only the Transport Concession Entitlement Card will be accepted as proof of entitlement to concession travel.

12. Applying for Concessions

- Electronic tickets, such as Concession Opal cards

For Concessions which are electronic tickets, such as Concession Opal cards, applicants must apply for such tickets directly via the TfNSW website <https://transportnsw.info/tertiary-students>

(b) Transport Concession Entitlement Card

For a TfNSW issued Transport Entitlement Concession Card, applicants must apply via <https://transportnsw.info/tertiary-students>.

13. Record keeping, reporting and audit

Institutions must keep accurate electronic records of:

- (a) student's privacy consents;
- (b) all students who are eligible for Concessions; and
- (c) students with a disability who have been approved for concessions outside of eligibility criteria.

These records must include:

- a. name of student;
- b. student number;
- c. date of birth;
- d. immigration status;
- e. study load (i.e. full time/part time);
- f. course (degree/course code);
- g. date of issue;
- h. expiry of eligibility; and
- i. where applicable disability support officer's assessment and certification (see section 7).

Institutions **must update their eligibility file immediately** where a student becomes ineligible for a concession travel entitlement.

Records held by Institutions relating to the verification of concession eligibility are auditable.

Retention periods

Records held by Institutions relating to concession eligibility must be retained at a minimum, until the end of the calendar year after the year that the student ceases to be eligible for a Concession (for example, if a student ceases to be eligible for a Concession in March 2024, then the relevant records should be retained until December 2025).

14. Replacement Concessions

- (a) Students who are already approved for a Concession Opal card should log into their Opal account to order a replacement Opal card.
- (b) All applications for replacement Transport Concession Entitlement card must be made to TfNSW via <https://transportnsw.info/tertiary-students>

15. Procedure for withdrawing students

Where a student holds a Concession Opal card or a TfNSW issued Transport Concession Entitlement card, then the Institution must inform TfNSW when the student is no longer eligible for this Concession.

16. Changes in accreditation

Institutions are to notify TfNSW immediately upon notification from the National VET Regulator or the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency of any variation (including, but not limited to, suspension or cancellation) to:

- the Institution's registration as a NVR registered training organisation or TEQSA registered provider; or
- the VET or TESQA accreditation of any course offered by the Institution.

Institutions which, for any reason, cease to be a TEQSA registered provider or NVR registered training organisation are not entitled to participate in the Scheme. Further, where a course offered by the Institution ceases to be accredited under the relevant legislation, the Institution is no longer authorised to confirm eligibility for students enrolled or applying to enrol in the course. The Institution must immediately remove students enrolled in the course from their eligibility file.

17. Impact on student's eligibility for Concession

Students enrolled either in a course which ceases to be a TEQSA or VET accredited course or with an Institution which ceases to be a TEQSA registered provider or NVR registered training organisation are no longer eligible for the Concession.

TfNSW will cancel the Concession entitlement and the student will not be able to use their Concession Opal card. Tertiary institutions should request return of a Transport Concession Entitlement Card where a student no longer meets eligibility.

18. Fees

No fee is payable for the initial issue of Concessions or for the annual renewal of Transport Concession Entitlement Cards for re-enrolling students. This does not preclude an Institution from charging students for issuing a student photo identification card; however, no charge can be levied for either the transport component of a combined student identification and concession, or for issuing Concessions.

Fees may apply for replacement Concessions and, where applicable, will be notified on: www.transportnsw.info/tertiary-students.

