VE-STP03 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Abbreviations:

Apex or Apex Australia	Apex Australia Vocational Education
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
CEO / DHA	Chief Executive Officer / Department of Home Affairs
CoE / ELICOS	Confirmation of Enrolment / English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
LLN / RTO	Language, literacy and numeracy / Registered Training Organisation

1. Scope

1.1. This policy applies to prospective domestic and overseas students seeking entry to Apex VET courses and to staff, approved agents and third parties involved in entry assessment. ESOS requirements apply to overseas and intending overseas students within the statutory definitions; a foreign passport alone does not determine ESOS status.

1.2. For registered ELICOS courses and packaged ELICOS-to-VET pathways, apply the sector-specific provisions in section 6.6 and the approved curriculum. The default VET academic and English benchmarks do not apply automatically to entry-level ELICOS.

1.3. Read this policy with VEL-STP02 Admission to Enrolment Policy and Procedure v1.1, particularly sections 3-6, 9, 11 and 15. This policy sets entry evidence and assessment controls; VEL-STP02 governs the complete admission, agreement, payment and CoE process. Apply any mandatory legal, training-product or registration requirement. Resolve conflicting published criteria through the Academic Manager and RTO Manager before acceptance; advise affected applicants and do not apply an undisclosed retrospective disadvantage.

2. Purpose

2.1. Apex will assess each applicant against relevant entry requirements and their capacity to participate successfully, provide individual suitability advice before enrolment, identify necessary support and reasonable adjustments, and keep evidence-based admission decisions. Entry requirements must protect course integrity and support fair access.

3. Policy Statement

3.1. Apex admits adults aged 18 or over, consistent with VEL-STP02 section 3.1. Verify age and identity before acceptance and CoE approval. Staff must not bypass the age restriction through an informal exception or guardian signature. Any proposed change requires prior review and approval of registration, welfare and National Code Standard 5 arrangements.

3.2. The Academic Manager approves and maintains current course entry criteria, including academic level, English proficiency, prerequisites, work experience, LLN/digital demands, delivery requirements and any placement, licensing or regulatory conditions. Mandatory requirements cannot be waived by payment, an agent, recruitment targets or management discretion.

3.3. Publish the applicable criteria, evidence options, assessment process, support, adjustments and review rights on the website and in course information before acceptance. Provide accessible assistance and a direct applicant communication route. Record the version supplied and explain relevant changes promptly. Website publication alone does not establish that an applicant received or understood the requirements.

3.4. Apex course admission criteria are separate from DHA visa criteria. Meeting this policy does not establish eligibility for a visa, a visa-English exemption, work rights, licensing, employment or migration outcomes. Refer individual migration questions to DHA or a lawfully authorised migration professional. Staff must not give immigration assistance unless authorised by law.

3.5. Apply entry criteria fairly and consistently, without assumptions based on nationality, disability or another protected attribute. Support voluntary disclosure, consult on reasonable adjustments and assess actual course requirements and support capacity. Collect only relevant evidence and protect it under the Privacy and Personal Information Policy.

4. Academic Entry Requirements and Overseas Equivalence

4.1. Unless the approved published VET course criteria specify another academic pathway, applicants must have completed Australian Year 12 or an overseas qualification assessed as comparable, or satisfy an approved alternative under section 5. This is an Apex institutional benchmark, not a universal statutory requirement for every VET qualification. Course-specific mandatory prerequisites and regulatory conditions also apply.

4.2. Admissions staff will obtain the qualification and transcript or equivalent achievement record, verify the applicant and issuing body, and refer overseas equivalence to the Academic Manager. Consider the education system and award year, recognition of the institution, level and duration, completion and grades, subjects and relevance to the intended course. A country name or translated certificate title alone is insufficient.

Academic evidence	Assessment and verification required
Australian senior secondary completion	Verify completion of an Australian Year 12 senior secondary certificate and any course-specific subjects or grades. An attendance statement alone is not proof of completion.
Overseas secondary or post-secondary study	Use official education ministry, awarding authority or recognised qualification-recognition information. Record the source, version/date consulted, qualification, completion and reason for the comparability decision. Refer unclear or historic awards for further evidence; do not assume equivalence.
Different or changed national systems	Check the actual award and cohort. Do not automatically equate UK GCSEs with completed senior secondary education or require two years of university from every Philippine applicant. Assess current and legacy awards on their verified level and content.
Documents in another language	Retain the original document and a reliable English translation. Record the translator or translation source; seek an appropriately accredited translation where needed to resolve uncertainty.
Unclear or incomplete evidence	Explain the gap, offer a reasonable opportunity to clarify or provide alternative reliable evidence, and record the result. Seek issuer confirmation or specialist recognition advice where proportionate.

4.3. Academic equivalence must be established from verified evidence, not an automatic country-based assumption. The Academic Manager will retain verified decisions in a controlled equivalence register, recording the award, country/system, award year, evidence, authoritative source, criteria met, conditions, decision maker and date. A previous decision may inform but must not replace verification of the current applicant and course.

4.4. Admissions staff will verify material discrepancies through proportionate checks, normally with the issuing institution or official verification service. Obtain appropriate authority for disclosure, retain the outcome and allow the applicant to respond to adverse material before deciding. Agents cannot authenticate their own unsupported assertions. Suspected fraud must be referred to the RTO Manager and assessed fairly; it is not established solely by nationality or unusual document appearance.

5. Alternative Academic Requirements

5.1. Successful completion of an authenticated Australian AQF Certificate IV or higher qualification may satisfy the default academic benchmark where the Academic Manager confirms relevance and preparation for the intended course. A higher qualification does not automatically satisfy subject-specific prerequisites or English, LLN and digital requirements.

5.2. Successful completion of an Australian foundation program may be accepted after verification of the provider, program level, curriculum, assessment and achieved outcomes against the intended course requirements. Attendance or the label “foundation” alone is insufficient.

5.3. Where the course permits an alternative to Apex institutional criteria, assess mature-age entry, prior learning, relevant work or preparatory study on reliable evidence of equivalent capability. The Academic Manager must approve the pathway with written reasons, support and conditions. Mature age is not automatic admission. No alternative may waive a mandatory training-product, licensing or regulatory requirement.

5.4. Advise applicants of RPL and credit transfer opportunities and refer them to the relevant policy and authorised assessor. Entry equivalence is not an award of RPL or credit. Where credit affects duration, follow VEL-STP02 section 5.2.4 for written acceptance, revised course duration and any required CoE or PRISMS action.

6. English Proficiency and Entry Assessment Procedure

6.1. VET English benchmarks

6.1.1. Apply the following Apex minimum English evidence benchmarks to overseas VET admission unless the approved published course criteria require a different or higher standard. They are institutional admission thresholds, not a statement that the tests are identical or accepted for visa purposes. Assess all four language skills in relation to the course; an overall result does not remove the need to consider material skill gaps and support.

English test	Apex admission benchmark
IELTS Academic or General Training	Overall 6.0 or above. Apply any published course-specific component requirement.
TOEFL iBT - tests before 21 January 2026	Total 80 or above on the 0-120 scale.

English test	Apex admission benchmark
TOEFL iBT - tests from 21 January 2026	Overall 4.0 or above on the 1-6 scale. Apex adopts ETS institutional transition guidance for its previous 80 benchmark; this is not an exact individual score conversion. Record test date, reported scale and component results.
PTE Academic	Overall 54 or above. Do not substitute PTE Core or another product without approval of a published entry benchmark.
ISLPR	3+ in each of speaking, listening, reading and writing.
Cambridge B2 First, C1 Advanced or C2 Proficiency	A verified Cambridge English Scale overall result of at least 169 where reported by that examination, or a higher reported result meeting the threshold. Use the actual result and the examination's reporting range; do not invent or extrapolate a score.

6.1.2. Verify results with the test provider where available, including identity, date, test product, delivery format, overall and component scores. As an Apex evidence-currency rule, English test results must normally be within two years of the proposed course commencement. Where a result is older or not directly verifiable, obtain current additional evidence under section 6.2 and Academic Manager approval. Do not describe this institutional rule as the visa validity rule.

6.1.3. Applicants relying on a new test product, revised score scale or unlisted result must be referred to the Academic Manager. Do not make an informal score conversion. A benchmark must be supported by current test-provider evidence, approved, recorded in the course criteria and published before it is used as a general admission route.

6.2. Alternative English evidence

6.2.1. The Academic Manager may accept the evidence below only after a recorded assessment demonstrates sufficient current English for the intended course. Verify the award, duration and language of instruction and assessment, results and relevance to the four skills. Request an interview, work sample or approved assessment where evidence is insufficient. Citizenship, a country's official language or prior attendance alone does not establish English proficiency.

Evidence route	Acceptance requirements
Study completed in Australia	Verified Australian Year 12 completion, an AQF Certificate IV or higher qualification, or a university foundation program taught and assessed in English; assess actual achieved language outcomes and currency.
Study completed overseas in English	Verified secondary or higher education taught and assessed in English, with a transcript and reliable medium-of-instruction evidence. Apply the same individual assessment to education in the UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand, Ireland and other systems; no nationality-only exemption.
School English subjects or IB	Verified GCE A-Level English at grade C or above, IGCSE English at grade B or above, or IB English results may support the assessment. Identify the actual English syllabus, level, grade and assessed skills; a grade alone is not an automatic exemption.

Evidence route	Acceptance requirements
Hong Kong, Malaysia or Singapore study	Evaluate the actual English subject, examination body, syllabus, level, grade, assessment coverage and currency. Do not treat a generic “pass” or a country’s education system as proof of meeting the course English benchmark.
ELICOS or another English course	Accept only the verified level and assessment outcomes that meet an approved progression arrangement under section 6.6. Completion of “Intermediate” General English or a CRICOS course alone does not establish readiness for VET.
Apex English Proficiency Test	Use only a controlled assessment with approved four-skill criteria, documented relationship to the course entry benchmark, secure identity checks, competent assessors, marking rules and moderation. Retain the responses, scores and decision. An undefined “pass”, agent-completed test or unvalidated instrument must not be used to satisfy entry.

6.2.2. Record the evidence considered, any further assessment, the achieved standard, course-specific justification, support needs and Academic Manager approval. Do not waive mandatory course language requirements. Domestic applicants undertake the suitability review in section 6.3; a formal English test is required only where a published lawful course requirement or an evidence-based need requires it.

6.3. Pre-enrolment LLN and digital literacy review

6.3.1. Before VET enrolment, review each applicant’s skills and competencies, including language, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, in the context of the intended training product, delivery mode, assessments, placement and occupational requirements. Apply VEL-STP02 sections 4.2-4.3. An English test, completed qualification or English exemption does not by itself establish numeracy or digital capability.

6.3.2. Use fit-for-purpose evidence, discussion, authentic work samples and/or an assessment suited to the course. A purchased test or universal ACSF score is not mandated. Where an ACSF or digital framework benchmark is used, record its relevant course mapping and approved decision criteria. Check practical tasks such as accessing learning systems, reading instructions, completing course numeracy tasks and submitting work as relevant to the course.

6.3.3. Verify that the applicant completes their own assessment. Explain permitted assistance and adjustments, and prevent proxy or agent completion. Staff must not coach answers to conceal a gap. An inaccessible assessment must be adjusted or replaced with an appropriate method that still assesses the required skill.

6.3.4. Record the method, evidence, findings, assessor, course criteria, gaps and support/adjustment arrangements. Give the applicant individual advice before enrolment on suitability, realistic support and any preparatory study or alternative course. A score-only record is insufficient. Where a gap cannot be addressed through reasonable support, explain the decision and alternatives with review rights.

6.4. Support and reasonable adjustments

6.4.1. Invite voluntary disclosure of disability and learning needs and consult the applicant or their associate about reasonable adjustments to admission and participation. Consider actual barriers, alternative adjustments, timing and the course’s inherent requirements. Do not require a diagnosis or complete medical history in every case, and do not assume disability makes a person unsuitable.

6.4.2. Record the consultation and adjustment decision, arrange reasonable adjustments in time to be effective and explain promptly where an adjustment is not appropriate or possible, including alternatives and appeal rights. Consider available support before concluding the course is unsuitable; any statutory exception must be properly assessed and documented, not assumed.

6.4.3. Explain how and when to access trainers, Student Services and LLN, digital or wellbeing support, including any cost or limitation. Provide ESOS-required reasonable learning support and information/referrals at no additional cost. Acknowledge requests within three working days, with urgent safety matters escalated immediately. Carry agreed support into the student file and alert relevant delivery staff on a need-to-know basis.

6.5. Assessment outcome and admission handover

6.5.1. Apply VEL-STP02 sections 5.1-5.2: acknowledge applications normally within three working days, check completeness within five and aim to decide a complete application within ten. Explain missing evidence, provide a reasonable due date and advise any justified delay and revised date. These are Apex service targets, not statutory admission periods.

6.5.2. Admissions staff record a recommendation; an authorised admissions officer or the Academic Manager records the decision and reasons. Refer equivalence, alternative English, uncertain suitability and support limitations to the Academic Manager. Give the applicant an opportunity to clarify material discrepancies or respond to adverse information.

6.5.3. Outcomes are an unconditional offer, a clearly conditional offer or preparatory pathway, a request for further evidence, an alternative course recommendation, or refusal with reasons and review rights. Each condition must state the evidence, deadline and consequence. Do not mark an unmet requirement as satisfied, accept an unsuitable enrolment or issue a CoE to bypass an entry condition.

6.5.4. Before final acceptance and CoE approval, complete the VEL-STP02 checklist for entry/suitability, identity and age, lawful study status as applicable, genuine study, transfer eligibility, approved course/location/capacity, credit and accepted written terms. Meet National Code agreement timing before or when accepting tuition or non-tuition fees. A granted visa is not a universal prerequisite to an offshore CoE; verify lawful study rights before onshore commencement.

6.5.5. Provide the applicant with the outcome and suitability advice directly in an accessible form and retain communication evidence. Reassess relevant entry requirements for a change of course or deferred intake where requirements or evidence currency have materially changed. Do not retrospectively impose a new requirement on an accepted student without assessing the agreement and legal position.

6.6. ELICOS placement and packaged progression

6.6.1. For an ELICOS course Apex is registered to deliver, assess entry against its approved curriculum and place the student according to current language proficiency, goals and learning needs. Where final placement occurs at orientation, record the initial admission basis and disclose the placement arrangement before acceptance. Do not impose the VET IELTS 6.0 benchmark on a beginner ELICOS course unless it is genuinely a published prerequisite of that course.

6.6.2. A packaged ELICOS-to-VET pathway must state each course, dates, fees, obligations and the exact approved VET progression evidence and threshold. Passage of time or attendance does not establish progression. Before direct entry, retain assessed outcomes and Academic Manager confirmation that the VET threshold is met. Direct-entry arrangements must include formal comparability measures and assessment oversight/moderation consistent with ELICOS Standard P4.1.3.

6.6.3. If a progression condition is not met, assess further preparation, a revised lawful pathway or an alternative course; explain contractual and visa implications through the authorised process. Any additional study, changed agreement, CoE or duration must comply with VEL-STP02, National Code and applicable course requirements. Do not promise automatic VET progression or a visa outcome.

6.7. Student visa English evidence

6.7.1. Direct overseas applicants to current DHA Student visa and English-language guidance. Visa evidence rules depend on matters including test date and product, permitted format, required score, evidence period, exemptions and package arrangements. The tests approved from 7 August 2025 and TOEFL requirements from 21 January 2026 must not be confused with Apex's institutional benchmarks. An Apex test or alternative schooling route accepted for admission is not automatically accepted for a visa.

6.7.2. The RTO Manager will maintain current official guidance links and brief admissions staff when rules change. Staff may explain the distinction and provide official information but must refer individual visa eligibility or strategy questions to DHA or an authorised migration professional.

6.8. Review rights and records

6.8.1. Applicants may challenge an entry, suitability, support, adjustment or other adverse decision under the Complaint and Appeal Handling Policy and VEL-STP02 section 11. Lodge at support@apexaustralia.edu.au marked "Appeal - RTO Manager", through Reception or with staff assistance. A prior complaint, special form, new evidence or agent permission is not required. Normally allow twenty working days from notification for an internal appeal and consider late requests fairly.

6.8.2. Use an uninvolved reviewer, procedural fairness and free internal access. Commence substantive assessment within ten working days, finalise as soon as practicable and provide written reasons. Permit a support person at relevant meetings. Explain appropriate independent external review at minimal or no cost; advise an unsuccessful overseas-student internal appellant within ten working days. Immediately implement a favourable decision or recommendation and/or required corrective action and notify the applicant. An appeal against admission refusal does not itself authorise commencement or create a CoE.

6.8.3. Keep the application evidence, information version, verification and equivalence sources, test results, LLN/digital review, advice, support/adjustment decisions, conditions, approvals, communications and appeal outcomes securely in the applicant/student file. Record corrections and restrict sensitive evidence. Collect, use and disclose information only on a lawful basis, with notices and consent where required. Apply the controlled retention schedule and legal holds; avoid blanket indefinite retention. Retain relevant ESOS section 21 records for at least two years after accepted-student status ends, and apply distinct rules for agreements, receipts, credit acceptance and assessment records through VEL-STP02 section 15 and the records policy.

7. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
CEO	Approve policy and resources; ensure accountability. No approval may override mandatory entry or legal requirements.
Academic Manager / ELICOS academic leader	Approve course criteria, equivalence methods, alternative entry, English assessments and pathway standards; decide academic suitability and support; maintain the equivalence register and assessment moderation.
RTO Manager	Monitor law and registration conditions; resolve policy conflicts; verify admission and CoE controls; manage compliance escalations and independent appeal allocation.
Marketing Manager / approved agents	Publish and communicate approved current criteria accurately. Do not determine academic equivalence, waive conditions, complete applicant assessments or guarantee admission or visa outcomes.
Admissions / Student Services	Verify evidence, conduct or arrange authorised reviews, provide direct information and advice, track conditions and obtain documented decisions before handover to enrolment/CoE staff.
Administration / authorised PRISMS users	Maintain secure records and audit trails; verify approvals and accepted terms before issuing or changing a CoE; follow VEL-STP02 and access permissions.

7.1. At least quarterly, the RTO Manager will sample entry decisions for verification, age, course criteria, LLN/digital review, individual advice, adjustments, conditional pathway compliance and evidence of approval. Record findings, action owners, due dates and effectiveness. Review entry benchmarks against student progress and support outcomes; address recurring gaps through course design, support or recruitment changes.

7.2. The Academic Manager and RTO Manager must align website content, course schedules, agent instructions, tests, application forms and offer/agreement/CoE checklists with this policy and VEL-STP02 before use. Record staff briefing and actual CEO approval/implementation. Review earlier than June 2027 for a material legal, registration, course, test or system change; do not wait for the scheduled review.

8. Associated Policies and Legislative Basis

8.1. Associated documents: VEL-STP02 Admission to Enrolment Policy and Procedure v1.1; approved course entry schedules and VET training and assessment strategies; approved ELICOS curriculum and placement/progression instruments; Student Handbook and application form; pre-enrolment LLN/digital procedures; RPL and Course Credit Policy; Student Support and Wellbeing procedures; Access and Equity/Reasonable Adjustment procedures; Complaint and Appeal Handling Policy; Privacy and Personal Information Policy; records management, education agent, marketing, fees/refund and CoE approval procedures.

8.2. Apply the following legislation as amended and in force. The RTO Manager will check current requirements before using changed criteria. Official guidance and test-provider material assist implementation but do not replace legislation.

Legislation or framework	Application to this policy
2025 Outcome Standards - F2025L00354	National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations) Instrument 2025: Standards 1.6-1.7, 2.1-2.4, 2.8 and 4.1-4.4. Suitability, support, credit, fair appeals and governance.
2025 Compliance Standards - F2025L00355	National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Compliance Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations and Fit and Proper Person Requirements) Instrument 2025, especially sections 7-8 and 20; NVETR Act 2011.
ESOS Act 2000 and ESOS Regulations 2019	Admission and accepted-student obligations; relevant reporting and records. National Code 2018 Standards 1-3, 6 and 10; apply Standard 5 safeguards if the approved age policy is changed.
ELICOS Standards 2018 - F2017L01349	Approved curriculum entry requirements; appropriate placement under P3.1 and direct-entry assessment comparability under P4.1.3, where applicable.
Equality and privacy law	Disability Discrimination Act 1992; Disability Standards for Education 2005 Parts 3-7; applicable Commonwealth/state/territory anti-discrimination law; Privacy Act 1988 and applicable privacy/health-records law.
Consumer and migration law	Australian Consumer Law in Competition and Consumer Act 2010 Schedule 2, including sections 18 and 29; Migration Act 1958 and Migration Regulations 1994, including lawful limits on immigration assistance.

8.3. Official reference links:

Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au/F2025L00354; www.legislation.gov.au/F2025L00355; www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A00757; www.legislation.gov.au/F2017L01182; www.legislation.gov.au/F2017L01349; www.legislation.gov.au/F2005L00767.

DHA Student visa guidance: immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/student-500

ETS score-scale guidance: www.ets.org/toefl/institutions/ibt/score-scale-update.html.html

Cambridge English Scale: www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/cambridge-english-scale/

9. Document Control

Document Name	Entry Requirements Policy and Procedure			
Document Code	VE-STP03			
Approved By	CEO	**Date Approved**	October 2020, October 2022, February 2024 (historical). Actual v5.4 approval recorded in the controlled register.	
Department	Admissions			
Revision History				
Version	Date / review cycle	Change Summary	Author / owner	Review Due
V1.0	October 2020	New Document.	CEO	October 2022
V5.1	October 2022	Reviewed to ensure information is up to date.	Academic Manager	October 2025
V5.2	February 2024	Reformatted; updated legislation links and document control; removed DESE reference.	Senior Compliance and Risk Manager	February 2026
V5.3	June 2024	Updated IELTS score. Historical source entry retained.	Senior Compliance and Risk Manager	June 2026
V5.4	June 2026	2025 Standards/ESOS entry revision; aligned with VEL-STP02 v1.1. Detailed changes follow. Actual approval recorded separately.	RTO Manager	June 2028
Organisation	Apex Australia Vocational Education			
Document Controller	RTO Manager			