# ISP ESOS Accreditation Guide

## 1.0 Purpose

This guide provides information to Victorian government schools about the International Student Program (ISP) and process and requirements relating to:

* applying to be Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS)-accredited in order to enrol international students who hold asubclass 500 Student – Schools visa, and
* how to apply for changes to your school’s accreditation (including ISP enrolment caps).

This document does not apply to non-government schools – these schools should refer to the [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) website](https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/schools/Pages/enrolling-international-students.aspx) for information in relation to international students.

## 1.1 Victorian government school ESOS accreditation overview

The Department of Education (DE or the department) through the International Education Division (IED) supports the delivery of high-quality learning experiences and educational outcomes for international students through the ISP in Victorian government schools. The ISP policies and procedures facilitate compliance with the department’s obligations under the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (ESOS Act), including the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* (Cth) (National Code) and promote the safety, welfare and inclusion of international students in each school’s community.

The legislative frameworks that underpin the ISP consist of the ESOS Act and the National Code (ESOS framework), the VRQA Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18 (VRQA guidelines) issued pursuant to section 4.5.1(3) of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (ETRA), and other relevant federal and state legislation and regulatory requirements. The ESOS framework regulates the provision of educational services to international students within Australia. It applies to international students who hold a subclass 500 Student – Schools visa (Standard and Study Abroad students).

The department’s registration on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) means it must comply with the ESOS framework. To meet its obligations DE (IED) accredits Victorian government schools to deliver the ISP to international students who hold subclass 500 Student – Schools visas. These students cannot enrol at Victorian government schools that are not ESOS-accredited.

To support schools to deliver a compliant ISP, the [ISP School Toolkit](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/policy) sets out the school’s roles, responsibilities, and compliance requirements specified in the ISP policies and procedures.

### 1.1.1 Types of ESOS accreditation for Victorian government schools

There are two types of ESOS accreditation for Victorian government schools – Level 1 or Level 2 accreditation.

#### Level 1 accreditation

Level 1 accreditation is available to primary schools and secondary schools. Students in Level 1 accredited schools reside with a guardian/parent or an Australian Government Department of Home Affairs (DHA)-approved relative.

#### Level 2 accreditation

Level 2 accreditation is only available to secondary schools (and P-9 or P-12 schools for Years 7-12). Secondary schools require Level 2 accreditation if the school engages in any of the following functions:

* facilitates homestay arrangements for international students under a department-approved Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) letter
* undertakes active marketing and promotion under the guidance and direction of the department as the CRICOS-registered provider

As part of Level 2 accreditation, the combination of CAAW responsibility and active recruitment means there is a greater level of risk and responsibility for both the department and schools in providing education services to international students. Accordingly, these schools are expected to engage in greater levels of training and monitoring activities led by DE (IED) to ensure all legislative compliance obligations are met.

### 1.1.2 Accreditation duration and decision

Victorian government schools are ESOS-accredited for up to four years. Decisions by DE (IED) about school accreditation are based on the following factors:

* The school’s capacity and capability to provide learning, English language and wellbeing support to international students
* System factors, including the department’s approved CRICOS aggregate cap, demand and supply factors (such as the department’s [Enrolment Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/enrolment/policy)) and advice from the region
* The school’s performance data around student learning and wellbeing outcomes and compliance with ISP policies and procedures (if applying for re-accreditation).

Based on the assessment of a school’s application and evidence and in consultation with the region, the DE (IED) Director responsible for the ISP decides whether to approve the school’s ESOS accreditation/re-accreditation, determines the duration of accreditation (up to 4 years) and the school’s ISP enrolment cap.

When it is time for a school to apply for re-accreditation DE (IED) will notify the school and advise them on the process for applying. Re-accreditation will occur in the year following a school review.

### 1.1.3 ESOS accreditation compliance requirements

Victorian government schools must comply with conditions of their ESOS accreditation. These include:

* compliance with all ISP policies and procedures as detailed in the [ISP School Toolkit](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/policy)
* completion of all mandatory DE (IED) ISP training
* provision of information required by DE (IED) to facilitate administration of the ISP and comply with ESOS reporting obligations
* participation in quality assurance activities which may include, but are not limited to, providing student records and other ISP documentation, DE (IED) staff school visits, audits and implementation of ISP compliance improvement strategies
* engagement and commitment to the ISP and striving for continuous improvement.

### 1.1.4 School ISP enrolment caps

All ESOS-accredited schools have an ISP enrolment cap for the total number of international students who hold subclass 500 Student – Schools visas that can study at the school at the same time. Schools may apply to DE (IED) to change their ISP enrolment cap as outlined in section 2.3 of this document.

In considering an appropriate ISP enrolment cap for the school, schools must consider the factors such as the school’s capacity and capability to provide quality education and support services to both international and domestic students, the department’s [Enrolment Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/enrolment/policy), compliance requirements with ISP policies and procedures, and any other local factors that might impact on the school’s ability to deliver the ISP.

Schools and DE (IED) monitor international student enrolment numbers against a school’s approved ISP enrolment cap. No additional international student applications for the ISP can be referred to schools that have reached their cap until their student numbers fall below their approved ISP enrolment cap.

## 2.0 School Accreditation

Schools can choose whether they wish to participate in the ISP and become ESOS-accredited, remain accredited or change their accreditation status. The sections below outline the process for applying for ESOS accreditation and how to request any changes to your school’s current accreditation status.

## 2.1 How a school can apply for ESOS accreditation

### Step 1: School notifies DE (IED) of its interest in ESOS accreditation

The principal emails DE (IED) at [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au) about the school’s interest in becoming an ESOS-accredited school. This expression of interest should be a simple email (4-5 sentences) explaining the rationale for seeking ESOS accreditation.

### Step 2: Preliminary discussion

A representative of DE (IED) sets up a discussion with the principal and a representative of the relevant regional office to discuss requirements under the ISP policies and procedures, school responsibilities, the accreditation process and the school’s capacity and capability to have an ISP. The discussion will cover the respective risks, opportunities and obligations associated with Level 1 and Level 2 accreditation, and discussion of the [ISP School Toolkit](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/policy).

### Step 3: School prepares self-assessment and application

School completes the following documents to demonstrate capacity, capability and commitment to participate in the ISP:

1. [ISP Student Support Self-Assessment Tool](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Student_Support_SelfAssessment_Tool.docx)
2. [ISP ESOS Accreditation Application Form](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_ESOS_Accreditation_Application_Form.docx)
3. The principal (as assisted by school staff) completes the [ISP School Compliance Attestation](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_School_Compliance_Attestation.docx), including:
   1. attestation from the principal committing to the ISP and meeting its compliance requirements, including completion of mandatory ISP training
   2. proposed ISP enrolment cap
   3. endorsement of the school council
   4. endorsement from the region (Regional Director, Area Executive Director or Senior Education Improvement Leader (SEIL)).

The school sends these completed and endorsed documents to [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au).

### Step 4: DE (IED) decision

DE (IED) will assess the application for accreditation based on the evidence provided and review of the evaluation elements to determine the school’s capacity, capability and commitment to meet the requirements for ESOS accreditation. The school’s performance data on student learning and wellbeing outcomes will also be reviewed.

Based on the assessment of the application and evidence and in consultation with the region, the DE (IED) Director responsible for the ISP decides whether to approve the school’s ESOS accreditation, determines the duration of accreditation (up to 4 years) and the school’s ISP enrolment cap. DE (IED) then notifies the school of the decision.

**2.2 How a school can apply for ESOS re-accreditation**

### Step 1: DE (IED) provides the school with a notice of lapsing ESOS accreditation

In the final year of a school’s ESOS accreditation, DE (IED) will write to schools (and their region) to notify them of the need to apply for re-accreditation. This notice of lapsing ESOS accreditation outlines the timelines for re-accreditation and asks schools to consider the appropriateness of their ISP enrolment cap. Re-accreditation will occur in the year following a school review.

### Step 2: School prepares and submits an application

The school will prepare their re-accreditation application as follows:

1. The ISC and principal jointly complete the [ISP Student Support Self-Assessment Tool](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Student_Support_SelfAssessment_Tool.docx)
2. The principal (as assisted by school staff) completes the [ISP School Compliance Attestation](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_School_Compliance_Attestation.docx), including:
   1. attestation from the principal committing to the ISP and meeting its compliance requirements, including completion of mandatory ISP training
   2. proposed ISP enrolment cap (this can be the same, lower or higher than current enrolment cap)
   3. endorsement by the school council
   4. endorsement by the region (Regional Director, Area Executive Director or SEIL).

The school sends these completed and endorsed documents to [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au).

### Step 3: DE (IED) assessment

DE (IED) will assess the school’s application, as well as compliance with ISP policies and procedures and the school’s performance data on student learning and wellbeing outcomes.

Throughout Steps 2 and 3, DE (IED) may undertake further review activities as appropriate (such as onsite visits, desktop reviews or an audit) in order to support its assessment of the school’s application.

### Step 4: DE (IED) decision

The DE (IED) Director responsible for the ISP, in consultation with the region, decides whether to approve the school’s re-accreditation for the ISP, the duration of the re-accreditation period (up to 4 years) and the school’s ISP enrolment cap. DE (IED) then notifies the school of the decision.

**2.3 How a school can apply to change its ESOS accreditation**

### 2.3.1 Changing the ISP enrolment cap

The process to change an ESOS-accredited school’s ISP enrolment cap is as follows:

#### Step 1: School request for ISP enrolment cap change

The principal emails DE (IED) at [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au) about the school’s interest in increasing or decreasing its ISP enrolment cap.

#### Step 2: School prepares and submits the form

DE (IED) advises the ISC and principal to jointly complete the [ISP School Enrolment Cap Variation Form](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_School_Enrolment_Cap_Variation_Form.docx). The school sends the completed and endorsed form to [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au).

#### Step 3: DE (IED) assessment and decision

DE (IED) reviews the form and then notifies the school of the decision.

### 2.3.2 Changing school accreditation levels

To change a school’s ESOS accreditation from Level 2 to Level 1, the principal should email DE (IED) at [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au) about this change and continue to meet all compliance obligations and ISP policy and procedure requirements relating to Level 2 accreditation until the final homestay student completes their planned studies.

The process to change a school’s ESOS accreditation from Level 1 to Level 2 is as follows:

#### Step 1: Level 1 accredited school submits requests for Level 2 accreditation

The principal emails DE (IED) at [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au) about the school’s interest in changing their accreditation from Level 1 to Level 2.

#### Step 2: School self-assessment and endorsement

DE (IED) advises the school to prepare their application as follows:

1. The ISC and principal jointly complete the [ISP Student Support Self-Assessment Tool](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Student_Support_SelfAssessment_Tool.docx)
2. The principal (as assisted by school staff) completes the [ISP School Compliance Attestation](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_School_Compliance_Attestation.docx), including:
   1. attestation from the principal committing to the ISP and meeting its compliance requirements, including completion of mandatory ISP training
   2. proposed ISP enrolment cap (this can be the same, lower or higher than current enrolment cap)
   3. endorsement by the school council
   4. endorsement by the region (Regional Director, Area Executive Director or SEIL).

The school sends the completed and endorsed documents to [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au).

#### Step 3: DE (IED) assessment and decision

DE (IED) consults with the region, assesses the school’s application and compliance with ISP policies and procedures, and reviews the school’s performance data on student learning and wellbeing outcomes. DE (IED) then notifies the school of the decision.

### 2.3.3 Mergers and separations of ESOS-accredited schools

#### Step 1: School notifies DE (IED) of upcoming merger or separation

The principal notifies DE (IED) in writing at [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au) when a school is expected to merge or separate – including the current ESOS accreditation status of the relevant school(s) within 60 days of the planned merger or separation.

#### Step 2: School self-assessment

DE (IED) advises schools to prepare their application as follows:

1. The ISC and principal jointly complete the [ISP Student Support Self-Assessment Tool](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Student_Support_SelfAssessment_Tool.docx)
2. The principal (as assisted by school staff) completes the [ISP School Compliance Attestation](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_School_Compliance_Attestation.docx), including:
   1. attestation from the principal committing to the ISP and meeting its compliance requirements, including completion of mandatory ISP training
   2. proposed ISP enrolment cap (this can be the same, lower or higher than the current cap(s))
   3. endorsement by the school council(s)
   4. endorsement by the region (Regional Director, Area Executive Director or SEIL).

The school(s) send these completed and endorsed documents to [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au).

#### Step 3: DE (IED) assessment and decision

DE (IED) consults with the region, assesses the school’s application and compliance with ISP policies and procedures, and reviews the school’s performance data on student learning and wellbeing outcomes. DE (IED) then notifies the school(s) of the decision.

**2.4 How a school can cease its accreditation**

Schools can opt-out of ESOS accreditation at any time. To do this, schools should complete the following steps:

#### Step 1: School notifies DE (IED) of intention to cease accreditation

The principal emails DE (IED) at [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au) about the school’s intention to cease its ESOS accreditation.

#### Step 2: Discussion with DE (IED) and region

DE (IED) may require a meeting between the school and a representative from the region to discuss transition out of the ISP and teaching out any currently enrolled international students.

#### Step 3: DE (IED) pauses school’s ESOS accreditation

DE (IED) will pause the school’s ESOS accreditation. A ‘pause’ means that:

* DE (IED) will not send any new Requests to Place (RTPs) to the school for international students who hold asubclass 500 Student – Schools visa
* The school must continue to meet its compliance obligations and ISP policy and procedure requirements until the final international student completes their planned studies.

#### Step 4: School notifies DE (IED) of final international student completion

The principal emails DE (IED) at [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au) to notify the department that the final international student has completed their planned studies.

#### Step 5: DE (IED) ceases school’s accreditation

Once all international students have completed their planned studies DE (IED) ceases the school’s ESOS accreditation.

## 3.0 Department monitoring and reporting activities

DE (IED) proactively monitors ESOS-accredited schools through departmental data on student learning and wellbeing outcomes and indicators on compliance with ISP policies and procedures to identify schools at-risk of not meeting ESOS framework and accreditation requirements. DE (IED) works closely and cooperatively with schools to intervene early and support them to improve their compliance where required.

Consistent with a risk-based support and intervention approach to compliance improvement, DE (IED) adopts school supports and escalating interventions depending on the risk posed by non-compliance and the response of the school as summarised in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1:** **DE (IED)’s compliance support and intervention approach**

This graphic provides an overview of the increasing levels of intervention that DET will take if non-compliance of accredited schools increase. DET's primary focus is always on providing guidance, education and support to schools, however, DET also reserves the right to pause or cease accreditation in serious cases.

ISP compliance breaches that present higher risks, or where a school has not been able to become compliant by an agreed timeframe in its ISP compliance improvement plan, may result in DE (IED) escalating its interventions. This could include changes to a school’s ESOS accreditation such as pausing accreditation and enrolments at the school until the issues have been resolved, or in severe cases, ceasing a school’s ESOS accreditation.

DE (IED) will use departmental data to monitor schools and work with those schools where compliance issues are identified to ensure the school continues to have sufficient capacity and capability to support its international students.

If DE (IED) identifies systemic issues, these may inform a review of relevant ISP policies and procedures and the development of training and resources to support schools.

DE (IED) may refer certain identified concerns to other areas in the department if non-compliance presents a broader risk (e.g. Child Safe Standards).

## 4.0 Further information and resources

## 4.1 Roles and responsibilities

* The **Executive Director**, IED, is responsible for the approval of this document as the nominated Principal Executive Officer of the department as a CRICOS-registered provider.
* The **Director** responsible for the ISP is responsible for making decisions on ESOS accreditation for Victorian government schools, as informed by input from other areas of the department and as supported by DE (IED) staff.
* **Principals** seek ESOS accreditation for their school and any changes to their ESOS accreditation, and ensure school compliance with the ESOS framework and accreditation requirements.
* **The school council** endorses the school’s ESOS accreditation and any changes sought to the school’s ESOS accreditation
* **The relevant Regional Director, Area Executive Director or SEIL** endorsesthe school’s ESOS accreditation and any changes sought to the school’s ESOS accreditation, and supports the school to be compliant with ESOS requirements.

## 4.2 Legislation

* *[Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A00757" \t "_blank)* [(Cth)](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A00757" \t "_blank)
* [*National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* (Cth)](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/F2017L01182)
* [*Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-training-reform-act-2006/094)
* [VRQA Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18](https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/schools/Pages/guidelines-for-international-education.aspx).

## 4.3 Associated documents

* [ISP School Toolkit](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/policy)
* [ISP ESOS Accreditation Application Form](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_ESOS_Accreditation_Application_Form.docx)
* [ISP Student Support Self-Assessment Tool](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Student_Support_SelfAssessment_Tool.docx)
* [ISP School Compliance Attestation](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_School_Compliance_Attestation.docx)
* [ISP School Enrolment Cap Variation Form](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_School_Enrolment_Cap_Variation_Form.docx)

## 4.4 Definitions

* **CAAW** means Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare for students under 18 years old.
* **CRICOS** means Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students**.**
* **DE** or the department means Department of Education in Victoria**.**
* **DE (IED)** means Department of Education– International Education Division. IED is the division in the department that administers the ISP in Victorian government schools. IED is not a separate entity to the department, which is the CRICOS-registered provider.
* **DHA** means Australian Government Department of Home Affairs
* **International students (or students)** are defined as students participating in the ISP who hold a subclass 500 Student – Schools visa.
* **ESOS** means *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (ESOS Act)
* **ISP** means International Student Program. The department’s ISP is administered by DE (IED).
* **ISP enrolment cap** refers to the maximum number of international students holding a subclass 500 Student – Schools visa that can be enrolled at any one time in an ESOS-accredited school.
* **Level 1 accredited schools** are ESOS-accredited primary and secondary schools where student’s reside with a guardian/parent or a DHA-approved relative.
* **Level 2 accredited schools** are ESOS-accredited secondary schools (and P-9 or P-12 schools for Years 7 - 12) that facilitate homestay arrangements under a department-approved CAAW letter and/or undertake active marketing or promotion under the guidance and direction of the department.
* **School** means any Victorian government school currently, or seeking to be, ESOS-accredited by DE (IED) to deliver the ISP.

## 4.5 Contact and maintenance officer

Manager, Strategy and Quality Assurance Unit

International Education Division

Level 28, 80 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000

Email: [isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:isp.quality@education.vic.gov.au)

Phone: + 61 3 7022 1000

## Authorised

A/Executive Director, International Education Division

**Date of authorisation**: 12/07/2021

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**Review frequency**: This document will be reviewed at minimum every **three years** or when any changes arise impacting its

currency, including legislative or regulation change.