# ISP Homestay Procedure

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide school staff with a procedure for managing homestays, including emergency homestays. This procedure should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education’s (DE or the department) International Student Program (ISP) [Accommodation and Welfare Policy](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Accommodation_and_Welfare_Policy.docx) and the [ISP Homestay Policy](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Homestay_Policy.docx).

For the purpose of this procedure, international students (students) are defined as students participating in the ISP under a subclass 500 Student – Schools visa and have been issued a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) Letter, or previously held a CAAW before turning 18 years old.

## Roles and responsibilities

The department’s International Education Division (IED) monitors schools’ compliance with legislative requirements and provides guidance, resources and training to schools as required.

Principals maintain overall accountability for signing off on recruitment, monitoring and management of homestay providers. Responsibilities assigned to principals cannot be delegated. Responsibilities assigned to schools may, however, be delegated to relevant school staff such as the International Student Coordinator (ISC).

Homestay providers must comply with the [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx), including providing students with a safe, caring and supporting home environment.

## Process

### Recruiting a homestay provider

Prior to recruiting homestay providers, schools must have a comprehensive understanding of the [ISP Homestay Policy](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Homestay_Policy.docx).

Schools may recruit new homestay providers:

* from within the school or local community
* via a direct application from a family residing within the area
* through the use of a commercial homestay recruitment provider or agency.

Schools may use a commercial homestay recruitment provider or agency. To ensure the suitability of the recruitment provider, the school must, at a minimum, satisfy the following requirements:

* solicit references from a prospective commercial homestay recruitment provider testifying to their ethical standards and the quality of their work
* consult with the school’s network cluster members and local Catholic and independent schools regarding the prospective commercial homestay recruitment provider’s quality of service
* inform the commercial homestay recruitment provider about the school’s child safe practices.

Schools cannot delegate any of their requirements to any commercial homestay recruitment provider.

### Screening a homestay provider

* verify the suitability of homestay accommodation by conducting a homestay site visit check prior to the student’s homestay commencement. The check must be completed using the online VISIT checklist (unless the particular homestay has been verified for a previous student in the preceding three months)
  + Schools are strongly encouraged to undertake the initial homestay site visit check at least six weeks prior to commencement of the homestay placement to allow additional time to remediate any issues identified
* ensure that no more than 3 students are residing in the homestay, regardless of which school they are attending
* after completing the above, make a recommendation to the school principal to approve (or not approve) the homestay provider
* subject to school principal approval, add the homestay provider to VISIT.

Principals must:

* approve or reject the homestay provider in VISIT

### Commencement of the homestay provider

Following the initial screening and approval of a homestay provider, the following tasks must be completed, prior to the placement of a student.

Schools must:

* provide homestay providers with the [[ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx) and ensure that the homestay provider understands the document
* provide homestay providers with an orientation session providing information on homestay expectations, critical incident procedures, emergency contact numbers and processes to identify and report abuse (the orientation can include the video for [Prospective Homestay Hosts](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ufMgyJqAX2E))
* sign the [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx) with the homestay which the homestay provider, school representative and student must sign. Note that the [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx) is non-binding for the student if they are under the age of 18 – instead, parents (and students, if they are over the age of 18) agree to homestay expectations by signing the [ISP Written Agreement](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Standard-Application-Written-Agreement.docx) as part of the enrolment process. Schools may provide a copy of the signed [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx) to parents for their information.

Principals must:

* ensure that every homestay provider has been provided with the above information and training
* ensure that every homestay provider has entered into a valid [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx).

### Monitoring a homestay provider

DE (IED) must:

* proactively and regularly seek feedback via an online survey to be completed by international students regarding their experience in homestay arrangements
* develop action plans to address feedback and monitor for improvement where required
* provide guidance and training to schools and/or homestay providers to support improvement based on feedback.

Schools must:

* maintain accurate and up-to-date homestay provider information in VISIT
* conduct a homestay site visit check every six months after the initial site visit (or more frequently if required, for example, following a critical incident). This includes checks for students who are aged 18 and over and living in CAAW Option 4 homestay accommodation. Checks for CAAW Option 3 homestays are no longer required after the student turns 18 unless the student raises concerns or the school has any concerns for the student’s wellbeing or living arrangements
* as part of the six-monthly check of homestay providers, seek feedback from international students regarding their experience in the homestay
* use the online VISIT site visit checklist when completing a homestay site visit check
* give at least two weeks written notice to the homestay provider prior to conducting a homestay check and site visit check
* maintain up to date homestay provider site visit records on VISIT
* monitor all homestay Working with Children Checks (WWCCs) by maintaining an accurate and up to date WWCC register in VISIT
* check the status of all WWCCs once a term by using the [Status Checker – Service Victoria](https://www.service.vic.gov.au/services/working-with-children-check-status-checker/home) website and saving a copy of the status checks in VISIT
* maintain up to date WWCC information in VISIT
* move the student into emergency homestay as soon as they are notified, or become aware, of any homestay provider or of any persons aged 18 and over living in, or regularly visiting, the homestay that do not hold a valid WWCC, until the WWCC is obtained. Where there are compassionate and compelling circumstances, the school may request that DE (IED) assess the circumstances and determine whether or not the student should be moved. This may require evidence that the required WWCC has been applied for and the school has appropriate risk mitigation strategies in place
* notify DE (IED) immediately if there are any changes to a student’s homestay arrangements
* follow up on any issues raised by the student or homestay provider and take appropriate action as per the [ISP Complaints and Appeals Process Guide](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Complaints-Appeals-Process.pdf).

Principals must:

* electronically sign-off on all initial homestay appointments in VISIT
* take appropriate action if a homestay provider has breached the [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx). These actions are outlined in the [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx)
* take appropriate action if a student has breached the homestay components of the [ISP Written Agreement](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Standard-Application-Written-Agreement.docx)
* notify DE (IED) if the school can no longer provide a suitable homestay for a student and all emergency accommodation options have been exhausted
* confirm that all homestay providers and persons aged 18 and over living or frequently residing in the homestay have a valid and up to date WWCC
* make a request to DE (IED) if they require DE (IED) to assess and determine whether a student should be moved in the event of a breach of WWCC requirements.

### Support for homestay providers

Schools must:

* Host (at a minimum) annual homestay provider information and awareness sessions addressing, but not limited to, the following:
  + critical incident policies and procedures
  + the school’s Child Safe Code of Conduct and Child Safe Policy
  + [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx), including any updates
  + identifying and reporting actual or suspected abuse
  + any legislative changes that will affect the homestay provider, student accommodation or related policy, guidelines, terms and conditions
  + outline the expectations, roles and responsibilities of homestay providers and answer any questions.

Principals must:

* confirm, by keeping attendance records, that the homestay provider training has been completed, ideally participating in the sessions in conjunction with relevant staff to ensure all homestay providers are in attendance.

### Payments to a homestay provider

All homestay fee payments must be made via electronic transfers so that there are receipts of all transactions. As agreed in the [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx), the student’s family will either directly pay the homestay provider, or will pay the school (who will pass on this payment to the homestay provider).

Schools must:

* collect any homestay fees from the parent in accordance with the DE [Finance Manual](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/finance-manual/policy) and [Fraud and Corruption Control Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/fraud-and-corruption-control/policy)
* disburse any homestay fees collected by the school directly to the homestay provider
* retain, monitor and reimburse accordingly all homestay bond payments.

Principals must:

* ensure that all homestay payments are managed appropriately by the school.

### Exiting a homestay arrangement

#### Transfer to another CRICOS-registered provider

Schools must:

* formally facilitate the transfer to another CRICOS-registered provider by assisting the student to complete a [Withdrawal Form](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Withdrawal-Application-Form.pdf), ensuring all evidence is attached, and providing a copy of the form and evidence to DE (IED) for approval
* continue to monitor the student’s accommodation and welfare arrangements until confirmation is received from DE (IED) that the withdrawal has been approved, and until the new provider takes over welfare.

Principals must:

* provide sign off on the [Withdrawal Form](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Withdrawal-Application-Form.pdf) and confirm that all evidence is attached.

#### CAAW to non-CAAW

Schools must:

* formally facilitate the change in welfare arrangements by assisting the student to complete a [Welfare Provision Change Form](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Welfare-Provision-Change-Form.pdf), ensuring all evidence is attached, and providing a copy of the completed form and evidence to DE (IED) for approval
* ensure the student remains in their approved accommodation until confirmation is received from DE (IED) that the new welfare arrangements have been approved.

#### Cancellation or suspension of student enrolment on a CAAW

Schools must:

* maintain their welfare and accommodation responsibilities and related provisions for any student where their enrolment is suspended or cancelled by DE, until advised otherwise by DE (IED).

#### Course completion

The student’s CAAW arrangement will cease 7 days after the last day of the student’s course.

#### CAAW ceases (over 18 years) – Independent Living

The student’s CAAW arrangements will cease once the student turns 18 years old.

Students are encouraged to remain in their homestay until they complete their studies. Where a student requests to live independently, schools must:

* counsel students and parents of the DE (IED) recommendation that they remain in homestay accommodation until they complete their studies
* fulfil requirements under DE’s [Duty of Care Policy](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/duty-of-care/policy) by completing the [Independent Living Assessment Checklist](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fstudy.vic.gov.au%2FShared%2520Documents%2Fen%2FSchool_Toolkit%2FIndependent%2520Living%2520Assessment%2520Checklist.docx&data=05%7C01%7CAndrew.Barrett%40education.vic.gov.au%7C69bb4460a9f2435f74b308dac05864ce%7Cd96cb3371a8744cfb69b3cec334a4c1f%7C0%7C0%7C638033783150328925%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=8s41sZYLm89%2Bwtkh3tRl4Q2lgs87Bl%2FNHRDJF3KxFRk%3D&reserved=0) and on-site visit prior to the student leaving their homestay
* formally facilitate the change in living arrangements by submitting the completed independent living assessment checklist to DE (IED) for endorsement of the proposed independent living arrangement
* ensure the student remains in their approved accommodation until confirmation is received from DE (IED) that the new living arrangements have been endorsed
* seek feedback from the student on the independent living arrangement at least once per Term to ensure that the accommodation remains suitable
* Update the [Homestay Information section in CASES21](https://study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/CASE21_Contact_information.docx).

Principals must:

* sign the completed [Independent Living Assessment Checklist](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fstudy.vic.gov.au%2FShared%2520Documents%2Fen%2FSchool_Toolkit%2FIndependent%2520Living%2520Assessment%2520Checklist.docx&data=05%7C01%7CAndrew.Barrett%40education.vic.gov.au%7C69bb4460a9f2435f74b308dac05864ce%7Cd96cb3371a8744cfb69b3cec334a4c1f%7C0%7C0%7C638033783150328925%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=8s41sZYLm89%2Bwtkh3tRl4Q2lgs87Bl%2FNHRDJF3KxFRk%3D&reserved=0) before it is sent to DE (IED) for approval.

### Handling of student complaints about homestay providers

* If an issue cannot be resolved with the homestay provider, the complainant should contact the school representative named in the [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Homestay_Responsibility_Agreement.docx)
* In the first instance, the school representative will obtain information and evidence from the complainant in support of their claim(s).
* If a school representative deems that there is merit in the complaint, the school will then review and investigate the complaint.
* If the complaint can be resolved and remedied, the school representative will advise both the complainant and the homestay provider of the proposed outcome and actions
* If the complaint cannot be resolved, the school representative will escalate it to the principal.

Principals must:

* address any complaints from the international student that cannot be resolved by the school representative, and review the complaint and evidence and decide on a course of action, such as moving the student into a new homestay.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the school’s response, they can lodge a formal complaint to DE (IED) – see: [ISP Complaints and Appeals Process Guide](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Complaints-Appeals-Process.pdf).

### School termination rights

Schools must:

Consider terminating the [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Homestay_Responsibility_Agreement.docx) (the Agreement) if the homestay provider commits a breach of the Agreement – refer to School Termination Rights in the ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement for justifications.

Schools should:

* send the homestay provider a letter advising why they may no longer be able to provide homestay related services in any Victorian government school and that the impending termination is open to complaint
* advise the homestay provider that they can complain about a possible termination decision and should contact the school principal in the first instance
* refer the homestay provider to the [IED Complaints and Appeals Process Guide](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Complaints-Appeals-Process.pdf) if the school principal upholds the decision to terminate the homestay provider. This guide provides an overview of the steps that homestay providers can take to deal with complaints and appeals relating to the International Student Program (ISP)
* send an email to their School Support Officer advising them of the decision to terminate
* advise the homestay provider in writing that their name may be added to a register of terminated homestay providers.

IED must:

* Add the homestay provider to a list of terminated homestay providers. If a terminated homestay provider wishes to reapply to be a homestay provider in the future, they will need to demonstrate to the school how they have remedied the circumstances, which led to their termination. If a homestay provider is re-instated, the school should advise their School Support Officer.

## Legislation

* [*Education Services and Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cth)](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A00757)
* [*The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* (Cth)](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2017L01182/Download)
* *Migration Act 1958* (Cth)
* *Education Services for Overseas Students Regulations 2001* (Cth)
* *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic)
* *Ministerial Order 819 – Fees for Overseas Students in Government Schools* (Vic)
* *Ministerial Order 1359 – Child Safe Standards* (Vic)
* VRQA Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18 Years

## Related documents

* [Complaints and Appeals Process Guide](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Complaints-Appeals-Process.pdf)
* [ISP Accommodation and Welfare Policy](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Accommodation_and_Welfare_Policy.docx)
* [ISP Homestay Policy](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Homestay_Policy.docx)
* [ISP Admissions and Enrolment Policy](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Admissions_and_Enrolment_Policy.docx)
* [ISP Homestay Profile Form](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Homestay_Profile.docx)
* [ISP Homestay Responsibility Agreement](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/PAL/isp-homestay-responsibility-agreement.docx)
* [ISP Written Agreement](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Standard-Application-Written-Agreement.docx)
* [Withdrawal Form](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Withdrawal-Application-Form.pdf)
* [Welfare Provision Change Form](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/Welfare-Provision-Change-Form.pdf)
* [ISP Independent Living Assessment Checklist](https://study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/Independent%20Living%20Assessment%20Checklist.docx)

## Related procedures

* [ISP Admissions and Enrolment Procedure](https://www.study.vic.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/en/School_Toolkit/ISP_Admissions_and_Enrolment_Procedure.docx)

## Supporting information / websites

* [WWCC Status Checker](https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/about-the-check/resources/status-checker)

## Definitions

* **DE (IED)** – Department of Education – International Education Division. IED is the division in the Department of Education that administers the International Student Program (ISP) in Victorian government schools. IED is not a separate entity to DE. DE is the CRICOS-registered provider.
* **International student (student)** – a student participating in the ISP under a subclass 500 Student –Schools visa who has been issued a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) Letter.
* **School staff** – employees of schools, for example – International Student Coordinator, Homestay Coordinator, Head of Department, deputy principal, and principal.
* **Homestay** – international student accommodation arranged by schools where DE (IED) is responsible for the welfare of the student at all times, including outside school hours.
* **Homestay provider** –typically a member of the school community and refers to the provision of homestay services to an international student. Homestay is a term used to describe full board accommodation offered by a family, a couple, or a single person for which a fee is charged. Homestay services include the provision of accommodation, meals, facilities, and utilities.

## Contact and maintenance officer

Manager, School Support Unit

International Education Division

Department of Education

Level 28, 80 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000

Email: [international.school.support@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:international.school.support@education.vic.gov.au)

Phone: +61 3 7022 1000

## Authorised

Executive Director, International Education Division

**Date of authorisation**: 26/04/2023

**Date last reviewed:** 24/01/2024

**Review frequency**: This procedure will be reviewed at minimum every 24 months or when any changes arise impacting its currency, including legislative or regulation change.