



# VSA International Skills Fellowship Application Guidelines

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# Introduction

## VSA VET International Practitioner Fellowship

The Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) in partnership with the International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute) are offering ten (10) International Skills Fellowships in 2024 valued at \$13,000 each.

The Victorian Skills Authority works in partnership with the International Specialised Skills Institute by funding the VSA International Skills Fellowship. The Fellowship program focuses on developing opportunities for building quality and excellence in the VET workforce.

The Fellowships are available to members of the Victorian VET Sector who are employed within Victorian Government contracted Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), including TAFEs, private RTOs and Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board registered Learn Local Providers (LL providers). Fellowships are also available to VSA Industry Advisory Group members and their Executive Officers.

## About this Fellowship

Those eligible are invited to apply for a Fellowship that will support the continued development of a skilled Victoria with a focus on one of the following priority areas:

1. Developing quality training with deep and meaningful connections to emerging or ongoing industry needs.
2. Developing educational approaches that support inclusion and increase participation.
3. Developing education and training that supports the skills needed for a clean economy.

## Victorian Skills Authority (VSA)

The VSA is an independent Administrative Office which is located within the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions portfolio. It has a mandate to publish an annual skills plan that sets the strategic agenda for the post-secondary education and skills system in Victoria. The VSA also has oversight of the VET Development Centre, which was established to provide professional development opportunities and capability building for the VET teacher Workforce.

The Fellowship program is important in supporting the VSA pursue its ambition to lift participation and maximise opportunities for Victorians to access good jobs through learning for work and life; instil higher order skills, especially at the trade and technician level; promote labour market mobility to fill new opportunities and enhance productivity; develop skills for local economies and local communities; and provide the pathways for Victorians to access education and training at regular intervals across their careers.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-skills-authority>

## International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The ISS Institute was founded 30 years ago, by a small group of innovative leaders who had a vision of building a community of industry specialists who would lead the up skilling of the Australian workforce. Investing in the development of talented, passionate and innovative Australians to travel abroad to develop new skills and knowledge and return to Australia to disseminate their learnings has, and continues to create a 'better skilled Australia.' Our Fellows represent a broad cross-section of industries and our Fellowship program creates impact in many ways including economic benefits, skills preservation, the personal and professional advancement of our Fellows, new thinking, practice and increased innovation in the workforce.

[www.issinstitute.org.au](http://www.issinstitute.org.au)

## What is International Applied Research?

Applied Research is an approach used to solve practical problems. This type of study and research is often used in

education, training and across industries with the intention of generating actionable knowledge, to find solutions or develop innovative practice that has direct application to the world. ISS Institute's Fellowship program invests in Australians to undertake applied research outside of Australia and apply their learnings in an Australian context on their return.

## How to apply for this Fellowship?

To apply for this Fellowship, you are required to:

1. Complete the application form
2. Provide a current curriculum vitae (resume)
3. Provide two letters of support which indicate that your Fellowship field is relevant and will benefit the industry (e.g. peak industry bodies, government agencies, professional associations)
4. Provide an Employer Endorsement Letter indicating that you will be supported to meet the obligations associated with this Fellowship (this letter should be from your current CEO, director or manager)

Email these documents to [applications@issinstitute.org.au](mailto:applications@issinstitute.org.au)

## Who can apply?

- Victorian Residents with Australian Permanent Residency (PR) or Citizens over the age of 18.
- The Fellowships are available to members of the Victorian VET Sector who are employed within Victorian Government contracted Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), including TAFEs, private RTOs and Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board registered Learn Local Providers (LL providers). Fellowships are also available to VSA Industry Advisory Group members and their Executive Officers.

## What are the Fellowship Priority Areas?

Fellowship applications must focus on one of the priority areas described below:

Priority areas for the current round of VSA International Skills Fellowships reflect the Department's primary focus, in building a future where Victoria is recognised nationally and internationally for the skills, knowledge, and expertise of its people. Underpinning each area of focus is an explicit alignment to areas of reform that will benefit the whole Victorian community.

### Priority Area 1: Developing quality training with deep and meaningful connections to emerging or ongoing industry needs.

ISS Institute's VSA supported Fellowships seek to:

- Ensure emerging needs are met.
- Ensure training leads to real jobs that benefit the economy.
- Support the progression of learning for individuals and the development of future skills.

This will be achieved by providing:

- High-quality training that students and industry can trust, aligned to industry and workforce needs.
- A real voice for industry in training.

### Priority Area 2: Developing educational approaches that support inclusion and increase participation

- A great education system widens opportunities for all, reducing the impact of disadvantage, and empowers people with the skills, knowledge, and experience they need to build healthy, happy and prosperous lives.
- Growing up in poverty, in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, or with complex social problems like mental health or disability, should not mean that a person's chances of succeeding in education are reduced. We are committed to

breaking the link between disadvantage and educational achievement.

- Increasing participation in education, training and employment supports good jobs, the economy and communities.

### **Priority Area 3: Developing education and training that supports the skills needed for a clean economy**

- New skills and jobs are emerging to support the transition to a clean economy.
- The impact is wide-reaching, from clean energy generation and transmission; waste reduction, reuse and recycling (the circular economy), through to climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Realignment of training to accommodate the increasing demand for multi-disciplinary skills, strong leadership and streamlined processes will be critical.
- The Victorian tertiary education and training system can play an influential role in workforce development through enabling more flexible and locally responsive provision.

### **What does a Fellowship involve?**

- Fellows must use their Fellowship payment to undertake applied international research overseas.
- Overseas Fellowship research may include meeting knowledgeable leaders, conducting interviews, observation, immersion in workplaces, undertaking specialised training or attending a specialist conference.
- Fellows must manage their Fellowship funds personally to arrange their travel and international activities.
- Fellows must prepare a formal Fellowship report documenting findings and recommendations for addressing the identified priority area within 12 months of receiving their Fellowship. ISS Institute will assist with the editing, design and publication of this Fellowship report.
- Fellows must participate in a Fellowship induction program and will be supported by ISS Institute staff throughout the Fellowship period (and beyond).
- Fellows must arrange for time off work with their employer to undertake the overseas applied research component of their Fellowship. While the Fellowship is being awarded to the individual and not their employer, it is important that the employer supports the individual's application and will support the individual to meet Fellowship obligations.
- Fellows will be supported throughout their Fellowship by the ISS Institute team.
- Fellows must develop local connections with the education sector in Victoria to ensure the knowledge being gained from the proposed Fellowship is being shared and/or applied within the education and training sector as well as relevant industries.
- The Fellow must complete a minimum three (3) dissemination sessions within three (3) months of their report being printed.
- The Fellow must agree (where practicable) to participate in speaking opportunities identified by the VSA, VDC (VET Development Centre) and/or the ISS Institute.

### **Selection Process**

- Each submission will be evaluated by the VSA and ISS Institute team members, who may draw upon specialist experts when evaluating applications.
- Short-listed applicants will be interviewed by a selection panel, made up of VSA representatives and ISS Institute team members.
- Interviews conducted face to face, or by video conference..

- Given the number of applications, individual applications will not receive feedback.
- Each applicant will be advised of the outcome of their application.

## **Conditions of Entry**

1. A Fellowship application, including the attachments (curriculum vitae, two (2) letters of support, one (1) employer endorsement letter) must be received by the ISS Institute by the closing date.
2. The duration of the overseas applied research component varies depending on the aims of the Fellowship (but generally Fellows spend between two (2) – four (4) weeks overseas).
3. Successful applicants will enter into a contractual agreement with ISS Institute to ensure that all Fellowship requirements are met.
4. Fellows must prepare both a brief and a detailed Fellowship report outlining their international research, findings and recommendations.
5. The Fellowship, including publication of the final Fellowship report, must be completed within 12 months.
6. Fellows agree to disseminate their Fellowship learnings, findings and recommendations to peers, industry leaders and other relevant bodies and report back to the ISS Institute about these.
7. Our Fellows agree to be ambassadors of ISS Institute throughout their Fellowship and into the future.
8. Our Fellows agree to take part in periodic evaluation, generally via surveys, so we can capture the impact that a Fellowship has had at a personal, professional or industry level over time.
9. While Fellowship applicants can be undertaking tertiary studies, the Fellowship cannot be used to gain a tertiary qualification.
10. The selection panel's decision is final and binding.
11. Unsuccessful Fellowship applicants are welcome to reapply for a Fellowship in the future.

## **Preparing your Fellowship application**

Before you complete your application form you may want to consider these tips and ideas:

### **About the application form**

ISS Institute prefers that Fellowship application forms are completed via our online application form available at [www.issinstitute.org.au](http://www.issinstitute.org.au)

When preparing a Fellowship application form, it is a good idea to type it up as a Word document and save locally. Once completed you can then cut and paste it into the PDF Fellowship Application Form. When filling out your PDF Fellowship application form save it regularly to avoid losing content if you encounter a computer issue.



When submitting your Fellowship application form please save the file as your surname and year (e.g. Jones2023) and then email it (along with the attachments) to applications@issinstitute.org.au

## **What are letters of support?**

Letters of support indicate that your Fellowship field is relevant and will benefit your industry or sector. Letters of support can come from a peak industry body, industry/sector partner, government agencies, professional association or key partner. The best letters of support describe how they may support your Fellowship, convey enthusiasm and lends credibility to the need for your Fellowship topic and the outcomes of your research.

Before approaching individuals who could provide you with a letter of support, it is a good idea to make a list of potential supporters. Contact them, preferably over the phone or via email, and ask if they would be willing to provide you with a Letter of Support. It is a good idea to have a brief summary of your proposed Fellowship and explain how it will benefit your industry/sector/community when asking for a letter of support.

Ensure your letter of support has an appropriate letterhead and is signed and dated.

## **What is an Employer Endorsement Letter?**

An Employer Endorsement Letter shows that you have discussed your Fellowship application with your employer (e.g. CEO, director or senior manager). While it is the Fellow, and not the Fellow's employer, who receives the Fellowship, it is important that your employer is aware that you are applying for a Fellowship. This ensures that your employer understands you will need to take leave from work (e.g. annual leave, professional leave etc.) to travel overseas, you will be completing a Fellowship report and seeking opportunities within and beyond your work place to disseminate your Fellowship learnings and findings.

Your employer may also want to assist you while you are developing your Fellowship application and the priority areas you want to investigate.

## **About the Fellowship application questions**

- Please avoid industry/sector jargon in your application and write in plain English.
- Make sure your answers are succinct, clear and to the point – there are restricted word limits per question.
- Consider having a friend or colleague who is not in the sector read your application form for clarity.

## **Fellowship application questions guidance**

You will be required to provide a short response (min. 200 words – max. 300 words) against each of the key selection criteria below:

### **Before answering the following questions in your application, please provide a title for your Fellowship.**

#### **1. Please provide a succinct description of your Fellowship? 150 words**

By this stage in your Fellowship application you will have covered most aspects of your Fellowship topic and proposal. In this question you have a chance to pitch your Fellowship proposal in a clear and thoughtful way. In many respects this is how you will convey your proposed Fellowship to your employer, those you are seeking letter of support from, and your peers.

Example:

*Molly intends to enhance her practice in technical wool knitwear through exposure to the world's capital of textile craftsmanship, Italy. Molly aims to address the knowledge gap of yarn spinning in Australia, whilst exploring heritage and new wool recycling methods to develop the quality of knitwear in Australia, further supply chain knowledge, and subsequently promote circularity. Through understanding state-of-the-art yarn spinning technology, Molly can apply and share knowledge to encourage innovative textile applications, whilst investigating opportunities to support the ongoing demand of one of Australia's largest export commodities, Merino wool.*

**2. Priority Area. Please outline the aim of your Fellowship and which priority area your Fellowship will focus on?**

In this question we want you to describe the aim of your Fellowship, how your proposed Fellowship aligns with one of the priority areas and how this will benefit you and your industry/sector now and into the future.

**3. Research and evidence: Please identify the research you have conducted and the evidence you have collected to indicate the need for, or importance of, your proposed Fellowship?**

In this question you have an opportunity to discuss research undertaken and/or the evidence you have collected which indicates how your Fellowship would assist in addressing the priority area you have selected. You may find that the evidence is a mix of formal research, action research or anecdotal evidence.

**4. Outcome for education and training sector: In what ways do you think the education and training sector will benefit from your proposed Fellowship and how would you ensure this?**

The Fellowships are intended to examine innovative approaches that demonstrate potential benefits for, and application in skills training in Victoria. A desired outcome of each Fellowship is the development of effective approaches for student engagement and participation, quality teaching and learning and employment and industry productivity.

While you may not have the answers now, you will have no doubt thought about the ways in which your Fellowship may have a positive influence in Victoria and this question is a chance to discuss that. In addition, this question provides you with a chance to discuss leading practice occurring overseas but which may not be evident or occurring in Victoria (or Australia).

**5. Local partnerships: What local connections have you formed with the education and training sector in Victoria - ones that will help to ensure the knowledge garnered from your proposed Fellowship will be shared and applied within the education, training and industry sectors? Please identify any network/s that you are involved with and details of your relevant industry partnerships?**

A core component of any Fellowship is disseminating learnings and ideas with colleagues, peers and influential organisations/individuals. In this question we are interested in learning about who you believe would benefit from the outcomes of your Fellowship and the ways you might share that information.

**6. International partnerships/connections: Which international institutions, organisations or centres of excellence will you be visiting and in order to develop connections during your proposed Fellowship and why have you selected these? Please provide details of the innovative work practices that the organisation/s have implemented which aren't currently evident in Australia.**

To answer this question we don't expect you to have organised a detailed itinerary or travel plan as yet. However, there is an expectation that you will have identified leading practice and skill enhancement opportunities, including where these are located, who you may wish to meet and/or the type of connections (e.g. shadowing, meetings, immersion, conferences).

**7. Implementation and impact: List a minimum of three (3) strategies you could potentially implement upon returning from your proposed Fellowship that will create change and impact.**

The response to this question should include actions that you envision you could implement on returning from your Fellowship travels based on your Fellowship learnings. Be bold.



**8. Professional capacity development: How will the proposed Fellowship benefit you in your professional capacity and development in the Victorian VET Sector? How will it enhance your position as an expert in your field? How will you support peers' professional capacity? What is your plan in relation to influencing and leading innovation in your sector beyond your Fellowship?**

In this question, we are interested in learning about how this Fellowship might assist you in achieving career goals now and into the future. In addition, we are keen to learn about ways you might be able to assist and contribute to the professional development of colleagues and peers, and the broader sector.

**9. Have you ever undertaken another Fellowship, awarded by another organisation, that was related to this Fellowship topic? If yes, please describe. 150 words**

While you may have undertaken a Fellowship provided by another organisation in the past, we prefer that it does not closely resemble this one. However, if this Fellowship application builds upon your previous one it will still be considered.

## **Enquiries**

ISS Institute welcomes applications from any individual who meets the conditions of entry. Whether you are familiar with preparing submissions or have never done so in the past, do feel free to contact us prior to or during the preparation of your Fellowship application.

If you have any questions please contact the ISS Institute team:

Phone: 03 9347 4583

Email: [applications@issinstitute.org.au](mailto:applications@issinstitute.org.au)

Website: [www.issinstitute.org.au](http://www.issinstitute.org.au)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ISSInstitute](http://www.facebook.com/ISSInstitute)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/ISS\\_Institute](http://www.twitter.com/ISS_Institute)