

Using electronic signatures

This fact sheet explains our expectations if you use electronic signatures, including common methods and some practical example scenarios.

You can use an electronic signature on all documents

We accept electronic signatures for all documents that need to be signed to meet a VET funding contract requirement. This includes your own signature, signatures of your employees or signatures of third parties such as students.

For example:

- practical placement agreements
- the evidence of eligibility and student declaration form
- teacher endorsement of an attendance roll for evidence of participation.

The only exception is where there is another law or regulatory obligation you must comply with that says you can't use an electronic signature.

What method to use

We don't prescribe how you make electronic signatures or endorse specific electronic signature software products. You'll need to research and investigate what's available and decide what will work best for your business.

But any method you use must satisfy these 3 principles:



identity – clearly identify the person who signs.



consent – clearly indicate the person's agreement to the information.



reliability – be 'as reliable as appropriate in light of all the circumstances' so we can rely on the signature at audit or review as showing the person's agreement.

We expect you to have a business process or rationale for choosing when to use an electronic signature. This applies to each situation where you collect signatures electronically.

You should use a method that is proportionate to the risk of what is being agreed to or endorsed.

In general, the higher the risk of an invalid or unenforceable signature, or potential security breach, the more robust your electronic method needs to be.

Common electronic signature methods

The table below identifies common methods for obtaining electronic signatures. It includes a rating of how robust we think they are in meeting the requirements of the contract.

On the robustness ratings scale:

- **high** means that using one of these methods is likely to be robust for most purposes
- **medium** means:
 - for higher risk applications: a combination of these methods might be needed for a higher risk application. For example, a student signature on the evidence of eligibility and student declaration form.
 - for lower risk applications: using one of these methods may be sufficient for lower risk applications or for actions occurring within a secure system. For example, within an online platform that includes both **authentication** (secure login) and **authorisation** (restricts particular actions to authorised users).
- **low** means do not use these methods as they are neither appropriate nor sufficiently robust.

Common electronic signature methods – from most to least robust

Method	Description	Robustness
Graphical signature	Such as using an electronic pen or finger to make a signature directly onto an electronic device.	High
Encrypted codes	When a unique code or encryption key is sent to a user and they must enter the code to sign the document by ticking a box or entering their name.	High
Electronic signature software	Commercially available software that send a request for signature to a user's email address. The software requires the user to authenticate their identity using methods such as an access code, SMS authentication, phone authentication or identity checks against publicly available information. The programs also keep electronic records of the signatures and protect signed documents from unauthorised alteration.	High
Tick box	Ticking a box in an online form.	Medium
Online form	Typing one's name in an online form.	Medium
Email from a verified address	Sending or receiving an email from an address that is verified to belong to that person. For example, an email from your employee from their password-protected company email address, or an email from a student from an address recorded in their student file as their primary contact.	Medium
Electronic workflow	Completing a step in an electronic workflow.	Medium
A scanned ink-based signature	An ink-based signature that is scanned into an electronic format and cut and pasted into a document.	Medium
Phone message	Phone conversation. Text message or another digital message.	Low

Example scenarios

Example 1: fully online enrolment process

Aliah wants to enrol in a Diploma of Nursing at Essential College. The college uses a fully online enrolment process.

Online enrolment

Aliah completes an electronic version of the evidence of eligibility and student declaration form.

Through its 'back-end' administrative process, Essential College assesses her eligibility and processes it through a workflow.

Obtaining the student's signature

Essential College uses a commercially available electronic signature software to collect Aliah's signature. This covers the requirements for identity, consent and reliability in one step and provides an electronic audit trail.

Obtaining Essential College's signature

An authorised delegate completes a step in a workflow and the system records it as their signature.

Essential College has a clear business process and can show that this 'sign-off' can only be achieved by them logging in to its system with a unique ID and password (**identity**).

Only specific people are authorised within the system to review and approve student information and decide student eligibility (**consent** and **reliability**).

Example 2: electronic endorsement of an attendance roll

Billy is doing a Certificate IV in Music at Cadence College. To improve efficiency, the college uses an online administration system to collect information about student attendance.

Cadence College uses this information as evidence of participation.

Obtaining the teacher's signature

To record student attendance, the teacher logs into a secure administrative platform using their unique ID and password (**identity**).

Cadence College has a business process and the platform is a recognised method for collecting student attendance information. They record the minimum information needed for evidence of participation (the student's name or student ID, the subject identifier and the date), also capturing any clustered delivery information.

The teacher recorded Billy's attendance by completing a 'tick box' process to confirm he attended the class and to show their endorsement of the attendance roll (**consent** and **reliability**).