

A Strategic Guide to Switching Careers - Complete Hospitality Training

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Details:

Switching into hospitality is mostly a question of four things: working out what from your current job already counts, using the right recognition mechanism to cut the parts you can already do, checking your funding eligibility before you enrol rather than after, and understanding that a relevant Certificate III changes your pay floor rather than just your resume. The funding question catches career changers specifically, and it is the one people find out about too late.

Decide why you are moving and test the destination

Our original switching-careers guide begins by asking why you want to move: a different work rhythm, more satisfying tasks, a new industry or a role using skills you already have. List your current technical and people skills, then compare them with real job advertisements and the course requirements of the role you want. Talk informally with people doing that job about a normal week and the entry route; an appealing title can hide work you would not enjoy.

Build a transition plan with steps, dates, likely training costs and a point at which you will start applying. Some research and training may be possible while you still work in your current role, which can reduce financial pressure. The credit, funding and award details below help you make that plan realistic; they do not replace the personal decision about the kind of work you want.

What transfers from other work

More than most people expect. Hospitality qualifications assess a lot of general workplace capability alongside the technical units.

From your current work	Where it lands in hospitality
Retail or call-centre customer contact	SITXCCS014 Provide service to customers; SIRXCEG008 Manage disrespectful, aggressive or abusive customers
Cash handling, POS, reconciliation	SITXFIN007 Process financial transactions — core in SIT30722 , elective in SIT30622
Rostering or supervising a team	SITXHRM008 Roster staff and SITXHRM009 Lead and manage people, both core in SIT40422 ; also BSB40520 Certificate IV in Leadership and Management
Coaching or training juniors	SITXHRM007 Coach others in job skills — core at both Certificate III and Certificate IV
Stock control, ordering, suppliers	SITXINV006 Receive, store and maintain stock; SITXMGT005 Establish and conduct business relationships

Conflict or complaint handling	SITXCOM010 Manage conflict — core at Certificate IV and Diploma
Budgets and financial reporting	SITXFIN009 Manage finances within a budget; SITXFIN010 Prepare and monitor budgets
Food safety from another industry	Standard 3.2.2A obligations; SITXFSA005 and SITXFSA006
Cross-cultural work	SITXCOM007 Show social and cultural sensitivity — core at Certificate III
Work health and safety responsibility	SITXWHS005 at Certificate III; SITXWHS007 at Certificate IV and Diploma

What usually does not transfer is speed under service pressure. That is learned on a floor or a pass, not in a classroom, and it is the reason placement matters more for career changers than for anyone else. It is also why several units are assessed by repetition rather than by test — SITHFAB027 requires five service periods including one peak, SITHFAB034 requires twelve with full menu advice in every one.

Two mechanisms, not one, and they take different evidence

Career changers reach for "RPL" as a single idea. There are two, under two different Standards, and bringing the wrong evidence to the wrong one wastes weeks.

	Recognition of prior learning	Credit transfer
Standard	1.6	1.7
What is assessed	Evidence of prior skills, learning and experience, against the unit requirements, through the RTO's assessment system	Prior completion of an equivalent training product
What you bring	Payslips, position descriptions, references, dated records of what you actually did, a supervisor prepared to verify it	AQF certification documentation or an authenticated VET transcript
Realistic outcome	Some units signed off, some still to study	The unit is credited, unless prevented by a licensing or regulatory requirement
Who it suits	Someone with a long work history and little paperwork	Someone who has studied before, in any field

Both Standards oblige the RTO to offer the opportunity, publish its policy, document the decision and decide in a way that is fair, transparent, consistent among students and protective of the integrity of the training product. RPL is a genuine assessment against the same evidence requirements, not a waiver — where the evidence holds, the unit is signed off and you do not repeat it. It is the single most direct way to shorten a course, and it is consistently under-used, mostly because people assume their experience does not count.

One trap specific to career changers with prior study: equivalence is not the same as similarity. BSB40520 Certificate IV in Leadership and Management is equivalent to the superseded BSB42015, so an old one credits cleanly. But BSB30120 Certificate III in Business is not equivalent to BSB30115, BSB30215, BSB30415, BSB30815 or BSB30915 — all superseded on 18 October 2020 — so gap

assessment is needed rather than a straight credit.

A second, more mundane trap: the provider name on an old certificate may not be the provider name you recognise . Training organisations trade under multiple registered names, and we have several on the RTO 3722 record. A credential issued under any of them is an RTO 3722 credential. The list is at the end of this page, and it is worth checking before you assume an old certificate is unusable.

The pre-training review, and what the RTO is obliged to consider

The moment to raise all of this is the pre-training review that every learner completes before enrolling, and it is a regulatory obligation with a named source. Standard 2.2 of the Outcome Standards for RTOs requires that "VET students are advised, prior to enrolment, about the suitability of the training product for them, taking into account the student's skills and competencies." Its performance indicators require the RTO to have procedures to review, prior to enrolment , the skills and competencies of prospective students — including their language, literacy and numeracy proficiency and digital literacy — and then to advise each prospective student whether the training product suits them. The review must also take account of individual requirements including physical skills, prior experience, prerequisites and entry requirements .

"Prior experience" is the phrase to hold onto if you are switching careers. The Standard obliges the RTO to take it into account, not merely to listen politely to it.

Name the instrument when you check this. The National Code 2018 also has a Standard 2.2 , and it is a different provision for a different cohort: the assessment of an overseas student's English proficiency, qualifications or work experience for course entry.

In practice the review is where you are told whether you are enrolling in the most suitable qualification, where your current competencies are recorded, where RPL and credit transfer opportunities are identified, where the learning and assessment strategy is shaped, and where the support services you may need are identified. It is also where any licensing or occupational licence requirement, any work placement requirement and the Student Identifier process must be explained to you. Bring the evidence to that conversation rather than describing it from memory. If you are unsure what your background is worth, skills assessment is the place to start.

The funding constraint nobody mentions

Government-subsidised training schemes commonly restrict subsidy for someone who already holds a qualification at the same level as, or higher than, the one they want to enrol in. Rules differ by state and change over time, so the qualifications you already hold and their AQF level both matter.

This is a career-changer problem by definition. Someone moving from an unrelated diploma or degree into a hospitality Diploma can be affected, while a first-time learner in the same class is not.

In Victoria, subsidised training runs through Skills First , under a Standard VET Funding Contract. The structure to plan around:

Requirement	What it says
Residency	Australian citizen, permanent visa holder, or New Zealand citizen
Timing	Enrol and commence within the contract period — for the current contract, between the commencement date and 31 December 2026 inclusive

Location	All training and assessment undertaken while physically present in Victoria , or in a listed border-region postcode . There is no general online or interstate concession.
One exception	Temporarily interstate or overseas for a practical placement : online training and assessment is permitted during that period, capped at no more than 50% of total scheduled hours
Volume, per calendar year	Maximum two skill sets ; maximum two AQF qualifications ; maximum two programs at a time . Programs scheduled to commence later in the same calendar year count towards the limits .
Prior qualifications	Subsidy is affected by the level of qualification you already hold — the career-changer constraint

Two honest caveats. First, the provider determines your eligibility and holds the evidence for that determination , so it is a question to ask them about your own circumstances, early. Second, this page is not your eligibility determination. Use the Victorian Government's own eligibility indicator, which is the authoritative source, and treat anything on any provider's website — including this one — as background rather than an answer.

Be wary of packages advertised with a headline value and a token price. This page carries no fees, and no "valued at" figures, because a fee printed on a web page ages badly and a stale one is worse than none. Confirm the current fee directly.

Our New South Wales delivery is fee-for-service, with no government subsidy attached. See launch your hospitality career with Victoria's government-funded training and why January is a good time to invest in your hospitality career .

What a relevant Certificate III does to your pay floor

This is the part that makes the switch worth finishing rather than half-doing — but it starts with a question career changers rarely think to ask, because in most industries there is only one answer.

Which award covers you is decided by the premises, not the job title , and in and around hospitality there are four :

Where you work	Award
Hotels, pubs, taverns, motels, resorts, casinos, caterers, accommodation	MA000009 Hospitality Industry (General) Award 2020
Not-for-profit registered clubs — RSL, bowls, golf, surf, sporting, community	MA000058 Registered and Licensed Clubs Award 2020
Standalone restaurants, cafes, night clubs , reception centres, roadhouses	MA000119 Restaurant Industry Award 2020
Takeaway, food courts, food sold mainly to be eaten away from the counter	MA000003 Fast Food Industry Award 2010

Each covers its industry to the exclusion of any other modern award, so exactly one applies to your employer. Two traps:

Clubs are not covered by MA000009. Clause 4.4(d)(i) expressly excludes "clubs registered or recognised under State or Territory legislation". A registered club sits under MA000058 , and only

where it is both registered under a liquor, gaming, associations or corporations statute and operating not-for-profit for the benefit of members and the community (clause 4.3).

Night clubs are not clubs. A night club is commercial, so MA000119 .

That matters practically for a career changer, because trying two or three different venue types while you work out what suits you means moving between awards, not just between employers.

The good news: the qualification floor exists in three of the four

A relevant AQF Certificate III or higher, used at work , sets a minimum classification of Level 4 :

Award	Floor	Rate clause
MA000009 Hospitality Industry (General)	Level 4	clause 18.1
MA000119 Restaurant Industry	Level 4	clause 18.1
MA000058 Registered and Licensed Clubs	Level 4	clause 18.3
MA000003 Fast Food	no equivalent provision	—

For a career changer this is the most reassuring fact on the page. Sampling a pub, then a club, then a cafe does not reset the value of the qualification each time — the floor is waiting in all three. Only the fast food award has no equivalent provision, which is a reason not to treat a food-court job as the easy way in.

Both conditions in that sentence have to hold: the qualification must be relevant to the classification you are employed in , and you must make use of the competencies in the work. Three wording differences follow from that:

MA000009 and MA000119 require you to make use of the skills and knowledge derived from the Certificate III competencies. A certificate in a drawer is not the test.

MA000058 states the floor for "AQF Certificate III qualifications" without the words "or higher", and adds that the Fair Work Commission may require the employee to demonstrate that they utilise the relevant skills.

Dispute routes differ : clause 40 under MA000009, clause 34 under MA000119, and referral to the Fair Work Commission under MA000058.

And the point that matters most if you are switching late

Under MA000119 , Level 4 is not a generic pay point. Schedule A defines it as "Food and beverage attendant grade 4 (tradesperson)" and "Cook grade 3 (tradesperson)" , and the Level 4 rate is that award's standard rate . Under MA000009 the kitchen stream likewise places Level 4 at Cook (tradesperson) grade 3 .

Read that against the usual assumption about changing trades in your thirties or forties. A relevant Certificate III, used at work , is a documented route to a tradesperson grade without serving an apprenticeship — in a restaurant, a cafe or a pub alike. For someone who cannot realistically start an apprenticeship from scratch at this stage of a working life, that is the difference between a career switch being arithmetically possible and not. It is also the strongest argument against stopping at a few units: the floor attaches to the qualification, and to using it.

Clause 2 and the "appropriate level of training" test, in three limbs

Alongside the Level 4 floor, MA000009 clause 2 defines a separate and broader test called "appropriate level of training". This is how the award recognises skill that did not arrive in the form of a certificate, and it is directly relevant to a career changer. An employee has an appropriate level of training if any one of three limbs is satisfied:

Limb	What it requires	A live route today?
(a)	Completed an appropriate training program meeting the training and assessment requirements of a qualification or one or more appropriate units of competency forming part of a training package	Yes — and note that individual units count, not only a whole qualification
(b)	Been assessed by a qualified skills assessor as having skills at least equivalent to those in limb (a)	Yes, and this is the limb that matters most to someone with a long unrelated history and no certificate
(c)	As at 30 June 2010 , had been doing the work of that classification for at least three months	No. This limb cannot be newly satisfied.

Limb (b) is the career changer's route. It does not require you to have studied. It requires a qualified skills assessor to conclude that what you can already do is at least equivalent to the training. That is a different mechanism from RPL against a specific unit, although the evidence you assemble for one serves the other.

Limb (c) is a closed transitional provision. It is not a rolling three-month test. It was written to protect people who were already performing the work when the modern award commenced, and the date is fixed: the three months had to have been served as at 30 June 2010 . Nobody can newly qualify under it now, and it does not mean that three months in a role at some later date satisfies the training test.

That distinction is worth being blunt about, because the loose reading runs in the employer's favour. If "three months in the role" were treated as a rolling test, a venue could argue an employee had the appropriate level of training on experience alone, and use that to sidestep the Certificate III qualification floor rather than to reach it. It is a live underpayment vector, so read limb (c) with its date attached every time. MA000119 has its own equivalent limb, anchored to a different date again: 31 December 2009.

The other MA000009 provisions

Under MA000009 the classification structure is an Introductory level plus Levels 1 to 6 , across five streams — food and beverage, kitchen, guest services, clerical and casino gaming — and clause 14 obliges the employer to classify every employee in accordance with Schedule A. Level 4 is also that award's own reference point , the standard rate from which apprentice percentages are calculated.

Unlike the Level 4 floor, the rest of the numbering does not travel: MA000058, MA000119 and MA000003 each have their own Schedule A, with their own classification names and grades and their own clause numbering. So read the award that covers your employer rather than carrying a level number across.

One more MA000009 clause that matters specifically to someone starting again in a new industry. Introductory level has a clock. It is for someone entering the industry who does not yet demonstrate Level 1 competency: up to three months while training and being assessed, extendable once by mutual

agreement by a further three, with six months the maximum . It is not a place to be parked because you are new to hospitality rather than new to work. A trainee under a registered training contract is a different arrangement, paid under the National Training Wage .

And under clause 3.3 your employer must make the award and the National Employment Standards available on a noticeboard or by accessible electronic means. No rates are printed here — award rates re-set every 1 July, so use the Fair Work Ombudsman's Pay and Conditions Tool.

What is legally gated, and what your new employer owes you

Switching industries means meeting requirements you have never had to think about.

An RSA Statement of Attainment is a national training record, but permission to serve alcohol depends on the destination's rules. NSW permits eligible temporary interstate workers; permanent movers and security or RSA marshal roles must meet NSW training and competency-card requirements, using bridging where eligible. Victoria offers bridging to eligible interstate holders. SA applies approved-provider rules to training from 1 November 2020, with earlier training not required to be repeated solely for that change. QLD and WA require suitable national RSA evidence. Tasmania distinguishes staff from licence holders; the ACT and NT have local currency and refresher requirements. Check the regulator before your first shift. See RSA recognition by jurisdiction , NSW's rules and SA's rules .

Food handler training , if you will handle food, completed before you engage in a prescribed activity and covering safe handling of food, food contamination, cleaning and sanitising, and personal hygiene. It does not have to be nationally accredited , has no mandated refresher period , and the business is not required to keep records of it. The separate five-year clock belongs to the Food Safety Supervisor certificate, which is an appointment the business makes. See food handling course .

Victorian RSG is free approved training: online modules through RSG Online and venue-arranged sessions with venue support workers. National SITHGAM training does not replace it. See the official training requirements and our RSG guide .

On the other side of the ledger, your new employer has duties on day one, and these do not vary by award. The primary duty of care cannot be transferred . In Victoria the employer must provide such information, instruction, training or supervision as is necessary for safe work; in New South Wales a work experience student is expressly defined as a worker . In practice you should receive a general induction on health, safety and security procedures, a site-specific induction (first aid kit, emergency evacuation, the hazards of that building) and hazard-specific training. If your course involves placement, the provider delivers a general safety induction before placement and monitors it; the host delivers the site-specific induction on day one in writing.

You carry duties too: reasonable care for your own and others' safety, cooperation with the employer's compliance actions, no interference with safety equipment, reporting hazards and incidents, and participating in consultation. The hazards to expect: glassware, cuts and burns, heavy lifting, repetitive work, slips and trips, extraction noise, cleaning chemicals, occupational violence and harassment, electrical equipment, cross contamination, carbon dioxide gas. See health and safety best practice in hospitality .

If you are switching into cookery late

Worth knowing, because the numbers are specific. Through Trades Recognition Australia only Chef (351311) and Cook (351411) are assessable in this field. The experience bar depends on whether you have formal training: 3 years of relevant full-time paid work experience with formal culinary training, or 5 years without . TRA accepts SIT30821 Certificate III in Commercial Cookery for Cook, and SIT40521 Certificate IV in Kitchen Management for Chef and Cook. SIT20421 Certificate II in Cookery is not

accepted for any occupation , and note it is a different qualification from SIT20322 Certificate II in Hospitality.

Note the sizes before committing: SIT30821 is 25 units with 20 core , and SIT40521 is 33 units with 27 core — the largest qualification we deliver and the least flexible. Neither is a career-change side project. But SIT30821 is also the qualification that carries the tradesperson-grade consequence described above, in both the hospitality and restaurant awards, which is why it is usually the better target than a string of individual units. See Certificate III in Commercial Cookery and Certificate IV in Kitchen Management .

Choose the entry point deliberately

Do not default to the lowest level out of caution, and do not jump to a Diploma because your old job was senior. Match the level to the work you want to do: operational roles sit at Certificate III, supervision at Certificate IV, management at Diploma. The guide on how far a hospitality qualification can take you maps that out, and what career paths a hospitality qualification can open up covers the sideways options — including three community services qualifications on our scope that are not advertised at all.

About us

We are Complete Hospitality Training — legal name Complete Hospitality Training (Vic) Pty Ltd , RTO 3722 , CRICOS 04242E , ABN 27 006 947 262 , ACN 006 947 262 . Registered as RTO 3722 since 1 June 1994 . Regulated nationally by ASQA since 8 September 2017 , when registration transferred from the Victorian regulator (VRQA). The current registration period runs 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2032 , exercised by ASQA under the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 .

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Trading names on the RTO 3722 record. Five are current — Victorian Bar School (from 1 June 1994, the original), Complete Hospitality Training (2011), Ready Serve Achieve Melbourne (2018), Coffee School by CHT (2021) and Alchemy Institute of Australia (2024). A sixth, Complete Healthcare Training , ran from 24 October 2023 to 19 April 2025 and has ended. A certificate issued under any of those names is an RTO 3722 credential.

We link to the relevant course and regulatory sources in this guide. Check those sources for current requirements, and confirm course availability, delivery, fees and entry requirements with us before enrolling.

Source records and further guidance

We link the unit records and regulator guidance relevant to this page below. Check the current source before making an enrolment, licensing or employment decision.

BSB40520 Certificate IV in Leadership and Management

SIT30821 Certificate III in Commercial Cookery

BSB30120 Certificate III in Business

SIT40521 Certificate IV in Kitchen Management

SIT20322 Certificate II in Hospitality

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Victoria)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Australian Capital Territory)

Food Standards Code — Standards 3.2.2 and 3.2.2A (food safety practices and food safety management tools)

Hospitality Industry (General) Award 2020 (MA000009)

Restaurant Industry Award 2020 (MA000119)

Skills First (Victoria) — VET Funding Contract obligations

National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 — Standards 1 to 11

Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2025 (full text)

How long does RPL take?

It depends on the evidence, not the course. Solid documentation moves quickly, while reconstructing a work history from scratch slows it down.

Can I mix RPL with study?

Yes. RPL is applied unit by unit, so a partial outcome is normal and you study only the remainder.

What is the difference between RPL and credit transfer?

RPL (Standard 1.6) assesses evidence of prior skills, learning and experience. Credit transfer (Standard 1.7) recognises prior completion of an equivalent training product, evidenced by AQF certification documentation or an authenticated VET transcript. Different evidence, different Standard.

What is the pre-training review, and what must the RTO consider?

Standard 2.2 of the Outcome Standards for RTOs requires that VET students are advised, prior to enrolment, about the suitability of the training product for them, taking into account their skills and competencies. The RTO must review, before enrolment, a prospective student's language, literacy and numeracy proficiency and digital literacy, and take account of individual requirements including physical skills, prior experience, prerequisites and entry requirements. It is also where RPL and credit transfer are identified. Note that the National Code 2018 has its own Standard 2.2, which is about overseas students' English and qualifications — a different provision.

I studied business years ago. Does it credit across?

It depends on equivalence. BSB40520 is equivalent to BSB42015, so that credits. BSB30120 is not equivalent to the 2015-era Certificate III in Business codes, so that needs gap assessment.

My old certificate has an unfamiliar provider name on it. Is it worthless?

Not necessarily. Providers trade under multiple registered names. We have six on the RTO 3722 record, listed at the end of this page, and a certificate issued under any of them is an RTO 3722 credential.

I have the experience but no certificate. Is there any route under the award?

Yes, limb (b) of the "appropriate level of training" definition in MA000009 clause 2: being assessed by a qualified skills assessor as having skills at least equivalent to the training in limb (a). For a career

changer with a long history and no paperwork, that is the live route. Limb (a) is also broader than people assume — one or more appropriate units of competency forming part of a training package will satisfy it, not only a whole qualification.

Does three months in a role count as the appropriate level of training?

No, not today. Limb (c) of MA000009 clause 2 refers to someone who, as at 30 June 2010, had been performing the work of that classification for at least three months. It is a closed transitional provision, not a rolling three-month test, and it cannot be newly satisfied. Reading it as "any three months in the role" would let an employer treat experience as a substitute for the qualification and pay below the Level 4 floor, so always read the limb with its date attached. MA000119's equivalent limb is anchored to 31 December 2009.

Will my existing qualification stop me getting funding?

It can, if it is at the same or a higher level. Ask the provider about your specific position before committing, and check the Victorian Government's eligibility indicator.

What are the Skills First basics?

Australian citizen, permanent visa holder or New Zealand citizen; enrol and commence within the contract period; all training and assessment while physically present in Victoria or a listed border postcode; maximum two skill sets and two AQF qualifications per calendar year, and two programs at a time.

Can I do a subsidised Victorian course online from another state?

No, as a general rule. The only exception is a temporary interstate or overseas practical placement, capped at 50% of total scheduled hours.

Who decides whether I am eligible?

The provider makes the determination and holds the evidence for it. The Victorian Government's own eligibility indicator is the authoritative reference.

Is training subsidised in New South Wales?

Not through us. Our NSW delivery is fee-for-service.

Which award will cover me in hospitality?

The premises decides. Hotels, pubs, taverns, motels, resorts, casinos and caterers fall under MA000009; not-for-profit registered clubs under MA000058; standalone restaurants, cafes, night clubs, reception centres and roadhouses under MA000119; takeaway and food-court outlets under MA000003.

I am trying a few venue types while I work out what suits me. Does that change my award?

Yes. Moving from a pub to a registered club to a cafe moves you across three awards, each with its own Schedule A, so the level number you held at the last place does not carry over. What does carry over is the Level 4 qualification floor, which exists in all three of those awards.

Does a Certificate III change what I get paid?

In three of the four awards, yes. A relevant Certificate III used at work sets a minimum classification of Level 4 under MA000009 (clause 18.1), MA000119 (clause 18.1) and MA000058 (clause 18.3). The qualification must be relevant to the classification you are employed in, and you must use those competencies. MA000003, the fast food award, has no equivalent provision.

I am changing careers too late to do an apprenticeship. Is a trade grade still reachable?

Under MA000119, Level 4 is defined in Schedule A as "Food and beverage attendant grade 4 (tradesperson)" and "Cook grade 3 (tradesperson)", and MA000009's kitchen stream places Level 4 at Cook (tradesperson) grade 3. A relevant Certificate III used at work reaches a tradesperson grade without serving an apprenticeship.

Is the floor automatic once I finish the certificate?

No. MA000009 and MA000119 require you to make use of the skills and knowledge derived from the competencies. MA000058 omits the words "or higher" and adds that the Fair Work Commission may require you to demonstrate that you utilise the relevant skills.

My employer disagrees about my classification. Where does that go?

The dispute clause of the award covering the employer — clause 40 under MA000009, clause 34 under MA000119, and referral to the Fair Work Commission under MA000058.

I am new to hospitality but not new to work. Can they put me on Introductory level?

Under MA000009, Introductory level is for someone who does not yet demonstrate Level 1 competency, and it is capped at three months, extendable once by mutual agreement by a further three. Six months is the maximum.

What do I legally need before my first shift?

RSA if you will serve alcohol, valid in the state you are working in, and food handler training completed before you engage in a prescribed activity if you will handle food.

How much experience does a cookery skills assessment need?

Three years of relevant full-time paid work experience with formal culinary training, or five years without — plus 12 months full-time paid in the nominated occupation within the past 3 years.

Where do I start if I am still deciding?

Lodge an expression of interest (/eoi/) or send a course enquiry (/contact/) with a short description of your work history.