

Food Handling Certificate – Complete Hospitality Training

Canonical: <https://cht.edu.au/news/food-handling-certificate/>

Details:

A food handling certificate is a Statement of Attainment for SITXFSA005 Use hygienic practices for food safety, issued by a Registered Training Organisation. It is not a licence and no government department issues it.

Three sibling pages cover the credential itself — what it is , how to get one and who needs one . This page covers the substance : the food safety knowledge the training exists to deliver, the clauses of the Food Standards Code that knowledge maps onto, and why each part of it is there.

Temperature control: the numbers that matter

Most foodborne illness in a commercial kitchen traces back to potentially hazardous food spending too long at the wrong temperature.

| | | | --- | --- | | The danger zone | 5 °C to 60 °C — where pathogens multiply fastest | | Receiving | Potentially hazardous food must arrive at 5 °C or below , or 60 °C or above | | Cold storage | Under temperature control, continuously | | Hot holding and display | Under temperature control, continuously | | Transport | Under temperature control | | Cooling and reheating | Within the specified timeframes — the transitions are where control is most often lost |

Those six lines are not arbitrary teaching points. They map directly onto the practices a category one business must be able to substantiate with records under clause 3.2.2A—12 , kept three months and accessible at the premises. See how long do I need to keep records for .

The transitions deserve emphasis. Food sitting in a working fridge is rarely the problem. Food cooling slowly in a deep container overnight, or reheated to "warm" rather than properly hot, is where the failures cluster — because both cross the danger zone slowly and neither looks wrong.

The probe is the whole system's weak point

Every temperature record depends on a thermometer being accurate. That is why SITXFSA006 , the supervisor unit, specifically requires the procedure to calibrate a temperature probe .

An uncalibrated probe is worse than no probe, because it generates records that document compliance which may never have happened. If you take one operational habit from food safety training, it is checking the probe rather than trusting it.

The nine points where control is won or lost

The supervisor unit frames food safety around nine critical control points . They are worth knowing even as a handler, because they are the checklist an environmental health officer is effectively working through:

Receiving — temperature on arrival, packaging integrity, supplier

Storing — temperature, separation of raw from ready-to-eat, stock rotation

Preparing — hands, boards, equipment, time out of refrigeration

Processing — process steps that achieve pathogen reduction, meaning cooking properly

Displaying — temperature control, protection from contamination

Serving — hygienic service, no bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat food

Packaging — clean materials, no contamination introduced

Transporting — temperature maintained end to end

Disposing — waste handled so it does not become a contamination route back

Most kitchens are strong at three or four of these and weak at the rest. The value of the framework is that it makes the weak ones visible.

Cross-contamination: the routes, not the rule

"Keep raw and ready-to-eat separate" is the rule everyone can recite. The training is about the routes, which are less obvious:

Hands — the most common vector, and the reason hand washing is assessed rather than described

Boards and knives — including the board that was wiped rather than washed

Cloths — a single cloth moved around a kitchen is an efficient distribution system for bacteria

Equipment — slicers, mixers, vacuum sealers, anything with a surface food touches

Storage order — raw above ready-to-eat in a fridge means drip contamination

Allergen carryover — the same routes, but the consequence is immediate rather than delayed

Cleaning and sanitising are two operations

Routinely conflated, and the distinction is the point:

Cleaning removes visible soil, grease and food residue. A clean surface looks clean.

Sanitising reduces micro-organisms to a safe level. A sanitised surface does not look any different.

You cannot sanitise a dirty surface — soil shields organisms from the sanitiser and, with some chemical sanitisers, neutralises them outright. So the sequence is clean first, then sanitise, and both steps are required. Standard 3.2.2A lists cleaning and sanitising of food contact surfaces and equipment as one of the practices a category one business must be able to substantiate, and "cleaning and sanitising of food premises and equipment" is one of the four topics any food handler training must cover.

Hand washing: what the Code actually specifies

This is the part of food safety most often taught as a slogan and most precisely written in the law. Clause 15 of Standard 3.2.2 sets out both the triggers and the method.

When: whenever hands are likely to be a source of contamination — and specifically:

immediately before working with ready-to-eat food after handling raw food

immediately after using the toilet

How: at the hand washing facilities provided, using soap or other effective means and warm running water, and dried on a single-use towel or another method not likely to transfer pathogens.

Those two named triggers are worth memorising, because they are the two that get skipped under pressure, and because "warm running water" and "single-use towel" are specified rather than suggested. Drying your hands on your apron is not a method unlikely to transfer pathogens.

Clause 17 then sets the standard for the facilities themselves: hand washing facilities must be easily accessible , with warm running water and soap or other cleaning items at or near each one, and they must be used only for washing hands, arms and face. A basin used for hands and also for rinsing produce is non-compliant however clean it is, and a hand basin blocked by a stack of crates is not easily accessible.

Not working while unwell — and the part that is not a judgement call

The part people most often get wrong in practice, and the Code is firmer than most kitchens realise.

Clause 14 puts the duty on the handler personally: a food handler must report symptoms, foodborne disease or carriage of a foodborne disease to their supervisor , must not handle food where contamination is reasonably likely, and must notify a supervisor if they know or suspect they have contaminated food.

Clause 16 puts the matching duty on the business: it must exclude a person known to be suffering from or carrying a foodborne disease from handling food where contamination is reasonably likely — and that person may be readmitted only on medical advice .

Read that last clause carefully. "They said they feel better" is not the test. Medical advice is. It is a management problem as much as a personal one: if your rostering makes calling in sick costly, your food safety system has a hole in it that no training will close.

Clause 18 closes the loop by requiring the business to inform all food handlers of their health and hygiene obligations . Telling your staff what clauses 14 to 17 require of them is itself a legal requirement, not a courtesy — and a signed induction record against a named unit is the easiest evidence that it happened.

Allergens

An untrained answer to "does this contain nuts?" can be immediately dangerous, which is a different risk profile from most food safety failures. Allergen management is specific enough that New South Wales names it as one of four mandatory key focus areas on its own Food Safety Supervisor certificate, alongside cleaning and sanitising, safe egg handling, and Food Act offences.

The practical points: know what is actually in the dish rather than what the menu says; treat allergen cross-contact with the same seriousness as raw-to-ready-to-eat; and never guess. "I'll check" is always a better answer than a confident wrong one.

When something goes wrong

Both units require reporting procedures — SITXFSA005 for unsafe hygiene practices, SITXFSA006 for incidents of food contamination . This is the part of training that is easiest to skip and most valuable when it is needed.

A workable version: know who to tell, know what to isolate, know not to serve it, and know that reporting a problem is the behaviour the system wants rather than an admission of fault. Clause 14 makes that last point legally as well as culturally true — notifying a supervisor that you may have contaminated food is a duty, not an option.

Who needs this training

Under clause 3.2.2A—10 , a food business must ensure each food handler who engages in a prescribed activity has completed food safety training before starting it — or that the handler possesses skills and knowledge commensurate with that activity.

A prescribed activity is the handling by the business of any unpackaged potentially hazardous food that is either used in the preparation of ready-to-eat food to be served to a consumer, or is itself

ready-to-eat food intended for retail sale by that business. That definition is the trigger for all three of the standard's tools — handler training at —10 , the supervisor at —11 , and the substantiation records at —12 — so it is also the date from which each of them has to be in place.

The alternative is competence, not supervision . Guidance describing the rule as "trained or supervised by someone who has been" predates Standard 3.2.2A, which commenced on 8 December 2023 . Supervision appears in the standard's separate Food Safety Supervisor tool, where the FSS must be reasonably available to advise handlers — that runs alongside handler training rather than replacing it.

And a duty that has applied since 2000

Standard 3.2.2A is the new layer. The older one is clause 3 of Standard 3.2.2 , which requires a food business to ensure that persons undertaking or supervising food handling operations have skills in food safety and food hygiene matters, and knowledge of those matters, commensurate with their work activities .

It is outcome-based — no course, no certificate, no unit code, no refresher period — and it applies to every Australian food business, not only to categories one and two. Standard 3.2.2A did not replace it. So the training on this page is best understood as satisfying two things at once: the prescriptive tool, and the older, broader competence duty that never expires.

A food handler is anyone handling food or food-contact surfaces — broader than the kitchen. Baristas handling milk and garnishes, bar staff handling ice and fruit, waiters plating unpackaged food, and anyone washing food-contact equipment all count.

Both category one businesses (which process unpackaged potentially hazardous food into ready-to-eat food — anyone with a kitchen who cooks) and category two businesses (retail sale of ready-to-eat food they did not make, where slicing, weighing, repacking, reheating and hot-holding do not count as making it) need trained handlers. Only category one carries the records duty, and that single clause is the whole difference between them.

And who does not

Two exemptions, and they are not the same size, which is the part that catches people out.

Standard 3.2.2A does not apply at all to food handling for or at a fundraising event — an event that raises funds solely for a community or charitable cause and not for personal financial gain. That removes the handler training tool and the supervisor tool together.

Clause 2 of Standard 3.2.2 is narrower. It relieves food handlers of the clause 3 skills-and-knowledge duty only where the food sold is not potentially hazardous , or is to be consumed immediately after thorough cooking .

So a charity stall can be outside Standard 3.2.2A entirely and still owe the clause 3 duty, if what it is selling is pre-made potentially hazardous food. And state law can bite on a different trigger regardless: in Queensland a non-profit selling prepared meals on at least 12 days each financial year is a licensable food business and needs a supervisor, whatever the Code says about fundraising.

The training does not have to be accredited

Standard 3.2.2A requires the training to cover four topics — safe handling of food, food contamination, cleaning and sanitising of premises and equipment, personal hygiene — but does not require a nationally recognised unit, and does not require a named unit code. A free, non-accredited course covering those satisfies the law, no refresher period is mandated, and the business need not keep records of it. Only the food safety supervisor needs a certificate from an RTO or an organisation the state recognises.

Prior learning also counts for the duty, and the recognised routes are wider than most operators assume: competency-based training , in-house education , a food safety induction completed at another food business , or relevant previous industry experience in the food industry.

What SITXFSA005 adds is a portable, verifiable record on your national transcript. That is an employability argument rather than a compliance one — and one structural argument on top of it.

What the document itself has to carry

Worth knowing, because it is the difference between a Statement of Attainment and a printed receipt. A compliant one carries the issuing organisation's name, registration code and logo ; the full title and national code of each unit ; the Nationally Recognised Training logo , used in line with its conditions of use; the signature of an authorised individual ; and a seal, corporate identifier or unique watermark — plus the statement explaining that a VET statement of attainment is issued when a person has completed one or more accredited units. For nationally recognised training, a USI is generally required before a qualification or Statement of Attainment can be issued, unless an applicable exemption applies. See the official USI exemption guidance . A USI is free; recover an existing one rather than creating another. Your USI must not be printed on the credential.

And it has a deadline: certification must be issued within 30 calendar days of the completion of assessment, provided you completed the product and paid all agreed fees. A document that arrives instantly, before any assessment occurred, fails the same standard from the other direction.

The units it unlocks

SITXFSA005 is a prerequisite for nine units in the current food and beverage stream, which is the strongest non-compliance reason to take the accredited version:

| Unit | Prerequisite(s) | | --- | --- | | SITHFAB022 Clean and tidy bar areas | SITXFSA005 | | SITHFAB023 Operate a bar | SITHFAB021 and SITXFSA005 | | SITHFAB024 Prepare and serve non-alcoholic beverages | SITXFSA005 | | SITHFAB025 Prepare and serve espresso coffee | SITXFSA005 | | SITHFAB026 Provide room service | SITXFSA005 | | SITHFAB027 Serve food and beverage | SITXFSA005 | | SITHFAB030 Prepare and serve cocktails | SITHFAB021 , SITHFAB023 and SITXFSA005 | | SITHFAB034 Provide table service of food and beverage | SITHFAB021 and SITXFSA005 | | SITHFAB035 Provide silver service | SITXFSA005 |

Read that figure as scoped to the food and beverage stream: across the wider SIT package SITXFSA005 also gates cookery, patisserie and kitchen units, so a package-wide total would be a different number about a different set.

Four units in that stream carry two or more prerequisites. SITHFAB023 and SITHFAB034 each carry two, and in both cases the pair is identical: SITXFSA005 together with RSA SITHFAB021 . SITHFAB030 carries three, adding SITHFAB023 , and SITHFAB039 Manage the sale or service of wine carries three of its own — SITHFAB021 , SITHFAB032 and SITHFAB033 . RSA there is an academic prerequisite, not a licensing one: it blocks those units regardless of the venue's licence or the state liquor regime, and it is no smaller a gate than the food safety unit, standing in front of nine units of its own. The register's own explanation for SITHFAB034 is that it covers higher-order service techniques required by senior food and beverage attendants while SITHFAB027 covers fundamental technical skills for casual dining. A free non-accredited course opens none of them, because a prerequisite can only be satisfied by the unit itself. See restaurant waiting , barista coffee course and RSA Melbourne .

The limit worth knowing

This does not make you a Food Safety Supervisor — not in any Australian state. The FSS role additionally requires SITXFSA006 , and together those two units form the SITSS00069 skill set. The difference between SITSS00068 and SITSS00069 is exactly that one unit.

A business that sends staff on a one-day food handling course and believes it now has an FSS does not have one. See what food safety certificate do I need .

A second limit: in Victoria and Queensland , food service in health and community settings requires HLTFS001 , HLTFS005 and HLTFS007 , Release 1 of each, for the supervisor role. Hospitality units do not transfer there. Note which states those are — Standard 3.2.2A names no sector units at all, New South Wales names none of its own , and Western Australia publishes HLTSS00061 , the same three bundled as a skill set, as an accepted equivalent rather than a mandate. And of the three, only HLTFS001 is on our scope , so a hospital, aged care or childcare kitchen needs a provider holding all three.

A third: New South Wales issues its own Food Safety Supervisor certificate, which must come from a provider approved by the NSW Food Authority under Food Act 2003 (NSW) s 106H and be kept on the premises under s 106G. We are not on that approved provider list. The reason NSW alone works this way is one line of the national standard: it defines a supervisor certificate as certification by either (a) a registered training organisation or (b) an organisation recognised by the relevant authority under that state's Act, and NSW is the only state to have exercised limb (b). No state operates any equivalent scheme for the handler obligation, which is why the certificate on this page travels cleanly across every border.

Does it expire?

The Statement of Attainment does not. It is a permanent record linked to your Unique Student Identifier and retrievable for life.

Standard 3.2.2A also mandates no refresher period for handler training. The five-year currency rule applies to the Food Safety Supervisor certificate, and it sits in the definitions clause 3.2.2A—2 rather than in the operative supervisor clause. That said, food law changes — Standard 3.2.2A itself is only from December 2023 — and clause 3 asks about present competence rather than about a document, so periodic refreshing is sensible even though no statute compels it. In Victoria, recognition of prior learning and recognition of current competency are actively encouraged, superseded course codes remain valid, and Safe Food Victoria's own guidance says prior training does not usually need repeating, so a refresh rarely means starting again. Queensland takes the opposite position and excludes RPL for the supervisor refresh.

Getting one

For nationally recognised training, a Unique Student Identifier (USI) is generally required before a qualification or Statement of Attainment can be issued , unless an applicable exemption applies. See the official USI exemption guidance . A USI is free at usi.gov.au . If you already have one, recover it rather than creating another. We check the issuing RTO and the unit codes when verifying a credential; a USI request alone does not establish whether a provider is legitimate.

We hold SITSS00068 Food Handling on our scope of registration, and have since 10 June 2022 :

Food handling course

Virtual food handling SITXFSA005 — the same unit, the same Statement of Attainment

Food Safety Supervisor — the SITSS00069 skill set

About us

We are Complete Hospitality Training , RTO 3722, CRICOS 04242E. Level 3, 28 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, and 410 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010. Contact melbourne@cht.edu.au or +61 3 9654 1554 .

Registered since 1 June 1994; current registration, exercised by ASQA, runs to 30 June 2032. Scope covers 17 qualifications, 81 skill sets and 579 units, all at the extent "Deliver and assess", with SITSS00068 and SITSS00069 on it since 10 June 2022. Two limits stated plainly: we are not approved by the NSW Food Authority and cannot issue the NSW FSS certificate; and of the health sector units only HLTFS001 is on our scope.

See also Standard 3.2.2A explained, why is food safety and handling important and all courses.

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.

What temperature range is the danger zone?

5 °C to 60 °C. Potentially hazardous food must be received at 5 °C or below, or 60 °C or above.

What is the difference between cleaning and sanitising?

Cleaning removes visible soil; sanitising reduces micro-organisms. You cannot sanitise a dirty surface, so both are required and in that order.

When exactly must I wash my hands?

Whenever your hands are likely to be a source of contamination, and specifically immediately before working with ready-to-eat food after handling raw food and immediately after using the toilet — clause 15 of Standard 3.2.2.

Is cold water enough?

No. Clause 15 specifies warm running water with soap or other effective means, and drying on a single-use towel or another method not likely to transfer pathogens.

Can the hand basin be used for anything else?

No. Under clause 17 hand washing facilities must be used only for washing hands, arms and face, and must be easily accessible.

Why does the course assess hand washing three times?

Because the unit requires four practices demonstrated on at least three occasions each. Hygiene failures are habits rather than knowledge gaps, and repeated observation is what reaches a habit.

Is it the same as a food safety certificate?

At handler level, yes. At supervisor level, no — that needs SITXFS006.

What exactly is a prescribed activity?

The handling by the business of any unpackaged potentially hazardous food that is either used in preparing ready-to-eat food to be served to a consumer, or is itself ready-to-eat food intended for retail sale by that business. It triggers all three of the standard's tools.

Is it valid interstate?

Yes — it is a nationally recognised unit, and no state runs its own handler scheme. State differences apply at supervisor level, and NSW does not recognise an interstate FSS certificate.

Can I do it online?

Commonly, yes — see virtual food handling (/courses/virtual-food-handling-sitxfsa005/), which is the same unit.

Do I need it before I start work?

Standard 3.2.2A requires the training to be completed before engaging in a prescribed activity, unless you already hold commensurate skills and knowledge. Working "supervised by someone trained" is not the stated alternative.

Does the training have to be nationally accredited?

No, and no unit code is required. A non-accredited course covering the four required topics satisfies the law, and so can in-house education, an induction completed at another food business or relevant industry experience. The accredited unit gives you a transcript record and satisfies prerequisites.

Our charity runs a stall. Are we exempt?

From Standard 3.2.2A, yes, if it qualifies as a fundraising event — raising funds solely for a community or charitable cause and not for personal financial gain. But the clause 2 exemption from Standard 3.2.2 is narrower, applying only where the food is not potentially hazardous or is eaten immediately after thorough cooking, so clause 3 can still apply. And in Queensland a non-profit selling prepared meals on 12 or more days a financial year needs a supervisor regardless.

Which other units does it unlock?

Nine, in the current food and beverage stream: SITHFAB022 clean and tidy bar areas, SITHFAB023 operate a bar, SITHFAB024 non-alcoholic beverages, SITHFAB025 espresso coffee, SITHFAB026 room service, SITHFAB027 serve food and beverage, SITHFAB030 cocktails, SITHFAB034 table service and SITHFAB035 silver service. Four units in the stream carry two or more prerequisites — SITHFAB023 and SITHFAB034 carry SITXFSA005 together with RSA SITHFAB021; SITHFAB030 carries those two plus SITHFAB023; and SITHFAB039 Manage the sale or service of wine carries SITHFAB021, SITHFAB032 and SITHFAB033.

Do I have to calibrate the thermometer myself?

The procedure sits in the supervisor unit, but anyone relying on temperature records should know whether it is being done. An uncalibrated probe makes every record it produced unreliable.

What do I do if I am unwell?

Report it to your supervisor — clause 14 makes that your duty — and do not handle food. Under clause 16 the business must exclude you where contamination is reasonably likely, and may readmit you only on medical advice.

Does my employer have to tell me these rules?

Yes. Clause 18 of Standard 3.2.2 requires the business to inform all food handlers of their health and hygiene obligations.

What should I say if a customer asks about an allergen and I do not know?

"I'll check." Never guess. Allergen management is serious enough that NSW names it as a mandatory focus area on its own FSS certificate, alongside cleaning and sanitising, safe egg handling and Food Act offences.

What should be printed on the certificate, and when should it arrive?

The RTO's name, registration code and logo; the full title and national code of the unit; the Nationally Recognised Training logo; an authorised signature; and a seal, corporate identifier or unique watermark. Within 30 calendar days of the completion of assessment. Your USI is not printed on it.

I work in aged care or childcare. Is this enough?

As a handler, yes. As the supervisor, no — Safe Food Victoria and Queensland Health publish HLTFS001, HLTFS005 and HLTFS007 for that sector, and only the first is on our scope.

I lost mine.

Your USI transcript holds the record and the RTO can reissue. If the certificate was issued under the trading name Complete Healthcare Training between 24 October 2023 and 19 April 2025, it is still an RTO 3722 credential.