

What Is a Food Handling Certificate? – Complete Hospitality Training

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

Details:

A "food handling certificate" is not a licence and not a government-issued card. In every Australian state the accredited version of it is a Statement of Attainment for a nationally recognised unit of competency, issued by a Registered Training Organisation.

Understanding exactly what the document is explains most of the confusion around it — including why it never expires, why it is yours rather than your employer's, why it does not make you a Food Safety Supervisor, and the part almost nobody mentions: the law does not actually require it to be accredited at all.

What the document actually is

| | | | --- | --- | | Formal name | Statement of Attainment | | Issued by | A Registered Training Organisation — we are RTO 3722 | | Unit for hospitality | SITXFSA005 Use hygienic practices for food safety | | Skill set | SITSS00068 Food Handling | | Retail equivalent | SIRRFS001 — though it carries an end date of 28 June 2024 on our scope | | Expiry | None — it is a permanent record of competency | | Linked to | Your Unique Student Identifier | | Must be issued within | 30 calendar days of the completion of assessment |

A Statement of Attainment is the instrument used for units and skill sets. A full qualification produces a testamur instead. If something calls itself a "certificate" but is not a Statement of Attainment or a testamur from an RTO, it is not nationally recognised, whatever it looks like.

What has to be printed on it

This is the most checkable thing on the page, and it is specified rather than conventional. A Statement of Attainment must carry:

the issuing organisation's name, registration code and logo

the full title and national code of each unit attained

the Nationally Recognised Training logo, used in line with its conditions of use

the signature of an authorised individual

a seal, corporate identifier or unique watermark

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.

Certification must be issued within 30 calendar days of the completion of assessment, provided you completed the training product and paid all agreed fees. So a provider that takes months, or that issues instantly before any assessment has happened, is off standard in opposite directions.

The part most pages leave out: accreditation is optional for handlers

Standard 3.2.2A requires a food business to ensure each food handler doing a prescribed activity has completed training before starting it. A prescribed activity means 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.

What the training must cover is specified — four things:

Safe handling of food

Food contamination

Cleaning and sanitising of food premises and equipment

Personal hygiene

Or, alternatively, the handler may simply possess skills and knowledge commensurate with that specific activity.

Three consequences follow, and all three are worth knowing before you pay for anything:

No national VET accreditation is required, and no named unit code. A free, non-accredited course covering those four topics satisfies the law. So does relevant industry experience. Only the food safety supervisor needs a certificate from an RTO or an organisation the state recognises.

No refresher period is mandated. Standard 3.2.2A sets no expiry on handler training. The duty is on the business to ensure handlers' skills and knowledge remain adequate and up to date — a continuing judgement, not a fixed retraining clock.

Record keeping is optional. The standard does not require the business to keep records of handler training, though many do. Prior learning may be recognised, and the routes are wider than most people 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.

And there is an older duty underneath it

Clause 3 of Standard 3.2.2 has applied to every Australian food business since 2000. It requires the 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. No course, no certificate, no unit code, no refresher period — it is an outcome test, and it asks about the present. Its only carve-out is narrow: it does not apply to persons handling food for fundraising events at which the only food sold is not potentially hazardous, or is to be consumed immediately after thorough cooking.

Standard 3.2.2A, which commenced 8 December 2023, added a prescriptive layer on top of clause 3 for category one and two businesses. It did not replace it. So a certificate is best understood as evidence towards clause 3 rather than as the thing clause 3 demands. That is exactly why the document has no expiry and the duty has no end — and why a business outside categories one and two is not outside food safety training law.

So what does the accredited unit buy you?

Not compliance — you already have that. What SITXFSA005 adds is portability and proof:

It sits on your national training transcript against your USI, permanently, retrievable for life

It travels between employers and between states without re-explaining anything

It credit-transfers into a qualification later. SITXFSA005 is a core unit in SIT30722 Certificate III in Hospitality (Restaurant Front of House) and in SIT40422 Certificate IV in Hospitality it is one of only two units in the compulsory Group A elective group

Within the food and beverage stream it is a prerequisite for nine units, so it opens doors the other Group A option does not

It is the only version that can evidence an approved competency standard, which matters in Victoria for anyone who may later become the supervisor

Most employers ask for it, whatever the law requires

That is an employability argument rather than a legal one. It is a good argument — but you should know which one you are being sold.

The nine units it unlocks

This is the concrete version of the portability claim, taken from the national register rather than from a brochure. Within the food and beverage stream, SITXFSA005 stands in front of nine units:

| Unit | Prerequisite(s) | | --- | --- | | SITHFAB021 Provide responsible service of alcohol | — | | 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 |

Nine units off one, which makes SITXFSA005 the natural first unit in any food and beverage plan. Keep that figure of nine attached to the food and beverage stream: across the wider SIT package SITXFSA005 also sits in front of cookery, patisserie and kitchen units, so a package-wide figure would be a different number about a different set of units.

RSA reaches just as far. SITHFAB021 is itself a prerequisite to nine units — SITHFAB023, SITHFAB029, SITHFAB030, SITHFAB031, SITHFAB032, SITHFAB033, SITHFAB034, SITHFAB037 and SITHFAB039 — so the licensing unit gates exactly as many units in the stream as the food safety unit does, and the two together are the sensible opening pair. Four units in the stream carry no prerequisite at all: SITHFAB021, SITHFAB028, SITHFAB036 and SITHFAB038.

SITHFAB034 is one of four units in that stream carrying two or more prerequisites — SITHFAB023 Operate a bar carries the same pair of two, while SITHFAB030 Prepare and serve cocktails carries three by adding SITHFAB023, and SITHFAB039 Manage the sale or service of wine carries three of its own in SITHFAB021, SITHFAB032 and SITHFAB033. On SITHFAB034 the second prerequisite is RSA — an academic prerequisite that applies regardless of the venue's licence or the state liquor regime. The register's own reasoning is that SITHFAB034 covers higher-order service techniques for senior food and beverage attendants while SITHFAB027 covers fundamental technical skills for casual dining. Two of the four sit at the end of chains rather than behind a single gate: SITXFSA005 then SITHFAB023 then SITHFAB030 puts the cocktail unit three deep and still needing RSA as well, and SITHFAB021 then SITHFAB032 and SITHFAB033 then SITHFAB039 runs four units deep, the longest sequence in the stream. See restaurant waiting and bartending course.

What the unit actually assesses

SITXFSA005 is not a quiz. The performance evidence requires hygienic food handling in line with organisational procedures, demonstrating each of the following on at least three occasions:

Correct hand-washing procedures

Appropriate use of uniform and personal protective equipment

Effective personal health and hygiene practices

Hygienic food service

Plus the procedures to report unsafe hygiene practices .

"On at least three occasions" is the detail that tells you whether a course is genuine. Assessment cannot be compressed into a single moment, and a 20-minute online quiz that issues a Statement of Attainment is not delivering what the unit requires. The useful question to ask a provider is not how long the course takes but across how many assessment occasions hand washing is observed.

It is also worth knowing what the unit is teaching towards, because Standard 3.2.2 puts duties on the handler personally, in clauses 13 to 18:

Clause 14 — a handler must report symptoms, foodborne disease or suspected carriage 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 15(2) and 15(4) — hands must be washed whenever they are likely to be a source of contamination, immediately before working with ready-to-eat food after handling raw food , and immediately after using the toilet; at the hand washing facilities provided , with soap or other effective means and warm running water , dried on a single-use towel or another method not likely to transfer pathogens.

Clause 16 — a person known to be suffering from or carrying a foodborne disease must be excluded from handling food where contamination is reasonably likely, and may only be readmitted on medical advice .

Clause 18(1) — the business must inform all food handlers of those obligations . So if nobody has told your staff, that is a compliance failure in itself, and a documented course is the easiest evidence that it happened.

That is why hand-washing is assessed by demonstration rather than described.

What it lets you do

SITXFSA005 satisfies the food handler training requirement under clause 3.2.2A—10 in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. It also satisfies clause 3 of Standard 3.2.2.

Both category one and category two businesses need trained handlers, so this applies whether the venue cooks or only slices and reheats. In plain terms: it is the training a person handling unpackaged ready-to-eat food is expected to have, and it must be done before they start that work rather than during their first weeks.

One structural note on why no state adds a layer here. Standard 3.2.2A defines a food safety 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 New South Wales is the only state to have exercised limb (b). There is no equivalent limb, and no state scheme anywhere, for the food handler obligation. That is why this particular document travels cleanly across every border.

What it does not let you do

It does not make you a Food Safety Supervisor. Not in Victoria, not in New South Wales, not in Queensland, not in Western Australia. The FSS role requires SITXFSA006 in addition — together the two units form the SITSS00069 Food Safety Supervision skill set, and the difference between the two skill sets is exactly that one unit.

This is the single most common misunderstanding in Australian food compliance. A business that has sent staff on a one-day food handling course and believes it now has an FSS does not have one, and will find that out at an inspection. See Food Safety Supervisor certificate .

The difference is not a formality. SITXFSA006 requires the correct methods of controlling food hazards at nine critical control points — receiving, storing, preparing, processing, displaying, serving, packaging, transporting, disposing — plus the procedure to calibrate a temperature probe and the procedure to report contamination incidents. SITXFSA005 is about your own conduct; SITXFSA006 is about the whole system.

In Victoria there is a further reason a certificate alone cannot make anyone the supervisor. Section 19G of the Food Act 1984 sets three tests: knowing how to recognise, prevent and alleviate the hazards at those premises; having met a food safety competency standard approved in writing by Safe Food Victoria or an equivalent body; and having the ability and the authority to supervise other food handlers. A document answers only the middle test.

A second limit: in Victoria and Queensland , food service in health and community services — aged care, hospitals, childcare — requires the HLTFS001 , HLTFS005 and HLTFS007 units for the supervisor role. A hospitality food handling certificate does not transfer into that sector's supervisor requirement. 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 units bundled — as an accepted equivalent rather than a mandate. Of the three, only HLTFS001 is on our scope.

A third: New South Wales issues its own Food Safety Supervisor certificate, defined at s 106B(3) of the Food Act 2003 (NSW), which must come from a training organisation approved by the NSW Food Authority under s 106H and must be kept on the premises under s 106G . An approved RTO there also carries a Food Authority approval number separate from its national RTO code , and must issue the state certificate within 10 working days . We are not on that approved provider list , so we cannot issue the NSW certificate. Keeping only the national Statement of Attainment does not satisfy s 106G — in NSW an approved RTO issues two separate documents.

Why it does not expire

A Statement of Attainment is a record that you were assessed as competent on a date. Records of that kind do not lapse, and it stays attached to your USI permanently.

Standard 3.2.2A also mandates no refresher period for handler training specifically. What does have a currency rule is the Food Safety Supervisor requirement: clause 3.2.2A—2 requires the certificate the business relies on to have been issued within the preceding five years . That rule is about the FSS certificate, not about food handler training.

That said, employers and councils reasonably expect food handlers' knowledge to be current, and food law changes — Standard 3.2.2A itself only commenced on 8 December 2023 . Retraining periodically is sensible even though no statute compels it at handler level, and it is the straightforward way to keep a defensible answer to clause 3.

It belongs to you

Because it is linked to your USI, the Statement of Attainment travels with you between employers and between states. Your employer may keep a copy for its own purposes, but the credential is yours.

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. Your USI must not be printed on your qualification or Statement of Attainment. We verify that it belongs to you before using it.

If you lose the certificate, your training record is retrievable through your USI account and the issuing RTO can reissue. The Act also places statutory limits on who may collect or use your USI.

How to tell a real certificate from a worthless one

The checks take a minute and they are the same checks that catch RSA scams. See beware of RSA training course scams .

Does it name a unit code? SITXFSA005 for hospitality, SIRRFSFA001 for retail. A course promising only a "food safety certificate" is not telling you what you will hold — and in Victoria a document naming no unit cannot evidence the approved competency standard s 19G requires.

Does it carry the required elements? Issuing organisation's name, registration code and logo; the full title and national code of each unit; the Nationally Recognised Training logo; an authorised signature; and a seal, corporate identifier or unique watermark. A document missing those is not a compliant Statement of Attainment even if the content of the course was fine.

Does it name an RTO number? Only an RTO can issue a nationally recognised Statement of Attainment. Search the number on training.gov.au and confirm the unit is on that RTO's national scope, then confirm delivery in your state and suitability for your sector directly with the provider.

Check the extent as well as the code. A scope entry carries an extent. Every current component on our scope is at "Deliver and assess" , meaning we may both teach and assess. An assess-only entry would mean something different.

Check the dates on the scope entry. SITXFSA005 , SITXFSA006 , SITSS00068 and SITSS00069 have been on our scope since 10 June 2022 , running to 30 June 2032 . And check for a past end date : SIRRFSFA001 sits on the scope with an end date of 28 June 2024 , so it is a unit people hold rather than one we can enrol you in today. A code on a register is not the same as a course you can book.

Check the registration period. RTO 3722 has been registered since 1 June 1994 , and its current registration, exercised by ASQA under the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 , runs to 30 June 2032 . CHT moved from the Victorian regulator to the national regulator on 8 September 2017 .

Check the trading name against the register. This one causes real confusion. We appear under six trading names, five current — Victorian Bar School (from 1 June 1994), Complete Hospitality Training, Ready Serve Achieve Melbourne, Coffee School by CHT and Alchemy Institute of Australia. The sixth, Complete Healthcare Training , ran from 24 October 2023 to 19 April 2025. So a certificate issued in that name between those dates is an RTO 3722 credential, even though an employer searching the current name will not find it. If you hold one, that is the explanation to give them.

If it is a NSW supervisor certificate, check two numbers. The national RTO code and the NSW Food Authority approval number are different, and the Authority's list is revised at least annually. ASQA registration is not NSW approval.

But do not assume every state list is an approval scheme. Western Australia's published table of providers is a convenience listing of self-notified RTOs , not a register of approval. A provider absent from it is not disqualified there, and "WA-approved" describes a scheme that does not exist.

What document will arrive? A Statement of Attainment , within 30 calendar days of the completion of assessment. A "Certificate of Achievement" or "Certificate of Completion" with no unit code and no RTO number is not a nationally recognised outcome — though for a handler it may still satisfy the law, provided the course genuinely covered the four required topics. The distinction is portability, not legality. It will not satisfy a prerequisite.

Does the assessment look plausible? Four practices assessed on three occasions each is not a five-minute exercise.

For scale: what RTO 3722's scope actually contains

Useful context when you are checking a provider, because the size and shape of a scope tells you something.

| | Count | | --- | --- | | Current qualifications | 17 | | Current skill sets | 81 | | Current units | 579 | | Extent, every current component | Deliver and assess |

The skill sets are not all hospitality — they span hospitality, business and cyber, community services, health and infection control, retail, creative arts and horticulture. Both SITSS00068 Food Handling and SITSS00069 Food Safety Supervision are on the list, since 10 June 2022, and they are different skill sets for different purposes. Of the health sector food safety units, only HLTFS001 is on that scope . Legal name Complete Hospitality Training (Vic) Pty Ltd, ABN 27 006 947 262, ACN 006 947 262.

Getting one from us

We hold SITSS00068 Food Handling on our scope of registration and deliver SITXFSA005 .

Food handling course — the standard delivery

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

Food Safety Supervisor — if you need the FSS level, which is a different thing

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 .

See also what food safety certificate do I need , Standard 3.2.2A explained 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.

Is it the same as a food safety certificate?

People use the terms loosely. If you mean food handler training, yes. If you mean the Food Safety Supervisor certificate, no — that is a higher requirement needing SITXFSA006.

Do I legally need an accredited certificate?

No. Standard 3.2.2A accepts a non-accredited course covering safe food handling, food contamination, cleaning and sanitising, and personal hygiene — or skills and knowledge commensurate with the activity, and it requires no unit code. The accredited unit gives you portability, not extra compliance.

Then why do employers ask for SITXFSA005?

Because it is verifiable. An RTO-issued Statement of Attainment against your USI is easy to check; "I did a course once" is not. It is also the only version that satisfies a prerequisite.

What must be printed on a genuine one?

The issuing organisation's name, registration code and logo; the full title and national code of each unit; the Nationally Recognised Training logo; an authorised signature; and a seal, corporate identifier or unique watermark, plus the explanatory statement about VET statements of attainment. Your USI is not

printed on it.

How quickly should it arrive?

Within 30 calendar days of the completion of assessment, provided you completed the product and paid all agreed fees. Instantly, before any assessment, is the other kind of warning sign.

Does it expire?

No, and Standard 3.2.2A mandates no refresher period for handlers. The five-year clock belongs to the Food Safety Supervisor certificate, in clause 3.2.2A—2.

If it never expires, why retrain?

Because clause 3 of Standard 3.2.2 asks whether you are competent now, and because the law has changed — Standard 3.2.2A only commenced in December 2023.

Does my employer keep it?

They may keep a copy. The original credential is yours and sits against your USI. Note the business is not required to keep records of handler training at all.

What is the difference between a Statement of Attainment and a testamur?

A Statement of Attainment covers units and skill sets. A testamur is issued for a full qualification. A single unit will never produce a testamur.

Is an online course acceptable?

For food handler training, commonly yes — see virtual food handling (/courses/virtual-food-handling-sitxfsa005/). Confirm your own state and, if an employer or council is involved, confirm with them.

Do I need one to work in a cafe?

Standard 3.2.2A requires food handlers doing a prescribed activity to have completed training before starting, or to possess commensurate skills and knowledge. Most employers simply require the training.

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.

Will a certificate from another state work?

Yes at food handler level — it is a nationally recognised unit, and no state operates its own handler scheme. Supervisor-level requirements are where state differences bite, and New South Wales in particular does not recognise an interstate FSS certificate, because it is the only state to have built its own certificate scheme on the national standard's second limb.

Do I need a USI?

For nationally recognised training, a USI is generally required before your qualification or Statement of Attainment can be issued, unless an applicable exemption applies. We can explain the requirements for your enrolment. See the official USI exemption guidance (<https://www.usi.gov.au/students/create-your-usi/exemptions-usi>). Creating a USI is free; recover an existing one rather than creating another. Your USI must not be printed on your qualification or Statement of Attainment.

My certificate says "Complete Healthcare Training" — is it real?

Yes. That was one of RTO 3722's registered trading names between 24 October 2023 and 19 April 2025. It is the same RTO, and the credential is a nationally recognised one.

How do I check a provider is genuine?

Search the RTO code on training.gov.au, confirm the unit is on its national scope, check the extent is "Deliver and assess", then confirm delivery in your state and suitability for your sector directly with the provider, check the scope entry has not passed an end date, and check the registration period has not lapsed.

Does it count towards a qualification?

Yes. SITXFSA005 is core in SIT30722, and one of the two Group A options in SIT40422. Within the food and beverage stream it also unlocks nine units — SITHFAB022, SITHFAB023, SITHFAB024, SITHFAB025, SITHFAB026, SITHFAB027, SITHFAB030, SITHFAB034 and SITHFAB035 — so it is worth holding before you choose electives. RSA SITHFAB021 gates nine units of its own, which is why the two are usually taken together.

I work in an aged care kitchen. Is this enough?

As a handler, yes. As the supervisor in Victoria or Queensland, no — that sector's published minimum is the three HLTFS units, and only HLTFS001 is on our scope.

What if my course did not mention a unit code?

Then you did not get a Statement of Attainment. That may still satisfy handler-level law, but you have nothing portable, nothing on your national transcript, nothing that satisfies a prerequisite, and in Victoria nothing that could evidence an approved competency standard.