



Frequently Asked Questions -

Managing Blue Cards for Homestay Placements

Department of
Education and Training

The purpose of the blue card system is to contribute to the creation of safe and supportive environments for children and young people when receiving services and participating in activities which are essential to their development and wellbeing, such as child care, education, sport, and cultural activities.

While many people are familiar with the blue card itself, it is important to be aware that the initial blue card screening is only the first component of a three part system which considers past, present, and future risks:

- *Blue card screening to determine a person's eligibility to work with children and young people based on their known past behaviour*
- *Ongoing monitoring of all blue card holders and applicants which enables action to be taken to protect children and young people if the person is charged with a concerning offence, and*
- *Mitigating future risk through the requirement for organisations providing child related services to develop and implement child and youth risk management strategies.*

Source: <https://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/about.html>

Full Fee Paying Overseas Students (FFPOS):

CRICOS-registered schools are reminded that where a CAAW is in place (as is the case for all boarding/homestay students), the school retains full responsibility for welfare of the child and for the approval of his/her accommodation arrangements. This responsibility for the approval of welfare applies regardless of any verbal or written permission for living arrangements given by the overseas parents, or the school's level of familiarity with elected homestay carers. If the requested welfare and accommodation arrangements do not satisfy your PEO and satisfy Queensland legislative requirements, then they must be revised until they are accepted as appropriate.

Exchange Students:

Schools that agree to accept an exchange student have responsibility for the student while they attend school, school activities and excursions, as per their standard obligations to all enrolled students. However, it is the relevant Student Exchange Organisation (SEO) in charge of arranging the exchange program that is responsible for ensuring suitable accommodation, support and general welfare arrangements are in place for the exchange student throughout the program, including during school vacations.

As part of their Queensland registration requirements, all SEOs are required to have local coordinators to support their exchange students and to liaise effectively with schools. All schools enrolling an exchange student should ensure that they retain a mobile telephone contact number for the student's local coordinator for use in an emergency. SEOs are also responsible for recruiting, selecting and screening local host families for exchange students and for monitoring and supporting students and host families during the exchange program. The selection and monitoring process also includes satisfying Queensland's legislative requirements relating to blue cards.

What information should schools collect in relation to blue cards?

Blue Card Services has made available a useful 'employee register' to help meet compliance obligations with the blue card system.

<https://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/volunteercoordseducationproviders/managingtheprocess.html>

What is the process for blue card holders to renew their blue cards?

Blue Card Services has flagged that their average processing time is 30 days. All card holders receive a reminder letter (and associated SMS if the card holder has supplied a mobile phone number) 10 weeks prior to the card's expiry. Providing the card holders lodge their renewal application at least 30 days prior to the expiry of the card, the Blue Card Services is able to process the renewal within the old card's lifespan.

What steps should CRICOS schools/SEOs take to ensure blue cards remain current for all homestay families?

CRICOS schools and SEOs should include a card expiry date column on their list of blue card holders to help volunteer families maintain their blue cards. A reminder from the school or SEO, combined with the notice Blue Card Services sends its card holders 10 weeks prior to the card's expiry, should reduce the number of instances where expired blue cards prevent a student from being placed with a family.

If the members of an unpaid homestay family don't hold a blue card (or their card has expired) can I place a student with them in an emergency?

Until a blue card has been granted/renewed a student cannot reside with the unpaid host family. The restrictions on volunteer families not being able to host until blue cards have been granted means that it is good practice for schools/SEOs to maintain up-to-date information on their employee register regarding blue card expiry dates, and a list of emergency placements for such situations.

If a blue card is required urgently, is there an alternative option to approving the arrangement e.g. Can the State Regulator give approval? Would a Federal Police Check suffice?

The *International Quality (Schools) Unit*, as State Regulator for CRICOS and secondary student exchange programs, has no authority to provide an alternative to the blue card. The Unit has no authority to run a police check and is therefore not able to determine whether a person has a criminal history that would prevent that person from obtaining a blue card.

The Federal Police Check will unfortunately not meet the legislative requirements in Queensland, as the blue card legislation does not provide for an alternative assessment process. Please check the below link to find out the difference between a Working with Children Check and a Police Check.

<https://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/Differencebetweenbluecardcheckandpolicecheck.html>