
Implementation: Torrens Valley TAFE's Hair and Beauty Program

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This 'story from the field' describes the experiences of working with the Mayer key competencies or the new Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry/Business Council of Australia employability skills and attributes. It is one of a series published on the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) website at <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/generic.htm>>. These stories are designed to help advise and foster better teaching practice.

Context

The National Hairdressing and Beauty Competency Standards have been mapped against the seven key competencies which have been identified by the Mayer Committee as essential in employment. The presence of key competencies and their performance levels have been identified for each unit of competency and are recorded in the evidence guides for each competency. At Torrens Valley TAFE, as part of the Hair and Beauty Program, we deliver pre-employment and vocational education and training (VET) for schools courses. The key competencies are used to underpin teaching/learning which helps learners to integrate work tasks and see them as a whole rather than a collection of discrete actions.

What did we want to do?

The key competencies are considered essential by employers for effective participation in the emerging patterns of work and work organisation. The average age group of our students is 15–18 years. At the end of our courses students are ready to seek work or engage in further study.

We wanted to provide our graduates with an edge to success by providing them with formal recognition in the form of key competency statements of completion to include in their resumé portfolio.

How did we try to do it?

Towards the end of the course, and using the Torrens Valley TAFE validated self-assessment tools for each key competency, the students were encouraged to reflect on, and identify, the tasks/activities associated with their competency achieved at level 1. Peer assessment was encouraged particularly in *working with others and in teams, communicating ideas and information, and planning and organising activities*. These were then validated by the lecturer, who arranged the statements of completion.

Even though the key competencies were achieved, we believed that it was important for the students to understand how they were achieved, to truly appreciate their competence.

Whilst achievement at level 1 was relatively straightforward for all graduates as part of the course reflecting the training package mapping, they were also given the opportunity to apply for performance level 2 or 3 through individual application.

What did we achieve?

For some students, who do not have fond memories of high school, the achievement has boosted their self-esteem immensely. Increased confidence at job interviews has been noted as students are able to speak of their generic skills with clarity and conviction. Schools and employers are impressed with our formal recognition of key competencies.

What still needs to be done?

Proof of the pudding is yet to come as this is the year of implementation! We expect that with further promotion in the hair and beauty industry, employers will increasingly require applicants to have undertaken formal assessment in the key competencies. Students will achieve greater participation in further education and in adult life more generally.

Hints for success

It is vital to success that we adopt a stringent student focus and always remember that we have a powerful influence over a student's destiny.

Effective consultation with all key players within our training organisation has assisted us to produce flexible, quality implementation procedures within a supportive network of colleagues.

Promotion of this key competency initiative with schools and employers has resulted in improved relationships with our major stakeholders.

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