



RESEARCH MESSAGES

2021

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Introduction

Research messages 2021 highlights the diverse range of research activities undertaken over the past year by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

This edition provides:

- key findings from our program of research
- details of conferences, presentations, webinars, podcasts and other NCVER research communications
- information resources collated by NCVER that help explain the VET system and its related policies
- a summary of NCVER discussion papers and submissions to government reviews.

NCVER is the independent national body responsible for collecting, managing, analysing and communicating research and statistics on the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

NCVER's vision is to inform and influence VET policy and practice for government, training and industry organisations to support the development of a skilled and capable Australian workforce and a strong economy.

NCVER's strategic in-house research program contributes to this mission by delivering world-class research, harnessing the power of integrated data and analytics to provide insights that will be relevant, and trusted by our stakeholders. Our research is guided by Australian, State and Territory governments and other key stakeholders to inform policy development and decision making for the delivery of quality VET.

Given the rapid pace of technological development and changes to the workplace brought about by the pandemic, our research needed to be more responsive than ever to provide key insights to support the changing needs of industry, government and the VET sector.

In 2021, research was shaped both by the VET reform agenda, and issues emerging from the pandemic, many of which will be reflected in publications such as: *An analysis of 'micro-credentials' in VET*, *Review of employment-based training models*, *The best of both worlds? Integrating VET and higher education*, *The impact of COVID-19 on industry innovation*, and *Industry's role in VET governance*.

NCVER continued to communicate our new research across a wide range of delivery platforms, including webinars and podcasts for Australian and international audiences, on many diverse topics such as skills utilisation, the stock of qualifications in Australia, online delivery of VET during COVID-19, among others.

NCVER celebrated its 40th anniversary and the 30th anniversary of *National Vocational Education and Training Research Conference 'No Frills'*, held online once again due to the pandemic. The theme of the conference, which was: **Past informing the future**, asked presenters to consider how VET's past might inform its future and to reflect on the lessons and achievements that have the potential to inform progress.

Research activity 2021



1 SUBMISSION



3 WEBINARS



4 DATA VISUALISATIONS/INFOGRAPHICS



21 REPORTS



11 EXTERNAL PRESENTATIONS



1 DISCUSSION PAPER



3 413 NEW TITLES IN VOCEDplus



Key research areas



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The 2021 national VET research agenda was overseen by the Australian and State and Territory governments and informed NCVER's research focus and the types of investigations that are priorities for the nation. Research published during the year encompassed a range of themes and topics categorised under four broad areas.



COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic and policy responses have impacted many aspects of education and training in Australia. The research under this theme examined both the impact on VET and its role in navigating and recovering from the pandemic.

Key themes and topics under this area:



COVID-19



training delivery



employment-based training



youth



skills innovation



apprenticeships and traineeships.










VET delivery and practice

Understanding the needs of learners to ensure meaningful engagement with the education system and examining what works to promote quality outcomes across teaching and learning models, assessment and reporting.

Individuals may access the VET system at different points in their lives for a variety of different reasons. It is therefore important that the teaching, learning and assessment practices within the VET sector are meeting their needs. Research under this theme has looked at validation of assessment, building VET teaching capacity, and integrating higher education and VET.

Key themes and topics under this area:

-  student aspirations and choice
-  outcomes
-  pathways and transitions
-  VET workforce
-  pedagogy
-  assessment
-  workplace learning.



VET student engagement and outcomes

Understanding how students are engaging in and benefitting from VET is important to monitor performance, quality, and accessibility. Exploring VET's impact on Australia's stock of skills and access to education will enable greater insight for policymakers.

The research under this theme reveals how VET is being utilised to deliver skills and qualifications, how secondary students and students with disadvantage are engaged with the system, and the quality of VET delivery.

Key themes and topics under this area:

-  economic and social outcomes
-  future of employment
-  compliance and regulation
-  micro-credentials
-  learner diversity and trends
-  social cohesion
-  foundation skills.



Industry and VET

The ‘vocational’ aspect of VET denotes its connection with employers and industry. This connection is embedded in multiple areas of the system; in the development of training packages and training courses, in RTO-industry partnerships, and in work placements for VET graduates. The research under this theme explores the role and engagement of industry in VET qualification development and training delivery, work and employment-based models of training, and how VET can best deliver skills for work.

Key themes and topics under this area:



industry engagement



future of employment



work and employment-based training



apprenticeships and traineeships



qualification development



international models of VET



skills for work.



COVID-19 pandemic



What VET can offer to COVID-19 youth unemployment recovery

JOANNE WAUGH & MICHELLE CIRCELLI

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

INTRODUCTION

As the pandemic has unfolded, the number of young people with a youth unemployment rate of 11.4% in December 2019, rose to 13.8% in May 2021. The strategies taken by governments to recover the impact of COVID-19 have had widespread economic impacts. By the end 2020, youth unemployment had risen to 13.8%. Youth unemployment rose by 11.5% between December 2019 and May 2021.

By examining responses to past economic downturns and recessions, both in Australia and internationally, this paper discusses the role of vocational education and training (VET) in mitigating the effects of economic downturns on young people and assisting them to move into employment. Vocational pathways in school, quality career guidance and work-based training are found to be critical to youth employability, especially for disadvantaged young people. VET qualifications with a work-based training component have been shown to protect youth from the scarring effects of unemployment but can be more effective when their training is linked to lasting employment, with the opportunity to progress.

There is nothing novel in these approaches, but the high rate of youth unemployment pre-pandemic indicates that the VET sector also needs to look at longer-term solutions. The opportunity VET offers to disadvantaged youth can only reach those who most need it when VET is adequately resourced to offer programs in tandem with holistic social services and industry support.

What VET can offer to COVID-19 youth unemployment recovery

Joanne Waugh & Michelle Circelli

Published 13 May 2021

Examining responses to past economic downturns and recessions, both in Australia and internationally, this paper discusses the role of VET in mitigating the effects of economic downturns on young people and helping them move into employment. Vocational pathways in school, quality career guidance and work-based training are found to be critical to youth employability, especially for disadvantaged young people.

Summary of findings

Vocational pathways in school, quality career guidance and work-based training are found to be critical to youth employability, especially for disadvantaged young people. VET qualifications with a work-based training component have been shown to protect youth from the scarring effects of unemployment but can be more effective when their training is linked to lasting employment, with the opportunity to progress. There is nothing novel in these approaches, but the high rate of youth unemployment pre-pandemic indicates that the VET sector also needs to look at longer-term solutions. The opportunity VET offers to Australia's youth can only reach those who most need it when VET is adequately resourced to offer programs in tandem with holistic social services and industry support.

Highlights

- Vocational pathways in secondary school broaden young people's understanding of the types of jobs that potentially await them and smooth the school-to-work transition, but the experience must be meaningful and supported by personalised career guidance.



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- Work-based training achieves the best lasting employment outcomes. Although apprenticeships and traineeships offer one mechanism, they are not the only effective work-based training approach.
- Career planning is essential for enabling youth to understand the breadth of occupations open to them. Individualised, ongoing support from an informed and objective person works best, especially for disadvantaged youth.
- The rapid digitisation of VET delivery is unique to this recession and has proved to be a double-edged sword: accessibility has improved for some learners, while those with limited access to the internet or electronic devices, or who lack digital skills, have been disadvantaged. High-quality online training and assessment experiences, those that support the most vulnerable unemployed youth, are resource-intensive approaches for training providers.



VET student outcomes 2020: impact of COVID-19 on domestic students

Ian White

Published 19 May 2021



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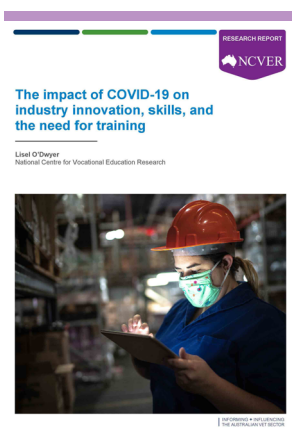
In addition to causing widespread economic disruption in Australia, the broad range of restrictions imposed to control the spread of COVID-19 significantly impacted the labour market. Using data from the National Student Outcomes Survey, this research examined how domestic students who finished a VET qualification in 2019 fared in terms of their employment outcomes at the end of May 2020 amid the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary of findings

The data revealed that COVID-19 had a significant effect on employment outcomes for VET students. Effects varied by location, industry and student characteristics. This snapshot of 2020 will provide a useful benchmark for following Australia's recovery from COVID-19 through 2021 and beyond.

Key messages:

- The proportion of VET students who completed a qualification in 2019 and were employed at the end of May 2020 decreased by 5.0 percentage points for the corresponding period in the previous year, which was larger for males (i.e., -9.1 percentage points), than for females (i.e., -5.6% percentage points).
- There was a significant proportion of VET qualification completers in 2019 who had subsequently obtained employment, who lost their job due to COVID-19 by the end of May 2020. Females aged between 20–24 years and younger completers generally who were particularly hard hit.
- VET qualification completers from 2019 who still had a job at the end of May 2020 experienced considerable disruption to their employment with 6.7% having been temporarily stood down due to COVID-19, and 34.4% having had their work hours reduced.
- Impacts on employment varied widely by industry, with the Arts and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food sectors, experiencing the highest proportions of job losses or reduced working hours
- All jurisdictions saw a decrease in the proportion of qualification completers employed full-time at the end of May 2020 compared with May 2019, with the largest declines in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania, and Queensland.



The impact of COVID-19 on industry innovation, skills and the need for training

Lisel O'Dwyer

Published 28 July 2021



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Innovation can offer a pathway to economic recovery from COVID-19. The VET sector could assist by providing training for new skills required to implement innovations. Using semi-structured interviews in three case study industries (manufacturing; healthcare; and hospitality and tourism), this research documents the different ways by which businesses have responded to the pandemic and the extent to which innovation was an element of their response.

Summary of findings

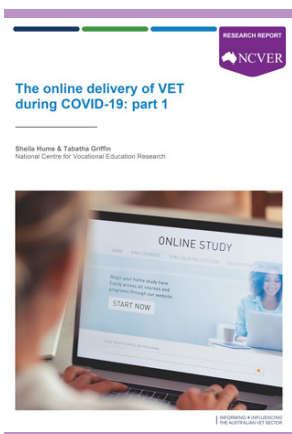
Most of the 21 interviewed businesses changed their usual operations in response to COVID-19 but training in new skills was generally not necessary. Any training undertaken was short-term, unaccredited and internal. The VET sector requires structural changes to better serve industry during a crisis, including reducing course duration, focusing on skill sets rather than qualifications, online delivery where possible, and meeting skills needs in industries where VET has not been a traditional source of training.

This report identifies the implications for the VET sector in providing training for any new skills needed for innovation under pandemic conditions.

Key messages

- Most businesses adapted to changing conditions during the pandemic, rather than innovated.
- A limited amount of training was required for the innovations or adaptations made, with most staff able to transfer existing skills to any new tasks.

- Where training was undertaken, it was mostly unaccredited and done informally on the job or via free online training (from government, industry associations or vendor websites). Where accredited training was used, such as in the aged care sector, it tended to be conducted online.
- Some businesses reported that VET was irrelevant to their needs (even pre-pandemic), while others reported that VET should be more agile or responsive to the conditions and provide training of short duration.
- Barriers to innovation during the pandemic included a lack of financial resources, limited innovation options and the conservative nature of their sector, as well as survival of the business being a higher priority. A lack of skills or inability to access training was not identified as a barrier to innovation.



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The online delivery of VET during COVID-19: part 1

Sheila Hume & Tabatha Griffin

Published 24 August 2021

This research provides a picture of how the VET system has responded to the changing landscape and uncertainty the pandemic has brought in terms of how training is delivered.

The first of two reports for this project, the report investigates the extent to which registered training organisations (RTOs) shifted to online training delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. It compares the incidence of online training delivery during 2020 with pre-pandemic figures from 2019 and includes an examination of training type and subject result during these periods.

The report also highlights key findings from a joint NCVER and ASQA survey of RTOs, describing their journey with regards to how training was delivered pre-pandemic, delivery in 2020 and any implications this has on future plans for training delivery.

Summary of findings

Efforts to contain COVID-19 through lockdowns and social distancing prompted swift changes to the delivery of VET, with questions subsequently arising about the impact of this rapid transition on students and trainers/assessors.

Key messages

- There was a strong response from the VET sector to COVID-19 restrictions, with the number of subjects delivered online increasing by about 24% between 2019 and 2020.
- The shift to online training delivery was more pronounced for government-funded subject enrolments than for those funded via domestic fee-for-service arrangements (increases of 40.4% and 15.7%, respectively):
 - The increase in relation to government-funded subject enrolments in 2020 was more pronounced as fewer of these subjects were delivered online only in 2019 compared with domestic fee-for-service subjects (897 100 and 1 660 000 respectively).
 - In 2020, there were an additional 159 600 enrolments in online-only government-funded stand-alone subjects, i.e. subjects not delivered as part of a nationally recognised program, which increased from 4.7% of all government-funded online-only training in 2019 to 16.0% in 2020.
- This move to online training in response to COVID-19 was further reflected in the survey responses of RTOs, with most (75.2%) having transitioned at least some of their training and assessment online.
- Approximately 12 months on from the commencement of COVID-19 restrictions in Australia, online training is still being offered in areas where it had not previously been, with around 71% of surveyed RTOs having maintained at least some of this initial shift to online training.

- The intention to maintain an increased level of online training and assessment is relatively high, with more than 61% of RTOs surveyed indicating they would be more likely to use blended learning in the future.

The next stage of this project will investigate in more depth the transition to online by RTOs, including future plans for online delivery.



Apprentices and trainees 2020: impacts of COVID-19 on training activity

Michelle Hall

Published 30 August 2021



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The COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread disruption to economic and educational activity in Australia during 2020, due largely to the restrictions imposed on businesses and individuals to mitigate the health impacts of COVID-19. Given the heavy emphasis on workplace-based training in apprenticeships and traineeships, the impacts of the pandemic on apprentices and trainees in 2020 were significant.

This research explored trends in the number of apprentice and trainee commencements, suspensions, cancellations and withdrawals, and completions over the course of 2020, to provide insights into the consequences of the pandemic for this segment of the VET sector.

Summary of findings

Following the national restrictions introduced in March 2020, contract commencements and suspensions showed prominent indication of disruption. However, contract cancellations and withdrawals and completions were steady, with less pronounced disruption. It is suspected that several government subsidy interventions influenced both the extent

of disruption and the recovery from disruption observed in the data.

Impacts to commencements and suspensions in the first half of 2020 tended to be more pronounced for females than for males; for contracts in non-trade occupations than for contracts in trade occupations; and for contracts with medium (20–199 employees) and large (more than 199 employees) employers than for contracts with micro (0–4 employees) and small (5–20 employees) employers.

Key messages:

- Compared with the same period in 2019, the number of contract commencements showed marked declines in April and May 2020, coinciding with the imposition of national restrictions designed to slow the spread of the pandemic.
- Commencement numbers were turbulent in the middle of the year as states and territories faced stark differences in restrictions. In the latter months of the year, commencement numbers recovered dramatically, driven strongly by the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements wage subsidy scheme, which was announced as part of the 2020–21 federal Budget.
- The number of contracts suspended over the course of 2020 was also a dramatic marker of the impacts of the pandemic on apprentices and trainees. Increases of more than 650% relative to 2019 were seen in March and April of 2020, with almost 300% in May of 2020.
- Declines were seen in the number of contract cancellations and withdrawals, as well as in the number of contract completions, from April 2020. These declines were less pronounced and less sensitive to the dynamics of the pandemic over the course of the year than the changes seen for commencements and suspensions.

- The industries that experienced some of the most substantial disruption to contract commencements in 2020 included Administrative and support services; Transport, postal and warehousing; and Information, media and telecommunications. The industries that experienced the most prominent increases in contract suspensions in the first half of 2020 included Arts and recreation services; Accommodation and food services; Transport, postal and warehousing; Retail trade; and Agriculture, forestry and fishing.
- Medium and large employers generally experienced more prominent disruption to commencements and suspensions than micro and small employers.



VET delivery and practice



Provision of foundation skills training by community education providers in regional Australia

Lisel O'Dwyer & Mandy Mihelic

Published 28 January 2021



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This research investigates the contribution community education providers make to foundation skills training in regional Australia, the models of delivery which seemed to work best, and whether the undertaking of foundation skills training helps build social and human capital of the individual and broader community.

Defined as language, literacy and numeracy, and employability skills, foundation skills are essential for individuals to participate in further education, employment and wider society. Community education providers, such as community colleges, neighbourhood houses, faith-based organisations and adult learning associations, are key providers of foundation skills training. The characteristics of community education providers, such as their relatively small scale and flexibility in teaching strategies, make them particularly suitable for providing such training. Despite this, the impact of foundation skills training delivered by community education providers on education and employment outcomes and involvement in society is not well known, particularly in regional areas where the foundation skill levels of adults tend to be lower than in metropolitan areas.

Summary of findings

The research finds that proportionally more regional community education providers deliver foundation skills training than other regional training providers. Completions among students at regional community education providers are high but little is known about education or employment pathways following training due to difficulties in tracking students.

Key messages

- Proportionally more regional community education providers deliver foundation skills training than other regional training providers.
- Between 2018 and 2019 however, enrolments in foundation skills subjects with regional community education providers declined whereas enrolments with other regional providers remained steady. Regional community education providers reported difficulty in securing sufficient funding and appropriately qualified staff, which may explain the recent decline.
- A higher proportion of foundation skills subjects in regional areas were completed by students with community education providers than with other training providers. Little is known though about the education or employment pathways after foundation skills training due to limited capacity by regional community education providers to track student outcomes.
- The positive impact of foundation skills training on an individual's social and human capital was viewed as improved levels of self-confidence and self-worth among students, and development of soft skills. Any broader impact at the community level is yet to be determined.



Building capability and quality in VET teaching: opportunities and challenges (re-release)

Josie Misko, Hugh Guthrie & Melinda Waters

Published 16 March 2021

This research examines the form and content of current teacher capability models and frameworks in VET and other sectors to understand what defines competence and quality in VET teaching. Consultations were held with industry leaders, peak bodies, RTOs, representatives from the Australian



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Education Union, and regulators to obtain their views on the desirability of implementing such frameworks. Also explored were issues relating to the registration and accreditation of VET trainers, trainer entry-level requirements, ways of attracting practitioners to the industry and the development of a capable VET workforce.

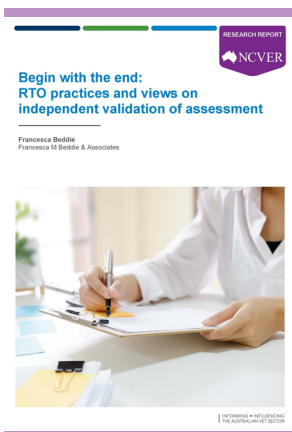
Summary of findings

There are key barriers to attracting and maintaining a capable VET workforce, such as the professional status of VET teachers and difficulties attracting industry professionals into teaching roles. Respondents also report difficulties in recruiting teachers with industry expertise, particularly in areas of skills shortage, among equity groups such as Indigenous Australians, and in regional and remote areas. Addressing these issues and ensuring adequate funding and coordinated systems for ongoing professional development are critical for developing and improving the quality of VET teaching.

Key messages

- There are mixed views on mandatory registration, with the majority questioning its value and the additional regulatory burden, while others consider it would professionalise the sector and raise its status.
- Stakeholders are generally united on the need to implement systematic approaches to teacher preparation, mentorship support and opportunities for continuing professional development.
- Some respondents advocated a future review of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) qualification to incorporate an increased focus on pedagogy, educational theory and practice, and the use of applied training methods. However, several stakeholders have a limited appetite for making any immediate additional changes to the Certificate IV in TAE as the basic entry-level qualification for teachers due to their experiences with the recent qualification upgrade.

- There is strong support for using teacher capability frameworks and/or professional standards as diagnostic tools and guidelines for teacher self-evaluation and reflection, including for the planning of objectives for personal and professional development. Nonetheless, limited appetite exists for a nationally prescribed VET teacher capability framework due to the diversity of the VET sector. The preferred option would be to develop a set of core capabilities, to be locally adapted.
- Other broad strategic initiatives are proposed to address challenges identified, including the regular collection of VET workforce data, and the addition of smaller micro-credentials or skill sets in the VET teaching suite of qualifications that can be scaled-up to a full qualification beyond the entry level qualification.



Begin with the end: RTO practices and views on independent validation of assessment

Francesca Beddie

Published 14 July 2021

Validation of assessment tools, processes and outcomes is an important element of the quality of assessment in VET. This report seeks to deepen understanding of the persistent issues RTOs encounter when conducting independent moderation and validation of assessments, and of the nature of industry involvement in these processes. The report achieves this by drawing on the findings from semi-structured interviews with public, private and community RTOs in urban and regional settings.



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Summary of findings

In terms of industry involvement, independent validation of assessment tends to be incorporated into ongoing RTO-employer relationships, rather than employers having a formal role. RTO staff can see the value of independent validation of assessment as part of a training system striving for quality. The favoured approach is bringing assessment and certification to the fore of training package development, implementation and adjustment, with less onerous validation processes helping to inform improvements.

The research is accompanied by two support documents:

- a literature review containing an annotated timeline, spanning 2001 to 2020
- a desktop investigation of validation and moderation approaches in the United Kingdom, Europe and New Zealand.

The interviews revealed that independent moderation and validation entail consideration of the diverse clients and business models of the various types of providers, and that a one-size-fits-all approach is not a workable solution. A desire for more professional development and greater opportunities to share experience in the field of assessment, moderation and validation was frequently expressed.

Key messages

- Independent validation of assessment is driven by regulatory requirements, which can generate a compliance mentality, leading to over-assessment, but not necessarily better assessment practices or improved training.
- Validation can play a constructive role in RTO governance and continuous improvement, although the associated terminology is not universally understood or used consistently, and the reporting burden is considered onerous.
- Compliance and good business practice drive ongoing relationships between RTOs and employers. Integrating validation into these relationships is viewed as potentially more constructive than any formal validation role for

employers, especially since many, particularly those in small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs), see validation as the responsibility of the RTO.

- Validation has the potential to bridge the gap between training package requirements and industry realities, given the latter often evolves more quickly than the training package.
- Where moderation does occur, it is primarily used to benchmark assessments across an organisation rather than as a measure of consistency with other organisation's assessment results.



Attracting industry experts to become VET practitioners: a journey, not a destination

Mark Tyler & Darryl Dymock

Published 18 November 2021



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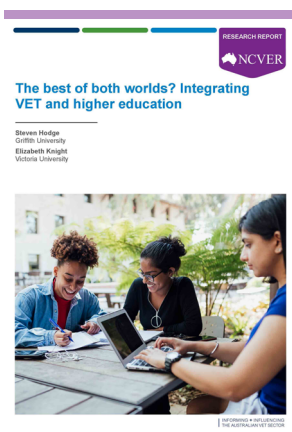
There is general consensus that the Australian VET sector faces a number of workforce issues including the aging of VET teachers, the high level of casualisation, industry currency and the need to increase the capacity of trainers. These issues, along with the need for the VET sector to respond to critical national workforce development requirements, have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

An underutilised resource that could contribute to the availability of VET practitioners might be industry experts who are highly knowledgeable and experienced in their sector. Through interviews and surveys with registered training organisations and current VET practitioners, this research sought to better understand how training organisations recruit and retain industry experts.

Through interviews and surveys with RTOs and VET practitioners, this project explored approaches to attracting industry experts to become and remain VET practitioners. Drawing on findings from the research, the authors provide strategies for consideration by government, industry, regulators, RTOs and VET practitioners that can help the journey from industry expert to VET practitioner be more rewarding and productive.

Key messages

- As described by participants, becoming a VET practitioner is an ongoing journey, not a destination, involving vocational and educational preparation; a transition to VET; and continuing practice and updating of skills to maintain the dual professionalism that is required to train, assess and respond to the changing needs of industry.
- Helping the next generation of workers to develop was a key motivator for industry experts to become VET practitioners. The provision of a supportive culture, structured mentoring, and RTO-supported professional development was the most effective strategy for retaining industry experts as VET practitioners once they were employed.
- The level of remuneration was a key consideration for industry experts in their decisions about transitioning to a VET practitioner role. The perceived lack of career pathways and the continual upgrading of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualification – the qualification required for training and assessing learners – were, however, seen as deterrents to remaining in that role.
- A means for addressing both currency of skills and workforce development could be achieved by more flexible ‘boundary crossing’ opportunities, whereby VET practitioners move back and forth between the classroom and the workplace. Industry bodies would seem the best placed to assist with this.



The best of both worlds? Integrating VET and higher education

Steven Hodge & Elizabeth Knight

Published 25 November 2021



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There is renewed interest in better aligning VET and higher education (HE). This report explores the characteristics and sustainability of different models of highly integrated VET and HE qualifications.

Loosely integrated qualifications, whereby pathways might be endorsed but where no credit is specified or arranged, are numerous. In these examples, the possibility of following a pathway (usually from VET to HE) exists, but responsibility falls on the student to navigate it.

This project is focused on more highly integrated VET and HE qualifications, those that can be described as ‘consecutive’, ‘concurrent’ or ‘embedded’. These integrated models are designed to provide clear linkages and pathways between VET and HE qualifications, enabling better student engagement with both. Through the examination of existing examples of these more highly integrated qualifications, this project explored the characteristics of such arrangements, determining whether and how they might be implemented more broadly.

Summary of findings

The research found that highly integrated arrangements are difficult and expensive to develop, and often difficult to sustain. These models may be more widespread and sustainable, however, if providers are supported with the expertise and resources to undertake mapping processes, where providers and their staff in the two sectors trust and value each other, where employers value both VET and HE, and students find demands associated with integrated offerings acceptable.

Key messages

- Highly integrated VET and HE qualifications are difficult and expensive to develop. This is primarily due to the comprehensive mapping of VET and HE content required, a time-consuming process involving skilled personnel. Other challenges include overcoming competitive pressures between the integrating institutions, convincing industry and employers to invest in and recognise integrated arrangements, and creating delivery schedules acceptable to students.
- Sustainability may be a persistent issue for higher integration models. These models might be more widespread and sustainable if certain conditions were met, including:
 - providers are supported with the expertise and resources to undertake mapping processes
 - value and support by collaborating providers
 - industries and employers value both VET and HE qualifications in the integration
 - students find the integration attractive and the associated demands acceptable.
- This research suggests that greater programmatic integration of qualifications may not be the best way to promote greater integration of VET and HE, largely because of the difficulties in developing and sustaining them. Further, integrated qualifications would only be useful in some industry areas, and not necessarily in large numbers. They may only be viable as niche offerings and where the conditions listed above are met.
- Less tightly integrated models of integration that do not require the same investment and expertise to initiate are likely to be a more sustainable approach.



VET student engagement and outcomes



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An analysis of 'micro-credentials' in VET

Bryan Palmer

Published 3 June 2021

Subjects not part of a nationally recognised course form the single largest component of enrolments in VET. However, little is known about this space. This analytical project looked for patterns amongst these subjects by matching them to students and RTOs.

Short-course training, often referred to as micro-credentials, is being seen as an increasingly important form of training, particularly as the world comes to terms with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the VET sector, training package skill sets and accredited courses are recognised forms of short-course training.

Nevertheless, a surprising amount of other, shorter, non-qualification training occurs in the VET sector, officially known as enrolments in subjects not part of a nationally recognised program (course). This report refers to them as 'subject bundles'. This is construed in this paper as a student enrolling in a 'bundle' of subjects at a single RTO, termed here 'RTO-student pairs. Indeed, in 2019, there were about 2.6 million students who enrolled in these subject bundles, by comparison with 76 565 students enrolled in training package skill sets and 93 555 in accredited courses. But what are they actually training for and why?

Summary of findings

This report contributes to the information already available on the largest segment of the VET sector, by analysing these subject bundles and their salient features. Analysis showed that engagement in subject bundles was found to be typically short, with bundles of three subjects or fewer accounting for 89.5% of RTO-student pairs. Furthermore, engagement was focused on a small number of bundles (with 601 of around 50 000 bundles accounting for 90% of the RTO-student pairs)

and with a relatively small number of RTOs (with 456 RTOs registering 90% of student activity).

Of particular interest was the finding that regulation, either explicit or implicit, formed the largest amount of activity in this area. The analysis also found that these subjects were overwhelmingly funded by fee-for-service-activity.

Key messages

- The analysis clearly indicates that subject bundles are mainly concerned with regulation and skills maintenance, either explicitly or implicitly. This activity can be grouped under the broad headings of workplace safety, emergency preparedness and authority to operate.
- This segment is largely a 'private' market – more than 93% of subject bundles were funded on a fee-for-service basis – with relatively little government intervention. The fact that the employer or the individual is prepared to pay for the training in many cases is due to a regulatory requirement, but also implies that the training is seen as having value as a (micro) credential in the marketplace.
- There is an opportunity for governments to stimulate 'non-regulatory' subject-bundle activity focused on emerging/persistent skill needs and on increasing labour market participation.
- The noticeable differences between the states and territories in subject bundles can be largely attributed to differences in regulatory requirements, funding regimes and the economic structure of the state/territory.



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The stock of qualifications in Australia

John Stanwick & Michelle Hall

Published 17 June 2021

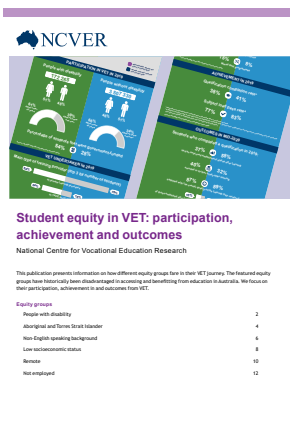
Formal qualifications are a key mechanism for skilling the Australian workforce and are underpinned by a robust framework that defines intended learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and skills, and their application. Having an overview of the stock of qualifications in the economy is therefore an important precursor to understanding the available stock of skills, which in turn informs supply- and demand-side issues, such as skills utilisation and skills gaps. Information on qualifications is often collected by labour force surveys or census data, but these statistics typically include only information on the highest level of qualification held, whereby VET qualifications are underreported.

This research report estimates and describes the stock of qualifications in the Australian economy using data from the 2018–19 Qualifications and Work survey, compiled by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The survey includes data on up to five qualifications per person. Accompanying the report is a suite of infographics summarising the key findings from the analysis, as well as six case study occupations, these highlighting the dynamics of qualifications in different employment contexts. A support document in the form of a literature review provides a broad overview of approaches to measuring the stock of skills in an economy, beyond the analysis of qualifications presented in the main report.

Key Messages

- In 2018–19, out of an estimated population of 16.1 million working-age Australians, 10.2 million people reported holding 15.4 million qualifications, including 3.8 million people holding two or more qualifications.
- VET qualifications outnumbered higher education qualifications by almost one million. Certificates III/IV were particularly prevalent.

- Around three-quarters of the qualifications held by employed people were in the same field as, or were relevant to, the worker's job. Among the 3.3 million people with two or more qualifications who were employed at the time of the survey, about a third held at least one qualification that was not at all relevant to their job; often the most relevant qualification to the worker's job was either not their highest or their most recent qualification.
- Different qualification profiles were evident in different occupational contexts. Some occupations have more diverse entry pathways than others, with regulation playing a role in some of these pathways.



Student equity in VET: participation, achievement and outcomes

NCVER

Published 24 June 2021

This publication presents information on how different equity groups fare in their VET journey. The featured equity groups have historically been disadvantaged in accessing and benefitting from education in Australia. This new data product focuses on their participation, achievement in and outcomes from VET.

The publication covers people with disability, Indigenous people, those from low socioeconomic circumstances, those who speak a language other than English at home, those living in remote and very remote areas, and those unemployed or not in the labour force.

The infographic style report highlights how the VET system is supporting equitable access, achievement, and outcomes across disadvantaged learner groups who undertook their training in Australia. It provides a summary of how each equity group is faring in VET compared with their non-equity peers.





Unpacking the quality of VET delivery

Hugh Guthrie & Melinda Waters

Published 8 September 2021

This paper is the first publication from a project focused on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment practices in the vocational education and training (VET) sector in Australia – what we understand these to be and how they might be measured. Based on a review of the literature, this paper explores current definitions of quality in VET, the factors that impact on the quality of delivery and the various measures used to make judgements about it.

The quality of delivery in the VET sector is critical to Australia's social and economic prosperity, especially in the post-COVID recovery. Research shows that good-quality delivery improves outcomes for students and contributes broader benefits to employers, communities and the economy.

'Delivery' is a broad term, one that extends beyond teaching and learning to the whole student experience – from before enrolment, through to completion and beyond – and involves a range of educational and support services. Notions of delivery quality are further complicated by the different ways in which VET stakeholder groups view the purpose of VET delivery and by the myriad factors that impact on it within and outside RTOs.

A number of measures are routinely used to evaluate the quality of delivery at national, state and VET provider levels, but there are concerns about the extent to which these measures capture the complexity and diversity of VET delivery contexts, or reflect the important aspects of delivery quality, those that make the difference for students and employers.



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Summary of findings

The quality measurement issues and challenges identified in this research have been identified in the literature for some time and require strategic and comprehensive interventions to shift the tenor of the quality delivery debate in VET.

Key messages

- The VET sector is highly complex and diverse. Thus, what contributes to effective or good-quality delivery in different local contexts needs to be broadly conceived and requires the use of 'fit for purpose' delivery approaches.
- Defining quality and the quality of delivery is not simple and involves gathering and using a wide range of data and information – both quantitative and qualitative – throughout the student life cycle to develop a 'true picture' of quality.
- Quality measures for RTOs reflect the impact delivery has on their clients (students and employers). A balance needs to be struck, however, between meeting immediate needs and developing students' longer-term skills, as well as the personal capabilities that will sustain them through their careers.
- The range of RTOs' contextual factors, organisational foci and missions also means that a 'one size fits all' set of measures of delivery quality may not serve all purposes.
- Critical factors affecting the quality of delivery include the policy and regulatory milieu in which RTOs operate, the quality of training packages and their ability to translate them readily into training programs, the types of students they service, the availability of teachers and trainers, the quality of leadership and culture in RTOs, and the effectiveness of initial and continuing professional development in maintaining and building the quality of RTO workforces.



VET for secondary school students: insights and outcomes

Josie Misko, Melinda Lees & Emerick Chew

Published 14 October 2021



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This research investigates the models used to deliver VET to secondary students across and within jurisdictions and public and private school sectors, and reports on findings from surveys of students and parents about their motivations and aspirations. Findings from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) are used to draw comparisons between employment and training outcomes for different cohorts of students at age 22 and age 25. Consultations with industry stakeholders and employers on the merits of VET for secondary school students (VfSSS) programs, and case studies of a sample of government and non-government schools provide some learnings for the sector.

The study also extends previously published analysis (Misko, Chew & Korbel 2020) to examine the differences in employment and training outcomes between students undertaking VfSSS compared with other student cohorts, including students who attained an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) and those who did not, using data from the LSAY.

Key messages

- Students undertake VfSSS for a variety of, and sometimes multiple, reasons, indicating the broad appeal of VET courses for those who decide to take them. Reasons include getting a qualification, getting a full-time job when leaving school, starting an apprenticeship or traineeship, following a personal interest, and achieving an ATAR. Parents cited a similar range of academic and personal benefits for their child undertaking VfSSS.

- There are varied and differing perceptions among industry and employer participants on the benefits and challenges for students undertaking VfSSS studies, with a general acceptance that having school students in workplaces helps students gain experience and knowledge. The areas for attention and improvement identified by some included issues of:
 - industry currency
 - course relevance
 - training quality.
- Various models of VfSSS provision are favoured across jurisdictions and school sectors, including, for example, schools becoming RTOs in their own right. In many cases, schools use a combination of arrangements and partnerships with other schools to enable access to a broader range of offerings.
- Schools with successful VfSSS display a strong commitment to VET, a broad range of offerings, good relationships with employers and access to purpose-built facilities for training. Key challenges for the case study schools involve recruiting teachers with industry expertise and ensuring that teachers maintain their industry currency.
- An analysis of LSAY data shows that at the age of 22, VfSSS who had not attained an ATAR were more likely to be in full-time and permanent employment than other cohorts. The picture changes at the age of 25, with all other student cohorts not only more likely to be employed but also more likely to have completed a post-school qualification at bachelor or higher degree level than their VfSSS counterparts without an ATAR. This change is primarily due to ATAR students who went on to university finishing their studies and entering the labour market by the age of 25.



Industry and VET



Industry's role in VET governance – using international insights to inform new practices
Gitta Siekmann and Michelle Circelli
National Centre for Vocational Education Research

INTRODUCTION
Industry representation and governance in the vocational education and training (VET) sector is destined to undergo several transformations in the past, and continues to do so, reflecting changes in the economy but also the continuing challenges in embedding an industry presence in VET leadership and governance. This review brings together findings from, primarily, international country comparisons on industry role in VET over the last decade, identifying the key characteristics of industry's successful engagement in VET governance. This review also seeks to understand any opportunities, governance structures have not substantially changed in the countries investigated. At the time of writing this summary, the COVID-19 pandemic was causing disruption to all sectors of society, including education and training, paradoxically providing a further opportunity for new perspectives on industry representation, leadership and governance in the VET sector.

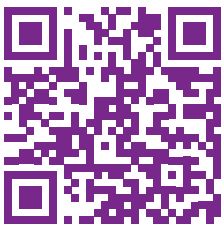
HIGHLIGHTS

- Industry within a governance framework context is not a homogeneous term and needs to be unpacked to clearly identify and define what the term encompasses.
- The multiple, and at times diverging, roles of industry in VET mean that successfully embedding industry in training governance and funding requires skilful coordination.
- Successful models for embedding industry in VET governance, where each partner is highly valued and willing to take responsibility for their component, are key to effective VET governance and, ultimately, improved outcomes for learners.
- Examples of good practice in social partnerships, along with industry engagement in VET governance, were found to continue and flourish in particular contexts such as Germany, the Netherlands and France. However, nearly every VET governance approach cannot easily be replicated elsewhere as they are contingent on history and culture.
- In many countries, including Australia, the national industry system still focuses 'first and foremost' on the provision, rather than regulation, of training. This is particularly true in countries with strong partnerships between employers, training providers and local governments, increasingly expressed through VET agencies.
- In relation to training quality and employer engagement, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has been working to increase the integration of quality work parameters, developed through best practices between employers and training providers, to ensure they become a significant and necessary part of all VET programs.

Industry's role in VET governance: using international insights to inform new practices

Gitta Siekmann & Michelle Circelli

Published 22 April 2021



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Industry representation and governance in the VET sector in Australia has undergone several transformations in the past, and continues to do so, reflecting changes in the economy but also the continuing challenges in embedding an industry presence in VET leadership and governance. This summary brings together findings from, primarily, international country comparisons on industry's role in VET over the last decade, identifying the key characteristics of industry's successful engagement in VET governance. Although some work referenced may appear outdated, governance structures have not substantially changed in the countries investigated. At the time of writing this summary, the COVID-19 pandemic was causing disruption to all sectors of society, including education and training, paradoxically providing a further opportunity for new perspectives on industry representation, leadership and governance in the VET sector.

Summary of findings

Social partnerships, negotiated between governments, employers, unions and training providers, where each partner is highly valued and willing to take responsibility for their part, is the key to effective VET governance and, ultimately, improved outcomes for learners.

Key messages

- 'Industry' within a governance-framework context is not a homogeneous term and needs to be unpacked to clearly identify and define what the term encompasses.
- The multiple, and at times diverging, roles of industry in VET mean that successfully embedding industry in training governance and funding requires skilful coordination.

- Social partnerships negotiated between governments, employers, unions and training providers, where each partner is highly valued and willing to take responsibility for their component, are key to effective VET governance and, ultimately, improved outcomes for learners.
- Examples of good practice in social partnerships, along with industry engagement in VET governance, were found in western and northern European countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Finland. However, country-specific VET governance approaches cannot easily be replicated elsewhere as they are contingent on history and culture.
- In many countries, including Australia, sub-national industry or sectoral skills councils – those that work at the provincial, state or regional governance level – are particularly successful in strengthening partnerships between employers, training providers and local governments, consequently improving the quality of VET programs.
- In relation to training quality and employer engagement, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recommends increasing the integration of quality work placements, developed through local partnerships between employers and training providers, to ensure they become a significant and mandatory part of all VET programs.



Vocational qualification development: lessons from overseas

Bridget Wibrow & Joanne Waugh

Published 20 May 2021

Streamlining the vocational qualification development process in Australia is a current priority of the skills ministers of both the Australian Government and state and territory governments. This research summary explores the development processes associated with vocational



qualifications in selected countries and compares them with the current process in Australia, with the aim of identifying any areas where efficiencies can be made.

The international processes examined apply to Canada, Finland, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. Detailed information for each of these countries can be found in the support document, International models to streamline VET qualifications: case studies.

Key messages:

- The qualification development process for each country operates in the context of its own VET system and broader governance framework; no international process appears to be more efficient or effective than Australia's, but there are elements that could be adapted to improve the approach in Australia.
- In the Australian process, the role of educators and educational institutions in technical advisory groups and in qualification development appears, on paper, to be similar to international processes. However, greater transparency in how the contribution of each influences the outcomes may improve the current perception that they have little involvement.
- In many of the countries examined, the regulator is involved in the qualification development process, mainly through the final approval of qualifications. In Australia, the VET regulators have little or no involvement in the training package development process, but they do accredit courses.
- Australia's federated system is a factor in the duration of the qualification approval process. The literature did not reveal details about the potential efficiencies within each development stage so further research that examines the collaborative practices and conflict resolution processes that may be contributing to the overall length of the process would be informative.



Review of employment-based training models

Lisel O'Dwyer

National Centre for Vocational Education Research



INTRODUCTION

Employment-based training (EBT) is training for paid employees which is designed, often in a work setting, related to their role, and provided or supported by employers. It can be nationally recognised or non-nationally recognised. It can be an on-site or off-site activity. For many employers, the crucial aspect of EBT is whether the training fits into productivity and profitability.

In Australia, apprenticeships and internships are widely recognised forms of EBT. On-site, formal and delivery are often well researched and understood – as is their value. They are well supported by transport, industry, education, and information technology industries. However, evidence on the effectiveness of EBT for on-site, delivery and less-structured approaches, such as mentoring, is limited. While these approaches are not necessarily new, their application offers implications for new and existing on-site and delivery EBT (Tombore and Nelson). The research in this report is a contribution to the current knowledge.

HIGHLIGHTS

The review considers research by Coburn et al. (2020), which explored the benefits and challenges of working with employers in VET programs (including apprenticeships and traineeships), and O'Dwyer (forthcoming), which focuses on a number of programs containing on-site delivery and is better suited to students, compared with those programs without the on-site component.

Understand how training that is agile and responsive to their specific needs, is affordable, and minimises workers' time away from their jobs. Whether the training is nationally recognised or not generally not employers' foremost concern.

Employers' current training approaches such as cadetships, traineeships or higher apprenticeships are well suited for meeting the needs of employers. VET providers' experience in delivering staged training to match work experience progression, and on-site apprenticeships and traineeships, offer them the opportunity to negotiate with employers to develop and deliver the bespoke employment-based training programs required by employers.



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Review of employment-based training models

Lisel O'Dwyer

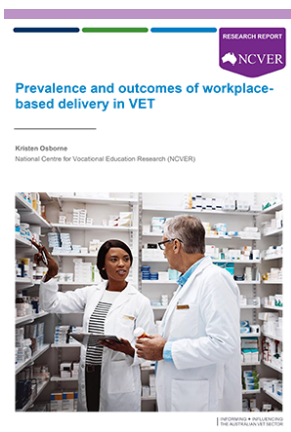
Published 28 September 2021

Employment-based training (EBT) is training for paid employees within a work setting, related to their role, and provided or supported by employers. The report explores alternative approaches to employment-based training – cadetships and internships, higher apprenticeships, and on-the-job structured training such as mentoring – and their implications for VET content and delivery. It draws on international and Australian literature, supplemented by interviews with employers in the social assistance, construction and information technology industries.

Summary of findings

These approaches are not necessarily new but the novelty in these forms of EBT comes in their fit-for-purpose designs.

- Employers look for training that is agile and responsive to their specific needs, is affordable, and minimises workers' time away from their jobs. Whether the training is nationally recognised or not is generally not employers' foremost concern.
- Employment-based training approaches such as cadetships, internships and higher apprenticeships are well suited for meeting the needs of employers. VET providers' experience in delivering staged training to match work experience progression, as occurs in apprenticeships and traineeships, offer them the opportunity to negotiate with employers to develop and deliver the bespoke employment-based training programs required by employers.



Prevalence and outcomes of workplace-based delivery in VET

Kristen Osborne

Published 20 October 2021



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Extensive evidence demonstrates a trend of positive outcomes related to learning in the workplace. Despite this, no examination of the outcomes has been undertaken using the available Australian VET data.

This research uses VET administrative data to examine trends in the delivery of workplace-based training, including where entire programs are delivered in this way. Additionally, data from the National Student Outcomes Survey are used to model the effect on employment and achievement outcomes of a student receiving workplace-based delivery. As previous work has extensively examined the role of workplace learning in apprenticeships and traineeships, this publication does not include these students.

Key messages

- Workplace-based delivery was used for about 4.1 million subjects (representing 17.2% of all subjects delivered outside an apprenticeship or traineeship) in 2019, either as the sole mode of delivery or in combination with other modes.
- Around 800 000 students experienced workplace-based delivery as part of their VET journey in 2019, outside an apprenticeship or traineeship.
- The most notable predictor of a student receiving workplace-based delivery when available factors were modelled was the field of education of their study.
- The relationship between mode of delivery and factors such as the field of education studied complicates efforts to understand the effects of workplace-based delivery.

As a likely consequence of this, the analysis of the impact of workplace-based delivery using administrative data did not identify a material impact on student outcomes.

A more conclusive understanding of the extent of the impact exerted by workplace-based delivery on student outcomes may only be possible through a randomised trial, whereby the only difference in the program is the presence of workplace-based delivery.



Skills utilisation in the workplace: the other side of the coin

Tabatha Griffin, Kristen Osborne, Patrick Lim & Jan Kabátek

Published 16 November 2021



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This research investigated skill underutilisation in Australian workers by examining patterns of over-skilling and over-qualification and the pathways of people into jobs where they are over-skilled. While skills development has long been a focus of policy-makers, ensuring the use of those skills has received much less attention. Skills utilisation, however, is a key component of workforce development, leading to increased productivity, higher levels of staff satisfaction and retention, and maximising the return on investment in skills development.

Through an analysis of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey, this research examined patterns of skill underutilisation across all Australian workers, with a focus on two industry sectors: manufacturing, and early childhood education and care. Interviews with employers from these two industry sectors further explored what high performing organisations are doing to understand the skills of their workers and what, if any, mechanisms are in place to maximise skills utilisation.

Summary of findings

The research found that around 19% of workers report that they are not using all their skills at work. Around 35% of workers are over-qualified, potentially contributing to this level of skill underutilisation. It also finds that while employers value the concept of skills usage, there are higher priorities, such as skills development.

Key messages

- Around 19% of Australian workers report that they are not using all of their skills at work. About 35% of workers are overqualified, potentially contributing to this level of skill underutilisation.
- The likelihood and perceived importance of skills utilisation appears dependent on the type of job held. High-skilled, complex jobs provide more opportunity for workers to draw on a broader range of their skills than low-skilled jobs.
 - Employers in the early childhood education and care sector believed that all employees were using their skills. Analysis of HILDA data, however, showed that around 16% of workers in selected occupations from that sector reported they were not using all of their skills.
 - Employers in the manufacturing sector were less confident that employees were using all of their skills, depending on the specific occupations considered. The HILDA Survey shows that around 14% of workers in selected manufacturing occupations report that they are not using all of their skills, with the highest level being metal engineering process workers (31.3%).
- Employers believe that skills utilisation is important for staff satisfaction and retention, but there were very few formal mechanisms in place in the case study organisations for understanding workers' skills and ensuring their optimal usage. Where mechanisms were used, they tended to be aimed at understanding skills needs, rather than ensuring skills utilisation.

- Employers were unsure whether support from government (or other bodies) would help them to be more active in utilising the skills of their employees. There was no sense that the lack of such support was the reason why these organisations were not addressing skills utilisation more actively. Instead, most turned the conversation towards skills development, including interest in financial support for training, which they see as higher priority.

Issues in apprenticeships and traineeships: a research synthesis

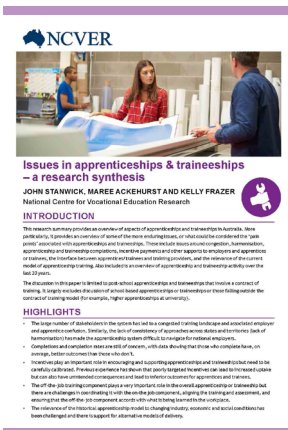
John Stanwick, Maree Ackehurst & Kelly Frazer

Published 23 November 2021

The aim of this synthesis piece was to provide an overview of some aspects of apprenticeships and traineeships in Australia. In particular, the synthesis brings together research and data on what could be considered five enduring issues. These are congestion and harmonisation, completions, incentive payments and other supports to employers and apprentices/trainees, the interface between the apprentice/trainee and training providers, and the relevance of the current model of apprenticeship training.

Summary of findings

- The large number of stakeholders in the system has led to a congested training landscape and associated employer and apprentice confusion. Similarly, the lack of consistency of approaches across states and territories (lack of harmonisation) has made the apprenticeship system difficult to navigate for national employers.
- Completions and completion rates are still of concern, with data showing that those who complete have, on average, better outcomes than those who don't.
- Incentives play an important role in encouraging and supporting apprenticeships and traineeships but need to



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be carefully calibrated. Previous experience has shown that poorly targeted incentives can lead to increased uptake but can also have unintended consequences and lead to inferior outcomes for apprentices and trainees.

- The off-the-job training component plays a very important role in the overall apprenticeship or traineeship but there are challenges in coordinating it with the on-the-job component, aligning the training and assessment, and ensuring that the off-the-job component accords with what is being learned in the workplace.
- The relevance of the historical apprenticeship model to changing industry, economic and social conditions has been challenged and there is support for alternative models of delivery.



New qualifications and competencies for future oriented TVET: Steering collective action (Volume 1)

Philip Loveder

Published 7 December 2021



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This publication on new qualifications and competencies (NQC) in technical and vocational education and training (TVET, as VET is known in Europe) has been compiled as part of the global Bridging Innovation and Learning in TVET (BILT) project overseen by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and written by Philip Loveder from NCVER.

One of three volumes, this report is written with the macro level or system-level stakeholder in mind. Macro level stakeholders can be any number of bodies with a mandate for collective action in TVET. This primarily covers ministries and statutory bodies with legally assigned duties in the governance of TVET.

Summary of findings

Macro level stakeholders play an essential part in the identification, integration and implementation of New Qualifications and Competencies in TVET. They do this through the provision and dissemination of skills and labour market data and ‘signals’ to the TVET market of the need for new training responses. Through regulation, quality assurance and educational policy settings, they influence their integration into national settings. And, by establishing financial arrangements and structures intended to serve as de facto development or support impulses, they influence their implementation on the ground.

Key messages

- Given their broad perspective on the TVET landscape in each context, macro-level stakeholders can draw upon a wide range of approaches, strategies, and tools to support the identification, integration, and implementation of NQCs in TVET.
- Ensuring TVET systems are ‘future ready’ involves continual evaluation of labour market data and improving the evidence base for the identification of NQCs. Ideally, this should cascade from the national to the local level and include a range of stakeholders from all levels – a coordination role that the macro-level stakeholder is often best placed to play.
- Integrating NQCs into TVET involves a range of approaches (or models) focused on either specific occupations or industries. Alternatively, a ‘cross-cutting’ approach with relevance across the whole workforce or broader society can also be effective. Macro stakeholders play an important role in establishing the framework and governance environment for integrating NQCs and assuring the quality of and confidence in their use.
- The key to measuring the success of NQCs is ultimately in their implementation and impact on the ground and ensuring their sustainability going forward. Macro stakeholders influence this by providing a supportive environment for implementation to happen through funding mechanisms, the introduction of ‘enabling’ or supportive structures or by providing opportunities for professional development or renewal of TVET instructors.

- The governance and responsibility structures in TVET systems need to be ‘optimised’ for the identification, integration, and implementation of NQCs. By their nature, these structures are often complex and require a commitment from the full range of stakeholders and social partners to adapt to the changing need for new skills and competencies. It is the macro-level organizations who are usually in the best position to ensure these conditions are favourable and to establish and sustain effective lines of dialogue across the stakeholder groups.



Engaging more employers in nationally recognised training to develop their workforce

Kaye Bowman & Victor J Callan

Published 9 December 2021



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Australia’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic depends on the ability of employers to fill the skills shortages resulting from lower migration and upturns in economic prosperity associated with ongoing technological change. The national VET system is best placed to support employers to meet these skill needs. However, data from the Survey of Employers’ Use and Views of the VET System show that, prior to the onset of the pandemic, employers’ engagement with the VET system had trended downward over the previous 14 years up until 2019.

This research examined the factors in the current VET environment that influence employers’ decisions when choosing training options, in particular, nationally recognised training. The research is based on interviews with a range of peak stakeholder bodies in late 2020 and early 2021 and of employers between March and June 2021. The employers were selected from five industries with comparatively low engagement with the national VET system in 2019. The research was supported by a review of the most relevant national and international literature.

Summary of findings

Employers train their workforces to improve their businesses, and judge training by its relevance to the skills needs of their workers; its flexibility in fitting in with their business cycles; the expertise of the training provider; and its affordability. These factors are more important to employers than whether the training is nationally recognised. Employers use both nationally and non-nationally recognised training to train their workers. They see these two forms of training as complementary.

Key messages

- Employers train their workforces to improve their businesses. They use both nationally and non-nationally recognised training and view these two forms of training as complementary. The training is judged by its relevance to the skills needs of their workers; its flexibility in fitting in with their business cycles; the expertise of its provider; and its cost. These factors are more important to employers than its recognition status; that is, whether it is nationally recognised or non-nationally recognised training.
- Employers who use nationally recognised training highlight its quality and the ability of RTOs to make assessments against the industry-developed national performance standards in training packages and in accredited courses, and that it is mandated in some instances.
- Nationally recognised training is seen as the logical fit for initial training for entry into the workforce and for upskilling in critical new technical skills, those that need to be formally acknowledged or recorded for certification purposes. The challenge is for RTOs to form closer partnerships with employers to understand their needs more fully and customise the curriculum and training delivery accordingly, including complementing other forms of training.



Promotions, resources and events



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Webinars

NCVER hosted webinars on a broad range of topics relevant to the tertiary education and training sector. The following webinars were presented during 2021, recordings of which are available on the NCVER Portal at www.ncver.edu.au/news-and-events/events/webinar-series.

VOCEDplus 'Expert Search' - What? Why? How? Amazing!

25 March 2021

Presenters: Tracy Gamlin, Research Librarian, Knowledge Management Branch, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

This 40 minute webinar demonstrates the powerful VOCEDplus 'Expert Search'. Learn how to build complex search strings quickly and easily, filter search results to refine and enhance your search results, and speak the language of VOCEDplus for optimal searching.

Getting to know NCVER data and how to access it

3 June 2021

Presenters: Martin Smolka & Nicole O'Malley, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

During this webinar Martin and Nicole discuss the broad range of products and data accessible from NCVER's Portal. They demonstrate how to get started and access data using NCVER's reports and data visualisation tools.

Learn how to:

- Navigate and extract data from digital publications
- Use the DataBuilder to quickly access information and create your own tables.

Attracting industry experts to become VET practitioners: a journey, not a destination



Attracting industry experts to become VET practitioners: a journey, not a destination

8 December 2021

Presenters: Darryl Dymock & Mark Tyler, Griffith University, with Discussant, Ian Curry (AMWU) and Chair, Michelle Circelli (NCVER)

Darryl Dymock and Mark Tyler of Griffith University discuss the findings of their NCVER report 'Attracting industry experts to become VET practitioners: a journey, not a destination'. Followed by Ian Curry providing his views on the findings and a lively Q&A session.



NCVER presentations

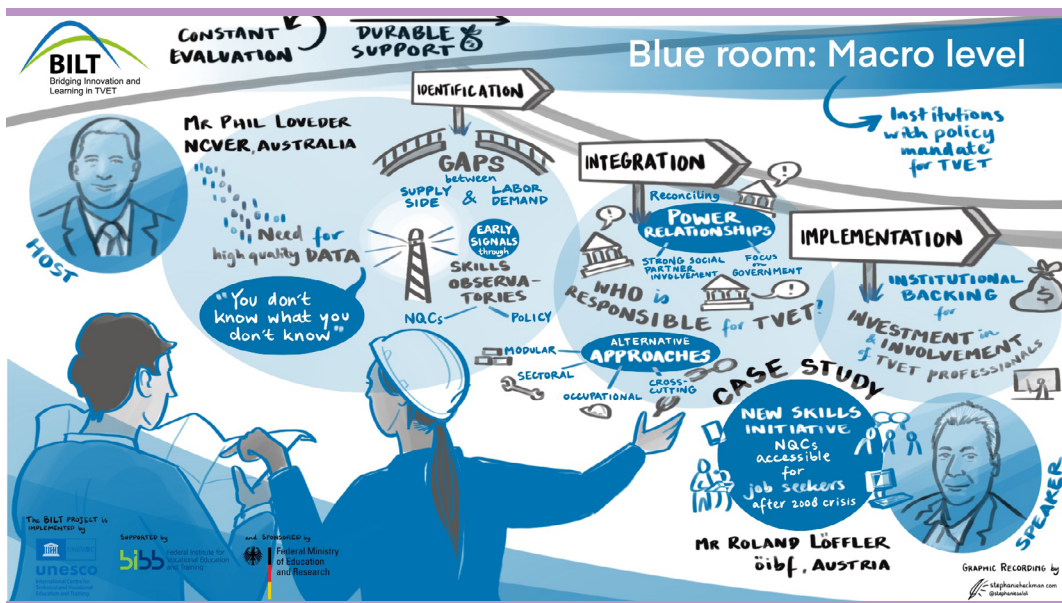
Presenters: Mette Creaser & Joy De Leo
Host: Australian Skills Quality Authority
Topic: NCVER sector insights

Presenter: Tracy Gamlin
Event: VELG members lunch webinar
Host: VELG Training
Topic: VOCEdplus: What's in it for me?

Presenter: Tracy Gamlin
Event: AVETRA Annual Conference 2021
Host: AVETRA
Topic: VOCEdplus: building confidence and skill for practitioners through resource discovery

Presenters: Joy De Leo & Phil Loveder
Event: AVETRA Annual Conference 2021
Host: AVETRA
Topic: Panel Session – Focus on VET research

Presenter: Phil Loveder
Event: Bridging Asia Pacific and Europe: new qualifications and competencies in TVET virtual conference
Host: UNESCO and German Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training
Topic: Providing leadership and guidance for collective action in TVET – The macro level stakeholder



Opening graphic for UNESCO-UNEVOC Building Innovation in Learning and Teaching Global Forum virtual conference hosted by (Mr) Phil Loveder.

Art by Stephanie Heckman

Presenter: Joy De Leo
Host: TAFE National VET Educator Network
Topic: Building capability and quality in VET teachers

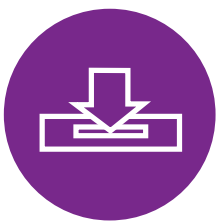
Presenters: Gitta Siekmann & Michelle Circelli
Event: QCEC VET in Schools Forum
Host: Queensland Catholic Education Commission
Topic: Industry's role in VET governance - an international comparison

Presenter: Tracy Gamlin
Event: 2021 Queensland Schools VET Conference
Host: VELG Training
Topic: How using VOCEDplus can build your understanding of VET

Presenter: Simon Walker
Event: 2021 National VET Conference
Host: VELG Training
Topic: VET for secondary school students: trends and destinations

Presenter: Kristen Osborne
Event: 6th International Conference on Employer Engagement
Host: Education and Employers with Edge Foundation UK
Topic: Preparing young people for the future: 'Work-based education in Australian VET'

Presenter: Phil Loveder
Event: UNESCO-UNEVOC Building Innovation in Learning and Teaching Global Forum
Host: UNESCO and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research
Topic: TVET Governance: steering collective action



Submissions

NCVER's submissions to parliamentary inquiries and public consultations are available at ncver.edu.au/news-and-events/submissions/submissions-2021.

Adult literacy and its importance

Submitted to The House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training on 5 March 2021.



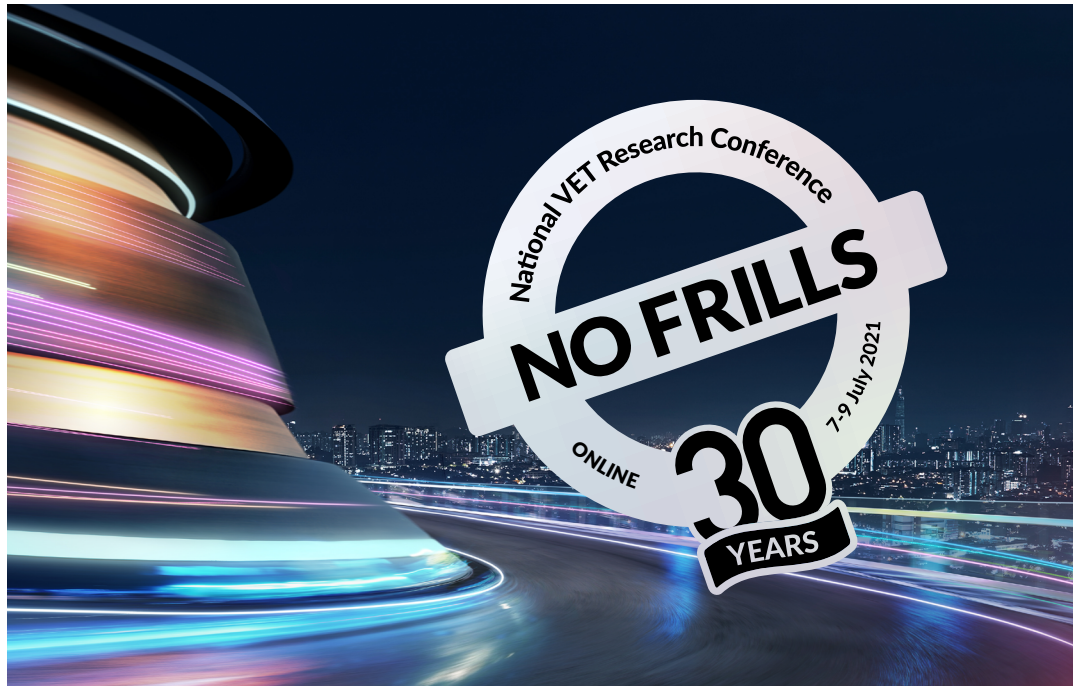
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'NO FRILLS' 2021



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The *National Vocational Education and Training (VET) Research Conference 'No Frills'* is a well-known annual conference where researchers, practitioners, providers and industry representatives come together and share knowledge, ideas, insights and solutions surrounding Australia's VET sector. The conference also provides valuable professional development opportunities through a program of hands-on pre-conference workshops incorporating activities on data and research analytics, and research practice.

The 30th 'No Frills' conference, was hosted online on 7-9 July 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The conference theme **Past informing the future** encouraged us to consider how VET's past might inform its future and to reflect on the lessons and achievements that have the potential to inform progress.

The 'No Frills' 2021 discussion paper Past informing the future (See page 60) reflects on some key developments in VET's past and how they have shaped the sector's approach to enduring issues such as VET's purpose, national harmonisation, and quality. The spotlight on VET post COVID-19 offers an opportunity to consider how the sector might shape its own future, based on learnings from the past.

NCVER's second online conference attracted terrific numbers, with delegates attending from every Australian state and territory, along with 14 international delegates including 10 international presenters/co-presenters.

Presentations

34 presentations on the following topics, as well as one focus session, three keynote presentations, six featured speakers and three live Q&A talk shows.



Keynote speakers



The Hon Stuart Robert MP, Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business, opened the conference and explained that creating jobs, generating economic opportunities, and boosting the skills of works are at the very heart of the government's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.



▲ WATCH



Dr Borhene Chakroun, UNESCO-HQ, discussed whether reading the past is sufficient to write the future in his keynote address *Reading the past, writing the future: skills for recovery and reimagining work and life*.



Well-known Australian demographer and social researcher **Dr Liz Allen** shared her personal story about the powerful and transformative role that education and training plays in addressing systemic disadvantage.



▲ WATCH



National Skills Commissioner **Adam Boyton** spoke about skills needs, the labour market and VET pricing & performance.



▲ WATCH



Steve Davis, Principal, Creative Director, Talked About Marketing, interviewed a collection of featured presenters during three live Q&A sessions at 'No Frills'.

Topics covered during these lively discussions include delivering future-focused education and training with, and in industry; understanding employers training choices; and VET and work life learning pathways.



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◀ View the conference presentations

Presentations from the 30th National VET Research Conference 'No Frills' are available on VOCEDplus, NCVET's international tertiary education research database.



‘NO FRILLS’ discussion paper

Past informing the future

Joanne Waugh, NCVER

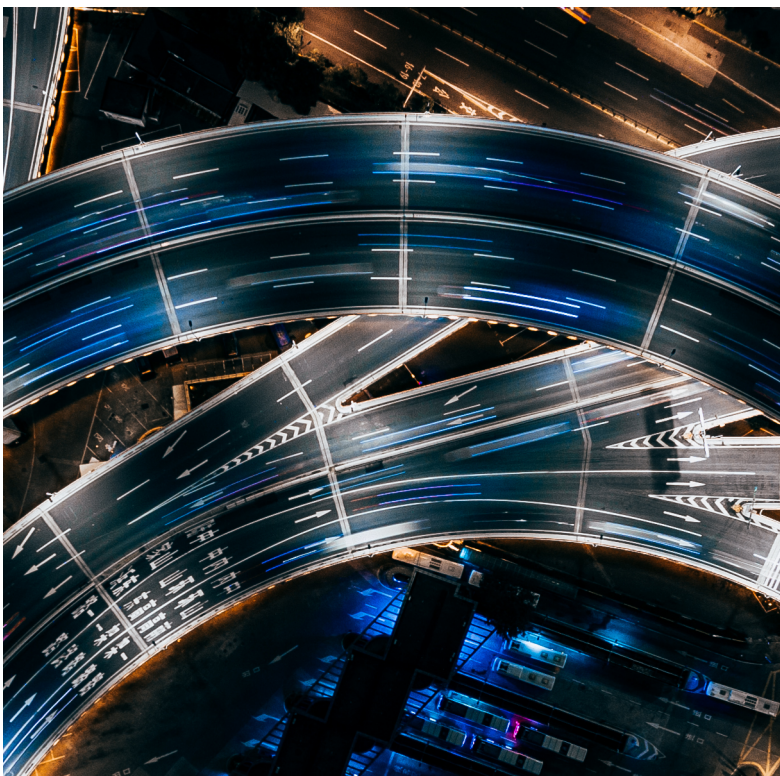
Published 30 June 2021



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Our past informs our future. It achieves this in two ways: first, by providing the context in which we make decisions, and, second, by delivering the various experiences that enable us to discover what does and does not work. As the Australian vocational education and training (VET) system has evolved, the institutional structures and frameworks that are now in place may determine the direction of its next turn, while our willingness to learn from past experiences will dictate whether it will turn at all.

Past informing the future was the theme for the 2021 ‘No Frills’ Conference — a conference that was held online, because if we had learned anything from 2020, it was that the freedom to travel is no longer guaranteed.



NCVER asked presenters to consider how VET’s past might inform its future and to reflect on the lessons and achievements that have the potential to inform progress. Over 30 landmark reports on VET published since 1981 provide evidence of a desire to understand the past and what may be learned from it. In some instances, change arising from those reviews has somehow seemed too much, while, in others, not enough. That said, it is worth reflecting on a number



of the past achievements before considering those aspects of VET's history that seem to repeat themselves. Generally, VET system reforms have been based on an analysis of past practices and represent attempts to both enhance policy and practice and address perceived failings in the system. Nevertheless, issues remain.

In 2009, Skills Australia's publication *Foundations for the future* pinpointed the 'complex governance roles and relationships' as one factor that would prevent VET reaching its skilling potential (Skills Australia 2009, p.2).

A 2008 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on Australia's VET system commended the high employer engagement in the system and its flexibility, both of which facilitated innovation, but viewed the system as challenged as a consequence of its poor use of skills forecasting and inefficiencies in training package development. The 2005 Skilling Australia report called quality 'our highest priority' (Department of Education, Science and Training 2005, p.18). The 2008 Bradley review found that funding in higher education (which included VET) 'lacks a clear rationale or purpose' (p.146), and that governments were not 'appropriately recognising the levels of support required' for the diverse student profile (Bradley et al. 2008, p.39).

In 2021, all of these issues remain salient. This conference paper briefly explores these enduring issues in the VET system to review what can be learned from the past to prepare the system for what may lie ahead.



Podcasts



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‘Vocational Voices’, is the official podcast of the NCVER. Join host and broadcast journalist Steve Davis and NCVER Managing Director Simon Walker and listen to leading experts discuss current trends in VET.

Listen, follow and subscribe via your favourite podcast apps.



Season 6

S6 Ep 5 - Best of 2021: highlights from Season 6

Speakers: Steve Davis, Simon Walker, Linda Simon, Martin Powell, Kira Clarke, Joanne Waugh, Bryan Palmer, Professor John Buchanan, Megan Lilly, Dr Kaye Bowman, Michael Hartman, Dr Martha Kinsman and Professor Stephen Billett

Published on 9 December 2021

In 2021, we invited expert vocational voices from the VET sector to share their views, stories, experiences and insights on a range of hot topics.

'Best of 2021' is a roundup of interesting snippets and research findings from across the four podcast episodes we released during the year. Full of short and sharp insights from each of our guest speakers, we cover off some of the best bits of Season 6.



◀ TRANSCRIPT

S6 Ep 4 - Past informing the future

Speakers: Steve Davis, 'No Frills' 2021 featured speakers

Published on 12 August 2021

Steve Davis interviews a collection of presenters from three panel discussions at the *30th National VET Research Conference 'No Frills'*, held on 7-9 July 2021.

Topics covered in the lively discussion include future-focused education and training delivered with, and in, industry; the 'futures' of work; understanding employers' training choices; and what is a VET system fit for the future?

Speakers are Professor John Buchanan, The University of Sydney; Ms Megan Lilly, Australian Industry Group; Dr Kaye Bowman, Callan Consulting Group; Mr Michael Hartman, Skills Impact; Dr Martha Kinsman, Australian National University; and Professor Stephen Billett, Griffith University.



◀ TRANSCRIPT

S6 Ep 3 - The role of micro-credentials in VET

Speakers: Steve Davis, Simon Walker & Bryan Palmer

Published on 3 June 2021

Short-course training, often referred to as 'micro-credentials', is seen as an increasingly important form of training, particularly as governments respond to the social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Steve Davis talks to Bryan Palmer, Private Consultant and author of *An analysis of micro-credentials in VET*, and Simon Walker, Managing Director, NCVET about the different interpretations and definitions of a micro-credential, why so many students pursue enrolments in subjects not part of a nationally recognised program, and why a majority of activity in this space is privately funded.

The discussion largely draws from *An analysis of micro-credentials in VET* (www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/an-analysis-of-micro-credentials-in-vet).



◀ TRANSCRIPT

S6 Ep 2 - VET's role in youth unemployment recovery

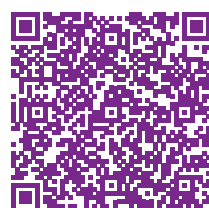
Speakers: Steve Davis, Simon Walker, Joanne Waugh & Kira Clarke

Published on 13 May 2021

Youth unemployment post-COVID is an all-hands-on-deck challenge. For young people who have lost work or have been looking for work, post-COVID recovery is going to be a fraught time if Australia doesn't take a well-structured pathway to recovery.

Join Steve Davis as he talks to Kira Clarke, Senior Research Fellow at the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Jo Waugh, Senior Research Officer, NCVET and Simon Walker, Managing Director, NCVET about the role the VET sector can and should play in the process. They discuss why vocational pathways in schools, work-based training, and career guidance are critical to youth employability, especially for disadvantaged people.

The discussion refers to research *What VET can offer to COVID-19 youth unemployment recovery* (www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/what-vet-can-offer-to-covid-19-youth-unemployment-recovery).



◀ TRANSCRIPT

Steve Davis (left) and Simon Walker (right) recording episode 1 of the sixth season of Vocational Voices.



S6 Ep 1 - Quality of VET teaching: perceptions and realities

Speakers: Steve Davis, Simon Walker, Linda Simon & Martin Powell

Published on 16 March 2021

Should we be concerned about the quality of VET teaching? Recent research suggests there are key issues affecting the quality of VET teaching that need to be addressed. These include entry level requirements, limited career pathways, workforce casualisation, and lack of support for professional development.

Steve Davis talks to NCVET Managing Director, Simon Walker, Educationalist and Researcher, Linda Simon and VET Development Centre CEO, Martin Powell about what helps build capability and quality in VET teaching.



◀ TRANSCRIPT



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Seasons 1-5

Seasons 1-5 is a full back catalogue of 28 episodes recorded prior to 2021. Visit the NCVET Portal for more information.



VOCEDplus



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In 2021, 3 413 new titles were added to VOCEDplus, NCVER's free international research database for tertiary education relating to workforce needs, skills development, and social inclusion. Taking the total number of items in VOCEDplus at the end of the year to 90 593.

Over 462 264 users from 231 countries visited VOCEDplus 584 014 times, viewing 964 989 pages and conducting 38 377 unique searches.

2021 Activity



231
COUNTRIES



3 413
NEW TITLES



38 377
UNIQUE SEARCHES



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TOTAL ITEMS IN
VOCEDplus



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VISITS TO VOCEDplus



964 989
TOTAL PAGE VIEWS



VET Knowledge Bank



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VET Knowledge Bank

The VET Knowledge Bank contains a suite of products capturing Australia's diverse, complex and ever-changing vocational education and training (VET) system.

It aims to provide a collected memory of VET reference information.

The VET Knowledge Bank is a living, growing resource that NCVET continues to develop and update on an ongoing basis.



Getting to know VET

Get a broad overview of different aspects of the VET system in Australia.



Policy initiatives

View a timeline of VET policies, programs and initiatives covering the last 23 years.



Governance and funding

Access information about who governs and regulates VET in Australia.



Glossary of VET

Understand the terms and acronyms used in Australian VET.



History of VET

Trace the story of VET in Australia through timelines and key publications.



Landmark documents

Explore the evolution of VET in Australia through landmark documents and historical overviews.



Organisations and resources

Discover key Australian research organisations and useful VET resources.



Further reading

Read the main information sources consulted in developing the VET Knowledge Bank.

The VET Knowledge Bank is a living, growing resource that aims to be a memory bank of reference information for the vocational education and training system in Australia. Through a suite of complementary products, it captures Australia's diverse, complex and ever-changing sectoral landscape. It contributes to an understanding of Australia's training system and provides access to historical and current information such as milestones in the history of VET; information about government departments, ministers and committees responsible for skills and training, and state and territory training authorities; and provides highlights from federal, state and territory budgets that relate to skills and training.



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Policy Initiatives

The Policy initiatives section has been expanded to now include not only the Timeline of Australian VET policy initiatives 1998-2021, but also information related to



Policy initiatives

<p>Policy initiatives timeline</p> <p>The <i>Timeline of Australian VET policy initiatives 1998-2020</i> presents 23 years of the national, state and territory programs, policy initiatives and economic events.</p> <p>Access the timeline</p>	<p>Program delivery</p> <p>An introduction to national, state and territory skills lists, apprenticeships, skills recognition, equity, career guidance and VET delivered to secondary students.</p> <p>Access the programs</p>	<p>Government bodies</p> <p>Authorities, bodies, entities and agencies established under statute by the state and territory governments to support the training system.</p> <p>Access the list</p>
<p>Budget highlights</p> <p>Overviews of funding allocations that relate to skills and training announced each year in the Commonwealth, state and territory budgets.</p> <p>Access the budgets</p>	<p>COVID-19 announcements</p> <p>The measures introduced by the Australian, state and territory governments to mitigate the impact of, and promote the economic recovery from, the pandemic.</p> <p>Access the announcements</p>	<p>Inquiries and reviews</p> <p>A collection of inquiries initiated by the Australian, state and territory governments on aspects of the VET sector with links to the publications in VOCEDplus.</p> <p>Access the list</p>

- implementation of key VET programs by jurisdiction - an introduction to national, state and territory skills lists, apprenticeships, skills recognition, equity, career guidance and VET delivered to secondary students
- government bodies that support the VET sector - authorities, bodies, entities and agencies established under statute by the state and territory governments to support the training system

- government inquiries and reviews - a collection of inquiries initiated by the Australian, state and territory governments on aspects of the VET sector with links to the publications in VOCEDplus
- policy initiatives announced in response to COVID-19 - the measures introduced by the Australian, state and territory governments to mitigate the impact of, and promote the economic recovery from, the pandemic
- federal, state and territory budgets - overviews of funding allocations that relate to skills and training announced each year in the Commonwealth, state and territory budgets.



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Governance and regulation

Governance of Australia's vocational education and training (VET) sector is through a network of Commonwealth and state and territory governments. In the wake of COVID-19, a new governance structure was put in place which saw the cessation of the COAG Skills Council and the formation of the Skills National Cabinet Reform Committee. To reflect these changes a new chart was developed and added to the VET Knowledge Bank to outline the current governance and regulatory bodies.



Focus on

The Focus on pages offer up-to-date quality information on a topic that is currently important in the sector. The pages present research analysis, policy, commentary, multimedia and statistics that introduce the topic and provide a guide to key resources.

In 2021, the two Focus on releases were:



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- **Focus on COVID-19 and online learning in VET**

The COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, and resulting social distancing measures and 'lockdowns', greatly impacted the provision of vocational education and training (VET) internationally. Almost overnight, teaching and training in-person ceased and had to be delivered online to students in their homes, forcing VET training providers to act quickly and be innovative in their training delivery. The International Labour Office report *Skills development in the time of COVID-19: taking stock of the initial responses in technical and vocational education and training*, highlights the main challenges faced by international VET training providers and identifies emerging innovations in switching from face-to-face to online teaching and learning.

While a previous issue of Focus on, published in late 2020, provided insight into research and policy addressing the impact of COVID-19 on education and training internationally, this issue focused specifically on recent research exploring the impact COVID-19 has had on the delivery of online learning in the VET sector.



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- **Focus on skilled migration**

Skilled migration is one of the policy levers available to governments to address workforce shortages in the economy. This issue of Focus on explores how skilled migration is utilised by governments globally to address skill and labour shortages; how effective policies and procedures that recognise and validate qualifications and credentials gained overseas can facilitate the integration of skilled migrants and refugees in destination labour markets; and the impact the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had on skilled migration around the world.



Current research

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CURRENT RESEARCH BEING
CONDUCTED BY NCVER



Research Messages

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PREVIOUS EDITIONS



Acknowledgement of Country

NCVER acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continued spiritual connection to land. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors/project teams and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government or state and territory governments.

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