



Responding to psychosocial needs of learners

**Resources for VET teachers
and training providers**

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Purpose

This guide presents a range of resources that have been identified by VET educators as valuable for building confidence and capability in recognising learner support needs, responding appropriately and connecting learners with specialised support.



Supporting needs of learners

Psychosocial support is now a core part of the teaching environment

Psychosocial factors refer to the emotional, social, psychological and environmental needs and challenges that influence a learner's wellbeing, sense of safety, and ability to participate in and successfully engage with vocational education and training.

Teachers are increasingly working with students who face a range of barriers to learning, including mental health challenges, behavioural issues, low motivation, literacy and learning readiness needs and broader wellbeing concerns. These challenges can affect both individual learners and the wider learning environment.

As a result, teachers need access to resources and professional learning that enables them to respond to psychosocial challenges while supporting student engagement and learning.



Supporting needs of learners (cont)



Mental Health

Build foundational skills to recognise, support and refer learners experiencing mental health challenges.



Government Resources, Relevant Standards & Codes of Practice

Relevant standards, codes of practice and regulatory guidance related to psychosocial health and safety, and work health and safety.



Pedagogical Models and Teaching Practices

Teaching approaches that promote connection, inclusion, engagement and learner wellbeing.



In-house Resources and Initiatives

Internal programs, wellbeing teams, employee assistance programs and organisational initiatives.



Neurodiversity Resources and Professional Learning Opportunities

Resources and professional development activities to build understanding and inclusive practice for neurodivergent learners.



Disability and Accessibility Resources and Training

Training and tools to support accessibility and inclusive learning environments.



Trauma Informed Practice and Wellbeing

Resources and strategies to create safe, supportive and empowering learning spaces.



Cultural Safety, First Nations and Cultural Diversity

Culturally informed approaches and professional development activities to respect and respond to diverse backgrounds and experiences.



Useful Resources from the school and Higher Education Sector

Useful resources and strategies adapted from the school and higher education settings can be applied in VET contexts.



Higher Level Qualifications

Formal qualifications to deepen knowledge and practice in psychosocial support and education.



Authors and Facilitators

Experts, authors and facilitators in the psychosocial and wellbeing space.



Self-directed Learning, Prior Knowledge, Prior Work Experience, Prior Education Experience and Informal Practices

Valuable learning from lived experience, prior roles, study and informal practices.



Learning from Peers and Networks

Sharing, collaborations and communities of practice to learn together and support each other.



Communication Skills Focused Professional Development Activities

Professional learning to strengthen communication, active listening, empathetic conversations and relationship-building skills.



Emotional Intelligence and self-awareness training

Building emotional intelligence and self-awareness helps educators strengthen relationships, navigate challenges and respond to learner needs with confidence and empathy.



About this document

The professional learning resources and ideas listed below were recommended by VET teachers and other VET professionals who participated in the research project *Strengthening Teaching Practice and Psychosocial Support*.

In some areas, participants identified specific resources, and links to these have been provided. In others, suggestions were more general in nature, and users may need to identify resources best suited to their teaching context and professional learning needs.

Where available, quotes from research participants have been included to provide context and explain why particular resources or approaches were recommended.

This guide is intended as an informational resource and is not exhaustive. While additional examples have been included where participants identified broad topic areas, there may be other relevant resources available.

The inclusion of a resource does not constitute endorsement by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) or the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). NCVER and DEWR are not responsible for the content of external resources and cannot guarantee that the information provided is accurate, complete or current.





Useful Resources



In-house resources and initiatives

Training provider-based support can play an important role in building educators' confidence and capability to respond appropriately to the psychosocial needs of learners. While not all of the approaches below will be feasible in every training provider, they may be useful options to consider.

Examples of in-house support, resources and professional learning opportunities include:

- Access to specialist staff, such as counsellors and student support services, for advice and referral pathways
- Professional learning opportunities on topics such as access and inclusion, neurodiversity, mental health first aid, trauma-informed practice, emotional intelligence and self-awareness
- Involving teachers in action learning projects that explore and address classroom challenges
- Engaging external experts to strengthen the knowledge, confidence and capability of teachers and support staff in responding to learner psychosocial needs
- Including professional learning as a regular agenda item in team meetings to share experiences, discuss challenges and exchange practical teaching strategies
- Compiling a list of local support services (connecting with local councils for information)



Useful Resources (cont)



Mental health

Mental health first aid training (MHFA) was highlighted by research participants as useful in responding to psychosocial challenges in VET. Such training can help teachers develop the skills and confidence to recognise signs that a learner may be experiencing psychosocial challenges, and to respond appropriately. It provides practical strategies for having supportive conversations, maintaining professional boundaries and connecting learners with appropriate support services when needed.

A range of organisations offer Mental Health First Aid training. Training providers and individual teachers should explore the available options and select training that best meets their needs, context and learner cohort.

Quotes from research participants regarding mental health first aid training:

Mental health First Aid would be the key resource. ... and as such there isn't as much in this space as there could be. (Workshop participant, SA)

I'm a new teacher and haven't had much opportunity yet to explore this other than TAE training. I'm hoping to explore more in this area particularly, mental health first aid training. (Workshop participant, Tas.)

Youth Mental Health First Aid should be run as a mandatory PD, face to face, section by section. ... This course was the best course I have been to ... (Survey respondent).

Research participants also identified the following training as helpful:

- [Accidental Counsellor Foundations](#) - a practical mental health and communication training program designed for people who may need to support someone in crisis, distress, or emotional difficulty — even if they are not qualified counsellors. It teaches core skills such as active listening, empathy, conflict management, responding to challenging behaviours, professional boundaries, and self-care.

- [Mindarma](#) - an Australian workplace mental health and resilience training organisation.

- [Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training \(ASIST\)](#)

The following organisations were identified as useful sources of information, training and support for VET teachers, and as referral pathways for learners who may require additional assistance.

- [Lifeline](#) – A national organisation providing all Australians experiencing emotional distress with access to 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services.
- [Black Dog Institute](#) - An Australian not-for-profit mental health research institute affiliated with UNSW Sydney. It focuses on understanding, preventing, and treating mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and suicide risk through research, clinical services, education, and digital mental health tools.
- [Headspace](#) - Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation, providing early intervention support for young people aged 12–25.
- [Beyond Blue](#) - A key Australian not-for-profit mental health organisation that provides information, support, and advocacy for people experiencing anxiety, depression, suicide-related concerns, and other mental health challenges.
- [MOST](#) - A free, evidence-based digital mental health service for young people aged 15 to 25, developed by Orygen, Australia's centre of excellence in youth mental health. Supported by Australian Government funding, MOST is now available nationally without referral.

The following websites provide resources to support training providers in promoting and responding to the mental health and wellbeing of VET students:

- [Department of Employment and Workplace Relations – Resources to support VET students' mental health and wellbeing](#)
- [Australian Disability and Clearinghouse on Education and Training – Mental health conditions](#)

Useful Resources (cont)



Government resources, relevant standards and codes of practice

The following resources provide information, guidance and professional learning opportunities offered by government agencies and regulatory bodies. They cover areas such as psychosocial hazards, workplace health and safety, compliance requirements, codes of practice and broader guidance relevant to supporting learners and educators.

- [Safe Work SA – managing psychosocial hazards at work – code of practice 2026](#)
- [SafeWork NSW – Psychological health and safety strategy 2024 - 2026](#)
- [Worksafe Tasmania – Managing psychosocial hazards at work](#)
- [WorkSafe ACT](#)
- [NT WorkSafe](#)
- [WorkSafe Victoria](#)
- [WorkSafe Queensland](#)
- [WorkSafe WA](#)
- [Mentally healthy workplaces Australia](#)
- [Department of Employment and Workplace Relations – Resources for training providers](#)
- [ASQA - Guidance and resources for providers](#)
- [Training Accreditation Council \(TAC\) policies and guidelines](#)

- [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority \(VRQA\), regulatory information to help RTOs comply with the Child Safe standards](#)
- [Department for Education, Children and Young People \(Tasmanian Government\), information to help RTOs in assisting young people](#)

Training providers' workplace health and safety (WHS) policies and procedures can be an important source of guidance and support. Teachers may also benefit from accessing broader WHS information and professional learning opportunities, including:

- WHS websites and online resources
- WHS short courses and training programs
- Professional development to update or strengthen WHS knowledge and qualifications



Useful Resources (cont)



Pedagogical models and teaching practices

Creating inclusive, supportive and engaging learning environments can help all learners succeed, including those experiencing psychosocial challenges. The following resources provide practical guidance and strategies for strengthening teaching practice:

- [Universal Design for Learning](#)
- Resources on high impact teaching strategies for professional teaching practice, for example, [the High impact teaching strategies](#) resource by the Victoria Department of Education and Training

'An introduction to high impact teaching strategies for professional teaching practice', is an amazing opportunity to learn new techniques and strategies, I would recommend all teachers/educators to attend this training (Survey respondent)



Trauma-informed practice and wellbeing training

The following resources can help educators understand how trauma may affect learning, behaviour and engagement, and provide practical guidance on creating safe, supportive and trauma-informed learning environments:

- [Berry Street Education Model](#)
- [Phoenix Australia Trauma training](#)
- [We Al-li – culturally informed Trauma Integrated Healing Approach \(CITIHA\)](#)
- [Center for adolescent studies resources](#)
- [The NSW Services for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors \(STARTTS\)](#)
- [DVassist - Responding to difficult situations and trauma-informed de-escalation](#)
- Webinars on trauma informed practice



Useful Resources (cont)



Neurodiversity resources and professional learning opportunities

As learner diversity continues to increase, there is growing recognition of the importance of understanding and supporting neurodivergent learners. Resources and professional learning opportunities that build knowledge of neurodiversity and provide practical strategies for creating inclusive learning environments were identified by participants as particularly valuable.

Examples of resources, webinars and professional learning opportunities include:

- [ADHD Assist – Australia's ADHD resource library](#)
- [AKO Aotearoa dyslexia resources](#)
- [Autism SA resources](#)
- [Speech Pathology Australia resources](#)
- [Neurodiversity 101](#) – a weekly LinkedIn newsletter by Prof. Amanda Kirby that explores topics such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, education, employment and inclusion in practical, easy-to-understand language. It combines research, professional experience and real-world strategies to support greater understanding of neurodiversity.
- Neurodiversity-focused webinars and workshops focused on navigating neurodiversity, learner wellbeing and enhancing teaching and assessment practices for neurodivergent learners in VET, delivered by organisations such as:
 - ◊ [VET Development Centre \(VDC\)](#)
 - ◊ [VELG](#)
- [Neurodiversity for educators – an online e-learning course](#) developed by Prof. Amanda Kirby

Teachers and training providers may also wish to attend conferences and events focused on neurodiversity and neurodevelopmental conditions, such as:

- [My spirited child - ADHD conference](#)
- [ADHD WA Conference](#)
- [Australian Conference on Neurodevelopmental Disorders \(ACND\)](#)
- [Neurodivergence Wellbeing Conference](#)

Useful Resources (cont)



Disability and accessibility resources and training

The following resources and professional learning opportunities can help educators better understand disability, accessibility and inclusion, and support them to reduce barriers to participation and success for learners:

- [Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training \(ADCET\) resources](#)
- [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\) resources](#)
- [Department of Employment and Workplace Relations – Practice guide – reasonable adjustments](#)
- Webinars and professional learning focused on disability and accessibility training (example provided by research participant – VDC webinar: [deafConnectEd: practical strategies for teachers with learners who are deaf or hard of hearing](#))



Cultural safety, First Nations and cultural diversity

Developing culturally responsive teaching practices requires ongoing learning and reflection. Educators and training providers can build their knowledge and capability through activities such as:

- Learning First Nations languages
- Working alongside Indigenous co-teachers in the classroom
- Cross-cultural training with Indigenous trainers
- Participating in Aboriginal 8 ways learning training
- Accessing resources from cultural resource centres
- [Geert Hofstede – The 6-D model of national culture](#)
- Engaging in relevant webinars and professional development activities



Useful Resources (cont)



Emotional intelligence and self-awareness training

Developing emotional intelligence and self-awareness can help educators build positive relationships, navigate challenging situations and respond to learner needs with confidence and empathy. Examples included emotional intelligence and self-awareness workshops such as:

- DISC behaviour profiling (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness & Conscientiousness) and communication styles training
- [Society of Actuaries \(SOA\) – Emotional intelligence training](#)

Participants also highlighted resources focused on emotional regulation and self-management, including resources developed for the school sector, as useful for strengthening self-awareness and understanding of how emotions can influence behaviour and learning.

In addition, the unit Develop and use emotional intelligence (BSBP502), included in the Diploma of Vocational Education and Training (TAE50122), was identified as a useful resource for building emotional intelligence and self-awareness.



Useful resources from the school and higher education sector

Resources and ideas from beyond the VET sector were found valuable by the research participants. Resources developed for school and higher education settings can provide useful insights into learner wellbeing, inclusion, engagement and support that may be adapted for VET contexts.

- School-based resources (including primary school) that support emotional regulation, self-management and social-emotional learning
- Qualifications and training in school education support, such as the Certificate III or Certificate IV in School Based Education Support
- [Psychology, Education and Neuroscience \(PEN\) Principles](#) - resources developed by the Science of Learning Research Centre (SLRC), University of Queensland, for use by students, educators, and parents. The principles draw on research from neuroscience, psychology and education to support effective learning and teaching practices.
- [Supporting university students with mental health condition](#) - this is a free online professional development course that provides educators and university staff with knowledge and practical strategies for supporting students experiencing mental health challenges and promoting wellbeing within higher education settings.
- [Big picture education Australia](#) - a non-profit company whose core business is the transformation of education through an innovative design for learning and schools in a range of urban, regional and remote settings around Australia. Their design for learning puts students at the centre of decisions around what, how, and when they learn.
- [SMART work design](#) - Centre for transformative Work Design, Curtin University Research participant quote: *applicable to psychosocial but also applied to all processes e.g. performance change architecture instead of management. Proactive positive language and planning for future prospects rather than reactive band-aiding of existing practices or trying to fix after damage done. (Workshop participant, Qld)*

Useful Resources (cont)



Higher level qualifications

Higher-level qualifications and advanced study can provide opportunities for educators to build specialised knowledge and skills for supporting learners, including those experiencing psychosocial challenges. Participants identified a range of qualifications and areas of study that may be valuable, including higher-level qualifications in their vocational field, as well as qualifications focused on teaching, learner support, mental health and leadership, such as:

- Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education
- Bachelor of Adult Applied Learning
- Diploma of Vocational Education and Training
- Diploma in Adult Education and Training
- Graduate Certificate in Family Violence Prevention & Practice
- Post graduate certificates in mental health and neurodiversity
- Diploma of Counselling
- Diploma in VET Leadership
- Master of Education (Special Education)



Useful authors and facilitators

The following authors, researchers and educators—identified by the research participants—share practical ideas, evidence-based approaches and professional learning resources that may help educators create engaging, inclusive and supportive learning environments:

- [Bill Rogers](#)
- [Michelle McQuaid](#)
- [Denise Cox](#)
- [Helen Timpefey](#)
- [Kay Schlesinger](#)
- [Dan Pronk](#)
- [Billy Garvey](#)
- [Viviane Robinson](#)
- [Doug Lemov - Teach Like a Champion](#)
- [Tom Bernet \(Running the room\)](#)
- [Barrie Bennett \(Instructional intelligence and classroom management\)](#)
- [Glen Pearsall and Natasha Harris \(Tilting your teaching: 7 simple shifts that can substantially improve student learning\)](#)
- [Feren Yen – Australian Trauma Education Centre \(ATEC\)](#)
- [Andrew Fuller](#)
- [Maggie Dent](#)
- [Gina Rippon](#)

Useful Resources (cont)



Other useful resources

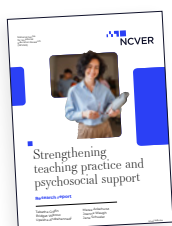
In addition to the professional learning opportunities and resources provided in the above sections, the following organisations, programs and resources can further support educators in responding to diverse learner needs:

- [The VET and ACE Educator Hub](#) – A dedicated digital hub, by Skills SA, supporting the VET and adult community education (ACE) workforce. This resource hub provides detailed information on professional development opportunities, scholarships, grants, success stories and other valuable resources for educators at all stages of their careers. This includes industry professionals interested in supporting VET in their current roles or transitioning into VET education, early career educators, experienced practitioners, and specialist or lead educators recognised for their expertise and contribution to the development of others.
- [VOCED+ VET practitioner resource](#) - The VET Practitioner Resource provides links to a range of information sources and professional development opportunities designed to support vocational education and training (VET) practitioners in their teaching and assessment practice. Resources are provided in the following categories: teaching and learning concepts, meeting student needs, modes of delivery, teaching and learning contexts, assessment, and professional development.
- [Community Early Learning Australia Professional Development](#) - is a not-for-profit peak body that represents and supports Australia's early childhood education and care sector.
- [DV-alert](#) - a nationally recognised training program with training and assessment delivered by Lifeline Australia and approved third parties on behalf of Lifeline Australia. The program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services as a key initiative under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.
- [Ask Izzy](#) - A free Australian online service directory that helps people find nearby support services for issues such as housing, food, mental health, domestic violence, money problems, healthcare, and counselling.
- [Webinars conducted by Skills Education](#) - an Australian professional development and training organisation that supports educators, trainers, assessors, and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) working in the vocational education and training (VET) sector
- [High impact wellbeing strategies – resource developed by Monash University in collaboration with the Department of Education, Victoria](#)
- Participating in LGBTQIA+ awareness workshops

Information and additional resources

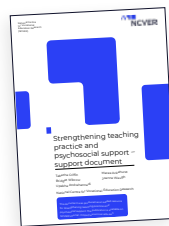
This practice guide is one of several resources developed through the research project *Strengthening Teaching Practice and Psychosocial Support*. The project involved extensive consultation with VET teachers and other VET professionals through a national survey, semi-structured interviews, and workshops conducted across Australia.

These activities informed a suite of practical resources for VET teachers and training providers.



Strengthening teaching practice and psychosocial support: Research report

Research findings on teaching practice and psychosocial challenges in the VET sector.



Strengthening teaching practice and psychosocial support: Support document

Includes some additional supporting evidence related to professional development and the importance of psychosocial support for teachers, as well as the initial literature review.



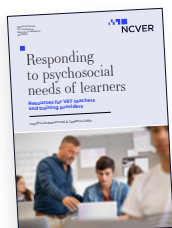
Strengthening teaching practices in VET: Research summary

Summarises the research related to strengthening teaching practices in VET.



Understanding psychosocial challenges and support in VET: Research summary

Summarises the research related to the teacher experience of psychosocial challenges and how teachers can support psychosocial needs.



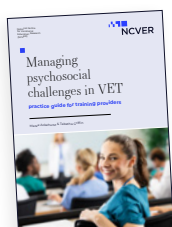
Responding to psychosocial needs of learners: Resources for VET teachers and training providers

Resources to support VET teachers in recognising, responding to and referring learners for specialised support.



From competence to confidence: Practice guide for supporting novice teachers in VET + Quick reference guide

Key conditions and strategies for supporting novice teachers as they develop in their teaching roles.



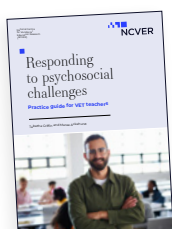
Managing psychosocial challenges in VET: Practice guide for training providers + Quick reference guide

Practical advice for training providers on supporting psychosocial needs in learners and teacher wellbeing.



Developing the educator mindset in VET: Practice guide + Quick reference guide

Explores the importance of developing and sustaining an educator mindset in VET.



Responding to psychosocial challenges: Practice guide for VET teachers + Quick reference guide

A guide for VET teachers on recognising, responding to and supporting learners experiencing psychosocial challenges.



From professional learning to practice for VET teachers: Practice guide + Quick reference guide

Effective approaches for embedding new teaching skills and sustaining improvements in practice.



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