

Joint Ministerial Statement on Vocational Education and Training in Schools



Background

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools was first introduced in Western Australia in 1997 as an alternative pathway to mainstream academic schooling that catered for small numbers of students who were at risk of disengaging with school or likely to enter employment or further training. Since then, VET in Schools programs have grown to become a significant and well subscribed pathway for senior secondary students.

The changes to the school leaving age between 2006 and 2008 resulted in an increased demand for alternative pathways for senior secondary school students and saw the emergence of three clear student cohorts likely to pursue a VET in Schools program.



These three cohorts can be categorised broadly as:

- students who traditionally enrol in a general education pathway in the senior secondary years which incorporates a qualification and would have left school and gone directly into a training institution or employment prior to the changes to the school leaving age;
- students who traditionally remain at school in a general education pathway until the end of Year 12 but without qualifications or a clear pathway to either further education, training or employment; and
- students who traditionally are university bound but wish to include qualifications to enhance their studies and build skills for employment.

The resulting expansion of VET in Schools has provided more students with the opportunity to commence qualifications while still enrolled in secondary school. The increasing student demand has, in turn, seen exponential growth in the number of registered training organisations (RTOs) working with schools, the number of teachers gaining the VET qualifications required to meet the national delivery standards and the range of qualifications available to school students.

The rapid expansion of VET in Schools has, however, not been adequately supported with the provision of a clear strategic direction which takes account of the specific needs of the identified cohorts as well as the complexities around changing national and State VET policies and directions.

With the adoption of changes to the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) from 2015, there is a need to reconceptualise the value that VET qualifications have for students in the senior secondary years, within a State policy framework for VET in Schools.

Strategic direction

The purpose of this Joint Ministerial Statement on VET in Schools is to:

- set a clear strategic direction in response to the WACE reforms which affirms the importance of VET in Schools as a valuable pathway for students during their senior secondary years; and
- provide strategic direction in how to best meet the needs of students undertaking VET qualifications in the senior secondary years.

The attributes considered essential for a quality VET in Schools program are:

- they should inspire confidence that students participating in the program are on a meaningful pathway to further education, training and/or employment;
- students should be able to choose from a range of vocational programs that suit their needs and aspirations; and
- employers and industry should feel confident that students who have completed VET in Schools programs will have credible industry skills and knowledge to assist them transition into further education, training and/or employment.

These attributes are better achieved when the training sector, together with the education system/sectors, work collaboratively to make clear the policies, guidelines and available resources for VET in Schools programs. Effective partnerships between schools and their RTOs and local employers to provide quality VET programs for students require a genuine commitment as well as ensuring the required industry standards are met.



Perspectives on VET in Schools

Student perspectives

While it is recognised that students will select a senior school pathway that is commensurate with their interests, skills and abilities, the changes to the WACE will increasingly see students select an educational pathway that leads to eligibility to university and/or further training. For students on a training pathway to achieve their WACE, they will be required to complete a Certificate II or higher qualification.

Key principles considered important for student decision making about their intended educational and career pathways include:

- The ability for students to undertake VET qualifications which allow them to participate in work based learning and gives them a strong basis for making informed career decisions.
- VET in Schools programs allow students to potentially access a range of available course offerings and pathways which assist them to meet the entry requirements for further training and/or university and develop valuable vocational skills at the same time.
- VET in Schools is an opportunity for students pursuing an identified vocational career to begin training in their chosen field while still at school. Programs such as school-based apprenticeships, traineeships and pre-apprenticeships give these students the opportunity to learn skills in a real work environment and transition effectively into post-school training or employment.
- Through VET in Schools programs, students are provided with nationally recognised VET qualifications that are portable and have industry recognition.
- VET in Schools programs can provide at risk or disengaged students with a way of exploring training or employment options which better suit their needs.

School and training perspectives

VET in Schools programs comply with the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) requirements which are consistent with all accredited training in Australia. The AQF provides the standards for Australian qualifications.

For schools, VET in Schools programs are a strategy to engage students while enrolled in senior secondary education and provide entry level qualifications which lead to tangible outcomes in employment, further education and/or training.

Industry perspectives

Industry must be assured that the RTO and the school are working together in compliance with the AQF to:

- deliver VET qualifications to industry standards;
- support quality workplace learning opportunities;
- equip students with the entry level skills required to work within an industry and facilitate effective school to work transitions; and
- involve industry in the design, delivery and quality assurance of VET in Schools programs.



VET in Schools Critical Success Factors

A strong partnership between the training and education system/sectors lies at the core of successful VET in Schools programs. The following five factors have been identified as being integral to the critical success of VET in Schools programs:

- **Leadership, continuity and partnerships** – schools which are successful have strong leadership. Their principals are actively involved in the promotion and operation of the VET in Schools program and the schools' VET coordinators and teachers are similarly committed. Schools actively engage with industry, RTOs and employers and form meaningful and collaborative partnerships.
- **Student cohort and parent liaison** – schools which are successful are mindful of the needs of different student cohorts and support these as required. Parent involvement is recognised as being crucial to this success.
- **Vision, place and configuration** – schools which are successful are more likely to work in partnership with other schools to share course offerings, and combine teaching and learning resources. Pathways for students are clear, and endorsed by industry. Most students are working at Certificate II level or higher (if appropriate).
- **Flexibility** – schools which are successful are flexible in their timetabling structure, and are able to willingly release students for training and workplace experience, frequently in conjunction with those from other schools. Partnering RTOs and employers also demonstrate flexibility.
- **Course content, structure and evaluation** – schools which are successful offer VET programs which are relevant to the age, interests and strengths of the student. Teachers and trainers have the relevant qualifications and experience to deliver to industry standards as required by the national VET standards.



Agencies' responsibilities

The WACE reforms will increasingly see students select an educational pathway that leads to eligibility to university and/or further training. The resulting exponential growth in the number of programs and students participating in VET in Schools is going to require a state-wide approach and collaboration between identified stakeholders. Each stakeholder group has responsibilities to contribute to the success and quality of VET in Schools.

Department of Training and Workforce Development responsibilities

There are a range of qualifications that have been endorsed by industry as being suitable for VET in Schools delivery. Schools should enrol students in these qualifications. The Department of Training and Workforce Development will:

- communicate to schools the units/qualifications from training packages which industry considers suitable for delivery in schools;
- facilitate schools and education authorities to engage with training councils to support on-going improvements in the delivery of VET in Schools programs;
- advocate through the national training package endorsement process that future training packages must take into account that units and qualifications delivered by schools will be completed in a combination of a school and work environment that is acceptable to industry;
- work with RTOs and education authorities to explore ways to improve the VET in Schools outcomes of senior secondary students;
- provide professional development opportunities to assist VET in Schools provision; and
- work with the education system/sectors to develop resources to support VET in Schools which showcases best practice in VET in Schools and a web resource to assist practitioners working in VET in Schools.



Education system/sector responsibilities

The inclusion of VET in Schools as a valid senior secondary pathway is a responsibility of school leaders. This will be achieved by VET in Schools being integrated into school planning, appropriately resourced and the capacity of staff to deliver industry standard VET qualifications strengthened.

- Schools will offer opportunities for senior secondary students to enrol in pathways that will lead to full qualifications.
- Students' vocational learning will be supported with opportunities to undertake quality and appropriate experience in the workplace. Schools will work collaboratively with employers and the community to provide students with access to authentic work environments.
- Schools will ensure the guidelines for VET in Schools students placed in the workplace are well understood by employers.
- Schools will provide quality career advice and guidance, combined with structured selection processes, to enable students and their parents to make informed choices about their preferred career pathways and maximise successful outcomes for students.

Registered training organisation responsibilities

State Training Providers must make all efforts to meet the unique needs of schools and their students to accommodate the broader expectations of students for a wider education. This includes providing additional flexibility for students to be able to manage both their vocational training and school education.

Registered training organisations must respond flexibly and supportively and understand the framework in which schools operate.

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