

# Did you know? A guide to vocational education and training in Australia

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In Australia, after people complete their compulsory schooling, their main choices for further education are vocational education and training (VET) and university. This publication provides a guide to understanding some basics about VET in Australia.

## What is VET?

VET aims to provide people with the skills and knowledge they require to:

- ✧ enter the workforce for the first time
- ✧ re-enter the workforce after absences
- ✧ train or re-train for a new job
- ✧ upgrade their skills
- ✧ move into further study in VET or university.

VET provides a vast array of subjects and programs, ranging from the traditional trades to business and commerce and the creative arts. It also provides basic skills training for social and community participation, such as English language training for new migrants.

Formal VET offers a range of nationally recognised qualifications, from certificates that can be completed in a relatively short time through to advanced diplomas that generally require two years of post-school study.

While this type of education is commonly known as vocational education and training (or VET) in Australia, it is known internationally as technical vocational education and training (TVET) or further education.

## Why choose VET?

VET provides skills and qualifications for all types of employment, except for those jobs which require a university degree. The flexibility of the system enables students to study one or two subjects to gain specific skills, without necessarily completing a full qualification, if that is their choice.

## Who undertakes VET?

In most Australian states, anyone over 15 years of age can access VET. Around half of all school leavers undertake vocational training within a year or two after leaving school. Over half of all students undertaking VET are over the age of 25 years and the vast majority of VET students study part-time.

Many people with university qualifications, such as degrees, also undertake VET to obtain specific skills. Some people are required to undertake VET as part of their job. Students also participate while still at school through 'VET in Schools' programs.

Australia's VET sector caters for all types of students, including:

- ✧ students living in capital cities, regional towns and remote locations
- ✧ students of all cultural backgrounds (including Indigenous people and people for whom English is a second language)
- ✧ international students (both in Australia or with an Australian VET provider overseas)
- ✧ students with disabilities.

#### **Did you know?**

You can study just about anything in the Australian VET sector; for example, cabinet making, accounting, mortuary studies, and fashion design to name just a few. Over 19% of VET students enrol in management and commerce programs, the most common field of study.

Source: NCVET 2007, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses 2006—Summary*

Over 11% of Australia's population aged between 15 to 64 years participate in government funded VET. The sector is a popular choice for young people (aged 15 to 19 years), with 30% of all young people living in Australia undertaking some form of VET.

Source: NCVET 2007, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses 2006—Summary*

## Who funds VET?

VET is largely funded by the Australian Government and state and territory governments. However, companies and individuals also contribute to the cost of training. Companies can contribute by purchasing training for their employees, while students contribute through the payment of course and administrative fees. Some students pay all their fees without receiving any government subsidies.

## Who provides VET?

VET is provided by training organisations which register with the government to teach accredited courses and include government and private providers.

Government registered training organisations include:

- ✧ technical and further education (TAFE) institutes
- ✧ secondary schools and colleges
- ✧ universities
- ✧ agricultural and technical colleges.

Private registered training organisations are a diverse group offering a range of accredited (recognised under a formal training framework) and non-accredited courses. They include:

- ✧ enterprises training their own employees
- ✧ private training and business colleges

- ❖ specialist bodies providing training within their industry
- ❖ adult and community organisations.

Schools also provide some vocational education and training. Known as VET in Schools, this nationally recognised training is available to all students as part of their senior secondary school education. This form of training offers students the chance to complete their secondary education, acquire work skills and gain a VET qualification.

There are various VET pathways available to school students, from programs offering a few hours per week to part-time school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, which combine training and paid work.

#### Did you know?

There are over 4400 registered training organisations in Australia, of which approximately 3100 are private providers.

Sources: National Training Information Service (NTIS) <[www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au)>  
Harris, Simons and McCarthy 2006, *Private training providers in Australia: Their characteristics and training activities*, NCVET

More than 79% of students who undertake training in a publicly funded training provider enrol in a TAFE institute or other government provider.

Source: NCVET 2007, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses 2006—Summary*

There are around 1.7 million students enrolled in the public VET system, compared with over 950 000 in university.

Sources: NCVET 2007, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses 2006—Summary*  
Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, *Education and Training Experience, Australia, 2005*

Approximately 2.2 million students undertake training with a private registered training organisation. This includes one organisation with 290 000 (part-time) students, reflecting large-scale provision of short courses.

Source: Harris, Simons and McCarthy 2006, *Privatetraining providers in Australia: Their characteristics and training activities*, NCVET

## Where is VET delivered?

VET is delivered in a traditional classroom setting, in the workplace, on the internet, by correspondence and in community venues, using a variety of methods to meet industry and individual needs. The learning options offered mean that students can learn at their own pace and in an environment which best suits their individual learning style.

VET may also be customised to meet the requirements of particular enterprises, each specific job skill and the ability of the student.

## Quality assurance of VET

The quality of VET in Australia is assured under the Australian Quality Training Framework. The framework offers:

- ❖ standards for the registration of training providers
- ❖ standards for those bodies that regulate and accredit training in the states and territories
- ❖ standards for the delivery and assessment of subjects taught
- ❖ standards for the administration systems.

The system has a number of key indicators to measure performance, including the employment rate and satisfaction of students.

### Did you know?

A snapshot of the VET student population reveals that the typical student in Australia is more likely to be an adult, already employed and upgrading their job skills, rather than a school leaver.

Sources: NCVET National VET Provider Collection 2006  
NCVER Student Outcomes Survey 2006

Of the 1.7 million students enrolled in the public VET system:

- ✧ 89% are in part-time study
- ✧ 55% are aged over 25 years
- ✧ 4% are Indigenous
- ✧ 13% speak English as a second language
- ✧ 6% report having a disability.

Source: NCVET 2007, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses 2006—Summary*

Almost 80% of graduates who undertake training are employed six months after completing their training, and almost three quarters of graduates report that their training was highly or somewhat relevant to their current job.

Source: NCVET 2006, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Student outcomes 2006—Summary*

## What qualifications are offered under the VET system?

The VET system offers a variety of qualifications, including certificates I, II, III and IV, diploma, advanced diploma, vocational graduate certificate and vocational graduate diploma.

The diagram below lists VET qualifications in relation to school and university qualifications.

Certificates I and II provide students with basic vocational skills and knowledge, preparing them for employment such as florists, factory hands, sales assistants or bank officers. Certificates III and IV have largely replaced the range of traditional trade certificates and prepare people for employment in roles as diverse as animal attendants, beauty therapists, plumbers, accounts clerks, professional builders, graphic designers and systems analysts.

### Did you know?

48% of VET students enrol in certificate III qualifications or higher.

Source: NCVET 2007, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses 2006—Summary*

The top five most popular courses are:

- ✧ Certificate II in Hospitality (Operations) – bar and cafe attendants or waiters
- ✧ Certificate III in Business (Administration) – clerical and administration officers or office administrators
- ✧ Certificate II in Business – receptionists, clerks, junior secretaries or word process operators
- ✧ Certificate II in Retail Operations – sales assistants
- ✧ Certificate III in Electrotechnology Systems Electrician – domestic, commercial and industrial electricians

Source: NCVET National VET Provider Collection 2006, unpublished data

## Qualifications by education sector

School sector accreditation	VET sector accreditation	University sector accreditation
		Doctoral degree
		Masters degree
	Vocational graduate diploma	Graduate diploma
	Vocational graduate certificate	Graduate certificate
		Bachelor degree
	Advanced diploma	Associate degree, Advanced diploma
	Diploma	Diploma
Senior Secondary Certificate of Education	Certificate IV	
	Certificate III	
	Certificate II	
	Certificate I	

Source: Australian Qualifications Framework <<http://www.aqf.edu.au/aqfqual.htm>>

## How is VET taught?

Australia's VET system is based on teaching industry standards and learning outcomes, via training packages. Students have to demonstrate specific skills to meet these standards. This approach is known as 'competency-based' training.

### Training packages

Training packages are a key resource for registered training organisations, employers and students. They are an essential part of Australia's system of competency-based training and comprise a set of competency standards and qualifications developed by industry.

A training package sets out the competencies but does not prescribe how the training should be delivered, nor the time taken to deliver it. It is the responsibility of the registered training organisations to develop teaching strategies and assessment methods to meet the needs, abilities and circumstances of the students and industry.

### Recognition of prior learning

Students may have gained prior skills through informal or formal training, experience in the workplace, voluntary work, or social or domestic activities. Whole or part qualifications can be awarded to students on the basis of these skills without further study.

### Did you know?

VET qualifications are based on a set of competency standards, rather than being determined by a set amount of time to undertake a course of study. Thus, students can study for differing amounts of time to complete any given qualification.

Training packages are reviewed every three years to ensure they remain current. This review process involves the developer of the training package (usually the relevant industry advisory body), industry personnel, training providers and other relevant stakeholders.

The ten most popular training packages are:

- ✧ Business Services
- ✧ Hospitality
- ✧ Community Services
- ✧ Information Technology
- ✧ Metal and Engineering Industry
- ✧ Retail
- ✧ Automotive Industry Retail, Service and Repair
- ✧ General Construction
- ✧ Transport and Distribution
- ✧ Financial Services

Source: NCVET 2007, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses 2006—Summary*

## Apprenticeships and traineeships

Apprenticeships and traineeships are a notable feature of Australia's VET system. They bring together training and employment under a legal contract between the apprentices and trainees, training providers (such as TAFE) and employers. Apprentices and trainees receive a training wage which increases as they progress. In some cases, group training organisations employ the apprentice or trainee and place them with a suitable employer.

Since the mid-1990s, the apprenticeship model of training and employment has been expanded through the introduction of traineeships in areas outside the traditional trades, including sales, service and clerical occupations.

Today, apprenticeships and traineeships are available to all age groups, and can be undertaken on a part-time basis (where available) or full-time. Apprenticeships and traineeships can also be undertaken by students in secondary school.

Employers are entitled to financial incentives when taking on new apprentices and trainees. These incentives also apply to employers who train or re-train their existing workers.

### Did you know?

Apprenticeships and traineeships are available in hundreds of occupations. Students are not restricted to choosing apprenticeships in the traditional trades, such as plumbing, hairdressing and construction, but can access training across a range of industries, including retail, business, and information technology.

More than one quarter of all new apprentices and trainees are already working for the employer they undertake their apprenticeship or traineeship with, and more than 43% are aged 25 or older.

Source: NCVET 2007, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Apprentices and trainees—December quarter 2006, Summary*

Of 15 to 19-year-olds commencing an apprenticeship or traineeship, 37% had completed Year 12.

Source: NCVET National Apprentice and Trainee Collection 2006, Number 51, unpublished data

13% of people commencing apprenticeships and traineeships are aged 45 years or over.

Source: NCVET 2007, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Apprentices and trainees—December quarter 2006, Summary*

## Organisations and information services linked to the VET system

There are a variety of organisations and information services that provide services and support for Australia's VET system, including those listed in the following table.

Organisation	Website	Responsibility
Adult Learning Australia (ALA)	<a href="http://www.ala.asn.au">www.ala.asn.au</a>	Adult Learning Australia is the national peak body representing organisations and individual members in all states and territories who are involved with adult and community learning.
Australian Apprenticeships Centres	<a href="http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au">www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au</a>	Australian Apprenticeships Centres are contracted by the Australian Government to provide one-stop shops for those seeking to take up an apprenticeship or those seeking to hire apprentices.
Australian Council of Private Education and Training (ACPET)	<a href="http://www.acpet.edu.au">www.acpet.edu.au</a>	The Australian Council of Private Education and Training is the national industry association for independent providers of post-compulsory education and training for Australian and international students, including university, VET and English language courses.
Australian Education International (AEI)	<a href="http://www.aei.dest.gov.au">www.aei.dest.gov.au</a>	Australian Education International integrates the development of international government relations with support for the commercial activities of Australia's education community.
Australian Flexible Learning Framework	<a href="http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au">www.flexiblelearning.net.au</a>	The Australian Flexible Learning Framework provides the VET system with e-learning skills, professional development opportunities, products, resources and support networks to meet today's increasingly technology-driven learning environment.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Australian Government, Department of Education, Science and Training	<a href="http://www.dest.gov.au">www.dest.gov.au</a>	The Department of Education, Science and Training provides advice to Australian Government education ministers and is responsible for all sectors of education and training.
Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board	<a href="http://www.aqf.edu.au">www.aqf.edu.au</a>	The Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board promotes and monitors national implementation of the system of qualifications.
Education Network Australia (edna online)	<a href="http://www.edna.edu.au">www.edna.edu.au</a>	edna is an online service that aims to support and promote the benefits of the internet for learning, education and training in Australia. It is organised around the Australian curriculum, its tools are free to Australian educators, and it is funded by the Australian Government and state and territory governments.
Group Training Australia (GTA)	<a href="http://www.gtald.com.au">www.gtald.com.au</a>	Group Training Australia is the peak body representing over 150 group training organisations employing approximately 40 000 apprentices and trainees.
Industry skills councils	<a href="http://www.isc.org.au">www.isc.org.au</a> Agri-Food Industry Skills Council <a href="http://www.agrifoodskills.net.au">www.agrifoodskills.net.au</a> Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council <a href="http://www.cshisc.com.au">www.cshisc.com.au</a> Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council <a href="http://www.cpsisc.com.au">www.cpsisc.com.au</a> ElectroComms and Energy Utilities Industry Skills Council <a href="http://www.ee-oz.com.au">www.ee-oz.com.au</a> Government Skills Australia <a href="http://www.governmentskills.com.au">www.governmentskills.com.au</a> Innovation and Business Skills Australia <a href="http://www.ibsa.org.au">www.ibsa.org.au</a> Manufacturing Skills Australia <a href="http://www.mskills.com.au">www.mskills.com.au</a> Resources and Infrastructure Industry Skills Council <a href="http://www.riisc.com.au">www.riisc.com.au</a> Service Skills Australia <a href="http://www.serviceskills.com.au">www.serviceskills.com.au</a> Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council <a href="http://www.tlisc.com.au">www.tlisc.com.au</a>	Industry skills councils provide industry intelligence to the VET sector about current and future training requirements, including industry skills reports. Primary responsibility of the individual skills councils is to develop and maintain relevant training packages.
Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE)		The Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education is comprised of the Australian Government and state and territory ministers with responsibility for vocational and technical education.



<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)	<a href="http://www.ncver.edu.au">www.ncver.edu.au</a>	NCVER is Australia's principle provider of VET research and statistics, offering its information to: federal, state and territory ministers responsible for training and their relevant education departments; training providers, public and private; employer and employee associations; public and private enterprises; researchers; and international VET research agencies.
National Industry Skills Committee (NISC)	<a href="http://www.nisc.tvetaustralia.com.au">www.nisc.tvetaustralia.com.au</a>	The National Industry Skills Committee provides advice directly to ministers about training needs, including workforce planning and future training priorities.
National Training Information Service (NTIS)	<a href="http://www.ntis.gov.au">www.ntis.gov.au</a>	The National Training Information Service is the database and the official national register of information on courses, qualifications, training packages, units of competency and registered training organisations.
National Quality Council (NQC)	<a href="http://www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au">www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au</a>	The National Quality Council considers initiatives to enhance national consistency and quality of training.
Reframing the Future	<a href="http://www.reframingthefuture.net">www.reframingthefuture.net</a>	Reframing the Future is a national professional development initiative for VET practitioners, and is funded through the Australian Government and state and territory governments.
State/territory government training departments	<p>Australian Capital Territory <a href="http://www.decs.act.gov.au">www.decs.act.gov.au</a></p> <p>New South Wales <a href="http://www.det.nsw.edu.au">www.det.nsw.edu.au</a></p> <p>Northern Territory <a href="http://www.deet.nt.gov.au">www.deet.nt.gov.au</a></p> <p>Queensland <a href="http://education.qld.gov.au">education.qld.gov.au</a></p> <p>South Australia <a href="http://www.training.sa.gov.au">www.training.sa.gov.au</a></p> <p>Tasmania <a href="http://www.education.tas.gov.au">www.education.tas.gov.au</a></p> <p>Victoria <a href="http://www.otte.vic.gov.au">www.otte.vic.gov.au</a></p> <p>Western Australia <a href="http://www.training.wa.gov.au">www.training.wa.gov.au</a></p>	Each state and territory government has a department that advises respective ministers and administers VET activity in their jurisdictions, including the allocation of funds, registration of training organisations and accreditation of courses.
TAFE Directors Australia	<a href="http://www.tda.edu.au">www.tda.edu.au</a>	TAFE Directors Australia is an association of directors/chief executive officers of TAFE institutes. It provides a forum for its members and is a voice and central coordination point for TAFE institutes.
Training.com.au	<a href="http://www.training.com.au">www.training.com.au</a>	Training.com.au is a collaborative project funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training and managed by the Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts. It is an online access point to a range of VET information, products and services in Australia.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Website</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Training Packages @ Work	www.tpatwork.com	Training Packages @ Work is a free national newsletter for teachers, trainers and assessors in the VET sector. This online newsletter is published monthly and features the latest information on the development and implementation of training packages and other key issues in the training sector.
TVET Australia Limited	www.tvetaustralia.com.au	TVET Australia manages ASharenet and Australian Training Products—publishing house and national clearinghouse for Commonwealth-copyrighted teaching and learning materials (including training packages). It is also secretariat for the National Industry Skills Committee and the National Quality Council.

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