

A BRIEF GUIDE TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

This section provides a brief overview of VET, including how it can help and what it requires of you as an employer or manager.

If you are not already familiar with VET, this is a useful place to start.

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TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

What is workforce development?

Workforce development builds the skills people need to participate in the labour market, and the skills organisations need in their workforce to operate effectively. It can involve training, as well as strategies for attracting, recruiting and retaining workers and consideration of factors such as language and literacy skills, support for learning, and funding for training.

What types of training are available?

Accredited training (also called Nationally Recognised Training)

This is training that leads to vocational qualifications and credentials that are recognised across the country. It's based on nationally agreed industry standards, which are documented in what is referred to as Training Packages. They take the form of:

- **units of competency** - these describe the skills and knowledge needed to perform a particular task effectively in the workplace.
- **training package qualifications** - these are groups of units of competency that cover the skills required for a particular occupation (e.g. personal care assistant). Qualifications include compulsory units, as well as units that can be chosen as electives.
- **skill sets** - these are smaller credentials made up of one or more units of competency designed to meet a particular industry or workplace need.

There are also **accredited courses**, which are groups of units of competency developed for areas not covered by national training package qualifications.

The premise of accredited/Nationally Recognised Training is that learners are trained and assessed against the agreed industry standards to the agreed level. Everyone who gains the particular qualification or credential should end up with the same skills and knowledge to at least the specified standard.

Accredited/Nationally Recognised Training can only be delivered by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

Non-accredited training

This includes any other type of structured training that does not lead to a formal (nationally recognised) qualification or credential.

This can include:

- short courses on particular topics (e.g. training on employee well-being)
- training in specific products (e.g. training for new Customer Relationship Management software)
- industry-specific training (e.g. training for employees on the NDIS Code-of-Conduct)
- organisation-specific training (e.g. induction training for new employees).

Non-accredited training can be delivered by anyone with the relevant expertise, including organisations' own staff, RTOs, other external training providers and product manufacturers.

Informal or non-formal learning

This training or learning takes place 'on-the-job' through more casual interactions, including:

- 'buddying' of colleagues
- mentoring or coaching by supervisors
- employees accessing online information or participating in forums and networks
- job rotations and special assignments.



What are the benefits of training?

Employers identify many benefits from training such as:

- higher productivity and efficiency
- improved service delivery
- increased client satisfaction
- increased health and safety
- reduced need for rework/fixing mistakes
- increased employee engagement and motivation
- reduced staff turnover and recruitment costs
- improved organisational culture
- increased levels of foundation skills (such as literacy, numeracy and digital literacy).

They also note the costs of not having properly skilled and experienced employees, such as:

- increased workload for other staff
- increased operating costs
- difficulty in meeting quality standards
- difficulties in meeting customer service objectives
- reduced productivity
- loss of business to competitors
- difficulty in introducing new work practices (including technological changes)
- the need to outsource work.

What are the costs?

Many human services employers emphasise that training is an investment in their workforce and therefore their business, and the long-term benefits outweigh the costs.

You'll need to consider both direct and indirect costs of training.

Direct costs may include:

- tuition/course fees
- course development costs (for the design of a customised course)
- student service fees for textbooks, materials, administration etc.

These costs vary across training providers. Financial support may be available to offset both tuition/course fees and students service fees for accredited training.

Indirect costs may include:

- time spent in overseeing training (e.g. liaising with the training provider, monitoring employee progress, filling in paperwork)
- paying employees while in training (e.g. if training is delivered 'on-the-job', or time off is given for study)
- paying supervisors to oversee and support trainees or students on placement.

Some employers pay all the costs of training, while some share the cost with employees. Others may ask employees to pay for their own training and to complete it in their own time.



What financial support is available?

State and Territory governments and the Australian government all offer differing types of financial support for training and workforce development. Financial support is provided through different channels and eligibility depends on where you are, the type of training undertaken and who's undertaking it. Some funding is only offered for a limited period (such as during the COVID pandemic).

The following are some of the common types of financial support.

Subsidised training

Government subsidies are available for training for high priority jobs or skills. Human services jobs fall increasingly into this category.

Subsidised training is also made available for groups of individuals, such as job seekers and those who don't have a qualification at Certificate III level or above. Some individuals may be exempt from student services fees as well as eligible for subsidised training.

Subsidies are mostly provided for accredited training, but some non-accredited training (such as training for literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills) may also be subsidised.

Financial support for employing trainees and apprentices

The Australian Government provides incentives to employers who employ trainees and apprentices, to help offset the cost of supervisors' time. These are provided through the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network.

Additional subsidies may also be available to employers of trainees and apprentices at particular points in time (e.g. wage subsidies provided during the COVID pandemic).

Wage subsidies

The Australian Government provides incentives for employing job seekers who meet certain criteria, such as young people, mature age people or people with disability. These are administered through employment service providers.

Support for individuals

The Australian Government offers financial support to individuals to help with the cost of training, through student loans and scholarships for young people.

Advice on financial support

The following organisations can provide advice on what financial support your organisation and employees may be eligible for:

- State or Territory Education and Training Departments can provide information about training subsidies and other types of financial support. See p.54 for an example of [financial support available in one jurisdiction](#).
- Registered Training Organisations can often provide information about subsidies that may be available for the training they deliver.
- Skills Checkpoint providers can help you access co-contribution incentives to upskill employees aged 45-70.
- Australian Apprenticeship Support Network can provide information and advice about support for employing trainees and apprentices.
- Employment service providers can provide information about wage subsidies for employing certain groups of job seekers.



WHO'S WHO IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The vocational education and training system involves many players. Below are the main stakeholders and their roles.



Who pays for training?

- Australian Government
- State and Territory Governments
- Employers
- Individuals
- Employment service providers



Who provides training?

- Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)
- Other training providers



Who regulates training?

- Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)
- Training Accreditation Council Western Australia (TAC)



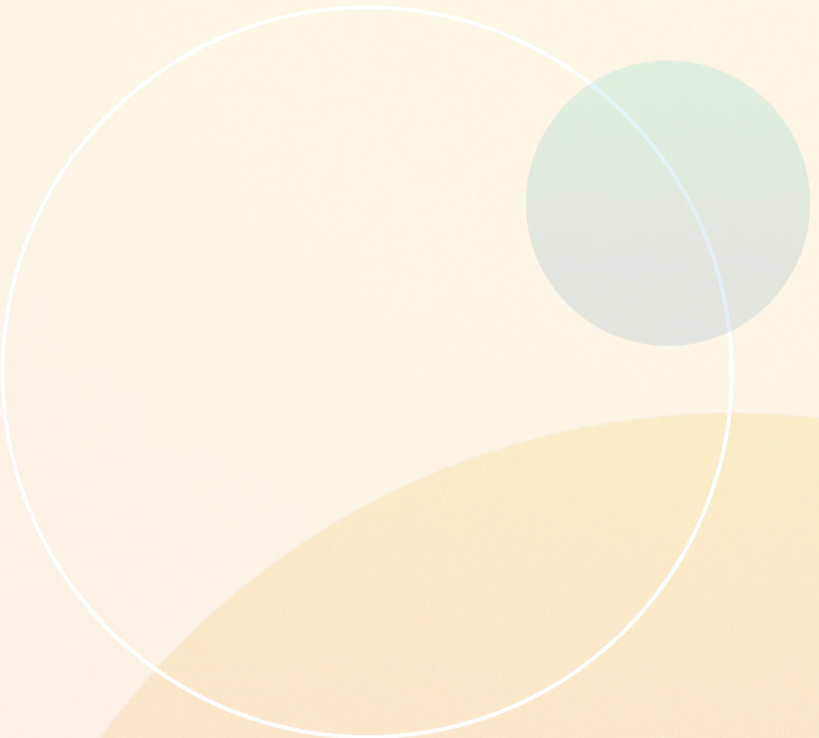
Who decides on the content of accredited training?

- Industry Reference Committees (supported by Skills Service Organisations)
- Other industry stakeholders



Who provides support and/or information?

- Skills Organisations
- Australian Apprenticeship Support Network
- National Skills Commission
- National Careers Institute



Who pays for training?

The **Australian Government** provides financial support through incentives for employers of trainees and apprentices, student loans and programs for particular groups of people, such as the Skills Checkpoint Program for workers aged 45 – 70.

State and Territory Governments provide subsidies for the delivery of accredited training in areas of identified industry need. They also subsidise student service fees for certain groups of learners.

Employers may pay RTOs for the training of their employees. This is referred to as fee-for-service training.

Individuals may cover the cost of their own training. They may be able to access student loans to help pay for accredited training.

Employment service providers can access funding to help job-seekers develop necessary skills for employment. This can include funding for training in employability skills and VET qualifications.

Who delivers training?

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)

These are training providers that meet government standards for delivery of nationally recognised training. They include public RTOs and private RTOs.

Public RTOs can include:

- technical and further education (TAFE) institutes
- some secondary schools and colleges
- some higher education providers
- adult and community education providers
- agricultural and technical colleges.

Private RTOs can include:

- private training and business colleges
- some higher education providers
- enterprises training their own employees
- industry training providers.

Other training providers

These can include an organisation's own trainers, external training providers that are not RTOs, industry bodies and product manufacturers.

Who regulates training?

Registered Training Organisations have to meet nationally agreed quality standards in order to deliver and assess accredited training.

These standards are administered by:

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) - which oversees registration of training providers in most states and territories. They also conduct regular audits of RTOs to make sure they are meeting the quality standards.

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) - which performs these functions for Victorian-based RTOs.

Training Accreditation Council Western Australia (TAC) - which performs these functions for Western Australian-based RTOs.

Who decides on the content of accredited training?

The development of content for training packages and accredited courses is a complex process involving many players.

Training Packages

Industry Reference Committees (IRCs) are groups of industry representatives that make recommendations about what is included in training packages. They are supported by **Skills Service Organisations (SSOs)**.

IRCs are informed by consultation with industry and feedback from RTOs. The accredited content of training packages must be endorsed by both the Australian Government and state and territory governments before it can be delivered by RTOs.



RTOs can't change the essential content of accredited training. They have to follow the rules about what to cover in the training and make sure that learners demonstrate they have met all of the required standards. They do however:

- contextualise training content to make it relevant to particular groups of learners (e.g. by training learners in particular types of equipment or technology used in their industry or workplace)
- offer the choice of elective units to include in the training (where the rules allow this)
- provide training in additional content areas (usually for an additional fee).

Accredited courses

In situations where there aren't suitable training options available through national training packages, organisations can develop an accredited course. These must meet the rules for accredited courses and be approved by a VET regulator. For more information see <https://www.asqa.gov.au/course-accreditation/overview>

Who provides support and information?

Other national organisations that provide support and information include:

Skills Organisations – (including the HSSO) which are national employer-led bodies established by the Australian Government to deliver improvements to the national training system.

Australian Apprenticeship Support Network – which is the central point of contact for apprenticeships and traineeships and provides support to employers of apprentices and trainees.

National Skills Commission – which provides advice and leadership for Australia's labour market, including current, emerging and future workforce skills needs, as well as on strengthening Australia's VET system.

National Careers Institute – which provides independent careers information for Australians of all ages and stages of their career. They also administer the My Skills, training.gov.au and Your Career websites.



HOW VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) CAN HELP YOU

VET can help with workforce development in a variety of ways.

What do you need help with?	How VET can help
Skilling new, inexperienced employees	Through entry-level training. Your employees or potential employees can complete: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - training in an accredited qualification or skill set - a traineeship or apprenticeship - non-accredited training (e.g. induction training).
Helping experienced employees to develop new, higher level or more specialised skills	Through upskilling. Your employees can complete: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - training in higher level accredited qualifications, skill sets or units of competency - non-accredited training - informal learning - a higher-level apprenticeship.
Skilling new employees who have previous relevant experience in a different industry sector	Through reskilling. Your employees can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - apply for Recognition of Prior Learning or Credit Transfer and/or - complete training in skill sets or units of competency to address skill or knowledge gaps.
Helping experienced employees to gain recognition for their existing skills or experience	Through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Your employees can apply for this with a Registered Training Organisation.
Helping employees to gain recognition for previous VET study	Through Credit Transfer. Your employees can gain credit towards a qualification for units of competency they have already completed.



What do you need help with?	How VET can help
Developing employees' language, literacy, numeracy or digital literacy skills	Through foundation skills training. Find out about subsidised training for foundation skills for your employees, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the national Reading Writing Hotline - a Foundation Skills for your Future Service Provider - your local Registered Training Organisation
Identifying workforce skills gaps	Through a 'training needs analysis'. A Registered Training Organisation can help you with this.
Helping with recruitment strategies	Through exposure to potential employees by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taking students for vocational placements. - building relationships with training providers and/or employment services providers who will work with you to identify suitable candidates.
Supporting career pathways	Through accredited training that provides a pathway for employees to undertake study at a higher level, including at university.

“We've been doing a program with an RTO who's also a jobactive provider working with job seekers. So we've been engaging with potential employees right from the beginning.

The jobactive provider uses our recruitment material to screen job seekers and make sure their consultants understand what ‘support work’ involves. Interested people came to an information session. I do speed interviews with the job seekers before they start the program to ensure the ones we take on for student placement are potential employees. Student programs are a major part of our recruitment strategy.

The RTO starts the students off. They do seven modules of their Certificate III, and then come to us for buddy shifts. If that is successful, we interview them, and they finish off their course as paid employees.

We've only had one person drop out. She decided after her first day that it wasn't for her. So it's been really successful so far.”

(Disability service provider)

Vocational placements

What are vocational placements?

Vocational placements (also called work placements) are more than work experience. They involve structured learning in the workplace, which links to students' coursework. They help link theory with practice.

Vocational placements are a mandatory part of many vocational qualifications in human services. For example, entry-level qualifications in aged care, disability and early childhood education and care sectors, require individuals to do a minimum amount of structured work placement.

How can vocational placements help?

Vocational placements give individuals valuable work experience in their chosen field, and help them to gain their qualification and employment.

For employers, they offer the opportunity to see students operating in a workplace setting. Many human services employers take on work placement students as part of their recruitment strategy and offer them employment on graduation.



“Work placements are a great thing... because you get a taste of them [the student], and they get a taste of you. Neither party’s made any commitment, and you get to see them in action, and get to see their values and behaviours. Many people get a qualification, but their attitude is what makes or breaks their employment.

So if you form a relationship with your local TAFE, or uni or whatever, and do work placements with them, it really makes life a lot easier.”

(Disability service provider)

What do vocational placements require of employers?

To take a student on a placement you must supervise them and contribute to their learning. You will liaise with the training provider about what the student needs to do during their time with you and be asked to verify that the student has developed the required skills.

“My experience is that placements have to be a two-way partnership. Each person understands the expectations of them, and how they perform that. It’s actually a simple process - you’ve got the reinforcement of theory, in terms of what the learner is learning, and the practicality of its application.

So it needs to be a partnership between us and the RTO to bring those two things together and wrap them around the learner to get a positive outcome from the placement.”

(Disability service provider)

Ideally you, the student and the training provider will sign an agreement that sets out the requirements of each party.

Providing students with a positive and meaningful vocational placement experience helps build a pool of skilled and motivated workers. Students can lose interest in a field because of poor placement experiences.

You can find further information about work placements in the HSSO’s Work Placement Guide (see Useful Contacts & Resources for details).

“We do try our best to create an authentic experience for our students. We want them to feel like they have responsibilities, and they’re able to actually behave like an educator rather than just a student.”

(Early childhood education and care provider)

Training

What is training and how can it help?

Training is an integral part of workforce development. It helps people develop the skills they need to do their job well and safely. Skilled staff help human services organisations deliver high quality service to clients and stay in operation. Investing in training also helps retain your employees. Training can give them pathways for career progression and keep them engaged and motivated.

“I think the employees feel more valued if you are supporting them to get training. They’re happier in their role, they can see advancement, even a bit of financial benefit.... I have people here who have been carers and become enrolled nurses’ and then RNs; people in the kitchen who have become carers. They come to us when we do our annual review, and they tell me what they want, and then we try to facilitate that for them.”

(Aged Care Provider)



What does training require of employers?

The most effective training involves a commitment from employers.

This could be in the form of:

- a workplace culture that encourages and supports learning
- giving employees time off for training
- paying for employees' training
- checking on employees' training progress, and looking for ways to apply their learning in the workplace
- mentoring or coaching employees
- engaging internal or external trainers to deliver training in the workplace
- working with a training provider to develop customised training.

“You’ve got to have the commitment to the admin and the completion of training. There’s an effort attached and it needs commitment from the organisation from top down. You have to make sure the person is available, or able to be pulled off the floor for learning. You need competent line managers who can cover the gaps in training and you need to educate management about what’s expected and how to do it.”

(Disability service provider)

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

What are apprenticeships and traineeships?

Apprentices and trainees are trained by both their employer and an RTO while they work under a formal contract of training.

Traineeships are usually shorter (1 or 2 years) than apprenticeships (up to 4 years) and both can be done at any age. For example, school-based traineeships allow young people to gain exposure to an industry and an initial qualification while still at school. Mature age traineeships enable those aged over 24 years to complete a qualification while working, and to be paid a higher trainee wage than young trainees.

‘Australian Apprenticeships’ is the formal term used for both traineeships and apprenticeships.

Trainees are paid prescribed ‘trainee wages’ in recognition of their lower skill levels. However, some employers choose to pay above award wages to attract good trainees.

Training may be partly or fully government subsidised. Employers of trainees may be eligible for government incentives that offset the time required to supervise and deliver ‘on-the-job’ training.

How can apprenticeships and traineeships help?

Employers cite benefits of traineeships, such as:

- trainees becoming “really great workers”, with the initial effort paying off in the long-term.
- trainees developing skills that the organisation needs.
- helping to attract and retain workers, and build commitment as part of a stable workforce.
- an affordable way of employing new staff to work alongside experienced workers.

What do apprenticeships and traineeships require of employers?

You will need to enter into a formal contract with the apprentice or trainee, which sets out the obligations of each party.

Trainees require a nominated staff member to supervise their learning in the workplace.

“We’ve recently taken on some trainees. We’ve gone through the process, and as an employer, I think you need to be aware of the responsibility and the extra work it will take - working with the RTO, interviews, the planning, the gearing up to have the training in place, completing the online applications for the funding and incentives.”

(Youth and Community services provider)



Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer

What are they and how can they help?

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a way of certifying that someone already has some or all of the skills and knowledge needed for an accredited qualification. These may have come from other formal or informal training, from experience working in the same sector/occupation, or from other work experience.

Credit transfer is the granting of credit by a Registered Training Organisation or higher education institution for units of competency already completed.

Registered Training Organisations must offer RPL and credit transfer to individuals before they start accredited training. This can reduce the amount of training needed and the time and cost involved. Individuals only need to train in areas where there are gaps in their skills and knowledge.

What does Recognition of Prior Learning require of employers?

Demonstrating that they have the required skills and knowledge can be time consuming for employees who apply for RPL.

You might be asked to complete paperwork to verify that employees have the required skills. So it's a good idea to keep records of any formal and informal training undertaken by your employees, as well as other documents that demonstrate their experience (such as position descriptions and performance management plans), in case they want to apply for RPL at some point.

