

STCCTTC Year 9 -12 Review Submission

Guilford Young College (GYC) has been an RTO since 1995. There are approximately 424 students currently enrolled in VET in Schools Programs based at GYC and the eight other southern Catholic colleges. The consortium of Catholic colleges is called the Southern Tasmanian Catholic College Trade Training Centre (STCCTTC). Our qualification provision includes:

Certificate I in AgriFood Operations	Certificate II in Tourism
Certificate II in Horticulture	Certificate I in Construction
Certificate I & II in Automotive Vocational Preparation	Certificate II in Community Services
Certificate II in Engineering Pathways	Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
Certificate I & II in Hospitality	Certificate III Health Service Assistance
Certificate II in Kitchen Operations	Certificate II in Sports coaching
Certificate I & II in Business	

The Years 9 and 10 students are offered three to six units of competency. In Years 11 and 12, students are offered part or whole qualifications and some students participate in school based apprenticeships. The TTC provides a smooth pathway where students can build on units achieved from Year 9 onwards in an inspiring industry based environment. Our programs run on single study lines within the normal school timetable. In this context, students are required to choose other subjects in order to undertake a well-rounded education in achieving their TCE requirements.

This submission is prepared in response to the Appendix C of the 9-12 review briefing document.

What is the stakeholder perception of the value of VET?

School leaders, teachers, students, parents and employers who experience a quality VET program have a very positive perception of VET in schools and what it can achieve.

Our STCCTTC VET programs involve 400 students and their parents per year, 25 VET teachers, 9 schools and Principals and over 100 committed employers. Employers support our programs by taking our students on work placements for up to 6 weeks, attending student and parent information sessions, providing industry masterclasses and then look to our schools for future employees.

Perception can be damaged by one bad experience, by one badly run program or by one negative or uninformed voice. Within our partnership VET is very positively reflected on by all our stakeholders. We annually undertake stakeholder surveys and receive excellent feedback.

In the past two years we have received approximately 80% student survey return rate with over 90 % being positive. Parents and employers are surveyed annually. In 2015 we collected over fifty parent responses providing positive feedback and over sixty employer responses confirming the high calibre of our students and the positive outcomes of student work placements.

The quality of VET in school's programs is crucial to maintaining a positive perception. Our assessment must be rigorous and work placement extensive. The programs must not be shortened to fit the school timetable restrictions, nor should qualifications that are too high for the school environment be offered. The chosen pathways must provide genuine employment opportunities not just respond to student or teacher interest. To ensure excellent industry perception we must provide VET in schools to as high quality than any other provider.

Who is VET targeted at and why?

In Tasmania the target audience are students who definitely know their vocational pathway or the students who are unsure or those who may have become disengaged as the normal school learning and assessment processes don't suit them. We also have a significant number of students who select VET while undertaking an academic pathway to enable them to gain an understanding of industry and a range of practical skills.

To engage students at school through to year 12 we need a diverse range of options. VET is part of this range. The achievement of units of competency and a qualification builds student's self-esteem, relates school life to the workplace and provides an identifiable link to industry.

Where is the training/employment destination of VET students?

In 2014 and 2015, of the 460 Years 9 and 10 students, over 350 gained recognition for two or more units of competency and each year approximately 50% continue to study VET in years 11 and 12.

Our Years 11 and 12 programs offer the opportunity for students to gain qualifications over one or two years, studying VET for approximately 300 hours. In 2014, of the 143 Year 11 and 12 students enrolled in qualifications, 74 gained qualifications while a further 60 gained statements of attainment. In 2015, 139 students accessed VET in years 11 and 12 and 85 gained a full qualification with 54 gaining statements of attainment.

Student destination research provides the greatest measure of success. Over the past two years, of the 159 students who gained qualifications 86 are employed in that industry. Of the 282 senior secondary students enrolled in 2014 and 2015, 79% are either employed or continuing studying in 2016.

If a student exits early they take with them some VET units or a VET qualification. This recognition will assist them in finding work and they can return to training at a later date to complete VET qualifications.

Principals also report that for students who do decide to leave school at the end of year 10 those with VET units of competency are more likely to gain apprenticeships. In 2015 18 of our students exited in grade 10 directly into apprenticeships. Employers will consider some younger students if they have the relevant skills and have already shown an interest in their industry sector. While our overall aim is to encourage students to stay at school through to year 12 there are some students that are suited to leaving after year 10.

What is the cost/affordability of providing VET?

The cost of not providing VET is a cost to society as it will result in a larger group of disengaged young people. Many students choose to continue on to senior secondary college to achieve a VET qualification.

The 9 Principals involved in our partnership view VET as affordable and recognise that it is providing students with genuine opportunity.

The major costs in providing VET programs are: smaller classes, significant facilities, specialised staff and the RTO requirements.

What preparation and expertise do schools need to provide VET? And are schools doing this preparation?

Preparation required includes:

- Industry standard facilities and equipment
- Specialised staff requirements
- Regular industry interface for planning and approval of programs
- Organisation, support and visits to work placements
- Development and validation of all assessment documentation
- Meeting of RTO requirements for enrolment, certification, data provision, internal auditing etc

Schools undertake this preparation to varying degrees which does affect the quality of the program.

Schools require strong support, guidance and leadership when embarking on VET provision to ensure their preparation and VET understanding is thorough. Poorly prepared VET provision can result in poor stakeholder support and develop a negative perception.

When the State Government senior secondary colleges first embarked on introducing VET they had excellent leadership and VET capability within their schools. They worked together to achieve some very significant VET programs. Within the Southern Catholic Colleges we currently have extremely strong VET leadership and the colleges work together to support a holistic provision of VET.

What issues impact on the quality of VET programs?

- Class size
- Facilities
- Teacher expertise
- Industry interface
- School leadership understanding and support, the perception within the school.
- Student counselling and selection
- External support from the RTO

Our partnership identifies these issues as major potential impacts on the quality of their programs and all our schools work together or overcome and respond to these issues.

How can smaller schools or rural schools provide VET?

St James is one of the schools in our partnership program and it is a small school based in a rural community. St James has a total of 44 years 9 and 10 students and it is based in Cygnet. Most year 9 and 10 students are doing a VET program as one of their electives. St James provides 4 VET programs including Agrifoods, Hospitality, Construction and Engineering. With the support and regular contact from GYC RTO and a very capable VET coordinator this program runs as well as any in the larger schools. To some extent being based in a small community works as an advantage when developing partnerships with industry.

St James also provides the construction and engineering programs for a larger suburban school. The class travels to St James and spends a day every fortnight undertaking construction and engineering units.

St James Catholic College invests significantly in their VET provision and strongly believe it is of huge value to the student cohort enrolled.

Comment on the cost of purchasing VET provision from TasTAFE or other providers.

It is the view of our partnership Principals that the cost of purchasing VET provision from outside providers is too high. Schools also need to cover the cost of transport and there is limited pastoral care. It is crucial that we can provide the pastoral care, sport engagement and scaffolding to keep these students on track. We do access VET options from outside providers where we have very small numbers of students interested.

Also our integrated timetable allows students to undertake VET but also be able to gain other subjects and work across schools to maximise opportunities.

It is noted that in some states the cost for school students accessing a TAFE course is actually funded by their State Governments.

Specific issues that are of concern regarding current VET arrangements in Tasmania

1. Direct comparisons with interstate VET programs in terms of number of enrolments and qualifications gained cannot be made as the following circumstances are significantly different:
 - Some state governments fund all student places where they undertake a VET course at TAFE.
 - Some funding arrangements encourage schools to enrol most of their students in VET.
 - Most mainland states count VET results towards ATAR scores.
 - Some states allow/encourage a much greater range of VET qualifications eg: Qld catholic schools have many of their students doing Certificate III in Christian Ministry and Theology.
 - A recent comparison of some mainland school VET programs show that they provide their programs in half the time than we do and provide significantly less work placement or no placement. While this may mean that their enrolment and qualification statistics look better it could also mean that the quality of the outcome is limited. It is reductions such as this that could develop poor industry perception of VET in schools.

2. Success of VET should not be measured by enrolment numbers of qualification outcomes alone. A quality VET program should be measured by:
 - Student satisfaction

- Student engagement and retention (even if they don't gain a full qualification)
- Parent and employer satisfaction
- Level of industry involvement
- Enrolments
- Completions
- Destination

3. TCE point allocation for VET subjects has several significant limitations:

Certificate I points are of limited use to TCE requirements, however Certificate I qualifications vary significantly from industry to industry. Eg: Certificate I in Construction is quite a difficult and lengthy course while Certificate I in Agrifood Operations or Hospitality are quite easy. When the same units are part of a Certificate I qualification they count as level 1 points but when they are part of a certificate II qual they count as level 2 points. If you take Certificate I in Construction the majority of the units are actually cert II units but if you do the same units as part of a Certificate I they only count as level 1 points. There are endless examples of VET TCE point anomalies which we currently work around for individual student cases.

Serious review of the VET TCE point system is required immediately as it is currently doing damage to VET student results.

4. Provision of high level qualifications in a school environment with limited work placement. When VET in Schools was initially introduced in Tasmania there was a clear policy that only Certificate I and II qualifications should be provided and that at least 4 weeks work placement must be undertaken for students gaining qualifications. This policy no longer exists and some schools have chosen to provide or access higher level qualifications and reduce work placement. There are times that this disadvantages students applying for jobs due to industrial issues. Ensuring qualifications are kept to appropriate levels with significant work placements is an issue that should be addressed in this review.
5. VET qualifications contributing to ATAR scores. There are advantages and disadvantages with regards to this. However, as other states currently do count VET towards university entry there is a need to analyse and address this issue.

By not allowing to contribute to the ATAR score the number of students that choose VET is reduced significantly.

By allowing it to contribute the following can happen:

- Pressure on the trainer for students to gain qualification may reduce the quality of outcome
- VET may be selected for the wrong reasons (not truly interested in the VET subject but choosing it as they may not do well in other subjects)

Whether VET results should contribute to an ATAR score needs to be considered as part of this review especially given that it does contribute in several other states.