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What is the VET for School Students policy?

The new VET for School Students policy is based on a review of the existing VET delivered to school students which identified areas for improvement with registered training organisations (RTOs), TAFE, schools and industry to ensure the best outcomes for school students.

The VET review had input from over 1,300 students, over 300 community members, over 300 career counselling survey respondents, 114 participants in forums and meetings and 47 written submissions.

Sessions were held with principals, education directors and the South Australian Secondary Principals Association as well as other stakeholders.

The review raised opportunities to:

- reconfigure VET courses to align to industry need
- improve quality of delivery to school students
- re-establish career education as a viable focus of study in the early years of secondary schooling to ensure students and families can make informed choices and students are well-placed to make good transitions post-school.

The policy requires modifications to existing VET structures and processes to better enable students to access viable industry-standard employment pathways with a clear focus on consistently high quality. It provides an opportunity for schools in South Australia to ensure they are offering high quality VET and career education that leads to the best outcomes for their students.

The aspiration is for South Australia to be world-class in its provision of VET for school students.

What does world-class look like?

The VET for School Students policy is built upon international best practice. Success in world-class systems is measured by the students’ outcomes and their post-school transitions.

There are key characteristics of a world-class VET for school students system that are common:

- Government ensures the right policy settings are in place to make delivery easy and streamlined
- There is a close correlation to the labour market needs and industry are invested in the future workforce
- VET is an integral part of the education system where there is a clear distinction between vocational learning and VET
- The community understands the pathway options available and their value.

While these features may not be replicated in total there are key aspects that we can learn from and have been adopted in the South Australian VET for School Students policy.
Why is this important?

The VET for School Students policy is important to South Australia as it will help to improve student outcomes for South Australians:

**SACE Completion**

In 2018 only 59% of Year 12 students completed their South Australian Certificate of Education.

**Post School Participation**

The proportion of young South Australians participating in post-school education training or employment has fallen from 70.6% in 2006 to 67.1% in 2016.

**Transition Time**

The average transition time from education to full-time work has significantly increased from 1 year in 1986 to 4.7 years in 2019.

**Unemployment Rate**

The average unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 years in South Australia over the 12 months to April 2019 was 13.2% and in some regions that figure is markedly greater.

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1. Department for Education, Senior School Retention and SACE Completion 2018
4. Department for Innovation and Skills
What are the key initiatives within the VET for School Students policy?

The VET for School Students policy adopts some of the key features of a world-class VET for school students system and groups the initiatives under three pillars:

1. Clearly articulated pathways
   - Industry endorsed Flexible Industry Pathways, including VET qualifications and apprenticeships and traineeships as career pathways to industry, funded by the state government and mapped to the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)
   - VET readiness orientation (VETRO) as the ‘gateway’ to Flexible Industry Pathways to ensure the students are prepared for embarking on the pathway
   - Enterprise and employability skills training mapped to SACE subjects
   - Simpler and streamlined funding arrangements

2. Enhanced career education
   - High quality career information and resources available to schools
   - Better marketing and promotional materials for schools and the community
   - Industry and employer immersion program for schools accessed through an online portal
   - World of Work Challenge for students
   - Streamlined processes for work experience and placements

3. Improved student outcomes
   - VET for schools capability building program to improve quality
   - VET skills clusters and workplace programs to support achievement of SACE
   - ePortfolio application for students to record their successes
   - Online community for students to share their successes
   - Destination data measures and tracking mechanisms to measure success
Why is the policy relevant to my school?

Implementation of the VET for School Students policy provides an opportunity for growth for every child in every class in every school. For government schools, the VET for School Students policy is part of the state government’s vision to become a world class education system.

It will enable secondary schools to provide good practice career education and quality VET to achieve the best outcomes for their students, including:

- High rates of SACE completion
- High rate of successful transition to post-school
- Low youth unemployment rates
- Low NEET - not in education, employment or training rates

Is this a national direction?

The VET for School Students policy is a state government initiative, however, there are national reforms to VET delivered to school students.

In 2019, the Australian government identified reforms to the VET system across states and territories.

These reforms also identified the need to align VET to job outcomes, ensure public confidence in the quality and value of VET, move it to parity with the higher education system and ensure accessibility of VET.

The national regulator of VET, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), has identified VET in schools as a target area where there will be a focus on systematic concerns that present the most significant risk to the quality of VET outcomes. This work will occur between 2019 and 2021.

When was the policy released and when will it be implemented?

The VET for School Students policy was released in October 2019 by the Minister for Education. Implementation timeframes have been modified after consultation and advice to accommodate schools unique contexts.

Implementation will be in place throughout 2020 and 2021 with the goal of ensuring that all schools are well positioned to have changes in place by 2022.
Why do we need to change what we have been doing?

The review of VET for school students conducted in South Australia in 2019 identified that VET delivered to school students is not of a consistently high quality, it is undervalued by the community and the delivery in schools is not well regarded by industry.

While there are some schools and regions that offer quality VET to school students that leads to employment outcomes, there are many opportunities for improvement to raise the standards across the education system.

For some schools change will be minimal. For others, there may need to be a reconfiguration of the VET programs on offer to students. Where change is significant, resources will be available to support the change in government schools.

What are the key changes that are being introduced?

A number of initiatives are being introduced to support secondary schools to provide high quality career education so that their students are well-informed and able to make decisions about their post-school pathways.

Flexible Industry Pathways (FIPs) are also being introduced from 2021 in industry sectors where there are entry level jobs for senior secondary school students.

FIPs include high quality VET qualifications delivered by RTOs and subsidised by the state government, and enterprise and employability skills training in preparation for employment by the industry. Students will complete their SACE as well as their FIP and in some cases will have the opportunities to work near full-time in their final year of school in an apprenticeship or traineeship.

The changes introduced by the implementation of the policy will assist schools to support students to complete their secondary schooling and successfully transition post-school.

What is quality VET?

Quality VET is designed by industry for training into skilled occupations within industry, suitable for school students and delivered to the standards set out in the VET Quality Framework.

VET qualifications are nationally recognised and designed to provide a pathway to a vocation. They give school students a head start in their careers within an industry sector.

VET qualifications should not be used as curriculum ‘fillers’ to achieve SACE or as a means of improving an ATAR without being related to a career pathway.

Providing VET qualifications that are not related to future career pathways is not in the students’ best interests, is wasteful of limited vocational training resources and devalues the purpose of VET.

As an alternative to a full VET qualification, short courses aligned to the SACE are an appropriate way to develop workplace skills and provide VET while contributing to SACE completion.

As part of the VET for School Students policy, quality VET qualifications within a Flexible Industry Pathway and quality VET skills clusters will be available to school students.
What VET qualifications are suitable for school students?

VET is competency-based and works by deeming a student either competent, or not yet competent at the end of the learning program. Students are required to provide evidence of each competence. This will involve actual work tasks, some of which must be done in a workplace.

Students need to be deemed competent in all units to achieve their full VET qualification.

Generally, VET qualifications up to and including certificate III are deemed an appropriate competency level for school students. However, in some cases, due to the nature of the competency required by industry, some certificate III VET qualifications are not appropriate for school students or must be delivered to school students through an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Is there a difference between VET and Vocational Learning?

Yes. VET enables students to acquire workplace skills through nationally recognised training described within an industry-developed training package or an accredited course.

There are 68 national training packages which include 1450 VET qualifications.

The achievement of a VET qualification signifies that a student has demonstrated competency against the skills and knowledge required to perform effectively in the workplace. VET is regulated by ASQA within the VET sector, and is identical to VET offered in any other context.

Vocational learning is general learning that has a vocational perspective. It includes any formal learning in a work-related context outside Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications. Through vocational learning secondary students can explore the world of work, identify career options, and plan their senior secondary education, training and tertiary education options.

What is high quality career education?

High quality career education includes access to structured career conversations, industry visits, industry speakers in schools, vocational learning and work experience; participation in career and industry information events and expos; and contextualised curriculum linked to occupations, careers and the world of work.

Students should be well informed and equipped to develop an individualised career action plan about their pathway aspirations before they reach senior secondary school.
How will the policy be implemented in government schools?

Implementation planning is well underway, with a focus on support for each school as they evolve their structures and courses over time.

The implementation processes will acknowledge the excellent work carried out in this area over the past 20 years and will be designed in full consultation with principals to minimise disruption and workload.

While some schools may need considerable support to bring about changes, others will require little support as change may be minimal.

Support to schools commences from March 2020.

What support is available to government schools to assist with implementation?

A central office team within the Further Education and Pathways directorate will ensure the following is available to schools:

- professional learning for key school personnel
- best practice VET guidelines
- best practice career education guidelines
- a central repository of tools, resources and information
- access to a panel of training providers, offering quality VET options with standard contracts and set pricing
- funding to support implementation and access and equity
- centralised organisation of regional careers events and expos
- materials for the World of Work Challenge; e-portfolio; online community and other initiatives within the policy
- access to systems to track and report on VET activity.

A field team within the Further Education and Pathways directorate will be located across the metropolitan and regional areas to provide clear advice and responsive support. This team will include:

- Industry engagement consultants to connect schools and students with employers and industry
- VET Advisors who are educationalists with knowledge of VET and schools
- Vocational Pathway Consultants who will work with regional schools and industry
- Principal Implementation Managers who will offer peer to peer support to principals.

The field team will support with career development planning and access to professional career counselling services and the introduction of the Flexible Industry Pathways in 2021.

These officers have started to contact schools to determine the support required.

Work is underway on communications and information packs, including exemplar case studies that can explain the practical implications of the changes over the 2 year period, reflecting all aspects of implementation such as HR, timetabling, trade training centres and funding.
How are young people being engaged in the design of the implementation?

The success of implementation is dependent on how the policy initiatives resonate with young people and their families. Co-designing the changes with young people as the users is an important part of this reform and the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Public Sector Innovation Lab have been engaged to test a number of concepts with young people.

How can I participate in the design of the implementation?

We are committed to working together with school leaders to ensure schools are well equipped to offer high quality VET and career education to their students.

There is an opportunity to participate in a project team, consultation forum or reference group as part of the design of implementation.

If you are interested in directly participating in the design and have any ideas to share, please submit your details by email to education.pathways@sa.gov.au.

What are the timeframes for implementation?

The Flexible Industry Pathways will commence in 2021 and there is an opportunity for schools to provide these to their students from term 1.

Full implementation of the VET for School Students policy is expected from term 1, 2022.

How will I be updated?

Regular communication with government schools will occur through existing communication channels, such as LinkEd and the intranet (edi). It is important leadership and staff in schools are proactive in using the information available to stay up to date. The VET for schools team who operate in the field and are aligned to partnerships will also be working closely with their allocated schools to keep everyone up to date.

What resources are available and where are they?

Resources on the policy will be available online as they are developed. Visit www.education.sa.gov.au/VETpathways for more information.