



DEVELOPMENT OF A QUEENSLAND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGY

DISCUSSION PAPER

Submission by the University of the Sunshine Coast

August 2023

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Executive Summary

The University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC) is pleased to provide a submission in response to the Queensland Government's Discussion Paper *Development of a Queensland Vocational Education and Training Strategy*.

Our submission first addresses the need for a **more aligned tertiary system**:

- Recommendation 1: The Queensland Government updated VET Strategy should recognise the important role that higher education institutions, particularly universities, play in the tertiary education and training system to drive further collaboration and integration between the two sectors, ultimately improving the education and training experience for all students and generating workplace ready graduates.

Remaining with that theme and recognising that VET and higher education are both critical to Australia's economic and social wellbeing, our submission further recommends opportunities for greater integration of these two sectors through:

Regional University Study Hubs

- Recommendation 2: Given the acknowledged fragmentation in the education sector, opportunities for collaboration should be fostered by government to ensure that new Queensland based Regional University Study Hubs enable and support TAFE and university collaboration.

Support and advocacy for AQF reform

- Recommendation 3: The Queensland Government collaborate with leadership in TAFE Queensland and Queensland universities to develop a consistent advocacy approach for AQF reform to enable better educational outcomes, with particular reference to regional and remote Queensland.

Integration through federal and state partnership

- Recommendation 4: The Queensland Government should recognise and support TAFE Queensland's opportunity to provide early leadership of reform, particularly in areas of national priority.

Alignment of inquiries

- Recommendation 5: All levels of government should consider the alignment of [the identified] inquiries, reviews, and reports to ensure a well-considered and integrated set of reforms that meet the needs of future students and national economic prosperity.

Our submission then addresses the Discussion Paper's four Focus Areas:

Focus Area 1: Delivering priority and future skills

Enhanced collaboration between VET, higher education, and industry

- Recommendation 6: TAFE Queensland should prioritise opportunities for dual awards with a focus on priority industries.
- Recommendation 7: The Queensland Government should fund pilot programs¹ in priority areas to enable TAFE and universities to collaborate on developing degree apprenticeships.

¹ <https://www.aigroup.com.au/education-training/centre-for-education-and-training/blog/degree-apprenticeships-get-under-way-in-queensland/>

Focus Area 2: Ensuring access for all Queenslanders

First Nations

- Recommendation 8: While the Brisbane, Cairns, Logan, and Gold Coast are serviced by both VET and higher education providers, the Queensland Government should consider 1) opportunities to ensure public transport links and digital connectivity enable Indigenous communities' seamless access from high school to post-secondary education options, and 2) advocating to the Australian Government for the establishment of a University Study Hub in Redlands, which could be co-located with TAFE and allow delivery of priority skills programs with better access for Indigenous peoples including the Quandamooka communities on the Moreton Bay islands.
- Recommendation 9: To avoid over representation of First Nations peoples in the lower Certificate levels, the Queensland Government should consider adjusting the Fee-Free TAFE qualifications list, considering the National Skills Agreement (NSA) Commonwealth funding (plus state and territory funding top-ups) for a further 300,000 TAFE and vocational education places to become fee-free.

Disability

- Recommendation 10: As the Disability Employment Strategy highlights, there is a need for a more joined-up approach across Disability Employment Services and NDIS funding and better integration with the tertiary education sector for the provision of specialised career transition services to students and graduates with disability.
- Recommendation 11: There is a need for more consistency in the support available to students with disability across the secondary and tertiary education sectors, particularly with respect to career advice, adoption of universal design for learning principles, and brokering for paid internships.
- Recommendation 12: The Universities Accord Interim Report has highlighted the potential benefits of the establishment of job brokers. This service should be available for both VET and higher education students and graduates and should incorporate specialist disability employment services to ensure students with disabilities can benefit.

Age

- Recommendation 13: The Queensland Government should work with the Australian Government, other states and territories, the education and training sector and industry to progress a national RPL system.

Regional and remote

- Recommendation 14: Regional University Study Hubs should enable regional and remote students to access a broader range of discipline areas and have access to both VET and university qualifications through the provision of infrastructure that support new modes of delivery (e.g. online and blended learning).

Focus Area 3: Working with employers and industry

Normalising cross-sector and industry collaboration

- Recommendation 15: The IAT model be considered as part of planning for TAFE Centres of Excellence in Queensland (and Regional/Suburban University Study Hubs) to ensure best use of infrastructure, resources, and outcomes.

Focus Area 4: Supporting VET pathways and job transitions

Schools engagement

- Recommendation 16: The Government consider how to support more holistic, innovative and research informed school engagement strategies and interventions, with greater support and involvement from industry, in areas of lower education and training participation rates and amongst equity groups.
- Recommendation 17: The Queensland Department of Education (DoE) continue to contribute to the Queensland Workforce Strategy through: 1) creation of a career development program for teachers and a career education program for students in Years 7 to 10 to help them understand their potential career options, 2) the appointment of Regional School Industry Partnership (RSIP) managers in education regions in 2023, and 3) supporting school career counsellors to ensure they have a contemporary understanding of jobs and educational requirements.

UniSC would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspect of our submission. If this is of interest, please contact Jason Mills, Head of Government Relations, on jmills3@usc.edu.au or 0415 950 619.

1. Introduction

The University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC) is pleased to provide a submission in response to the Queensland Government's Discussion Paper *Development of a Queensland Vocational Education and Training Strategy*.

In welcoming the Queensland Government's review of the VET system in Queensland, UniSC acknowledges the strong fundamentals of our tertiary education system and the important and unique role that regional universities play in meeting the education, training and research needs of regional communities in collaboration with the VET sector.

However, UniSC is concerned that the Queensland Government's Discussion Paper does not regard universities as a key stakeholder in Queensland's VET system. This is perplexing given the well accepted, increasingly discussed, view that Australia's tertiary education system would be significantly strengthened with greater collaboration and integration of the VET and higher education systems.

Indeed, the ongoing review of Australia's higher education system (the Australian Universities Accord (the Accord))² has heard that transitions between VET and higher education are fragmented and misaligned, making it difficult for students to navigate across sectors and obtain the skills they need. The Accord Interim Report has therefore highlighted the importance of greater integration of the higher education and VET sectors and is exploring how industry and the higher education and VET sectors can establish parity of esteem and collaborate more effectively. This includes in the development of innovative course content, and in providing more quality placements and work integrated learning across more courses.

1.1 About UniSC

UniSC was founded by its community in 1996 after Sunshine Coast residents campaigned for locally provided tertiary education opportunities. As the first greenfield university to open in Australia since 1975, UniSC has helped unlock the innovation, productivity and potential of its regional communities through the contributions from its 33,000 graduates and 17,500 current students studying a diverse offering of in-demand higher education programs.

Consistent with our mission to improve access to higher education in underserved locations, UniSC has strategically expanded its footprint into more regional communities, encompassing areas from Moreton Bay to the Fraser Coast. The University collaborates closely with all levels of government, regional leaders, industry, and other partners to ensure programs, research and support services align to create greater opportunities in all the areas it operates within.

In addition to two of UniSC's campuses being co-located with TAFE Queensland campuses (Gympie and Caboolture), the University is working with TAFE Queensland executives to develop a refreshed and broader collaboration agreement to capitalise on the numerous shared priorities across the two organisations.

On the world stage, UniSC is recognised by The Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings as a global leader in climate action, clean water sanitation, life on land, and life below water. This ranking comes alongside the Australian Research Council's recognition of UniSC as a producer of world-class research in 26 speciality areas, including environmental science, medical and health sciences, neuroscience, technology, and psychology.

Among public universities, UniSC is number one in Queensland³ and in the nation's top two, for overall educational experience. In the Good Universities Guide 2022/23, we have 13 five-star ratings

² <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>

³ [2021 Student Experience Survey Data](#)

from key areas of student satisfaction, for teaching quality, overall experience, learner resources, skills development, social equity, student support, first generation and learner engagement (postgraduate).

2. A more aligned tertiary system

UniSC believes VET and higher education are both critical to Australia's economic and social wellbeing and that they play distinct, yet complementary roles.

Universities must therefore be acknowledged by the Queensland Government as a key stakeholder in the State's VET system (and vice-versa), particularly in relation to ensuring opportunities that enable lifelong learning. The Accord Interim Report⁴ states that Australia's skills needs are growing and changing fast, with industry needs evolving and requiring skills and knowledge that cross the boundaries of education sectors. It is acknowledged that Australia's current policy, funding and regulation is fragmented across different institutions, levels of government, industries and locations.

UniSC strongly supports the Universities Accord considering further opportunities to strengthen engagement and integration of the two sectors.

Recommendation 1

The Queensland Government updated VET Strategy should recognise the important role that higher education institutions, particularly universities, play in the tertiary education and training system to drive further collaboration and integration between the two sectors, ultimately improving the education and training experience for all students and generating workplace ready graduates.

2.1 Regional University Study Hubs

The Australian Government has accepted an early recommendation of the Accord Interim Report to create additional Regional University Study Hubs and expand the model to suburban/outer metropolitan locations. These centres provide students the opportunity to upskill, reskill or skill for the first time without leaving their region.

Recommendation 2

Given the acknowledged fragmentation in the education sector, opportunities for collaboration should be fostered by government to ensure that new Queensland based Regional University Study Hubs enable and support TAFE and university collaboration. For example, current Skills Ministers' discussion regarding the development of nationally networked TAFE Centres of Excellence⁵, should consider co-location with university hubs, where appropriate, to enable better use of infrastructure, teaching delivery, student support and integrated offerings and pathways.

2.2 Support and advocacy for AQF reform

The Accord Interim Report has noted further consideration be given to:

- Setting targets for tertiary education participation and attainment, including for higher education, through consultation with Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) and the VET sector.
- Increasing delivery of preparatory programs, including across VET and universities, as pathways into higher education, with consistent recognition across all institutions.
- Improving the integration of higher education and VET to create new types of qualifications – starting in areas of national priority, e.g. clean energy, the care economy, and defence.
- Addressing barriers that prevent VET and higher education working together, especially in courses and institutions that involve both sectors.

⁴ <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/accord-interim-report>

⁵ <https://ministers.dewr.gov.au/oconnor/communique-meeting-federal-state-and-territory-skills-ministers-1>

The Accord Interim Report considers that reform to the AQF is also necessary to facilitate this collaboration. Clearer pathways are required due to the complexity of both sectors, including in how training packages and qualifications are developed and delivered, making it challenging to provide clear and seamless pathways between the two sectors. Reforming the AQF would improve pathway outcomes which is a key pre-requisite to uplifting pre and post school training and education participation rates.

Recommendation 3

The Queensland Government collaborate with leadership in TAFE Queensland and Queensland universities to develop a consistent advocacy approach for AQF reform to enable better educational outcomes, with particular reference to regional and remote Queensland.

2.3 Integration through federal and state partnership

Given that all Governments have now agreed to the vision and guiding principles for longer-term VET reform to commence in 2024, the timing of the development of the Queensland VET Strategy presents an opportunity to begin the process toward a more integrated system through federal and state partnership.

Recommendation 4

The Queensland Government should recognise and support TAFE Queensland's opportunity to provide early leadership of reform, particularly in areas of national priority.

2.4 Alignment of inquiries

All sectors and levels of government are presented with a unique opportunity over the coming decade to reform education outcomes and prioritise emerging and future skills needs. Current reviews contain considerable overlap that could not only provide enhanced student services, support and outcomes but also potential savings.

Recommendation 5

All levels of government should consider the alignment of the following inquiries, reviews, and reports to ensure a well-considered and integrated set of reforms that meet the needs of future students and national economic prosperity:

- The Australian Universities Accord
- Developing a Queensland Vocational Education and Training Strategy
- Inquiry on the Perceptions and Status of VET Training⁶
- Review of the Australian Qualifications Framework Final Report 2019⁷
- Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System Consultation⁸ (National School Reform Agreement)

3. Focus Area 1: Delivering priority and future skills

3.1 Enhanced collaboration between VET, higher education, and industry

Ensuring Australia has the skilled workforce needed for critical industries is a core pillar of the National Skills Agreement⁹. With a focus on essential sectors such as care and support (aged, disability, veterans and early childhood and education), clean economy, manufacturing and sovereign capability (including defence industries), construction, agriculture, hospitality, tourism,

⁶ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Employment_Education_and_Training/VETInquiry

⁷ <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-reviews-and-consultations/resources/review-australian-qualifications-framework-final-report-2019>

⁸ <https://www.education.gov.au/review-inform-better-and-fairer-education-system>

⁹ <https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/national-skills-agreement>

cybersecurity, and technology, more needs to be actioned in regard to collaboration between VET, higher education and industry to ensure future talent pipelines.

More than nine-in-ten new jobs are projected to require post-school qualifications¹⁰, reflecting the importance of tertiary education and skills development beyond secondary school so the right mix of skills needs to be offered across the VET and higher education system. Jobs and Skills Australia notes that this, combined with on-the-job training and lifelong learning, is critical to the functioning of our economy and to an individual's success in the labour market.

In its submission to the Inquiry into the Perceptions and Status of Vocational Education and Training, Jobs and Skills Australia noted that over the past year around 36% of total employment growth has been in occupations where university qualifications are the primary pathway, while just over 60% of total employment growth has been in occupations where VET qualifications are the primary pathway. The skill level with the projected strongest employment growth is for skill level 1 (commensurate with a Bachelor degree or higher), growing by 13.5% between 2021 and 2026.

UniSC's host communities place value in access to educational opportunities that lead to skills acquisition to enable career paths in current and future industries. The same value is true of employers who are invested in the development of talent pipeline and the ability to work collaboratively with education providers across the sector to create relevant educational programs that enable seamless transition and 'stackable', 'as needed' skills uplift and/or qualifications, some with accreditation requirements.

Further collaboration on joint delivery opportunities is necessary. UniSC believes dual awards provide great potential for delivering more efficient learning outcomes for students and producing job-ready graduates for industry, particularly in areas of skill shortage and emerging occupations like renewable energy. For example, UniSC has developed a dual aircraft maintenance award with TAFE Queensland.

Recommendation 6

TAFE Queensland should prioritise opportunities for dual awards with a focus on priority industries.

Recommendation 7

The Queensland Government should fund pilot programs¹¹ in priority areas to enable TAFE and universities to collaborate on developing degree apprenticeships.

4. Focus Area 2: Ensuring access for all Queenslanders

UniSC welcomes the Queensland Government's focus on improving access to training and notes this will require both demand and supply side policy measures. We argue that the greatest gains and return on investment will come from focusing effort on regional Queensland and equity cohorts who have both lower participation and attainment rates.

4.1 First Nations

New South Wales and Queensland are home to the largest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with the Indigenous share of the population in Queensland representing 4.6%¹².

Distance to education providers is a key challenge to raising VET and higher education participation rates, with the proportion of Indigenous adults currently attending an educational institution decreasing with increasing remoteness of usual residence – from 14% in major cities to 2.8% in very

¹⁰ Employment outlook Industry and occupation trends over the five years to November 2026, National Skills Commission

¹¹ <https://www.aigroup.com.au/education-training/centre-for-education-and-training/blog/degree-apprenticeships-get-under-way-in-queensland/>

¹² [ABS Census Data 2021](#)

remote areas. In non-remote areas, 12% of Indigenous adults were currently studying, compared with 3.5% in remote areas¹³.

In relation to metropolitan Indigenous students, the Australian Government is legislating to ensure all Indigenous students in Australia are guaranteed a Commonwealth Supported Place at a university of their choice (for Bachelor level courses other than medicine), when accepted into their chosen course of study. Coupled with free apprenticeships, fee-free TAFE, and the Queensland Government's First Nations Training Strategy¹⁴ this provides a funding mechanism for progression through post-secondary education options.

Recommendation 8

While the Brisbane, Cairns, Logan, and Gold Coast are serviced by both VET and higher education providers, the Queensland Government should consider:

- Opportunities to ensure public transport links and digital connectivity enable Indigenous communities' seamless access from high school to post-secondary education options.
- Advocating to the Australian Government for the establishment of a University Study Hub¹⁵ in Redlands. This Hub could be co-located with TAFE and allow delivery of priority skills programs with better access for Indigenous peoples including the Quandamooka communities on the Moreton Bay islands.

Recommendation 9

To avoid over representation of First Nations peoples in the lower Certificate levels, the Queensland Government should consider adjusting the Fee-Free TAFE qualifications list, considering the National Skills Agreement (NSA) Commonwealth funding (plus state and territory funding top-ups) for a further 300,000 TAFE and vocational education places to become fee-free.

4.2 Disability

The most recent VET data reported by NCVER¹⁶ shows that despite 18% of the Australian population reporting that they have a disability, only 9% are employed, and 4% are enrolled in VET. Of those students with disability enrolled in VET, there was a 40% completion rate compared to 46% of people without a disability and a subject load pass rate of 74% compared to 81% for students without a disability. Only 50% of students with a disability who completed a VET qualification in 2021 reported that they had an improved employment status after training compared with 67% of students without a disability. Despite this, 87% of VET students with a disability reported that they were satisfied with the overall quality of the training they received, which is only marginally lower than the 89% reported by students without a disability.

The underrepresentation of students participating in VET and continuing low employment rates of people with disabilities are in part related to challenges highlighted in the Employ My Ability Disability Employment Strategy – an Associated Plan under the National Disability Strategy (2021-2031)¹⁷, which provides a guiding framework for employers, government, and the broader community to increase employment outcomes for people with disability. These challenges include the lack of appropriate career development and transition to work activities while at school (for

¹³ <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-06-educational-participation>

¹⁴ <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/training/docs-data/strategies/first-nations-training-strategy>

¹⁵ <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education/support-students/suburban-university-study-hubs>

¹⁶ NCVER (2023). *Student equity in VET 2021: participation, achievement and outcomes*. NCVER, Adelaide. https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0036/9676701/Student-equity-in-VET-Infographics.pdf

¹⁷ Australian Government (2023). *Employ My Ability – the Disability Employment Strategy*. <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/disability-employment-strategy>

example, participation in work experience) and the need for more confident and informed support networks, including teachers and career advisors.

Lower completion rates in tertiary education are partly attributed to a lack of support and the reluctance of students with disability to self-identify or access specialised supports. This points to the need for tertiary providers to implement the principles of universal design for learning and ensure mainstream services, including careers advice, are inclusive and work with a range of disability and employer services to ensure a joined-up approach to support.

While there are dedicated programs available to universities, such as the University Specialist Employment Program (UESP)¹⁸, there does not appear to be a comparable program for VET providers, and the uptake of USEP by students with disabilities is variable. One of the challenges is that programs such as USEP target students in their later years of study, whereas students with disability need to be gaining work skills throughout their studies with the appropriate supports in place to maximise their chances to succeed. The evidence suggests that paid internships can better prepare graduates with disability for longer-term employment, yet as the Australian Network on Disability reports¹⁹, students with disability often find it difficult to secure work experience in their career of choice. Graduates also report discrimination in the workplace and challenges in negotiating reasonable adjustments. The Stepping Into Program²⁰, which is a paid internship program designed specifically for university students with disability, reports positive outcomes for participants who have found that their career prospects after graduation improve, with some graduates securing ongoing work with the organisations they intern with.

However, graduates also report experiences of lack of support and discrimination in the workplace, so there is also a need for community education programs targeting employers. It should be noted that the Australian Association of Graduate Employers reports that 56% of graduate employers have advised that they plan to hire more graduates in 2023, and many indicated an intention and desire to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in their graduate recruitment programs²¹. This demand must be met with ongoing supply and appropriate education programs to ensure they can provide appropriate support for employees with disability.

Recommendation 10

As the Disability Employment Strategy highlights, there is a need for a more joined-up approach across Disability Employment Services and NDIS funding and better integration with the tertiary education sector for the provision of specialised career transition services to students and graduates with disability.

Recommendation 11

There is a need for more consistency in the support available to students with disability across the secondary and tertiary education sectors, particularly with respect to career advice, adoption of universal design for learning principles, and brokering for paid internships.

Recommendation 12

The Universities Accord Interim Report has highlighted the potential benefits of the establishment of job brokers. This service should be available for both VET and higher education students and graduates and should incorporate specialist disability employment services to ensure students with disabilities can benefit.

¹⁸ <https://www.adcet.edu.au/resources/usep-and-tsep/usep-toolkit>

¹⁹ Australian Network on Disability (2021). Levelling the playing field for students with disability. [Levelling the playing field for students with disability | myfuture](#)

²⁰ <https://and.org.au/students-jobseekers/start-an-internship/>

²¹ Australian Association of Graduate Employers. (2022). Market Snapshot Survey. Camberwell, VIC: AAGE.

4.3 Age

UniSC encourages the Queensland Government to recognise the implications for policy and funding aimed at lifting participation rates of mature age students given they are now the dominant student type. For example, in 2022, 84% of TAFE students residing in Queensland were aged 20 or older, with 46% being 25 or older²². Regional universities have witnessed the same trend. In 2022, over 60% of UniSC students were over 20 years of age.

For mature age people without an ATAR, or who are otherwise unable to be directly accepted into a VET or higher education degree, alternative entry pathways like bridging courses can help prospective students to gain the confidence and prerequisites needed to succeed in most programs of study.

However, UniSC believes the real opportunity to leverage alternative entry pathways to improve the accessibility of education and training drive higher participation rates lies in improving our recognition of prior learning (RPL) system. The Australian Universities Accord Interim Report acknowledges the importance of an improved, national RPL system and we encourage the Queensland Government to advocate for and contribute to this outcome.

Recommendation 13

The Queensland Government should work with the Australian Government, other states and territories, the education and training sector and industry to progress a national RPL system.

4.4 Regional and remote

Regional and remote training delivery differs by state, though remote training is most commonly delivered in Queensland and Western Australia. Jobs and Skills Australia's 2023 Regional and Rural VET report²³ noted:

- VET students in regional Australia are more likely to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students or from a lower socioeconomic background than their counterparts from major cities.
- VET students in regional and remote areas are more likely to undertake lower-level qualifications than those in major cities.
- Students in remote areas are more likely to undertake qualifications at the Certificate II and below level (32% of all enrolments compared to 24% for all Australia), while those studying a diploma or higher VET qualification in outer regional and remote areas is less than 8%.
- Analysis of VET concentration by occupation shows that VET attainment (as the highest qualification) for the same occupation group increases with remoteness. This means that individuals working in regional and remote areas who work in similar roles to those in the city are more likely to be VET qualified than to hold other (e.g. higher education) qualifications, reflecting labour market opportunities and competition.
- Engagement with local study options increases with remoteness, with a higher share of students accessing RTOs in the same Statistical Area Level 2 (as per the Australian Statistical Geography Standard) compared to those located in major cities. This likely reflects a combination of practical proximity, travel and training options.
- The analysis of access to local training options also shows that often local delivery does not match local demand. This means that students are travelling outside their local region to study their preferred qualification.

²² <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/total-vet-students-and-courses-2022>

²³ <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/reports/vocational-education-and-training-regional-rural-and-remote-australia>

Recommendation 14

Regional University Study Hubs should enable regional and remote students to access a broader range of discipline areas and have access to both VET and university qualifications through the provision of infrastructure that support new modes of delivery (e.g. online and blended learning).

5. Focus Area 3: Working with employers and industry

5.1 Normalising cross-sector and industry collaboration

Many examples of cross-sector and industry collaboration exist, but work needs to be done to ensure these are normalised and not exceptions. While it is true that a review of AQF and RPL will assist with the creation of such collaborations, the Queensland Government should further support these initiatives to maximise their success.

Current examples include:

- UniSC and Aviation Australia (Bachelor of Engineering Technology)
- Central Queensland University BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (Certificate II in Autonomous Technologies).
- The Institute of Applied Technology (IAT) model: A new tertiary education offering from the NSW Government.
 - TAFE NSW, UTS, Macquarie University and Microsoft (IAT in Digital Tech)
 - Western Sydney University and CPB Contractors (IAT in Construction)

The IAT model, where TAFE has partnered with universities and industry to provide a new blended approach to learn from microskills to degrees, allows for flexible pathways and industry required outcomes.

Recommendation 15

The IAT model be considered as part of planning for TAFE Centres of Excellence in Queensland (and Regional/Suburban University Study Hubs) to ensure best use of infrastructure, resources, and outcomes.

6. Focus Area 4: Supporting VET pathways and job transitions

The Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032²⁴ (QWS) notes the importance of skills development pathways (VET and university) and highlights examples of success partnering with the university sector to increase collaboration between government, universities and industry. There are some excellent examples and further growth of VET and university engagement is required.

6.1 Schools engagement

Important discussions and decisions about post-school education, training and employment options are made during the schooling years. Acknowledging the wide range of existing interactions with schools by governments, education and training providers to help inform student choices, UniSC believes there is more that can be done to reach this important cohort before they form firm views and make decisions on post school options.

Building a talent pipeline for our regions requires engagement of both primary and secondary education stakeholders. Several successful examples that assist to broaden school students' knowledge of future jobs and industries include:

- Gateway to Industry Schools Program (GISP)²⁵
- VETiS²⁶

²⁴ <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/employment/support-employers/workforce-strategy/about>

²⁵ <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/training/employers/gateway-schools>

²⁶ <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/training/providers/funded/vetis>

- Localised VET models, for example:
 - Dalby State High School (DSHS) 'Trades future' program
 - Kelvin Grove State College (KGSC) 'Health Highway' program

Selection of UniSC outreach programs:

- Primary and secondary outreach programs²⁷
 - The Explore program²⁸: a creative approach for developing the breadth of students' career aspirations through a scaffolded suite of lessons for primary school students in Years 4, 5 and 6.
 - Mindset-Do²⁹: designed to introduce our students (years 4-6 and years 7-12) to the challenge and discovery of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
 - Creative Writing Excellence Program³⁰: practice-based program designed to inspire student-writers to embrace their creativity and develop their understanding of narrative. The program equips participants (year 6 and years 7-11) with the fundamentals of creative writing, while developing their analytical and grammar skills for use in their wider education.
 - Emerge program³¹: designed to develop the breadth of high school students' (years 7-10) career aspirations.
 - Headstart³²: allows senior high school students to study first year university subjects and gain credit towards a UniSC degree.
- Non School Leaver programs
 - Equip workshops³³: Designed for those thinking about taking the first steps to study at university or TAFE.
 - Tertiary Preparation Pathway (TPP)³⁴: a bridging program that allows students to experience university life before jumping into a full degree.

As part of a new Queensland VET Strategy, UniSC would like to see innovative strategies to both scale existing school outreach programs that are working well or replace underperforming activity.

School interventions should be more holistic and evidence based, with greater support and involvement from industry to showcase future jobs and career prospects, including in their local regions. Effort should be prioritised in areas of lower education and training participation rates and amongst equity groups.

We also think more effort needs to be directed to primary school outreach. For example, recent UniSC research indicates that girls as young as eight are prematurely excluding STEM-related study and work options, due to negative images they have of the field and their own abilities in STEM subjects³⁵.

²⁷ <https://www.usc.edu.au/community/schools-engagement/outreach-programs-for-schools/primary-outreach-programs>

²⁸ <https://www.usc.edu.au/community/schools-engagement/outreach-programs-for-schools/primary-outreach-programs/explore>

²⁹ <https://mindset-do.edu.au/>

³⁰ <https://www.usc.edu.au/community/schools-engagement/outreach-programs-for-schools/primary-outreach-programs/creative-writing-excellence-program>

³¹ <https://www.usc.edu.au/community/schools-engagement/outreach-programs-for-schools/secondary-outreach-programs/careers/emerge>

³² <https://www.usc.edu.au/study/courses-and-programs/headstart>

³³ <https://www.usc.edu.au/study/how-to-apply/pathways-to-study/university-preparation/equip-workshops>

³⁴ <https://www.usc.edu.au/study/courses-and-programs/tertiary-preparation-pathway>

³⁵ [Primary school program addresses STEM gender gap | UniSC | University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia](#)

Recommendation 16

The Government consider how to support more holistic, innovative and research informed school engagement strategies and interventions, with greater support and involvement from industry, in areas of lower education and training participation rates and amongst equity groups

Recommendation 17

The Queensland Department of Education (DoE) continue to contribute to the Queensland Workforce Strategy through:

- Creation of a career development program for teachers and a career education program for students in Years 7 to 10 to help them understand their potential career options.
- The appointment of Regional School Industry Partnership (RSIP) managers in education regions in 2023. Supporting school career counsellors to ensure they have a contemporary understanding of jobs and educational requirements.