



Steven Hodge  
 President, AVETRA

**“** In essence, referencing is about acknowledging where you get your ideas, facts and figures from. It is ultimately about intellectual honesty.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### To reference or not to reference...

An irritating thing about writing up research – whether for Research Today or journals from major publishers like AVETRA's own *International Journal of Training Research* – is referencing. The writing is difficult enough without adding the burden of following a detailed referencing style. The temptation is there to give way to frustration, or to somehow minimise task of referencing. We might even ask, why bother? Plenty of information we access and use in VET has no referencing at all, or only the occasional reference. And then, things we read often don't get too hung up on how the referencing is done. It might just be to mention the name of a writer or report or book or idea. Isn't that enough? Why all the rigmarole about referencing conventions?

I suggest this whole question about referencing has two main sides. There is the rationale for referencing – why do it at all? – and then the other side is the 'craft' of applying a certain referencing style or convention.

In essence, referencing is about acknowledging where you get your ideas, facts and figures from. It is ultimately about intellectual honesty. However, it's not that easy to separate what we ourselves think up and the ideas we get from other people. If the old saying is true, that 'there is nothing new under the sun' (Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text, 1996, Ecclesiastes 1:9) then maybe the ideas we come up with might just be a rehash of something old that we forget we've heard or read. If that's the case, then intellectual honesty about where our ideas come from is a never-ending task and we'd never get to think or say anything truly new!

Fortunately, common sense comes to our rescue with a rule of thumb that terms and ideas which are already out there in general circulation generally don't need to be referenced. 'Training packages' or 'student-centred learning' or 'competency-based training' are all ideas that are well-known in VET so can be used without constant referencing. But if you were talking to a group of engineers or childcare workers about these ideas, referencing becomes more relevant. In addition, if we started to investigate one of these terms for a VET audience, then we would be interested in where an idea comes from in the first place and how it has changed over time. If we start using terms that are fairly new in the VET space, like 'vocational streams' (Buchanan, Yu, Marginson & Wheelahan, 2009) then we really should reference them.

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Overall, new or special terms and ideas should be referenced if we are writing about them. At least we know where we got them from. Another good thing about this kind of intellectual honesty is that your readers have an opportunity to follow up on these new or special ideas.

An example of a problem that arises if people don't reference concerns the concept of 'dimensions of competency'. People learning about CBT in the Australian VET setting often learn that competency has four dimensions: task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills and job/role environment skills. I remember learning about this when I was doing my BSZ qualification at good old Onkaparinga TAFE in the early 2000s. To me, the idea of these dimensions was really interesting and I wanted to know more. Unfortunately, the trail had long since gone cold. Nobody could tell me where they came from.

Later, when I started researching VET, I discovered the 'Job Competence Model' that was initially developed by David Mathews and Bob Mansfield in the UK (Mansfield & Mitchell, 1996). This is where the four dimensions idea comes from, and I was able to learn that the authors were struggling to develop a rich way of talking about competency that got away from so-called 'behavioural' ways of talking about competency. Now, I don't mean to say that my TAFE learning materials were wrong for not ferreting this out, or that the government policy and competency documents that include the four dimensions should always reference the source, but it is actually a good idea to let people know these ideas haven't fallen from the sky or that scientists have discovered them. It is good to know the source so that we can learn more if we want to, but also to know they are created by fallible creatures like you and I and are therefore not the last word on the topic.

The other side of referencing is the slog of getting used to using something like APA7 referencing. It's a craft, so it doesn't come easily but gets easier. Using a

referencing convention has its benefits. A referencing convention actually saves time. For instance, I could have just said that I discovered the 'job competence model' (Mansfield & Mitchell, 1996), and if you know the APA7 drill, you'll know to go to the end of discussion where you'll find the full reference and from there be able to follow up on the idea yourself.

If you have to use, e.g. APA7, there are many guides – often university libraries have a freely accessible resources you can just Google – but when you have an example journal, then you can just see with your own eyes how the referencing is actually done. AVETRA's *International Journal of Training Research* uses APA7. That means authors are required to use that convention if they want to publish in the journal, but it also means there are examples of how you actually do it. At the same time, like any craft it is easy to make mistakes, and it's a learning curve.

What about *Research Today*? What convention does it use? Well, this is a new kind of publication and we are still settling questions like how many rules to impose on authors new to writing up their research. But we do want our readers to have a decent chance of following up on the source of ideas presented by writers. In other words, we embrace the essence of referencing – the rationale – and ideally our authors will use a consistent approach (e.g. APA7). ■

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## FROM THE EDITOR

### Welcome to another edition of *Research Today*

I'm absolutely delighted by the range of papers in this edition: we have a range of fascinating research topics and projects from researchers with different perspectives and different levels of experience.

That is the goal of *Research Today*: to provide a forum for research that can be applied, that can positively impact the professional practice of you or your industry or community partners. This platform is for researchers at all levels to tell their stories. It is a forum to disseminate the lessons learned through structured inquiry so that they can be applied elsewhere across our sector and beyond.

Recently, contributors to our May 2021 edition of *Research Today* presented their research in an online conference forum, *Research Today @ OctoberVET*. I was thrilled to host the event and found myself inspired anew by the presentation of this research in a different medium. Participants in the session asked probing questions of our presenters, and provided warm and appreciative feedback.

The recording of the *Research Today @ OctoberVET* event can be accessed here: [youtu.be/du4FitJf6oQ](https://youtu.be/du4FitJf6oQ)

Time and again, I am nourished by my interactions with researchers and research in the VET sector, here in Australasia and across the globe. AVETRA unites a community of practice, and provides forums like OctoberVET and *Research Today* to bring us closer to each other.

Looking back at previous editions of *Research Today* ([avetra.org.au/pages/research-today.html](https://avetra.org.au/pages/research-today.html)) I noticed that the magazine is 15 years young. It feels good to be part of a long history of passionate VET researchers. Of course, we evolve through time.

This edition welcomes Paul Boys to the *Research Today* editorial team. Paul is the Director of the Gippsland Tech School in Victoria, and his research informs his passionate VET practice. Welcome and thank you, Paul!

Finally, thank you to all the contributors to this edition of *Research Today*. Your willingness to share your work enriches and inspires the work of others.

Stay safe, everyone! ■



Andrew Williamson,  
Editor,  
*Research Today*

## FROM THE ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The opportunity to assist with the review of this quarters AVETRA Research Today papers has been a wonderful experience which has re-affirmed how passionate and committed our VET educators are to making sure that students are the centre of our attention.

We are truly lucky to have such dedicated and inquisitive educators who are striving to improve and refine their practice and further influence the policy settings which govern its operations. The challenges of the past 20 months have been profound but VET practitioners have led from the front to maintain their standing as champions of applied learning backed by methodical research and a desire to give their best.

I am looking forward to assisting with the editing of future editions. ■

*Paul is the Director of Gippsland Technical School in Victoria.*



Paul Boys,  
Associate Editor  
*Research Today*

## AVETRA'S REPOSITORY OF RESEARCH RESOURCES

### Ever wondered how to begin research, or how you yourself got started on your research journey?

If so, you are not alone! Many early career researchers in the VET sector have been expressing the need for some means of readily accessing resources that would help them get started. This repository has been developed for you.

Check out the range of research resources on the AVETRA website:

<https://avetra.org.au/pages/resources.html>

# Supporting Teacher Wellbeing in the Classroom

Karen Cook, Rosanna Matovinovic  
and Fiona Wahr

## Context

Student mental health issues have significant impact on learning and engagement. Teachers respond to and manage a wide range of student attitudes, behaviours and issues in the classroom. In some instances, students may present with behaviours associated with diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health issues which can intensify demands on teachers. The complexity of these needs often impact the classroom environment as a whole, and on teachers working in these diverse learning contexts, despite teachers' experience, training and professional commitment.

This research sought to investigate an approach to support teacher wellbeing within this context. Teachers at a large vocational education provider reported increasing numbers of students with complex mental health and related issues, such as learning difficulties, impacting on the learning environment in relation to classroom management, group dynamics and student outcomes. Further, the provider's Student Services department identified an increased number of teacher requests seeking help, advice and intervention to effectively managing student classroom behaviour. Teachers also reported increased stress levels associated with working within these classroom settings and managing student expectations and requirements.

Miller and Nguyen (2008) considered the effects on teachers dealing with students' complex issues in the classroom, while Gillard (2017) examined increasing numbers of students presenting with mental health challenges in the classroom. These studies encourage teachers to proactively assist students and advise teachers on how they can do this. The literature, however, is largely silent on the need for and strategies to assist and support teachers as they encounter and deal with these additional student needs.

Within educational settings, teachers are the main student point of contact. The student's journey is aligned to the teacher and their capacity to deliver quality training (Costa, Park & Kira, 2021). Thus, research into teacher wellbeing is worth pursuing. Teacher wellbeing does not have a single agreed definition within the literature, although it clearly relates to a teacher's capacity to bring energy and a mindful stance to their work (Costa, Park & Kira, 2021) and their positive responses to work

(Granziera, Collie & Martin, 2021). For the specific purposes of the project, teacher wellbeing is viewed as teachers feeling competent, safe, and supported where they are required to manage challenging behaviours in the classroom.

## The project

An institutional seeding grant provided the opportunity to undertake a limited study enabling a 'real time' snapshot of teacher experiences in the classroom, and the opportunity for those teachers to reflect on and reappraise these experiences. No previous studies were found to have been undertaken in the vocational education sector where teachers utilize and reflect on real time classroom experience to create dynamic classrooms. This project was designed to shine a light on teachers and how they might deal with distress and the emotional climates emanating from learning environments involving vulnerable students and student groups.

“ Within educational settings, teachers are the main student point of contact. The student's journey is aligned to the teacher and their capacity to deliver quality training.

Clinical supervision is recognised within some areas of the health sector as an essential component of a practitioner's continuing professional development. Clinical supervision is a formal process where a trained clinical supervisor facilitates sessions to address complex professional issues. It creates an environment

where professionals can safely, openly and confidentially question and appraise their practice, and seek new approaches to recurring issues (Miller and Nguyen, 2008). For this small study, clinical supervision was identified as a potential approach to support teacher wellbeing in the classroom. It is noted that the term 'clinical supervision of teachers' refers to a wholly different process. To avoid confusion, this study uses the term Facilitated Peer Support Program (FPSP) describing the practice of health sector clinical supervision where it is utilised amongst professional teachers.

An innovative FPSP was developed and delivered across five weeks in one-hour blocks. An external professional was engaged to facilitate the program. The facilitator is an appropriately experienced and qualified organisational psychologist with vocational education sector teaching experience. Program participants were a self-selected group of teachers from a range of course areas.

Specifically, the research project aimed to better understand how a clinical supervision program (FPSP) supports teachers in managing classroom interactions and thereby contribute positively to teacher wellbeing.

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## Research method

A program evaluation methodology (Patton, 1984) was applied to the FPSP to determine what value the program offered teachers within the research context. This involved first identifying a basis for comparison going into the program. This involved participants, prior to their involvement in the FPSP, describing the nature of working in challenging classroom environments, including the challenging behaviours teachers experience, strategies teachers use to manage challenging classrooms, support teachers see as available and use, and any other supports teachers would like. Participants would then participate in the FPSP. Following completion of the program participants would be invited to share their experiences and their responses to the program, including whether FPSP offered value to supporting teacher wellbeing in classroom contexts associated with the study. To facilitate this data collection each participant was invited to complete a survey before and after taking part in the FPSP. The surveys were designed using a combination of closed and open ended questions to qualitatively identify the range of teacher background, experiences, perspectives and observations, which when analysed, would respond to the research aims. Human ethics research approval was granted for this study through Melbourne Polytechnic's human ethics approval process.

## Results

Of the 12 teachers enrolled for the five FPSP sessions, nine attended the first session, with an average of seven teachers attending the remaining sessions. A selection of responses is provided for each topic area

### Pre-FPSP survey results showed:

- Ten teachers completed the pre-survey.
- Participant teachers' experience ranged between 3 and 11 years.
- Participants were volunteered from a range of department areas.

Responses relating to classroom behaviour challenges faced by teachers.

- 26 challenges were identified regarding managing student issues, 8 of which were identified by more than one teacher including mental health of individual students translating to their behaviour in the classroom, social media usage, large class sizes, student disengagement and student anxiety.
- 24 challenges relating to behaviours influencing class dynamics were identified. Multiple teachers identified disruptive behaviour and student disagreements requiring teacher intervention.

- The majority of the participants felt these challenges negatively affected teacher wellbeing.
- A number of teachers reported feeling unsupported, where they were left to informally debrief with colleagues who were possibly also feeling distressed, without focus on solutions or alternative strategies and where they were told "tomorrow is a new day – you'll be OK".
- Teachers suggested 14 approaches to support others, with only one (the Employee Assistance Program) available at that time at the institution.
- Teachers sought strategies and skills to deal with student problem behaviours and challenges.
- Teachers hoped participation in the program would lead to better systems/supports for teachers and would raise awareness of the issues confronting them.

Teachers identified the following barriers to their participation in the FPSP:

- The required time commitment on top of long teaching duties
- The difficulty of finding a convenient meeting time and location for all teachers.
- Some were unsure of what to expect and wanted further detail and clarification. Others expressed an element of scepticism about the genuineness of the program, observing the institution provided other wellbeing related professional development sessions without follow through. They viewed such professional development as tokenistic, and initially considered this program as more of the same.

### Post-FPSP survey results showed:

- Nine teachers completed the post-survey.

Teachers identified the following benefits arising from their participation in the FPSP:

- Strategies for dealing with challenging student behaviours, including identification of issues, communication, referral and debriefing.
- New information and techniques to use with students and to engage management with the issues.
- The ability to respond to students and to work with managers. The majority of participants said that they had already started or intended to implement strategies obtained through program.
- Connections with peers from other departments were made and strategies on how to support each other.
- Highlighting the need for comprehensive 'on boarding' for new staff in class room management and need for regular re fresher training for current staff were workshopped.

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- Interest in some of pursuing further resources, e.g. from the library.
- All participants reported the program offered an appropriate support model and would aid in staff retention, especially for new teachers.

Teachers identified the following attributes of the FPSP in supporting the positive outcomes:

- Importance of a safe space to openly discuss concerns.
- The mix of staff from various departments enabled broader and more robust conversations. A number of teachers commented that they felt they could not speak freely in their own departments so having a forum like this was helpful.
- Participants were impressed with the facilitator's skills in unravelling the intricacies of interpersonal interactions and the direction and framework of the sessions.
- The open ended, teacher led approach where teachers were able to talk and were listened to.
- Provision of handouts and a booklist.

Teachers reported the following suggestions and improvements for future programs:

- Development of a framework and structure for an ongoing program.
- Inclusion of prior reading and session outlines would have enabled them to be better prepared.
- Offering longer sessions over a longer period, as they said it took time to develop confidence in the process.

Overall:

- Participants reported an aim to keep the group running beyond the project, based on the trust developed amongst participants.
- All participants wanted to see this program (or similar) offered in the future with smaller groups.

## Discussion

The study shows teachers are aware of, experience and are concerned about the impacts of challenging student behaviours on their teaching and for themselves. Of concern is that teachers report feeling unsupported and lacking in resources to deal with these issues. The issues appear complex and multifaceted, as well as highly dynamic, likely to lead to teacher stress and subsequent negative impacts for individual teachers and educational institutions. The study suggests a strong need for initiatives to assist teachers to mediate challenging behaviours in their classrooms and to minimise the impacts on teachers.

This study sought to understand if the FPSP could offer teachers a worthwhile mechanism to address these challenges. Pre-program data indicates participants came to the FPSP seeking strategies to address the classroom issues they were facing and to alleviate the impact these were having on them personally. Despite teachers reporting initial concern about the value of the FPSP, teachers found the program valuable. Strong teacher attendance, despite logistical challenges for some, as well as teachers wanting to extend the program indicates teacher engagement and commitment to the FPSP.

Two key elements of the FPSP approach were reported by teachers as contributing to teacher wellbeing (their capacity to feeling competent, safe, and supported when managing challenging behaviours in the classroom). First, teachers especially valued the program's provision of practical guidance and resources for dealing with classroom issues. The survey results also show teachers especially valued the building of a collegial (although from different departments), trusting and safe space where they felt understood, heard and supported by the facilitator and interactions amongst participants.

Of significance is how these two elements appear to have a mutually enabling reciprocity. Discussion around resources and strategies enables a mechanism for sharing experiences and socially constructed meaning to develop. Key to the simultaneous provision of these elements is facilitation by an appropriately skilled professional to provide objectivity, a structured program of activity and to encourage and manage group interactions.

Further research is needed to understand the full term impact of the FPSP approach. The study reported teachers' immediate positive reactions, stated learnings and in some cases, reports of change. Follow up research, however, would show if the program achieves broader and ongoing impacts on teacher wellbeing. Additionally, positive program impacts might be improved with more and longer sessions, easier arrangements for teachers to attend, and alignments with other professional development offerings.

Whilst the FPSP requires further research, this study suggests the program can assist institutions to promote teacher wellbeing through:

- Improved professional relationships and teamwork
- Opportunities to reflect and link knowledge and teaching practice
- Increased teaching confidence
- Professional skill development
- Greater self-awareness and understanding.

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## Conclusion

Based on an established clinical supervision model regularly used with health professionals, the study suggests FPSP offers a worthwhile approach to responding to the important issue of teacher wellbeing. The FPSP provided teachers with two mutually complementary supports; the practical resources and strategies for dealing with challenging student behaviours in the classroom, as well as a safe environment to share experiences, discuss resources and strategies and to provide support to each other, and thus promoting teacher wellbeing. ■

## Acknowledgements

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## Models for independent validation and moderation of assessment: using history and Zoom

Francesca Beddie

In 2020, the draft VET roadmap compiled by the Skills Senior Officials' Network (SSON) envisaged a 'new system for assessment to be endorsed and invested in by industry' and foreshadowed trials of various models (Skills Senior Officials' Network 2020, p.6). With assessment on the agenda again, the SSON approved NCVER's proposal for a project investigating how registered training organisations (RTOs) conduct independent moderation<sup>1</sup> and validation of assessment (IMVA) and what industry involvement they have in these processes.

The project's research questions were:

- What are current internal and external independent validation practices?
- How satisfied are stakeholders with these approaches?
- What are the potential barriers and facilitators in implementing these approaches at the national level?

Conducted in 2020, this qualitative research project involved a desktop review of the literature and semi-structured interviews with a selection of public, private and community RTOs around the country, as well as others involved in the national training system.

Phase one of the project delivered:

- a literature review of Australian policy, reviews and research written up as [an annotated timeline](#)
- a [review of international experience](#) in Europe, UK and New Zealand
- an issues paper *independent validation of assessment: challenging the stalemate* circulated to the project advisory committee (unpublished).

As well as setting out the key policies, reviews, pilots and research relevant to independent validation of assessment, the annotated timeline demonstrates the stalling of reform in vocational education and training (VET) during the last 20 years. This trend is not confined to VET. The Grattan Institute's survey of barriers to reform (Daley, J (2021) *Gridlock: Removing barriers to policy reform*, Grattan Institute) shows how politics and public opinion, the 24/7 media cycle, budgetary considerations and policy capability have also prevented governments introducing new measures, especially unpopular ones.

In the case of independent validation of assessment,

<sup>1</sup> Moderation, not included in the Standards for RTOs, was little mentioned in the interviews.

“...the timeline suggests the complex governance arrangements of the VET system – involving federal and state financial commitments.

which is just one of many cogs in the VET quality machine, the obstacles are less party political. Nor is IMVA the subject of media interest. Instead, the timeline suggests the complex governance arrangements of the VET system – involving federal and state financial commitments – and the increasingly prominent rhetoric about an industry-led system can act as a brake on reform. The stasis becomes even more explicable when you add to this: reluctance to invest in the VET workforce; the lack of continuity in the Commonwealth policy arena, where VET responsibilities regularly move from one government department to another; and, the aftermath of VET FEE-HELP rorts, when VET did grab the headlines, and which prompted a strong focus on compliance.

The annotated timeline also exposed a lack of corporate memory in VET policy circles, with the same questions being posed and receiving the same answers, and the lessons from pilots being lost (or perhaps buried because they had budgetary implications). This in turn shows the benefit of including historical thinking in the policy toolkit to avoid needless reinvention of the wheel.

Overall, the 2020/21 project did not uncover anything new. Instead, the messages from current VET practitioners reinforce the findings from previous work:

- Compliance not continuous improvement tends to be the main driver for independent validation of assessment, although validation is acknowledged to be good business practice.
- The paperwork and time involved in validation is onerous and it is not always easy to engage employers in formal validation exercises.
- Holistic assessment of knowledge and skills indicates competence and workplace relevance but compliance with the requirements for validation can mean atomisation of assessment tasks.
- A good feedback loop to training package development is missing. The findings from validation exercises could contribute to that feedback loop as well as to improvement in assessment tools and practices.
- RTO staff want and need professional development, especially in assessment and validation.

These findings inevitably lead to the question of “who

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pays for what” which has repeatedly been identified as being needed or as desirable, especially in reference to the following professional development/communities of practice: investment in technological solutions: central development of high-quality assessment resources: and independent assessors. This is a particularly complicated question in a system of such varied and numerous Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

What was different in this research was COVID-19. The shift in operations during the pandemic had a direct impact on how the research was conducted, primarily via Zoom. While the familiar difficulties of reaching smaller, private RTOs persisted, overall it proved easier to get a sample from across the country. VET professionals are taking online communication in their stride, using it for networking with each other (and a researcher) as well, more importantly, with employers. Anecdotal evidence shows that Industry engagement appears to have been enhanced by the restrictions.

Moreover, while still to be tested, the research points to the potential for technology (for example, digital recordings, virtual reality, various networking apps, integrated record management systems) to break the logjam in harnessing IMVA as a way to improve the quality and relevance of vocational education and training.

The final report, [Begin with the end: RTO practices and views on independent validation of assessment](#) was published in July 2021 by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. ■

## TARGETED PARTICIPANTS: WORKING-AGE AUSTRALIANS

TAKE THE SURVEY

**We want to know about how you have learned and negotiated the transitions across your working life.**

In this survey, ‘transitions’ can refer to changes in occupations, ways of working, new jobs, or coming in a new country to work. This survey is part of an Australian Research Council funded project that aims to generate evidence-based policies and informed practices supporting work-life learning arrangements to promote Australian workers’ employability. These are urgent needs in the era of COVID-19.

To thank you for providing a completed survey, you can enter a prize draw to

**win one of 40 gift vouchers**  
(20 x \$100 vouchers + 20 x \$50 vouchers)

(Only completed survey respondents will be eligible.)

It will take about 15 minutes to complete the survey via this link:

[prodsurvey.rcs.griffith.edu.au/Worklife-survey](https://prodsurvey.rcs.griffith.edu.au/Worklife-survey)

Your responses to this survey will be anonymous and treated confidentially. Moreover, the data in a survey like this is presented in an aggregated way so that individual responses will not be identifiable. So, please respond to the survey as fulsomely as possible. We thank you, in anticipation, for your contributions to this research.

I’d be most grateful if you could forward this link to your family and friends who are currently working and invite them to complete the survey and contribute to a national study on transitions across working lives.

**Thank you.**



Australian Government  
Australian Research Council



Queensland, Australia

## Micro-credentials, a disruption, innovation or just a craze?

Keri Bailey, Holmesglen Institute

Australia's workforce and their employers well understand the imperative for re-skilling and upskilling to meet future demands. To meet these demands, "we will need to leverage the unique role VET plays within society, its grassroots connection to individual workers and businesses, and its key role as part of the larger educational ecosystem."<sup>1</sup>

Holmesglen Institute provides education and training that spans many industries for all levels of the workforce. Holmesglen's authentic approach to the research, development and accreditation of micro-credentials has contributed to it being the premier provider of high-quality micro-credentials in Victoria. It has implemented a robust micro-credential framework supported by strong governance which is informed by national and international research to further cement Holmesglen's unique position in Vocational and Higher Education and its high regard held by Industry, Community and Governments.

"Education changes lives, and micro-credentials, done well, can be a force for good as part of, or to supplement and complement formal education systems."<sup>2</sup>

### A craze – maybe?

Not everyone is enamoured by the idea of micro-credentials. In some arenas 'badge mania' occurs, whereby everyone gets a 'badge' for just showing up, or for undertaking professional development which once upon a time was just part of your job. In some ways, this practice de-values the micro-credential industry and plays into the hands of cynicism.

Literature indicates that most resistance comes from within academia where micro-credentials are viewed by some as reductivist, anti-market and 'vocational' in nature, leaving students unable to develop formed skills as they would in a degree program.

Ralson (2020) describes fears that micro-credentials might replace or cause the decline of traditional qualifications in that they reflect administrative urgency to unbundle degrees for greater profitability and to reorient university curriculum towards vocational training. Critics are concerned that micro-credentials may undermine the mission of higher education institutions, as they are not focussed on educating the whole person, nor liberating learner's potential to become lifelong learners. Ralston suggests "a more deliberative and constructive approach to micro credentialling as a sound alternative approach to micro credentialling, and a sound alternative to the current craze."<sup>3</sup>

Holmesglen's approach has been both deliberate and constructive, involving a whole of organisation approach to consultations and workshops which supported respectful dialogue, minimised resistance and was led by a dedicated project manager with credible educational experience. Participating in these deep and sometimes personalised consultations, enabled stakeholders to understand and express issues and opportunities from every angle of the organisation, which in turn has aided a deep commitment to designing and implementing Holmesglen accredited micro-credentials. Those consulted, brought their own lens and specific focus to what needed to be considered, or not, all of which are included in Holmesglen's final "Micro-Credential Framework" and accompanying set of high level, detailed governance documentation.

### Disruption – yeah

"The disruption coming to the world of work is well documented. Micro-credentials and other forms of non-formal learning are emerging as potential solutions to the rapid upskilling... required. The formal qualification system is unlikely to cope, burdened with ever-increasing cost."<sup>4</sup> Supporting disruption in the workforce by providing a new form of non-formal learning actually creates somewhat of a disruption within educational institutions as well, which for many years have operated confidently and with expertise in delivering tried-and-true products.

Whilst overarching perceptions of accrediting Micro-credentials at Holmesglen are positive, there have been some concerns expressed that micro-credentials might be 'Mickey Mouse' and detract from our excellent reputation, or that 'we're heading into the Wild, Wild West' or 'we are too busy focussing on xyz' – feelings from staff feeling worried and/or disrupted. Embracing something new is a major disruption to any status quo and takes time and focussed effort, neither of which are in plentiful supply.

Educational institutions are experiencing a double disruption; "the convergence of digital transformation and the global pandemic which together, have accelerated the adoption of technology at a speed none of us thought possible."<sup>5</sup> Major disruption occurred over the course of a few months and, "how we work, when we work and where we work are all being redefined. Such is the scale of disruption, there are few of us who remain unaffected."<sup>6</sup>

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have placed significant stress on educators which have had to rapidly converting to online delivery, doing everything possible to support students, whilst maintaining full teaching loads and working to meet existing KPIs. This has highlighted the difficulty for those already working in education to maintain their existing

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workloads whilst being encouraged to embrace yet another 'thing'.

In recognition of this, Holmesglen and industry partners provided support/seed funding to develop pilot micro-credentials in areas where they will make a difference to not only industry but also to individuals. This has provided a benchmark for embedding micro-credential development into annual work plans for 2022.

## Innovation – definitely

Micro-credentials at Holmesglen are the latest innovation in its suite of educational products that they have offered in decades. Holmesglen's Micro-Credential framework, policies and procedures are in place, and early adopters have 'branched out' to work with industry to develop

bespoke micro-credentials for accreditation and delivery. It is now necessary for Holmesglen to support and provide more staff with the time, skills, and opportunity to address the growing demand for micro-credentials.

Inspired by an analogy used by Judith Morris<sup>7</sup> when talking about innovation in education, a Holmesglen version below describes how we might support our people to actively embrace the innovation of developing new products – Micro-Credentials.

Morris describes the everyday business of working in education as 'working in the farm' and says that innovation happens when workers cross an imaginary bridge to spend time working in the adjacent garden. Supporting staff to cross that bridge to embrace working on innovation becomes Holmesglen's goal for 2022. The Holmesglen version of the analogy follows:

## Working in the Holmesglen Farm AND in the Garden

### The Farm – Holmesglen Institute

- Set up as a business to provide various products to different markets
- Implements an annual budget cycle to ensure a profit
- Reports activity and performance to shareholders, regulators, and funding bodies
- Hires staff with specific qualifications and abilities to do specific jobs around the farm to keep it going
- Purchases/leases equipment and buildings
- Undertakes significant maintenance
- Abides by regulatory requirements
- Continuously improves what exists
- Deals with changes to government policy
- Organised by a clear hierarchy of workers with defined roles
- Deals with competition
- Reputation and quality are high stakes
- Uses certainty in decision making based on what has occurred in the past.
- Finds dealing with uncertainty stressful
- After generations doing the same thing the same way (especially if successful), it may be hard to change ideology/practice
- The farmer is the boss

### The Bridge Connection

- People can walk across to be in the garden and at times, take flowers or produced back to the farm
- Need to be able to go back and forth across the bridge to support the day-to-day functions of each.
- Some people may never want, or be able to cross the bridge.
- Some are fearful of crossing the bridge into unknown territory
- Some hold the bridge in disdain.
- Industry is very keen for farm workers to cross the bridge
- The bridge needs maintenance so that it feels safe to cross
- Some need to be guided across the bridge.
- Some need incentives and support to cross.

### The Garden Innovation

- Produces different products to the farm for specific markets
- Provides colour and perfume and a break from routine.
- Needs initial design, setting up, fertiliser, plants, maintenance, trellis's etc
- Depends on the environment
- Usually, multi coloured and multi textured
- Some plants don't survive due to a variety of conditions, pests, theft, poor soil etc
- Flowers/plants come in and out of fashion
- Operates way from noise and constraints of the farm
- Can provide some by-products to the farm and vice versa
- Garden workers have different skill sets to farm hands
- A place where it's OK to explore and experiment. If cuttings or new plants don't take its not high stakes
- Outcomes are not always certain, but when successful, they look and smell good. When unsuccessful, they can be used as compost to fertilise the next crop
- Head Gardener is the boss and reports to the Farmer

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## Holmesglen Truisms:

Successful implementation of Micro-Credentials comes from:

1. Strong internal governance and commitment from the whole organisation.
2. Leadership by a dedicated project manager with credible educational experience.
3. Quality products that make a difference to individuals and industry
4. Supporting workers to cross the bridge and work in both the garden and on the farm.

*Keri Bailey is the Strategic Education and Training Advisor at Holmesglen Institute.*

### Endnotes

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- 5 Digital Transformation Expert Panel, "The Learning Country Digital Transformation Skills Strategy,"
- 6 Ibid
- 7 Judith Morris: former President and CEO of Lambton College, Canada

## ACDEVEG Conference 2021

The 7th Annual Conference on VET teaching and VET teacher-education mounted by ACDEVEG (the Australian Council of Deans of Education Vocational Education Group).

ACDEVEG consists of the universities delivering VET teacher-education programs.

The theme is **'People, place and time: developing the adaptive VET Teacher'**.

Registration is now open for the 2021 conference, which is online on the afternoon of Wednesday 8 December, from 2pm – 6pm AEDT.

The conference is supported by the VET Development Centre, and because of this the cost is only \$25.

The conference keynote address will be delivered by Professor Joy Papier, Director of the Institute for Post-School Studies, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town – 'Taking their rightful place in South Africa: Towards the development of professional TVET teachers'.

The full program can be found [here](#) and includes papers on VET teachers and COVID, on-line delivery of practical subjects, VET teachers' industry engagement, together with an update from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills and Employment on the national VET Workforce Quality Strategy.

Further details, including the registration link, can be found [here](#).

Non-registration enquiries may be made to [ACDEVEG2021@federation.edu.au](mailto:ACDEVEG2021@federation.edu.au)

# ACDE

## Employment and training in everyday industries: What public data tell us

Erica Smith – Federation University,  
Richard Robinson – University of Queensland,  
and Darryn Snell – RMIT University

Retail and hospitality/tourism industries employ around 20% of the Australian workforce (Vandenbroek, 2019), yet the industries suffer from low prestige (Smith & Teicher, 2017). This historically low perception discourages people from imagining worthwhile careers in those sectors, and can contribute to poor self-image for those working in the industries. Yet the COVID-19 crisis has shown just how vital both sectors are for the Australian public and the national economy. They are recognised internationally, for example by the OECD, as low-status occupations which have become more valued during the crisis (Schoon & Mann, 2020). It has been well known for decades (e.g. Smith & Green, 2001) that many young people find their first jobs in the hospitality and retail industries, often while full-time students in school and tertiary education. These jobs could – and often do – turn into satisfying careers, but the fact seems to be rarely acknowledged by those who advise on careers.

A major research project, 'Careers in everyday industries', is focusing on investigating and publicising available career paths, and the reasons for poor public perceptions among various groups. It involves research with industry stakeholders, school, VET and university students, the general public, and careers advisers, as well as detailed company case studies with managers and workers. The project is funded by the National Careers Institute Partnership Grant scheme, and involves researchers from three universities and the Skills Service Organisation SkillsIQ. The research began in April 2021 and aims to conclude by the end of 2022. The project web site is at [federation.edu.au/research-everyday-careers](http://federation.edu.au/research-everyday-careers).

The project began with analysis of available statistical data sources on employment and training, to provide base data to answer the first of the four research questions for the project: 'What careers are available in the retail, hospitality and allied industries?' We wanted to evaluate the importance of retail and hospitality in the workforce, in post-school pathways, and in vocational education and training. The sources were:

- Australian Bureau of Census (ABS) data for employment in each occupational classification in the industries, including management roles, thus gaining industry overviews.
- LSAY (Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth) data (collected by National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) for employment in retail and hospitality.

- NCVER vocational education and training (VET) data on students in retail and hospitality qualifications.

### Census data

As the project is about careers, and because careers advice currently tends to focus on occupations rather than industries, we decided to base our analysis on particular occupations within the two industries. We identified all the relevant ANZSCO (Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations) occupation codes in retail, and, within hospitality, in food services and accommodation (we excluded travel, tourism and guiding). In an iterative process we removed codes that were peripheral to these industries or that overlapped with other industries. Our occupational code selection is guiding the project as a whole.

We included 13 retail occupations and 19 hospitality (accommodation and food service) occupations at what is known as the ANZSCO '4-digit level'. 2011 and 2016 ABS Census data were analysed for numbers working in these occupations as their main job. In the census, people are asked to write their occupation, and their responses are then coded.

The snapshot table below compares the numbers in the relevant retail and hospitality occupations with all occupations. It can be seen that the selected occupations grew much faster than the average over the five years.

**Table 1: Snapshot of employment in the relevant occupations ('main job'), compared with all employment, ABS census data**

|  |                            |                            |                                       |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Hospitality and retail occupations in scope</b> | <b>2011:</b><br>1,516,338  | <b>2016:</b><br>1,656,314  | <b>9.23%<br/>increase<br/>2011-16</b> |
| <b>All occupations</b>                             | <b>2011:</b><br>10,058,364 | <b>2016:</b><br>10,683,822 | <b>6.22%<br/>increase<br/>2011-16</b> |

Table 1 shows that 15.08% (2011) and 15.50% (2016) of employed people reported one of these hospitality and retail occupations as their main job. There are of course many other employees working in the industry sectors, for example accountants, clerical workers, HR managers and labourers, who are counted in generic ANZSCO codes. These account for the difference between the figures in Table 1 and the industry employment figure of 20% (Vandenbroek, 2019).

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Over the 2011-2016 period, hospitality and accommodation occupations grew by 16.53%. Chefs (40% growth) and housekeepers (35%) grew the most. The retail occupations' increase (5.32%) was modest – in fact, less than the 'all occupations' percentage increase. Sales Assistant (General) increased by 15.1%, and service station attendants increased by 22%.

These two industries contain some of the largest numbers in single occupations, including the largest of all, Sales Assistant (General), an occupation undertaken by over half a million Australians as their main job. Quite a few were at or around 100,000 (Table 2a).

**Table 2a: Employment ('main job') above or near 100,000 in the relevant occupations, ABS census data, 2016**

| Retail 2016   | Hospitality and accommodation 2016  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>526,013 Sales Assistants (General)</li> <li>184,571 Retail Managers</li> <li>102,183 Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>109,631 Kitchenhands</li> <li>106,357 Waiters</li> <li>83,915 Bar Attendants and Baristas</li> <li>80,719 Chefs</li> </ul> |

As a comparison, only sixteen other occupations had more than 100,000 workers in 2016, with only two of these having more than 200,000: Nurses (220,981) and General Clerks (219,845).

Management jobs are shown in Table 2b. As can be seen, one ANSZCO code spans both industries.

**Table 2b: Employment ('main job') in management occupations in retail and hospitality ('Main job') ABS census data, 2016**

| Retail 2016  | Hospitality and accommodation 2016   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>184,571 Retail Managers</li> <li>27,527 Retail Supervisors</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>53,892 Café and Restaurant Managers</li> <li>19,943 Hotel and Motel Managers</li> <li>7,247 Hotel Service Managers</li> <li>6,338 Other Accommodation &amp; Hospitality Managers</li> <li>5,758 Licensed Club Managers</li> <li>3,298 Caravan Park and Camping Ground Managers</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>52,997 'Other Hospitality, Retail and Service managers' ANSZCO code 1499</li> </ul> |  |

Distributing the 1499-coded people equally between retail and hospitality, the total numbers in all of the occupations we studied, and the proportions which were managers, were as follows:

- Retail occupations: 970,080; Retail managers: 238,598 (25.29%)
- Hospitality occupations: 686,237; Hospitality managers: 122,967 (17.92%)

It should be remembered that the relevant ABS census question asks only about the 'main' occupation. It is reasonably common for people to work in some of these occupations as their second or third job, so the figures will under-represent total occupational numbers, but to what extent is unknown.

### LSAY ('Longitudinal Surveys of Australia Youth') data

LSAY, managed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) tracks Australians from ages 15 to 25 through annual telephone surveys of a large cohort of young people. Their responses about occupations are coded to ANZSCO occupational codes.

NCVER provided us with data for relevant questions for the 2009 cohort (known as YO9) whose last survey year was 2019, for our selected retail and hospitality occupational codes. To cover the 11 waves, we requested data from Waves 1, 5, 8 and 11 (ages approximately 15, 19, 22 and 25).

In every wave, the respondents were asked what jobs they expected to have when they are about 30 years old. In public commentary on LSAY data this is often presented incorrectly as occupational 'aspirations' (e.g. De Bortoli, 2021). Only a small proportion of young people expected to be working in the selected retail and hospitality occupations at age 30), ranging from 3% -5%. The specific occupations most often cited were chef (especially for younger students), and retail manager.

By age 19, 78% of the respondents were working, and that continued to rise until the final wave, aged 25. Although not many young people expected to work in retail and hospitality when they were aged 30, there was substantial **actual** employment in these occupations among the LSAY participants over the 10 years. At age 15, when only one-third were working, three-quarters of these were working in retail and hospitality. The proportion declined to one-half at age 19 and through to 11% at age 25. The substantial decline over time in the proportion in retail and hospitality jobs is to be expected as the young people moved from part-time working while studying into post-school and/or post-university employment, where more diverse occupations are available. By age 19, 15% of those working in retail and hospitality reported working as managers, more often in retail than hospitality.

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## Enrolments in VET qualifications

Two national Training Packages contain specific qualifications for the industries that cater for the relevant occupations: SIR (Retail Services Training Package) and SIT (Tourism, Travel and Hospitality Training Package). The qualifications relating to the selected ANZSCO occupational codes (8 qualifications in retail and 24 in hospitality) were the majority of the qualifications in the Training Packages. NCVER assisted with data extraction from the Total VET Activity (TVA) data collection, providing data for both government-funded and non-government funded enrolments.

### Overall enrolments: 2017 data

Two versions of both Training Packages were in operation in the 2010s. We selected 2017 for the analysis for this paper, as data for both versions were readily available for that year. In retail, the largest enrolments were in the Certificate II Retail Services (34,357) and the Certificate III Retail ('Retail Operations' in the 2012 Package) (15,826). No other qualifications came near those numbers. Hospitality and accommodation had substantial enrolments in more qualifications: 48,651 (Cert II Hospitality), 36,320 (Certificate II Kitchen Operations), 34,975 (Cert III Hospitality) and 28,762 (Cert III Commercial Cookery), with two other qualifications at around 14,000.

In the qualifications selected, Hospitality had a total of 210,378 enrolments (of which only 250 were in accommodation) and Retail had 53,383. Thus the overall picture is of healthy enrolments in hospitality, and modest enrolments in retail.

### Government funded versus non-government funded training

For the totals of all qualifications within the project's scope, retail had a slightly greater proportion of annual government-funded enrolments (between 55% to 60%) than hospitality (47% to 59%).

The most-often-funded qualification in retail was the Cert III in Retail, with others lagging far behind. Four qualifications in hospitality each contributed 10% or more of government-funded hospitality training each year: in descending numerical order, Cert II in Hospitality, Cert II in Kitchen Operations, Cert III in Hospitality and Cert III in Commercial Cookery.

## Discussion

The data show that retail and hospitality occupations form a substantial proportion (15%) of the Australian workforce, even when considering only those working in the occupations as their main job. 40% more people work in retail occupations than in hospitality occupations. Almost 1 in 20 workers alone are retail sales assistants.

The analysis shows that there are excellent chances for career advancement: one-quarter of all retail workers and nearly 18% of hospitality workers are in management positions. The LSAY data confirm that young people start in retail and hospitality at a very young age and move into management positions in the industries before they are 20. And yet very few expect to be working in retail or hospitality at age 30.

The total number of VET enrolments in qualifications in 2017 was 3.4 million; yet the combined totals for the hospitality and retail qualifications we studied was 263,761 – that is, only 7.75% of the training total, for occupations which employ 15.50% of the workforce. Hospitality is relatively well served by the VET system compared with retail, with almost four times the number of people in qualifications.

Comparing numbers training in, or for, the occupations with employment numbers, five people per 100 employed (2016 figures) were receiving retail qualifications (2017 figures), compared with 31 people per 100 employed receiving hospitality qualifications. While retail students are slightly more likely to be government-funded than hospitality students, far less government funding accrues to retail training because so few people receive retail training.

The general picture from the data is that retail and hospitality occupations are very important to the economy and to people's lives. They offer good prospects for advancement. But they are poorly served by the VET system.

The picture presented above is not able to account for the effects of COVID-19. 2020 and 2021 statistics for these two industries will be affected by COVID, particularly hospitality and accommodation. Unfortunately, the 2021 census data will not be available for some time yet. COVID has affected not only employment with the sectors (e.g. Baum *et al*, 2020, on hospitality) but also the nature of the work (e.g. Cai *et al*, 2021, on retail). A methodological issue that will occupy the research team during the remainder of the research will be how to address the effects of COVID while still focusing on the main aims of the project.

An issue that emerged in this phase of the research was the complexity and inaccessibility of the data. For example, VET qualifications data from NCVER are no longer available in reports; and LSAY data is quite difficult to interpret. We had tried to utilise a Victorian survey of young people six months out of school – 'On Track' – but detailed reports are no longer produced. It seems that 'everyday researchers' (as opposed to statistical experts), and arguably more importantly, careers practitioners, are now less well served by national collections than previously. ■

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## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank other project team members Antonella Sterrantino, Victor Callan and Andy Smith.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**How can I join AVETRA? >**

**How can I access AVETRA publications? >**

**What events do AVETRA run? >**

### CONTACT

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## Delivering Modern Manufacturing through a Skilled Workforce consultation series

Workforce skills program developers, IBSA Group, conducted a six-month process of collaboration and research to seek the views of organisations working in manufacturing and related industries and their training partners, on the priority actions needed to ensure Australia has the highly skilled workers required to support modern manufacturing.

The research was primarily qualitative and included a series of online quantitative polls. Almost 500 people took part in the process, with 4,400 reached through social media. The series of events incorporated desk top literature reviews, sector-specific feedback collating webinars and in-depth interviews. These were then validated and refined by a roundtable with some of Australia's top business leaders and a series of briefings with senior representatives from the Commonwealth and every State Government.

Six key themes were identified:

- Sovereign capability and value/supply chains
- Skill shortages
- New technologies and new skills
- Collaboration
- Skills system responsiveness, and
- Workforce development

and a series of skills response recommendations made.

Details can be found at

[manufacturingskillsreport.ibsa.org.au/](http://manufacturingskillsreport.ibsa.org.au/)



## Applied research at BHI contributes to inclusivity award

Annemaree Gibson and Annie Carney

On 16 October 2021, Jane Trewin, Director of Educational Delivery at Box Hill Institute (BHI), accepted the Inclusive Training Provider of the Year award at the Victorian Training Awards. She celebrated the employees who work in this area as 'very special people, with very special skills', and thanked our long-standing industry partners and employees at BHI for their 'amazing contribution'.

The award recognises three aspects of BHI's commitment to inclusivity:

- our research into universal design
- the Disability Service Provider programs that BHI maintained throughout lockdown
- our supports in place for all students to access whether they disclose a disability or not.

### Background to research into universal design

In 2019, Box Hill Institute, on behalf of the TAFE Network, commissioned a [research report](#) into improving access and achievement for students with a disability. This report was presented to the parliamentary inquiry into access to TAFE for learners with a disability.

Following on from the findings of this report, the Teaching and Learning Enhancement (TLE) team designed a series of micro-learning products, made up of short animations, to educate teachers about using universal design principles as a valuable tool in their teaching practice.



Universal design means design that is usable by all people without the need to adapt or specialise. It improves learning outcomes for all students as well as expanding teacher capabilities. Seven short animated videos created by Annie Carney put the learnings in context for our busy teachers, with each principle supported by insights and practical tips from colleagues in disability support.

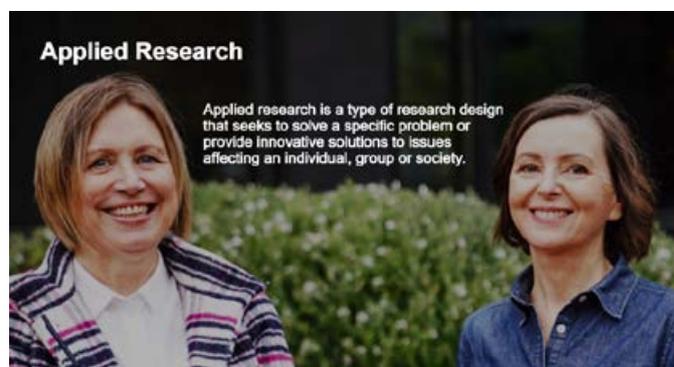
### UDL microcredential

The animations were well received by teachers and were used to inform a more comprehensive microcredential designed to inspire the adoption of UDL principles for all learning experiences. Our teachers can self-enrol to complete this free short-course microcredential and earn a digital badge to verify their achievement.

We recently re-launched the [Universal Design for VET Teachers microcredential](#) and are delighted to observe that our early adopters are performing an integral role as change agents.

### Applied research project

The concept of making learning more accessible to all learners was so attractive, and the team was so determined to integrate the principles into our student experience, that it inspired an applied research project entitled 'How can VET teachers apply the principles of universal design in education to support learners of all abilities?' Specifically, the TLE team's research focused on analysing and identifying the effectiveness of the *Universal Design for VET Teachers* microcredential and identifying barriers to teacher participation.



Annemaree Gibson and Annie Carney

In November 2020, Annie Carney and Annemaree Gibson presented their initial research at the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA), OctoberVET conference. They presented a progress update at the National AVETRA Annual conference in April 2021. At this conference, they were awarded the Inaugural Women in Vocational and Adult Education (WAVE) Sue Salthouse Grant for Research into Diversity and Gender. Gibson and Carney will also present their research at an upcoming AVETRA OctoberVET event.

Due to the level of interest in the team's research from other TAFEs and the disability sector, we have also presented the progress of our research to the

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Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) in a [webinar](#). According to an ADCET environmental review, BHI is the only TAFE in Victoria doing applied research on UDL.

Research by our applied research team highlighted two critical points concerning quality and inclusive teaching:

1. Many students with a disability are reluctant to self-disclose. Therefore, our teaching methods need to be accessible to all – whether the student discloses their disability or not.
2. Universal design – that is, design usable by all people without needing to adapt or specialise – improves learning outcomes for all students.

## Collaboration

BHI and Monash University are now partnering to work on a collaborative research project on how to maximise the effectiveness of UDL in post-secondary education.

Pending final BHI Research Subcommittee and Monash University Ethics approval, BHI will commence a research pilot with Monash University and Dublin City University on UDL implementation, focusing on online and blended delivery models.

This pilot research project will involve collecting data from the delivery of selected courses from various faculties at BHI incorporating different AQF levels. The output of this research will inform the development of a series of resources.

## Representation

Importantly, our work in this area is informed by representation at national advisory committees. For example, Annie Carney from the TLE team was invited to join the ADCET Advisory Committee as the only Victorian TAFE representative. She is also a member ADCET's *Universal Design for Learning E-learning Project* advisory group. TLE have shared our seven animated videos on UDL with ADCET for the course they are currently developing for national distribution.

## Benefits of UDL project

Box Hill Institute recognises the benefits that diversity and inclusion bring to our organisation. Our diversity and inclusion approach aims to create a culture where our people understand that each individual is unique. Supporting diversity makes us more flexible, productive, creative and competitive.

A significant feature of our inclusivity commitment is our applied research into UDL in vocational education. The warm welcome that has been extended from local and overseas universities has demonstrated how many educational institutions value UDL and are interested in how it can be used to improve the student experience. We have found we are 'pushing an open door'.

The UDL for VET teachers project at BHI is an excellent example of how applied research in vocational practice builds industry connections and capability, contributes to awards programs, and fosters innovation and unity. ■