

SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS KIT:

REVIEW INTO VOCATIONAL AND APPLIED LEARNING PATHWAYS IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLING

Background

In November 2019, the Victorian Government commissioned a review into vocational and applied learning pathways for senior secondary students led by John Firth, former Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

The review found evidence of outstanding programs across the state but that more needs to be done to ensure all young people had access to the training that engages them, delivers high demand skills and leads to quality jobs.

The review recommended that Victoria should move to an integrated senior secondary certificate by 2025, with a first step to embed a new vocational specialist pathway in the VCE by 2023. This certificate will replace the existing standalone VCAL certificate and will give students the opportunity to develop both academic and practical skills.

The reforms set out in the Firth Review will help ensure high-quality vocational and applied learning is available to every senior secondary student, no matter where they go to school.

Further work is now being undertaken to plan for implementation of later stages of the reforms in consultation with students and families, schools, industry, employers, TAFEs, universities and other service providers.

KEY MESSAGES

- Every Victorian student, no matter where they go to school, will have access to high-quality vocational and applied learning options.
- The move to a specialist vocational pathway embedded into the VCE from 2023 and a fully integrated certificate from 2025 will provide all Victorian students with the opportunity to develop high-quality academic and practical vocational skills that prepare them for diverse post-school pathways and the jobs of the future.
- The Firth Review has recommended changes to ensure that all Victorian secondary students have access to high-quality vocational and applied learning – to prepare them for success in further education, training and, ultimately, work.
- The single certificate will build on the current successes of VCAL, lift the reputation of vocational and applied learning, and solidify its position as an equally high quality and respected senior secondary pathway.

- Work will begin now to improve support to schools to deliver high quality vocational and applied learning programs and to commence development of the specialist vocational pathway in the VCE.
- The Victorian Budget 2020/21 invests \$38 million to support students to access high-quality vocational and applied learning pathways. This investment will:
 - support development of a new vocational and applied learning pathway within the VCE, as well as a new Foundation Pathways certificate, with the first student cohort commencing these certificates in 2023;
 - provide secondary schools with funding in 2021 and 2022 for Jobs, Skills and Pathways Coordinators to provide practical support for planning and administration of vocational and applied learning programs;
 - fund Jobs, Skills and Pathways Managers in regions to provide support to schools to help make the delivery of vocational and applied learning easier, and promote collaboration across schools.

STRENGTHENING VOCATIONAL AND APPLIED LEARNING FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

The Victorian Government has announced a \$38 million investment to create a new single Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) that will give students flexibility to combine academic and applied learning in line with their interests, strengths and career aspirations.

The new single VCE senior secondary certificate will mean students no longer have to choose between doing VCE or VCAL. This will start to be implemented from 2023.

The move to a single certificate follows a review by former Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority CEO John Firth that found the change would provide all Victorian students with the best opportunity to develop both academic and practical vocational skills.

The review found evidence of outstanding programs across the state but that more needed to be done to ensure all young people had access to the training that engages them, delivers high demand skills and leads to quality jobs.

Our school will receive funding for a Jobs, Skills and Pathways Coordinator to support the delivery of our vocational and applied learning programs. Their job will be to provide advice and support for students choosing vocational and applied learning programs. They will also work with training providers and employers to ensure that students get the most out of their learning and training.

Our school will also have access to a Jobs, Skills and Pathways Manager to provide practical support to our school to deliver high quality vocational and applied learning programs.

Work has started and will continue in 2021 to support the introduction of a new vocational specialist pathway in the VCE.

The integration of a vocational and applied learning pathway within the VCE will offer high-quality pathways for all students so they are better prepared for lifelong learning and can transition more smoothly through school, further education or training and work.

Students currently completing VCAL or VET will not be affected by these changes. This includes students undertaking VET as part of their VCE. The new vocational specialist pathway, embedded within the VCE will commence in 2023, and a fully integrated certificate will commence in 2025.

Students can continue to commence VCAL in 2021 and 2022. Transition plans will ensure all students enrolled in VCAL will be able to complete their senior secondary certificate.

Further information and advice about the transition to the new vocational specialist pathway for students will be provided to you in 2021.

FAQS

SINGLE SENIOR SECONDARY CERTIFICATE

When will the new certificate come into effect?

The move to a single certificate will happen in stages. The first is the creation of a new vocational specialist pathway within the VCE, with the first cohort of students starting the new certificate in 2023. The next stage will create a fully integrated senior secondary certificate from 2025.

This is a long-term reform agenda with minimal changes for schools in the first few years. The Department and VCAA will consult with students, schools, universities, TAFEs, peak bodies, industry and employers and other service providers.

Students, schools, families and employers will be given plenty of notice about what these changes mean for them and will be fully supported in the lead up to the introduction of changes to the certificate.

How will these changes affect students currently completing VCAL or VET?

Students currently completing VCAL or VET will not be affected by these changes. This includes students undertaking VET as part of their VCE. The new certificate, which will include a vocational specialist pathway, will not come into effect until 2023.

If VCAL isn't fit for purpose, why wait to 2023 to introduce an alternative?

The Firth Review found that there are many examples of high quality VCAL being delivered across Victorian schools. This good practice will continue and many schools can learn from this practice to improve the way they deliver VCAL now.

The report is clear that while the new vocational specialist pathway will come into effect from 2023, implementation of the report findings can begin in 2021 by enhancing support for delivery of the existing VCAL while the new certificate is being developed. That's why schools are receiving funding for Jobs, Skills and Pathways Coordinators to help coordinate vocational and applied learning programs. Schools will also have access to regionally-based Jobs, Skills and Pathways Managers to provide tailored support to deliver high quality vocational and applied learning programs.

Effectively integrating vocational pathways into the VCE requires a measured and comprehensive approach that is undertaken in close consultation with students, schools, universities, TAFEs, peak bodies, industry and employers.

What will happen to students who are part way through VCAL in 2023?

Students who have commenced VCAL prior to 2023 will not be disadvantaged in any way. Transition plans will ensure all students enrolled in VCAL will be able to complete their senior secondary certificate.

Further information and advice about the transition to the new vocational specialist pathway for students will be provided to schools.

Why is VCAL becoming a specialist pathway within the VCE?

An integrated certificate will provide students with higher quality vocational and applied learning. It will better engage students, improve the number of students staying in education and address negative perceptions of vocational education.

The certificate will give students flexibility to combine academic and applied learning in line with their interests, strengths and career aspirations. This approach will also prepare students for diverse post-school pathways, which may involve both university and higher-level VET qualifications.

The single certificate will build on the current successes of VCAL, lift the reputation of vocational and applied learning, and solidify its position as an equally high quality and respected senior secondary pathway.

How will the new vocational specialist pathway be different from VCAL?

The report recognises that many schools and non-school senior secondary providers offer outstanding VCAL programs and many students have benefited from VCAL. It is important that the strengths of VCAL are retained. At the same time, the report recommends several improvements as part of the creation of the new vocational specialist pathway.

Top line changes include increasing the rigour of the curriculum, enhancing its assessment and reporting, and reducing its complexity.

Students currently undertake VCAL at Foundation, Intermediate or Senior level, and credits can be ‘carried forward’ from one level to another. The report recommends the new vocational specialist pathway in the VCE should work differently, with a sequential curriculum so students can move through Units 1-4, as they do in the VCE. This will mean greater rigour for the vocational specialist pathway and less repetition.

The vocational specialist pathway will retain the strand structure used in the VCAL, to ensure students have an appropriate breadth of study, opportunities for integrated learning, flexibility to complete units over multiple years and a focus on work-based learning.

The report proposes a graded assessment approach to encourage students to excel. At present, VCAL students receive either Satisfactory (S) or Not yet complete (N) on their Statement of Results. Under the new approach, students undertaking Unit 3-4 sequences would have the opportunity to be assessed on a scale that also recognises those higher levels of learning.

What will ‘a fully integrated senior secondary certificate’ look like? How will it be different from the new certificate being introduced in 2023?

The Firth Review found all students would benefit from a deeper integration of academic and applied learning as part of the senior secondary certificate.

The changes to be implemented from 2023 will bring the vocational specialist pathway within the VCE certificate.

The next stage of reform - a fully integrated certificate - will provide students with a high-quality offering which better combines 'academic' and 'applied' learning and prepares students for success in further education and training.

Any further change to the VCE as part of a move to a more fully integrated certificate will involve extensive consultation with schools and other stakeholders, including universities, industry and employers.

What changes are being made to the VCE?

A new vocational specialist pathway – in place of the VCAL – will be embedded within the VCE from 2023. No other changes are proposed to the VCE at this time.

Students currently enrolled in the VCE will not be affected by this change.

Any further change to the VCE as part of a move to a more fully integrated certificate will involve extensive consultation with schools and other stakeholders, including universities.

How do we know that academic standards won't be diminished with the move to a new senior secondary certificate?

The same high standards that apply to VCE will be retained as part of the new senior secondary certificate, and during the transition phase. No student will be disadvantaged by these changes.

The move to an integrated certificate will provide all Victorian students with the opportunity to develop high-quality academic and practical vocational skills that prepare them for the jobs of the future.

Any further change to the VCE as part of a move to a more fully integrated certificate will involve extensive consultation with schools and other stakeholders, including universities.

How will changes to Foundation VCAL impact students with disabilities or additional needs in specialist and mainstream schools?

Foundation VCAL plays an important role as a completion certificate that recognises the achievements of students with disabilities and additional needs in specialist and mainstream settings.

The development of a new Foundation Pathways Certificate will strengthen the foundation-level qualification.

The certificate will provide a pathway into further education and training as well as directly into employment. It will also support students to develop skills and qualities to help them in their personal and civic life. For some students, the certificate will also offer a pathway into a senior secondary certificate.

SUPPORT FOR IMPROVED DELIVERY

What is being funded? (Jobs, Skills and Pathway Coordinators)

To support students in their training, funding is being provided for Jobs, Skills and Pathways Coordinators in government secondary schools.

The Coordinators will provide advice and support for students choosing vocational and applied learning programs. They will also work with training providers and employers to ensure students get the most out of their learning and training.

This initiative will also reduce the administrative burden on schools, so they can get on with delivering high-quality teaching and supporting students in their vocational learning.

Which schools will receive Jobs, Skills and Pathway Coordinators?

In 2021, support will be provided to all government secondary schools with a senior secondary program that provide VET programs to their students. From 2022, this will be extended to include all remaining government schools with a senior secondary program. This will give schools that don't currently provide their students with access to vocational and applied learning pathways greater capacity to introduce these pathways.

When will the support be available?

The funding will be available in March 2021 for secondary schools with a senior secondary program and VET programs. All other government schools with a senior secondary program will receive funding from January 2022.

What will the support be used for?

The support can cover the costs of a range of activities including frontline planning and delivery of vocational and applied learning programs, student support, such as enrolments and liaison with other providers and employers and administration, processing and coordination activities.

How will Jobs, Skills and Pathway Coordinators work alongside careers educators and current VCAL coordinators?

Schools are being provided funding to support frontline planning and delivery of vocational and applied learning programs.

Schools may choose to employ a new coordinator via a network with other schools, to create time release for a VCAL or VDSS teacher to play this role, or to bolster the capacity of a member of staff currently in a vocational and applied learning leadership role.

This will complement the work of existing specialists in schools such as careers educators by providing a focus on vocational and applied learning.

Where VCAL coordinators are already employed, schools can use this funding to boost their capacity, rather than employ a new resource.

How will Jobs, Skills and Pathway Coordinators work with Local Learning and Employment Networks?

The 31 LLENs across the state develop local partnerships between schools and industry to improve outcomes for young people, by increasing opportunities for their participation, attainment and successful transitions in education, training or employment.

This is done by sourcing placement opportunities including work experience, structured workplace learning and school community work. LLENs also provide students with an understanding of industry through workplace visits, industry tours, and guest speakers from industry.

Part of the role of Jobs, Skills and Pathways Coordinators will be to serve as the central connection point between schools, LLENs, and other parts of the vocational and applied learning system. Coordinators will work with LLENs to help match opportunities created by LLENs with student skills and interests.

What other support is available for schools for these activities?

Grants will also be available for schools for short-term projects that will further boost planning, design and delivery of VET programs. This includes \$26.2 million funding available until June 2023, to support projects aimed at increasing the capability, supply and quality of teachers delivering VET to senior secondary students

How will the current VCAL and VET workforces be affected by these changes?

Our highly skilled VET and VCAL teachers and trainers play a critical role in ensuring students develop the skills and expertise they need to succeed in further education, training and, ultimately, work. The changes we are introducing are aimed at ensuring all Victorian students have access to high-quality vocational and applied learning programs.

The move to an integrated single certificate will build on the current successes of VCAL to provide students with the opportunity to develop both academic and practical skills.

Specialist vocational and technical skills and core literacy, numeracy and work-related skills will continue to be an important part of the specialist vocational pathway in the VCE. Our VET and applied learning teachers and trainers are key to the development of those skills.

We're taking a staged approach to implementation of these reforms so that we can work carefully through the changes required in partnership with schools and our vocational and applied learning workforce.

What are you doing to increase the supply of qualified VET teachers in schools?

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring the supply and development of the VET teaching workforce in secondary schools. This workforce plays a critical role in supporting all students to access high quality vocational and applied learning pathways.

The 2020/21 Budget invests \$15.5 million to support accelerated pathways to teaching for graduates and career changers, including a Master of Applied Learning and Teaching program to boost the number of vocational and applied learning teachers in Victorian schools. This builds on a \$26.2 million package of initiatives introduced in 2019 to increase the supply and quality of teachers specialising in VET and VCAL.

These investments in our VET teaching workforce will support those entering the teaching profession from industry or TAFEs to develop the skills needed to deliver VET programs to school students. The investment is also providing VET teachers in Victorian government schools with the opportunity to enhance their industry skills and knowledge, and maintain their connections to industry. We will be piloting a program to gauge demand from VET industry professionals to be retrained as VET qualified teachers. Grants are also available to schools to share VET trainers between schools, and to support innovation in the design and delivery of VET programs!