

PRACTICAL LEARNING THROUGH VET TO HELP STUDENTS WHO FIND LEARNING CHALLENGING

MASTER BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA – A SKILLS FIRST TRAINING PROVIDER CASE STUDY

The Master Builders Association of Victoria (Master Builders) offers industry-specific VET courses to students who possess practical skills but who may face challenges in their learning.

The training provider offers just six targeted qualifications.

Courses designed for quality outcomes

Head of Training, Corrie Williams, says that courses are developed based on discussions with employers and students to get the best training outcomes.

For example, when designing its Diploma of Building and Construction (Building), industry partners were keen for a 52-week course. However, after speaking to students, Master Builders advised that a longer course was required for quality learning. This was based on student feedback that intensive study was not possible while working and managing family commitments. Therefore, the final Diploma course developed is 95 weeks in length, operates 'one week on, one week off', and students complete 15 hours of coursework outside the classroom each week so they can manage learning in their own time.

Classes are scheduled outside of work hours (in the evening and on Saturdays) to provide flexibility for students with other commitments outside study.

"The Master Builders Association of Victoria has developed specific learning and student support programs for students who find learning is necessary but challenging."

Corrie Williams, Head of Training, Master Builders Association of Victoria

Responding to learning strengths and barriers

Students who enrol in Master Builders' courses have some specific advantages and challenges.

Most students (94%) are fully employed in the construction industry, and therefore already possess a level of knowledge and experience. These students seek specific qualifications to advance their business or employment goals.

Many students did not complete their secondary schooling and most have not studied for a while. Therefore, returning to study can be challenging for students. Some are identified at the time of enrolment as possibly needing support with their language, literacy (including computer literacy) and numeracy skills.

In response, Masters Builders employs an expert teacher in language, literacy and learning, and offers specific support services for students who require additional support.

Learner support

Students identified with lower levels of language, literacy and numeracy during the pre-training review stage are assigned a learning support trainer.

An Individual Support Plan is developed for each student that sets out the learning support available to them during their studies. This support might include assistance with researching information and understanding the requirements of assessment tasks.

Student progress is monitored and tracked through a learning support contact log and their learning support trainer contacts them regularly to offer advice and support.

Quality teaching

Teachers with Master Builders must show they have completed at least two units of professional development each year to maintain their currency. These units of professional development are usually courses provided by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), VELG Training or the VET Development Centre. This supports trainers in maintaining their industry currency.

Trainers are also supported by Master Builders to develop their teaching strategies. For example, the literacy, learning and numeracy expert has developed a short workshop that helps teachers to work more effectively with students with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

Cutting edge simulation centre

A key learning tool of Master Builders is its Building Leadership Simulation Centre. Master Builders invested \$14 million to open the facility in 2012.

One of only three in the world, Corrie says the simulation centre is a quantum leap in training in the building and construction industry.

It employs highly skilled professional actors, who help students confront challenges on a real construction site without risk or injuries.

It's more than role-play – it's 'real play' that helps students improve decision-making, problem solving and leadership skills. Scenarios are written specific to course requirements and played

out on a 15-metre-wide parabolic projection screen and 12 site sheds to place students in the middle of the action.

In addition to the construction industry recognising the power of the simulation centre as a learning tool, many other sectors are also now using the facility, such as emergency services, transport, manufacturing and utilities.

“Tools such as our Building Leadership Simulation Centre will become more important as industry training requirements continue to evolve.”

Corrie Williams, Head of Training, Master Builders Association of Victoria
