

A CUSTOMISED DIPLOMA OF VET

WODONGA TAFE – A SKILLS FIRST TRAINING PROVIDER CASE STUDY

Wodonga TAFE offered the Diploma of VET exclusively to teaching staff in 2016.

The Diploma was developed to meet the specific needs of the TAFE's operations as part of a strategy to improve teaching capability and student learning, and to improve the TAFE's capacity to meet its quality standards.

Diverse backgrounds

The TAFE supported 23 teachers to complete the Diploma. They came from a broad range of industry sectors, including nursing, paramedic science, logistics, motorsport, engineering, design, hospitality and event management.

Teachers were working across many Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) levels, from Certificate II through to Advanced Diploma. Many had never crossed paths due to the different locations, subject areas and the demands on teachers in different departments.

Senior teacher from the TAFE's Quality Teaching and Learning Unit, Jenny Vibert, says the past learning experiences of the group were also diverse, with some participants having completed higher level qualifications, but with most returning to study for the first time since completing their Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

The teachers each had different roles at the TAFE, including:

- Facilitating learning and assessment using materials and resources developed by others
- Designing, developing and implementing sophisticated learning and assessment programs
- Working in partnership with industry
- Leading the development of quality processes to be implemented across the TAFE.

“The most powerful learning for our teachers came from sharing and collaborating with each other.”

Jenny Vibert, Quality Teaching and Learning Unit, Wodonga TAFE

Customised to the TAFE

The Diploma course was developed with input from across the TAFE's departments. It was tailored specifically to the TAFE's learning and quality systems.

Wodonga consulted with other TAFEs that offer an in-house customised Diploma of VET, which assisted with validating Wodonga's program.

The Diploma was delivered in a blended mode, with participants engaging in online activities that introduced concepts and knowledge, followed by discussion and learning tasks in class time.

The Diploma included approximately 150 hours of class time, comprising full day and evening sessions that encouraged active application, clarification and social learning. This critical time together was supported by post class activities, designed to revise, practice, consolidate and extend learning.

Jenny says the face-to-face contact was vital to the success of the Diploma. Sharing and collaboration between participants was central to developing the capability of each teacher.

Teachers observed each other in classrooms and were mentored on how to provide meaningful feedback. For example, role play was important for developing classroom presentation skills with input from colleagues.

Jenny says the diverse skills and backgrounds of the participants proved a particular strength for

the Diploma program. They shared their expertise and experience to help each other develop skills.

For example, the design teacher shared her experience, leading the group in the review of the design of their own learning resources, ensuring that student engagement and learning was maximised. Those who regularly designed and developed assessment tools, worked with others to further develop their capacity with this critical task. The teachers also worked collaboratively and provided feedback on each other's work. This enabled the sharing of knowledge, testing of ideas, review of processes and products, and improved their overall skill base and confidence.

The Diploma also included 'hot spots', where time was spent on topics that teachers identified as relevant. Jenny facilitated a panel approach to these dilemmas and challenges, sourcing experts to respond directly to questions and provide input and discussion from a range of points of reference. Topics included: challenges of blended learning models, classroom management, industry consultation and involvement, and maintaining industry currency and competency.

Individual and organisational benefits

Jenny says the Diploma course has generated profoundly positive benefits for teachers and for the TAFE.

The teachers now have a 'birds eye' view of the TAFE's operations and can place themselves within the broader context of the TAFE. They better understand quality systems and assessment standards and act as champions of quality in their respective departments.

Teachers are also more confident in the classroom and are highly skilled in developing quality teaching, learning and assessment resources.

Jenny says these teachers have become 'go to people' for others in their departments and there is greater interaction between departments. Since graduating, teachers have volunteered to lead validation panels and be part of professional development and planning days in different departments.

One of the teachers who completed the Diploma has moved from Allied Health to teaching the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Another has been promoted to a Team Leadership role.

The TAFE's Quality Teaching and Learning Unit has also benefited. The Diploma students provided a cross section of teachers to 'road test' its quality procedures, templates and forms. The input from teachers has enabled the Unit to develop resources that are more relevant, effective and meaningful to teachers and across all departments.

"Our Diploma of VET teachers now appreciate that if learning and assessment tasks have rigour then compliance logically follows."

Jenny Vibert, Quality Teaching and Learning Unit, Wodonga TAFE
