



Catholic Regional College, Sydenham

School profile

- Victoria
- Metropolitan
- Non-government
- Year 11 to 12 senior campus of a federation of seven schools
- A Registered Training Organisation (RTO) with some courses auspiced to third party RTOs
- 16 courses in eight industry areas in 2015
- 793 students enrolled in 2015

Catholic Regional College, Sydenham is the senior secondary college in a federation of seven schools. It offers the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) as well as the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). It is located in the west of Melbourne, Victoria, in a rapidly expanding growth corridor and an area of high unemployment.

In 2008 the college moved to include vocational education and training (VET) courses alongside VCE courses for all learning areas. It refers to its model of VET in schools delivery as the enterprise education model.

The college is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), Catholic Regional College Institute of Training (CRCIT), for Hospitality, Sport, Signage, Picture Framing and Beauty Services and operates an onsite shopping centre that is open to the public. The nine businesses in it are owned and operated by the college, and staffed by students who are undertaking a VET course.

Program background

Catholic Regional College, Sydenham aims to provide a transition pathway into further education, training or work for every student.

The college is a member of the Brimbank Cluster of the Local Learning Employment Network. This cluster of schools has agreed to cooperate in the provision of VET programs and not to compete with each other. The college enrolls approximately 700 students from other schools as day students in its onsite VET courses.

From offering two VET courses prior to 2007, VET offerings have grown at the college to meet the needs and interests of students and the demands of local employment. In 2016 more than 60 per cent of Year 11 and 12 students are enrolled in VET courses.

Program features

Course selection and structure

Courses and qualifications chosen by schools and the structure of VET courses should be informed by an understanding of:

- *the needs of students*
- *how VET supports career and employment pathways*
- *industry workforce needs*
- *school sector or jurisdictional policies*
- *funding priorities targeting VET towards particular industries or occupations.*

In 2008 the college moved towards all learning areas offering a VET course as well as a VCE offering and now offers 38 VET programs.

With many refugee students and first generation migrant students, the college wanted to adopt a true applied learning pedagogy from the outset. Industry was involved in all aspects of planning to ensure post-school pathway provision for students and to encourage partnerships with businesses and industry.

Initially the college had a third party RTO auspice arrangement in which students were sent offsite for training. But the realisation that it took too much time for the staff to find the structured workplace learning opportunities provided the momentum to establish the shopping centre and businesses.

The only purpose of the enterprises is to serve the training and learning needs of the students within the VET qualification; they are not entrepreneurial businesses designed to make money. The income from each business is invested back into the college, providing industry-standard equipment and fee-free VET courses to the college's students.

Being co-educational, the college initially wanted to avoid VET courses likely to be more attractive to young women or young men only. The retail, food

and hospitality sectors have driven much of the employment for students and are a reason for the development and delivery of VET courses in these industry areas.

So the nine businesses the college now runs include an a la carte restaurant, a bakery, a cafeteria and food van, a picture framing store, a signage store, a fitness gym, a theatre, a beauty salon and Design 380, which provides computerised numeric control (CNC) router machining.

‘The very important part is that they are exposed to the real world of work. I always say, “Train, practice, practice, practice, practice, train, practice, practice, practice,” that is the only way. ... By having a real restaurant, a real bakery ... and paying customers, that is where we provide the environment to learn in the real world.’ (Director, Trade Training)

Facilities and equipment

Access to the right facilities and equipment is critical to the success of VET programs and is necessary to comply with VET delivery and assessment standards. The training package or accredited course materials provide information on what is needed. Identifying required equipment informs decisions about partnerships and accessing external expertise and equipment.

The college shopping centre, open to the public, operates nine businesses staffed by teaching staff and students. The Trade Centre provides the training while the retail outlets provide employability skills.

The facilities and equipment for all VET courses at the college are ‘state of the art’ and were designed in collaboration with industry professionals. Industry can hire the facilities at the college for their own use.

Industry trainers bring with them networks of contacts with whom arrangements can be entered

into for accessing equipment either for loan or for use offsite. These contacts have sometimes grown into partnerships and resulted in generous donations or intelligence about good deals such as ex-demonstration equipment that could be bought at greatly reduced prices.

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Staffing

Access to the right staffing is critical to the success of VET programs and is necessary to comply with VET delivery and assessment standards. The training package or accredited course materials provide information on what is needed.

The college approached the provision of facilities and staffing with the clear view that it was establishing a set of commercial, stand-alone operating businesses.

The college needed the new staff to be industry professionals, passionate about their industry, knowledgeable, well-connected, with a wide industry networks. They had to be able to manage and run a business, and at the same time be able to train young people and meet with customers.

‘You need trainers with a deep knowledge of industry – who have lived and breathed it – and with the right temperament. These are the people who make great



trainers for young people, people who are equipped with a Certificate IV Training and Assessment and mentored by those who understand schools and students. ... [trainers need] that real industry experience which makes them successful and believable, because students know. You've got to be believable; you've got to be authentic; you've got to be real.' (Principal)

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Working with employers

Collaboration is a key component of the Preparing Secondary Students for Work framework. Involvement from employers and industry is critical when planning for the implementation, delivery and assessment of VET for secondary students. Working with employers or work placement providers to provide access to quality and relevant workplace learning opportunities enables students to develop skills that are better aligned with workplace needs.

Industry engagement was crucial for the college to ensure that VET courses provided viable pathways. The college has established a wide network of employers locally and in the city of Melbourne. Industry partnerships have led to many job offers to students after completion of Year 12, and businesses like Sofitel seek the top students from the college.

In 2014–15 the college commenced VET courses in Horticulture. A company was engaged by the college to deliver landscaping, gardening and grounds services across the seven campuses to students.

Significant industry investment has been provided, in the form of equipment, knowledge and expertise.

Integrating VET

VET needs to be integrated into the fabric of schools and the broader curriculum. This may be through:

- flexible timetabling
- language literacy and numeracy support
- assessment support
- support with other additional matters that students undertaking VET courses might require.

Each of these options will suit schools in different situations. Whatever the arrangement adopted, schools and employers need to be confident that the RTO has suitably qualified trainers and assessors and access to the industry-standard equipment required.

Of the 38 VET programs the college runs, some contribute towards the VCE, others are only accessed by students undertaking VCAL.

The timetable for the college was changed to provide for the workplaces to operate and allow VET to be authentically delivered within the operating businesses. The college opens at 4.00 am and closes at 11.00 pm with classes able to operate any time from 4.30 am to 10.30 pm.

I'm not just training them in cooking, I prepare them for the work environment.' (Director, Trade Training)



The integration of mainstream VCE with VET and VCAL has been complex and has transformed not only the hours of the school day but also the staff employed, security arrangements, cleaning arrangements, and even meeting times for staff.

‘The first three months are ...the transition period for students coming into VET. ... [they are] coming away from traditional teaching ... it is a completely different environment of course. Sometimes ... they realise, “Oh this is actually hard work ...” When you have 130 customers everybody has to chip in; it is sometimes hard on them. But I think it is better that they get that shock here than once they are outside in the work environment. It is better if they get reality checks here, than out there ... That’s when they lose jobs. ... I’m not just training them in cooking, I prepare them for the work environment.’ (Director, Trade Training)

Student support

Vocational learning activities and pre-vocational programs support students to select the right VET course and pursue their chosen pathway to a career, employment or further education and training. Career education and the opportunity to gain work readiness skills helps students make informed choices and prepares them for learning in a workplace environment.

A student services centre operates adjacent to the Trade Centre and is serviced by psychologists, a work placement officer, the student learning and homework support team, two full-time careers officers, a wellbeing counsellor and four learning support officers.

The college established a study hall where students can go during their free classes and undertake homework. It is staffed from 8.00 am to 5.00 pm and open during

the school holidays for those who do not have a home conducive to study.

The college provides detailed information for families and students. Its twilight evening career and course information session each August runs over the day and evening, and has more than 100 booths covering all the main universities, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and private training providers, the defence force, apprenticeship providers among many others. Attendance runs at about 4,000.

The college meets with each student and their family for a one-on-one counselling session on three separate occasions prior to final course selection.

Review

The school’s VET offerings are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they meet the needs of industry and employers. Similarly, jurisdictions and school sectors update their policies and procedures in line with funding priorities and skills needs. Schools should have in place review processes for the VET programs they offer to ensure these maintain their currency and effectiveness within both VET and school policy environments.

The board of studies is responsible for the provision of studies across the schools and the review of the programs. RTO reports are also provided to the board of studies as part of the review process. The Student Pathways Team is also responsible for reviewing and monitoring programs and student outcomes. Staff are part of collaborative learning teams in which they observe and provide feedback on each other’s classrooms. The student voice is heard via surveys and data collected across all courses.

