



Northern Adelaide State Secondary Schools Alliance

School profile

- South Australia
- Metropolitan
- Government (- Craigmore High School - Gawler and District College B-12 - Karna Plains School - Mark Oliphant College - Northern Adelaide Senior College - Para Hills High School - Parafield Gardens High School - Paralowie School - Playford International College - Salisbury East High School - Salisbury High School)
- Year 11 to 12 (some Year 10 students in special cases)
- Partnering with 16 RTOs – one-third third party RTO auspice arrangement delivery onsite; one-third third party RTO delivery onsite; one-third third party RTO delivery offsite
- 45 VET courses
- Approximately 2,500 students enrolled in Year 11 and 12 across 11 schools in 2016

The Northern Adelaide State Secondary Schools Alliance (NASSSA), South Australia, is a group of 11 schools that collaborate to provide more efficient, effective and extensive delivery of vocational education and training (VET) programs to secondary students than any of the schools could do individually. The 11 schools are situated in a low socio-economic region and within a radius of about 10 kilometres of each other. The Alliance coordinates 16 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) delivering more than 45 qualifications.

Program background

NASSSA has been in operation for about 15 years. Prior to that, the schools in north Adelaide were each separately struggling with the expense of delivering a limited range of VET options and were not satisfied that their programs were as effective as they could be. Since coming together to collaborate, NASSSA's VET programs have evolved and matured; in addition the schools have gained well-equipped Trades Centres that support the depth and breadth of the Alliance's VET program.

Although students' natural inclinations may be to stay within their home schools, they are happy to move when an attractive course is on offer elsewhere. The schools do not compete between each other, and each school sees all the students enrolled in the VET courses as requiring the same duty of care and nurturing attention as their own students.

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.*

The delivery of VET courses with clear pathways to further education, training or work, including potentially to university, is of overarching importance in this low socio-economic region where students may be the first in their family to achieve the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE).

Courses are selected and offered at each school, based on student interest and engagement, employment opportunities and available facilities.

A NASSSA pathways group considers the future needs of the economy and society in South Australia (SA) and nationally, among other considerations. The group has representation from the South Australia Government Department of State Development, industry and business, local councils, the schools, and parent and student bodies.

The Alliance offers VET courses that support the Northern Economic Plan in South Australia; for example, Certificate III in Media offers two strands, one in coding and one in animation. With these skills sought after by the defence industry, students can move into developing simulations.



In support of Australia's future needs in aged care, NASSSA ran an innovative pilot with an aged care facility to train young people over a three-week placement in the workplace. The Certificate III Individual Support (Ageing) has been specifically developed with English as Additional Language/Dialect students in mind and as one pathway that might suit migrant or refugee students.

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NASSSA works with Housing SA and Habitat for Humanity to enable students to undertake Construction onsite; Certificate II students build a house that is then sold in the community.

In 2017 Kurna Plains School will be hosting vocational education and training programs in endangered languages with a focus on Kurna language. The school is based on Kurna land and the hope is that through the course the next generation of Kurna teachers will be trained.

NASSSA learned early in its history that VET courses needed to be timetabled on common days across

the Alliance in order to maximise student choice and minimise interruptions to other subjects.

Where possible NASSSA prefers to deliver training to groups of students as they find it increases persistence and resilience, compared to sending individuals off to external courses where they have to mix with adults and often do not complete the course. The 11 schools make it possible for a class of students to be formed in order to deliver a VET course; it only takes one or two students from each school to share an interest.

The Alliance has the approach that so long as students have identified the VET course through their involvement in the career and course counselling and selection processes, and are capable of, and committed to, undertaking the course, the schools will fund it, as the course will contribute towards their SACE and potentially towards an Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking (ATAR).

A large number of School-based Apprentices are supported across NASSSA each year. These usually arise because students have been enrolled in VET courses. NASSSA takes a flexible approach to meet the employers' needs to have students on days of their choosing.

The schools in the Alliance are also determined through their career counselling and pathways approaches to ensure that students are very aware of how the VET courses potentially lead on to university, even if this is not something that they will take up in the short term. By the time students leave school they are clear about their options for further training and education, no matter what their immediate pathway is.



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.

Because VET is timetabled to take up the same two full days each week, students miss out on other scheduled classes during that time and are expected to catch up on work missed. To support these students with this task and their academic work, NASSSA provides staff with a teaching load that includes time for students to access assistance.

To establish a holistic approach to training, the schools try to make the mathematics, English and science subjects relate to the vocational courses of VET students.

The relationship between VET and SACE means that VET is a pathway to any career, university based or not, and it is promoted as such. Opportunities at the schools are the same whether students are pursuing an academic pathway, a VET pathway or mix of both. NASSSA promotes the understanding that in some academic fields, engineering for example, having a practical understanding gives a problem-solving edge that is highly valued as a student at university and as an employee. In other fields, NASSSA may say to students, a VET course, for example the Certificate II in Multimedia, is considered the best pathway available.

Registered Training Organisation status

All VET is required to be certified by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Schools have a variety of ways of accessing RTO services:

- becoming an RTO
- the school sector acting as the RTO
- partnering with an RTO (auspice)
- using an external RTO to deliver and assess all of the training onsite or offsite.

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.

There are three models of training delivery in NASSSA and all involve external RTOs. Teacher trainers at the schools who have the necessary industry experience and VET qualifications deliver training auspiced by an external RTO. RTOs send their trainers to deliver training in school facilities. Students attend training at the RTOs' external facilities. About a third of training is delivered through each of these three methods.

One of NASSSA's key managers is responsible for quality assurance and improvement processes for VET across the Alliance. Sustainability of the VET programs is of prime importance and key to that is the quality of both the teacher trainers and RTO trainers. The memorandum of understanding between the Alliance and each RTO makes clear that quality assurance of training will be involved. If a trainer is not coping well, or their pedagogy is not appropriate for secondary students NASSSA will talk to the RTO. Professional development for both teacher trainers and RTO trainers on formative assessment was successfully run as a pedagogy improvement process. NASSSA collects a range of feedback on the learning in classes.

Generally NASSSA hopes that trainers will stay with them for a reasonable period over which they would expect to see improvement and change. There is a



sustainability plan and for most VET courses there is a backup person. The schools' principals support ongoing training for staff and the release of teacher trainer staff to keep their industry experience current.

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 help students make informed choices and prepare them for learning in a workplace environment.

To monitor nearly 1,000 students across 75 locations and classes each week, NASSSA uses a program called WebVET and requires all its RTOs to use it. The program covers attendance, competency progressions and work placements, and allows VET leaders in their home schools to provide timely intervention where needed. WebVET also provides detailed course information that students, parents and families can access.

NASSSA has an induction package that all schools use with their students. All trainers are required to go through a formal induction package and employers who provide work placements must indicate that they have undertaken an induction.

The Workabout Centre that supports Aboriginal secondary students in school-to-work transition works closely with NASSSA focusing on school retention, SACE completion and post-school pathways. The needs of each individual student determine the kinds of support the Centre puts in place, but it generally works on the introductory aspects of training. It provides weekly Five Steps to Work Readiness courses that help students to set goals, write resumes or prepare

for their first experience in employment or work placement. The Centre has worked with NASSSA to develop Aboriginal specific VET programs and has Aboriginal mentors who might attend training with a student or assist with theory or practical work. As a result of their joint work, students might enroll in Introduction to Construction and White Card in Year 9, Certificate I in Year 10 and then their options are open as they progress through Year 11 and 12. The Centre also provides support to Year 12 students for six to twelve months after they leave school.

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.

Students are surveyed twice a year and asked about their trainers, the training, facilities, the process they used for gaining entry to a VET course, their plans for the future, and whether their trainers are supporting their movement towards the desired post-school pathway. Parents and employers are also surveyed.

VET leaders meet twice a term to discuss how students are progressing in courses and whether RTOs are delivering a good service. This happens for both school-delivered courses with school-based trainers, and RTO-based courses. These discussions and the results from the survey analyses are taken back to the RTOs by the VET pathways coordinator if action is required.

