



Erindale College

School profile

- Australian Capital Territory
- Metropolitan
- Government
- Year 11 to 12
- Active Tuggeranong is the RTO with Erindale College as the lead college with six other schools/colleges
- 18 VET courses in seven industry areas in 2015
- 524 students enrolled in Erindale College in 2015

Erindale College is in the Tuggeranong Network of schools in Canberra and provides learning programs for 600 students in Year 10, 11 and 12 during the day and about 500 adult learners during evening sessions. The college is part of a consortium of seven schools consisting of another senior college and five Year 7 to 10 high schools that combine to provide vocational education and training (VET) pathways for students. The seven schools form a single Registered Training Organisation (RTO), the Active Tuggeranong RTO, with Erindale College as the lead college. The college runs a number of programs and academies that enable students to specialise in areas of interest such as the Sports Academy and Innovation and Arts Academy. Moving beyond the college to the workplace or Technical and Further Education (TAFE) fits naturally with the freedoms students have within the senior secondary colleges in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

Program background

The view of VET in the community is changing and it is starting to be seen as an authentic and rigorous alternative or addition to an Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking (ATAR) pathway. Like many others, the college has had to counteract a view among some parents and members of the community that VET is a second-class option and only courses that accrue an ATAR are worthy of consideration. A concerted communication strategy across the consortium of seven schools will embed the cultural shift.

The two senior colleges in the consortium were both RTOs until the ACT Government's Review of VET for Secondary Students in ACT Public Schools (2015)

recommended, among six other major directions, that the number of RTOs be rationalised and strengthened under existing school network structures. After the review the two RTOs merged, with Erindale College taking the lead. Strategic planning work on the future directions of the RTO continues, looking at how it can further strengthen the offerings across the consortium.

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.*

When selecting courses the college considers three factors: student interest, the advice of industry experts, and opportunities. Student interest is mapped to lists of national and local skill requirements, the availability of qualified staff, and optimal use of the college's facilities. The advice of experts is sought about pathway opportunities for students. Innovative opportunities are sought to expand VET or have it more widely accepted.

As a way of encouraging young people to see VET qualifications as academic or fitting within an academic pathway, the college offered Certificate I in Engineering Pathways with teams of students from the seven partner schools engaged in a bridge building challenge. The partner organisation, Canberra Institute of Technology, assisted with stress testing.

The college supports School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships. It also offers a number of short courses such as First Aid, Responsible Service of Alcohol, Security, Makeup and Beauty.

The college's timetable is arranged to facilitate School-based Apprentices and Trainees to organise their one or two days of required off-campus work. The college is as flexible as possible with employers but says, 'School

comes first in a School-based Apprenticeship'. The college's role is to assist students and employers keep all the different elements involved in a School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship running smoothly. While the college acknowledges that combining a highly academic pathway with a School-based Apprenticeship is more difficult due to the amount of off-campus time, this has been managed in those industry areas where students have been able to shift off-campus time to nights or weekends.

The college accepts Year 10 students who are able to demonstrate: a high level of expertise in subjects such as Sport and/or Mathematics and Science; a high level of self-management; strong application to academic endeavour; and a clear pathway for the future, including goal setting.

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'There's so many different pathways for students these days, both in the traditional classroom setting and beyond. Lots of links with the community, lots of partnerships, and students get to go out and experience the world of work before they are actually out there themselves, and hopefully guide their decision-making along the way.' (VET Coordinator)

'Vocational education and training covers a wide range of activities that can be structured, ... or a lot more flexible ... or diverse. It can be in school or out of school. ... students can come in and out of the programs, they don't have to be locked into a particular VET stream. Because all sorts of students may find value in doing a short course in something that will complement where they think they're heading with the next phase of their life.' (VET Coordinator)

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 equipment needs informs decisions about partnerships and accessing external expertise and equipment.

All the schools in the consortium have well-developed facilities, equal to those used at TAFE and set up to emulate what is found in industry. They enable the colleges to cover a wide range of skills that are on local or national skills needs lists.

In 2014, the Tuggeranong Sustainable Living Trade Training Centre (TSLTTC) was established. The two colleges in the network, Erindale and Lake Tuggeranong became a specialist hub for three of the qualifications delivered (Hospitality, Building and Construction, and Automotive) and work in partnership with Tuggeranong Canberra Institute of Technology and other training providers. The five Tuggeranong high schools offer the programs together with the colleges. TSLTTC is central to the Active Tuggeranong RTO.

The quality of the facilities is a strong drawcard for students to undertake VET, knowing that they will be training within a real world context.



As the lead college in Active Tuggeranong RTO, Erindale College is responsible for ensuring that equipment is up-to-date, relevant and maintained, and for allocating limited resources towards this.

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 principal finds it a challenge to find dual qualified trainer teachers for a wide variety of VET areas and then to replace them as they move on. In the ACT, as in some other states, it is not possible for a trainer without a teacher qualification and registration to deliver in a school setting; qualified TAFE trainers, even if they have working with children checks, cannot teach in schools without teacher qualifications. The principal noted that the teacher registration body was working with principals and the Director in the ACT Education Directorate, to address this challenge and was hopeful that there would be a solution.

New staff to the college need to be supported to gain their Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and may need to update industry experience. Sometimes this professional learning may need to be undertaken over a school holiday period. The college supports the teacher as much as possible, financially or with time release.

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.

The college seeks to partner with industry to ensure that the quality of the graduates they send out meets the expectations of industry. It is aware that relationships with an industry can quickly change if there is any question about quality. There is an understanding that the closer the college works with industry the better the quality of their training.

The major industry groups realise that their sustainability is dependent on a steady flow of employees. Industry is therefore enthusiastic about working with the college and the consortium to ensure the training provided within their facilities is what industry needs.

In the ACT, employers willing to provide students with work experience or work placements can be found on a central database. Many placements are also found through the usual mix of direct approaches from students and colleges.

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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.

The college is part of a consortium of seven schools consisting of another senior college and five Year 7 to 10 high schools that combine to provide vocational pathways to students. The seven schools form a single RTO, the Active Tuggeranong RTO, with Erindale as the lead college.

The other senior college in the consortium is Lake Tuggeranong College. The five high schools are: Calwell High School, Caroline Chisholm School, Lanyon High School, Wanniasa School, and Namadgi School.

Having RTO status allows the college and the consortium as a whole to more easily change and adapt the scope of the VET courses on offer.

Erindale College has third party agreements with each of the other schools to ensure that requirements are met. Nominated Erindale staff members take responsibility for each course area, and staff across the schools meet regularly and communicate digitally about matters such as assessment instruments, standards, validation and moderation to ensure that all are compliant.

Senior managers observe that one of the challenges of delivering VET in a school setting is being compliant with two governing systems – the education system and the VET regulatory environment. As an RTO, the college must be compliant, for example with training packages and competency standards, and ensure that

other schools in the consortium are. Yet as a college, it may be working quite differently without curriculum restraints or with A to E grading for assessment.

‘It’s important to make sure that you’re familiar with, and very much abreast of, the changing VET landscape because it’s always changing. Then [it’s just a matter of] adhering to all those aspects of the VET standards to make sure you are compliant.’ (VET Coordinator)

Communication

Current information from a range of sources helps students, parents, employers and the broader school community understand VET offerings and the opportunities they provide. Communication enables students and parents to understand the options available and to make informed choices.

VET is promoted as a valuable pathway to students, teachers and parents. Since over 70 per cent of students across the two senior colleges of the consortium do not go on to university, this cultural shift away from seeing an ATAR pathway as the unquestioned and preferred option to higher education has been identified as something that is very important to communicate. The high schools, and then the primary schools, are or will be the targets of this communication strategy, particularly during the transition points from Year 6 into Year 7 and Year 10 into Year 11. The five high schools all share the same vision and are promoting the pathways through VET into college or work and the strong partnership with Canberra Institute of Technology.

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