



St Patrick's Technical College

School profile

- South Australia
- Metropolitan
- Non-government
- Year 11 to 12
- Has a legal Co-operative Agreement with TAFE SA to jointly deliver VET competencies
- 16 courses in six industry areas in 2015
- 213 students enrolled in 2015

St Patrick's Technical College is a co-educational college located in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, South Australia, and offers a specialist trades focused South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) and a School-based Apprenticeship program for students in Years 11 and 12. Its aim is to have students transition into an full-time Apprenticeship by the time they leave the college. The teaching and learning programs have been developed to support the individual trades for which the college delivers pre-vocational training. The college has a legal Co-operative Agreement with Technical and Further Education South Australia (TAFE SA) to jointly deliver vocational education and training (VET) competencies.

Program background

St Patrick's Technical College began operation in 2007 as the Australian Technical College – Northern Adelaide, an initiative of the Australian Government in partnership with the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide and the Northern Adelaide Industry Consortium. It was one of 25 technical colleges established with Australian Government funding to address trades shortages. The colleges were integrated into existing education and training systems in 2009, in this case the South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools.

Establishment and operational funds were provided to enable the college to build a purpose built facility to teach all nominated trades areas with industry-standard workshops and equipment. The staff funding provided allowed for class sizes of 12 students. Selection of 'state of the art' equipment was aided by industry advisory groups established by the college to ensure both equipment and course content were

relevant and current. These industry groups continue to provide advice to the college.

The industry areas which continue to be offered include: Automotive, Building and Construction, Electrotechnology, Metals and Engineering, and Commercial Cookery (now Food and Hospitality). Plumbing, and Hair and Beauty have since been added with pre-vocational training for Hair and Beauty undertaken at TAFE SA. Community Services is being offered in 2017 subject to student numbers. To the end of 2015 about 65 per cent of students who have attended the college have entered into a School-based Apprenticeship during their enrollment.

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.*

During the establishment of the college, an environmental scan was undertaken as part of the business plan to identify the skill areas that needed to be targeted in order to maintain and expand the economic prosperity of the Northern Adelaide Region. An analysis of the expanding industry sectors in the region requiring an adequate supply of skilled labour, both currently and in the future, resulted in the targeted trades areas.

The enrollment process for students examines attributes such as attitude, aptitude, presentation, family support, ability and career aspirations. Students choose a trade area, undertake an aptitude test and are interviewed with their parents or carers. The aptitude test is to determine whether they are capable of acquiring the skills and knowledge required in some trades – for example, the level of Mathematics in Electrotechnology – or if they have any learning difficulties requiring support.



Students undertake the subjects and VET programs relevant to that trade. Embedded in their studies is the delivery of a Certificate II Pre-vocational VET course linked to the particular trade they have chosen. Curriculum development and college culture has a strong emphasis on developing employability skills.

The college structures its timetable to enable college-based students to spend three days in the classroom studying theory and two full days in the workshops undertaking practical work developing their skills.

The timetable is also arranged to enable all students to complete compulsory SACE subjects by the end of Year 11. Students are discouraged from taking up School-based Apprenticeships until Year 12. This gives the college more flexibility in developing a college/work program with a potential employer during their Year 12. Most employers want to maximise the time a School-based Apprentice spends on-the-job training and this enables the college to be as flexible as possible while still ensuring the student achieves their SACE. It also enables students to mature, to build skills at college, to gain a probationary drivers licence during the year – needed for many of the trades covered by the college – and to experience the six one-week work placement blocks throughout Year 11.

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Out of the 200 points required to gain the SACE at St Patrick's College 140 points would usually be completed in Year 11 and 60 in Year 12. Rather than release students for one or two days a week for a School-based Apprenticeship, the college releases them for six- to eight-week blocks of time. In between students return to the college to ensure SACE studies are being maintained and to gain any required assistance.

Early in Year 11 students undertake VET short courses like Work safely in the construction industry and Occupational Health and Safety so that they have the necessary requirements for their first work placement and ongoing work contact.

The six one-week blocks of work experience during Year 11 enable students to find out if the trade they have chosen is the right one. If it is not, then the college will support them to make a change. Should an Apprenticeship opportunity arise the college recommends that a student spend at least one week of work experience with the potential employer to ensure both parties are happy with the outcome.

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 seeks teachers who have a trade background as well as teaching qualifications. If they are unable to fill a vacancy, the relationship with TAFE SA enables the college to seek a trainer who can deliver at the college or at the TAFE. Students see the relationship with TAFE SA as seamless.



The college employs an industry relations manager whose role is to establish and maintain relationships with industry.

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.

To ensure the curriculum delivered by the college is relevant and current, industry advisory groups have been established for each industry sector. Membership consists of representatives from industry, including employers, RTOs, government and industry advisory boards, and their role is to provide input to course content to ensure what is being taught is relevant and interesting for the students.

This initiative also provides a platform to establish the partnerships with industry that are critical to gaining Apprenticeships. Industry advisory groups have resulted in projects that students participate in to develop their VET competencies; examples include Habitat for Humanity, Weeks Group and Ausco home construction.

Various major employer associations, such as the Motor Trades Association, Australian Submarine Corporation and plumbing industry representatives, are invited to the college to give presentations, promote vacancies, interview students and conduct aptitude testing. Employer groups such as these use the college as a significant source of recruitment for Apprentices.

By attending School-based Apprentice sign ups the industry relations manager is able to establish good relationships with the employer and the Apprentice Support Network representatives and support the interests of the student.

The college developed a School-based Apprentice model designed in collaboration with industry and endorsed by them. Employers indicated to the college that to employ a School-based Apprentice it needed to maximise their time spent on-the-job. In order to do this the college approached the South Australian Government Traineeship and Apprenticeship Services seeking approval to release students from the college in blocks. Students' employability skills such as punctuality, teamwork, communication and problem solving needed to be developed. Employers needed to be able trial students prior to employment and seek feedback from teachers and/or access college reports, and students needed to have references from employers gained through work experience.

Taking all these elements into account the college developed a School-based Apprentice model supported by employers.

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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.

When a student enrolls at St Patrick's Technical College they select a career pathway and the subjects that support this. Every subject they enroll in relates to the training they are undertaking. The Mathematics and Engineering student undertakes different subject to those undertaken by a Hospitality student. The English subject for an Automotive student is different to that undertaken by a Beauty and Hairdressing student. The college intends that every hour of the day a student is enrolled in a subject will be related directly to the career pathway they have chosen.

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.

St Patrick's Technical College has developed a legal 'Cooperative Agreement' with TAFE SA to jointly deliver VET courses. VET Courses are delivered by suitably qualified teachers from the college or TAFE either at the college or TAFE or at both.

When the college was established the College Board took a decision that it should not set itself up as an RTO. Many of the local employers had long established relationships with RTOs such as the TAFEs or other private training providers. The Board did not want to set up in competition with these. In addition, the college wanted to ensure the students had established pathways into Apprenticeships and build on existing good relationships it had in place with employers and RTOs. The decision was made to deliver at Certificate II level and establish a relationship with TAFE SA as the RTO. This arrangement means that when a student moves into an Apprenticeship, the relationship the employer has with their existing RTO can be continued.

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