



Taminmin College

School profile

- Northern Territory
- Provincial
- Government
- Year 7 to 12
- RTO for all VET courses offered
- 9 VET courses offered
- 1,023 students enrolled in school/campus in 2015

Taminmin College is a comprehensive rural school catering for 1,100 students from Year 7 to 12. It is located 40 kilometres south of Darwin in Humpty Doo, Northern Territory. The college offers a range of vocational education and training (VET) and secondary education courses, and has a 75 hectare mixed produce farm. Taminmin College is the largest school provider of VET programs and the only agricultural high school in the Northern Territory. It is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

Program background

Taminmin College has developed its VET program over a period of 10 years to become integral to the way the college provides options and post-school pathways to students. It has had strong leadership of and support for the VET program. 'Now, even Year 7 students know what VET is' and parents look at VET as a good option for their children. 'We're very proud that VET programs are fully integrated in our school.' (Taminmin College Principal)

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.*

Year 9 students are introduced to VET through Certificate I in Agrifood. In Year 10 a range of VET courses, such as Automotive, Hospitality, Business, Engineering and Retail, are offered mainly at Certificate I level. Certificates I and II in Horse Racing (Stablehand) are also offered. In Year 11 Certificate II courses are offered in the same industry areas as well as Certificate III in Agriculture through which students are offered the opportunity to show cattle at the Northern Territory Agricultural show.

In 2017, the first group of Certificate III Business students will complete Year 11 while having the opportunity to complete the qualifications. When those students transition into Year 12 they will be required to study three subjects instead of the usual four because Certificate III Business is recognised as part of the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training. When the VET course was offered, 43 students applied, triple the number of students the college had expected. The college says this is an indication of the shift in culture around considering VET pathways as a positive option that has occurred amongst students and parents or carers.

All students taking a VET course in Year 10 do so on Thursdays. Students have the opportunity to trial one or two VET courses during Year 10. Other non-VET elective subjects, such as the outdoor education program, run for the whole day during the same time that VET courses are timetabled giving the VET courses equal status.

Students enrolled in all VET courses must undertake one or more structured work placements. Recognising the individuality of every student, the college works closely with employers to make sure that a good match is achieved between student and employers ensuring both parties' needs are met. Students enrolled in Certificate III Agriculture undertake a long block of work placement on a cattle station with which the college has a partnership, accompanied by their trainers to support the students and mitigate any risks.



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 is particular in selection of staff for delivery of VET programs. It employs experts out of industry who come in with the latest knowledge and techniques. 'It's about having the right people and having high expectations about their role in developing students.' (Taminmin College Principal) The college makes clear that its aim is for every student to be successful and trainers have key performance indicators to meet that outcome.

The school funds the equipment and materials that the industry experts expect, with assistance from the Northern Territory Government Department of Education and industry partners when high costs are involved.

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Being taught the latest techniques by industry trainers who know how to use up-to-date equipment and materials ensures the safety of students when they go into the workplace and means they are able to contribute immediately.

One of the college's four assistant principals has a major responsibility for VET programs. The school also has a VET Quality Assurance Officer/RTO compliance officer and a VET Coordinator with responsibility for the trainers.

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.*

The VET courses are based around projects so that students learn the skills and knowledge required in the workplace in authentic situations. Together with industry placements this gives students a full experience of the industry. For example in Certificate I Retail, students run a coffee club and undertake a barista course. The industry skills students learn go well beyond those required in the qualification and give students the opportunity to develop the employability skills required in the workplace.

The college finds that students with 'really good practical skills can then get through the theory side of the VET course and assessment requirements because they can understand what is required in the real workplace. They can see it, touch it, feel it. The success is through immersing them totally in the learning environment.' (Assistant Principal with responsibility for VET)

Trainers spend extra time with students out of class time to assist them during assessment period, providing them with individualised support when needed.

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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 an RTO with scope to deliver all nine VET courses. The college became an RTO partly due to the remoteness and distance from Darwin and the difficulty of transporting local students to other training providers. The college decided it needed to offer VET courses onsite to provide opportunities for students, and to do that the college needed to become an RTO in its own right.

The college employs a Quality Assurance Officer who looks after the VET compliance and quality assurance of VET delivery, provides guidance to trainers on credible evidence of training and assessment, and ensures that industry has input to the training.

‘It’s really important ... that you can demonstrate that you meet the required industry standards. My role is to unpack them to a level where work experience trainers can actually work with students and collect the evidence necessary that demonstrates that we meet those standards.’ (VET Quality Assurance Officer)

‘Quality assurance is about making sure that plans are in place, that everyone knows what they’re doing and when that needs to happen. It’s about the type of assessment evidence that’s gathered and actually meeting the requirements of the nationally recognised workplace standards.’ (VET Quality Assurance Officer)

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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.

Strong leadership, support and vision from the principal were key elements in the establishment and success of the VET programs. Equally important was the passionate commitment of those in charge of the program that could communicate this to school leadership, staff, students and community both directly and indirectly.

The school leaders stressed the importance of having the right people in place. People who could drive the



program at an operational level and ensure that high expectations were communicated and translated into processes and practice. People who could ensure that the right information was communicated to every student and their parents, which meant making sure that every staff member was fully informed, and could communicate this information through information nights and course selection periods.

Getting the message out and understood by the wider community was also attributable to having the right people in place. People who could communicate with industry and make the links. People who could tell the story to the community that VET is not an 'add on' but the means of offering a positive pathway option for each student. People who could enact and communicate 'the vision'.

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 college undertakes a review of VET courses each semester. A performance review is undertaken with all trainers. Students complete anonymous feedback forms about the VET courses they've completed,

supervised by school administrators to keep the feedback at arms-length from the trainers responsible for courses. Each industry area is reviewed, industry boards consulted and consideration is given to changes in the skills needs and employment opportunities in the Darwin area.

Key criteria analysed and assessed includes whether students are engaged, whether students are meeting the industry standards expected by employers on work placements, whether the VET course is targeting the right skills areas, whether the college has the right trainer. A recent review has led the college to consider expanding its scope to offer Certificate II in Tourism as a result of feedback from industry.

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