

Submission: by The Hamilton and Alexandra College

To: The House of Representatives Education Committee to inquire into Vocational Education in schools.

The Hamilton and Alexandra College is a P-12 Co-Educational day and boarding school affiliated with the Uniting Church of Australia. It has an enrolment of 392 students. The school is located in Hamilton, a rural town in Western Victoria, situated about 250 kilometres west of Melbourne. The town has a population of approximately 10,000 people.

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses that we currently offer are:

- a) As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO):
 - Certificate II in Horse Studies
 - Certificate II in Hospitality (Operations)
 - Certificate II in Information Technology
- b) In association with South West TAFE, Hamilton and Warrnambool:
 - Certificate II in Auto Studies
 - Certificate II in Electronics
 - Certificate I in Engineering
- c) In association with RMIT, Melbourne:
 - Certificate II in Arts – Multi-Media
- d) In association with West Vic Group Training:
 - Certificate II in Agriculture (new apprenticeships)
- e) In association with private providers:
 - Certificate II in Hospitality (La Porchetta, McDonalds)
 - Certificate II in Retail Operations (La Porchetta, McDonalds, IGA Supermarket)
 - The CISCO Certified Network course.
- e) Other – non-VET status
 - Electrical apprenticeship (status pending)
 - Certificate II in Aviation (student pilot licence) in association with Sharp Aviation Pty Ltd, Hamilton and RMIT Melbourne

Methods of Delivery

The popularity of VET courses at our school and the variety of courses offered have caused us to develop creative timetabling approaches.

Certificates II in Horse Studies and Hospitality are delivered all day (and night in the case of Hospitality) every second Friday – Day 10. This enables a greater a greater range of students to take such courses at Year 12.

Certificate II in Information Technology is timetabled as one of the electives available to Year 10 students.

This is the same for Certificate II in Arts Multi Media, which is offered to students in Years 11 & 12. Certificate II in Auto Studies, Certificate II in Electronics and Certificate I in Engineering are studied after school/evening at the local TAFE by students in Years 9 to 11. Students complete Work placement during their holidays.

Certificate II in Agriculture modules are completed in the students' own time. West Vic Group Training representatives and our students hold regular lunch time meetings. Work placement is completed during school holidays. We encourage students to begin at the end of Year 9 to maximise the holiday time available.

Certificate II in Horsestudies.

The Hamilton and Alexandra College is one of only two schools in Victoria that have R.T.O. status for this course.

Growth and Development:

We commenced lobbying for its development in 1995. Representatives of the College have been involved in the writing of curriculum of this course and in its development and rewriting.

Resourcing/Teacher Training/Impact on other programs:

Initially it was difficult to recruit a teacher with both educational and Equestrian Federation of Australia level 1 qualifications.

Our current teacher, Mrs Sally Balson, works virtually full time delivering Certificate II in Horse Studies, Year 9 and 10 Horse Studies and Horsemanship. As well, she organizes clinics and activities run by specialist instructors, the local Pony Club, Riding for the Disabled, Hunt Club etcetera.

Resourcing this subject has been very costly. We have had to build an all-weather surface manege and 16 loose-boxes in order to cater adequately for this subject. In addition, the horse paddocks have had to be re-fenced, sufficient watering points constructed and jumps built.

These facilities have enabled us to become a focus for horse related activities in the district. The Riding for the Disabled group have re-located their club-room to our school in order to share the facilities. An old scholar of ours is currently National Director for Riding for the Disabled.

Acceptance within the Industry of results and Qualifications:

The College is highly regarded as being Victoria's "Horse School". We attract enrolments from all over Victoria, eastern South Australia and South and Western New South Wales from students interested in our horse courses.

Our students have found work at equine hospitals and racing stables in Australia, Britain and Germany. Some have continued on to do Applied Science (Equine Management) courses at tertiary level, or other horse related courses.

Developing links within their local communities and local employers:

As stated above, the College has developed close links with the local community and local employers. The College employs sessional lecturers (farrier, veterinarian, horse dentist, animal behaviourists etc). These in turn offer our students work placements.

Certificate II in Hospitality (Operations)

Growth and Development:

The College is one of only 4 independent schools that have R.T.O. status in this course. As the College was involved from a very early stage, it has been involved in trialing modes of delivery and assessment. The compulsory work placement is initially performed in the restaurant owned by the teacher, Mrs Rosie Mercer.

The popularity of the course with our students and the esteem in which our hospitality students are held within the industry has meant that our students also work in a number of local venues.

Acceptance within the industry of Results and Qualifications:

Our students are in demand from Lorne to Robe. Several have gained entrance into William Angliss and similar hospitality courses.

Developing links within their local communities and with local employers:

College students not only work with local employers they also assist in the catering for many College functions, for which the College caters for commercial gain. This has brought them many positive comments from members of the local community.

This week at Sheepvention they are catering for clients of Arcadian Wool. Last week they catered for a barbeque to welcome a visiting delegation from China. Last year they assisted a Melbourne caterer at a society wedding which Prince Andrew attended, so their experience is very varied.

Effectiveness in Preparing Students for Post-School Options:

VET courses are very effective in preparing students for post-school options.

Relevance - many students discover that the "regular subjects" such as Maths and Chemistry do have practical applications and so are more interested in them.

Varied Modes of Delivery - Many students enjoy learning in non-classroom environments.

Preparing for the world of Work - Most students enjoy working with adults. They can observe successful people at work and use them as role models.

Emerging Industries:

I hope to work with local schools to implement a Food (Wine) Technology Skills Centre as part of the Wine Science Centre Deakin University may open in Hamilton. If such an industry is to get off the ground government funding will be necessary. Such a centre will provide valuable employment opportunities in near by South Australian wine producing areas and also in the newly emerging Henty and Grampians wine growing areas.

Conclusion

The College students have a very high degree of involvement in VET courses. They also have a high rate of completion of such courses.

It is to be hoped that Federal funding continues and is increased. We have to charge our students in excess of \$600 per course just to cover our costs. This precludes some from participating. This will be detrimental for them. It will also be detrimental to the wider community. It is our student numbers that add to those from the local community that keep the TAFE classes viable. For example, because of VET classes, the Auto Department has re-opened in Hamilton, allowing local people to participate. Prior to this these courses were only available in Warrnambool. As there is no public transport from Hamilton to Warrnambool, some Hamilton residents were precluded from gaining these skills.