



A VOCATIONAL EDUCATION RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

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A vocational education response to the pandemic

Abstract

This proposal is to develop a VET qualification, the Diploma of Professional Studies, that utilises existing training packages and also incorporates literacy, numeracy and digital competence skills. It is proposed that a stipend set at the Youth Allowance rate be incorporated. The qualification would be delivered only on a full-time basis, thus providing a substantive alternative to an apprenticeship or university degree (and resulting in high completion rates). The qualification would take two years (three years for nursing).

The stipend would be available to all full-time students undertaking a VET diploma, including the proposed professional diploma in government identified high priority areas. It would be available to students who are not in receipt of other Commonwealth/state government allowances. The key target group is 18 to 22 year-olds who are not going to university. These students may have been disadvantaged because of the disruption to their education caused by the pandemic. They are a high risk group who could fall into unemployment.

The proposed diploma enables a student to exit at different stages. Each exit point enables students to leave with a qualification in a high demand employment area. A course outline in education and early childhood development is provided as an example. A student who completes a professional diploma would have the necessary underpinning skills and knowledge to proceed with credit into an applied higher education degree and/or employment.

A critical component of the diploma is assessable work integrated learning (WIL).

External assessment, particularly for literacy and numeracy skills to level 3 are part of the structure of the qualification.

The proposal relies on state and Federal government co-operation.

Implementation issues are discussed.

The Diploma of Professional Studies

While COVID-19 has affected the whole community, with high mortality rates among the elderly, a particular concern is young people who are transitioning from school to further education and work.

Schools have closed and classes moved online, which has no doubt been stressful for most students. However, many of them will still make that successful transition to post-school study, especially those who come from the more traditional stable family backgrounds. Moreover, in a period where the economy is struggling, post-school full-time study becomes more attractive, and history has shown that the demand for university places is likely to go up.

However, there is another large group of students who are going to pay a heavy price as a result of the pandemic. These students may not have had the required support, either from under-resourced schools or as a result of their family background, to keep connected and engaged in their education.

Furthermore, the area where many of these students typically gained experience through part-time work and earned an income, such as retail and hospitality, has been at least temporarily destroyed. This significant number of people now face a very difficult future, with few employment opportunities.

Apprenticeship commencements are also likely to decline as employers face their own difficulties¹ and given the difficulties of their final year at school, as noted earlier, many of these young people may also face some extra educational challenges.

The OECD recently undertook a survey of 59 countries to see how their educational systems had coped throughout the pandemic. The OECD was very complimentary of many countries, saying:

“The education systems of the 59 countries that participated in this survey have demonstrated remarkable resilience, flexibility and commitment to education in having established strategies for education continuity, in extremely challenging conditions... For the most part, those strategies were viewed positively by senior administrators, teachers, and school and other education administrators, in terms of their implementation and the results they achieved in providing a considerable number of students access to at least part of the curriculum. (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020, p.3)

However, this positive view was tempered with the following observation:

“More attention has been given to ensuring the continuity of academic learning than to the socio-emotional development of students, and there is agreement that not all students have been able to engage consistently with their education... Although most of the countries surveyed were able to put alternative learning opportunities in place, respondents estimate that just about half of the students were able to access all or most of the curriculum”. (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020, p.3)

¹ The extent of this likely decline is not yet known - the latest NCVET Apprenticeship data is for the March quarter 2020 showed a substantial decline in apprenticeships. [NCVER](#) Managing Director Simon Walker commented that ‘it won’t be until the June quarter that we get a true sense of how the pandemic has affected apprenticeship and traineeship activity’ (NCVER press release).

The bottom line is that, relative to earlier cohorts, the school leavers of 2020 will have an educational deficit. Given this, together with the more limited apprenticeship and employment opportunities, it is not surprising that young people are worried about their future.

Again, the OECD has been active in this area and conducted an online survey in April 2020 with 81 countries and nine youth-led organisations from 48 countries (OECD, 2020). The four most prevalent concerns were:

- mental health
- employment
- disposable income
- education

In this paper, we propose an initiative for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector that goes to the heart of these concerns of young people. It is directed at those young people who leave school with poor prospects for work and education. It builds on the strengths of current training models while addressing their weaknesses.

We are proposing a qualification, titled Diploma of Professional Studies, which has the following features:

- Its target group is young people who have left school and are not going on to university. The diploma may also be of interest to adults wishing to retrain.
- It is of substance - of two to three years' duration.
- It is focused on a vocational stream (for example, community care).
- It incorporates AQF qualifications that are recognised by industry. Graduates would obtain a diploma level qualification, together with AQF Certificate III or IV qualifications where appropriate. Depending on the area of study, the diploma would include 'tickets', which would prove useful in gaining employment. See example of an Education and Childcare Course Guide, page 12. Graduates would have obtained tickets to be a teacher's aide or childcare worker.
- It has a substantial quantity of work integrated learning (WIL).
- It includes a substantial component of general education.
- It is full-time.
- It attracts an income
- It is high quality, with some level of external assessment.
- Graduates would be prepared for employment or further study at the degree level.

Target group

The qualification is firmly directed at young people who have had their education significantly disrupted because of the pandemic and who are also facing a very unfriendly labour market.

That said, the model would also work well for adults seeking retraining. It is not intended as a substitute for those already undertaking a diploma or a degree. However, it would be a suitable qualification for those who might normally have obtained an apprenticeship in a better economic climate. If successful, the model could provide an alternative pathway to a number of occupations, supplementing the well-trodden apprenticeship route.

Duration

Short training courses are likely to be of little benefit when the labour market is so poor. They are most unlikely to overcome the educational deficit caused by the pandemic. We also need to be mindful that people only obtain a return to education with substantial effort. Degrees take a minimum of three years, while apprenticeships tend to take three to four years. Moreover, a diploma taking two years will mean that as the economy gradually restarts from the pandemic, fewer young people will be competing for the few jobs that are available. It will be a good time for young people to be in education rather than unemployment because of this low opportunity cost. While most of the diploma would take two years, some, such as nursing, may take an additional year.

Vocational streams

Rather than students taking a plethora of individual qualifications, we suggest it makes more sense to draw them all together into a vocational stream. This argument draws to some extent on developments in England following the Sainsbury Review (Shreeve 2019). This approach would allow all students within a vocational stream to undertake foundation courses before specialising in a particular area. For example, a building and construction stream would initially provide a general background before the individual chose to pursue a field of study. It is open for discussion how many streams there should be. In the UK, the T level qualifications following the Sainsbury Review covers² an extensive set of fields (see *Attachment 2*).

In Australia, the vocational streams could be based on a field of study or occupational structures. However, the number of categories to be offered will be a matter of judgment. For example, the field of study 'society and culture' covers both community services and security, which would make very strange bedfellows in a vocational stream. Current offerings of diploma qualifications provide a starting point (see *Attachment 4*). Some of these diplomas are in high priority areas such as health, building, engineering and education.

² There are clear parallels between what we are proposing and the T level qualifications developed for England, Wales and Northern Island, notably the vocational orientation, considerable general education and substantive WIL. However, there are differences; T levels are seen as an alternative to A levels for academically orientated school students, while we see the Diploma of Professional Studies as a post-school qualification, and as a possible route to degree level study. In *Attachment 2* we include the information about T level qualifications provided by the Department of Education in the United Kingdom.

A further consideration will be employment opportunities - there is little point offering a qualification in areas where there is little work on offer. In aged care, for example, there will be significant opportunities, while few jobs will be available in the creative arts.

In *Attachment 5* we report a selection of results from the Student Outcome Survey showing sample size (to give an indication of relative size of the qualifications), and a number of outcome indicators.

Attachment 5 shows that outcomes for the various diplomas vary widely. The creative arts tend to have poor immediate employment outcomes, for example. It is noteworthy that for a number of qualifications, a high proportion of graduates go on to further study at the degree level (for example, more than 20 per cent for nursing, business, sport development, laboratory technology, counselling, information technology and legal services).

It is also worth noting that the match between the area of study and the occupation is generally low, with only seven of the diplomas having matches higher than 40 per cent (of those in employment). These seven diplomas are early childhood education, remedial massage, finance and mortgage broking, nursing, financial planning, property services (agency management), and laboratory technology. It would suggest that many students are using occupationally specific VET courses to try to gain wider employment outcomes.

Incorporation of AQF certificates

The new diploma is not intended to replace AQF certificates. Rather the idea is to incorporate current competency-based certificates in a broader construct. This is particularly important in areas with licensing regulations. It also may be possible to include multiple certificates in the one qualification. Thus, Certificates II could be a building block for Certificates III or IV. The intention is to have an overarching qualification that covers general education, AQF certificates and work integrated learning and results in a qualification at the diploma level. In some areas, micro credentials such as first-aid certificates would also be incorporated.

Work integrated learning

Work integrated learning (WIL) is a critical part of the construct. It must be substantial and consist of proper work, not just observation of the workplace. The expectation is that upon graduation the individual will be work ready, having at least four months of experience in the workplace (20 per cent of the course time).³

However, this expectation gives rise to a number of issues. First, ideally the students would be paid for their work, so they have experience as proper employees. The stipend, outlined on page 10, assists in this regard. Simulated workplaces are another option, but this is not ideal and not as persuasive to future employers regarding the work-ready argument.

It is important that the WIL is 'real' and provides proper on-the-job training. We need to build on the apprenticeship or enrolled nursing model in its rigorous relationship with an employer. One avenue

³ Course time is the estimated amount of hours an average student is expected to take to complete the course.

to explore would be whether group training organisations could play a coordination role, on the understanding that they offer real WIL through their network of employers. Without substantial WIL, the qualification would become just another institution-based qualification, and unlikely to be attractive to employers. Preferably, it would be desirable to strengthen institutional capacity requiring them to liaise with the employers, which should see longer-term benefits.

General education

The competency-based movement in Australia has been driven by industry wanting work-ready graduates, but has been criticised as being overly narrow, despite some lip service paid to generic skills. The inclusion of a substantive level of general education has many benefits.

- It recognises that individuals need flexibility and that many graduates do not gain employment in the field of their qualifications.
- It recognises that the world is in a state of flux and it is not possible to predict at all well what employment opportunities will occur in the future. It provides some insurance against uncertainty.
- It recognises that a young person will have a working life of 40 to 50 years and that an initial vocational qualification is unlikely to equip an individual well for that whole period. *Attachment 6* demonstrates that the higher the qualification the better the employment outcomes.
- It recognises that some young people will want to go on to study at a higher level – undertake a degree, for example. These individuals need a solid academic base equivalent to year 12 completion or the standards set by higher education for adult entry. A general level of education provides the possibility of further study, even if it is not immediately. This type of education would also prepare individuals for a greater range of opportunities. For example, in the field of emergency services the qualification could prepare students for possible entry into the police force, the prison service, the armed forces or security including cyber security.

In the recently developed T level qualifications in the United Kingdom, students are expected to study English, maths and digital skills, irrespective of the field of the qualification (Shreeve, 2019). However, these three areas should be seen as a minimum. For example, community care students would benefit from studying some psychology or sociology. It is expected that upon graduation, all students would have sufficient academic credentials to study at the degree level.

Full-time

Because the qualification would only be delivered full-time, this signals its seriousness and its role as an alternative to, say, university study or full-time employment. It would also ensure the best chance of high completion rates – we know that in both vocational education and higher education, students studying part time have much lower completion rates.

The full-time expectation signals to students that the qualification is a real alternative to an apprenticeship or full-time academic education.

Attracts an income: The Stipend

Prospective students are unlikely to be enthusiastic about the qualification unless a stipend is associated with it. The diploma must be seen as attractive relative to social security payments. The Youth Allowance may be able to provide support; we suggest that the diploma be seen as a legitimate activity for adults in receipt of unemployment benefits.

Features of a stipend

- Set at the Youth Allowance rate currently \$304 per fortnight if living at home or \$462 per fortnight if need to live away from home.
- Not means tested.
- Fully government funded.
- Available to 18 to 22-year-old full-time students undertaking a diploma, including the professional diploma, in state government high-priority areas.
- Funded by the Commonwealth, provided the states do not charge students a tuition fee.
- Students in receipt of other Commonwealth/state government allowances would not be able to claim the stipend as an addition. It is not a top up.
- Recipients undertake other part-time work within the tolerances currently available for youth allowance recipients.
- Available for a maximum of two years (other than nursing students entering into full-time study through a health stream who would be eligible for youth allowance until the completion of their enrolled nurse course).

Quality and external assessment

To guarantee success, this qualification needs to be seen as a high-quality qualification that ensures the graduate has a range of skills. It needs credibility. A weakness of the current VET system is that the provider of the training also conducts the assessment. Regulation is expected to ensure the quality of the providers. The most obvious way of ensuring credibility is a separate assessment body that delivers some sort of capstone assessment at the end of the study period to gain the qualification. The assessment body would need to have credibility with both educators and industry.

Implementation Issues

- Eligible providers are restricted to those currently able to offer VET student loans.
- The addition of literacy, numeracy and digital competence built into the curriculum would need development. Given the tight timeframe these competences may need to be introduced in the

second half of year 1.

- The additional competences will need to be funded over and above existing subsidy levels to providers.
- Work integrated learning, which is not a feature of VET at higher levels, will require institutions to develop links with employers and develop an industry placement capability. The development of this capacity will need to be funded. Currently the Commonwealth government spends \$200 million a year on an apprenticeship support network. A similar model could underpin this proposal in order to develop high quality work integrated learning.
- Ideally, employers and employee organisations would engage with educationalists in the design of the professional diploma. It is suggested that state governments organise working groups to refine the curriculum and strengthen work integrated learning experiences.
- Employers participating in work integrated learning would need to be remunerated. It is suggested the level be similar to that available to employers for nursing students. (i.e. \$62 per day).
- External assessment would apply particularly to literacy, numeracy and digital competence. It is relatively easy to access literacy and numeracy levels through external assessment. Digital competence is more difficult. The design of the work experience project may incorporate a demonstration of digital skills competence.

Example: Diploma of Professional Studies in Education and Childcare

Course Guide	
Qualification purpose	<p>The purpose of the Diploma of Professional Studies in Education and Childcare is to ensure students have the qualifications and skills for employment as: a Teacher's Aide, Outside School Hours Coordinator and a Childcare Manager. They will have a Working with Children Certificate.</p> <p>Those graduates who wish to proceed to an undergraduate degree in early childhood will have the necessary capabilities to enter the degree with up to 12 month's credit.</p>
Objectives	<p>The objectives of this qualification are to equip students with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the core knowledge and core skills that are relevant to education and childcare; • up-to-date occupational knowledge and skills that have continued currency among employers and others; • English and mathematics to level 3 and digital skills; • threshold competence that meets employer expectations and is as close to full occupational competence as possible; • opportunities to manage and improve their own performance; and • Students on completion of year 1 will have literacy and numeracy to level 2, as well as a Certificate IV in Teacher Assisting or a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education.
Industry placement experience	<p>Industry placements are intended to provide students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for skilled employment in their chosen occupation and which are less easily attainable by doing a qualification alone.</p> <p>Placements should be appropriate to the student's intended career path and would include childcare centres, schools, kindergartens and TAFE institutions in selected areas.</p> <p>The industry placement is used to assess students' competencies.</p>

See *Attachment 3* for an example of the General Competency Framework.

Concluding comments

The Vocational Education and Training sector has the opportunity to support young people in the time of COVID-19 through a new approach: the Diploma of Professional Studies.⁴ The idea behind this qualification is to:

- tackle mental health issues by providing a substantive full-time activity for those young people who are likely to fall by the way because of the fall-out of the pandemic on education and on the labour market;
- prepare graduates for the workforce by providing work integrated learning. In this regard, the work component of the qualification will give graduates the experience employers generally are seeking;
- provide a base level of income at a time when a lack of income is an important concern of young people;
- prepare young people educationally. This is of particular importance for those young people whose education has been disrupted by COVID-19. It will position graduates for either direct employment or prepare them to continue their studies at a higher level. The substantive amount of general education provides some insurance against the uncertainties of the future as well as recognising that there is generally only a loose connection between what VET students study and their subsequent occupation.

The qualification will also take people out of the pool of the potentially unemployed for two to three years. In effect, this qualification buys time for the job market to improve while also providing real VET qualifications and employment experience.

Finally, the success of this qualification would be easy to judge. Completion rates indicate the extent to which it has provided a constructive, substantive activity for young people. Similarly, employment and further study rates will indicate how well the qualification has equipped young people for the transition from school education to the workforce.

⁴ We would suggest that the broad field be included in the label, for example Diploma of Professional Studies in Education and Childcare.

Attachment 1

This Attachment considers costs associated with a new qualification. It considers government subsidies and various forms of student support, several of which would have to be amended to apply to the new Diploma of Professional Studies. The degree of risk of these students falling into unemployment is well illustrated from the in ABS 2019 and ABS 2020.

Subsidies, fees and concessions

A few examples are given of subsidies and fees for courses that might be comparable in size to the ones being proposed in this proposal.

NSW total price and subsidies for a whole qualification are shown in SMART AND SKILLED - NSW SKILLS LIST. The set fee is the difference between the total price and the subsidy. Loadings and concessions are shown.

The Victorian government spreadsheet *Skills First – 2020 Funded Course List and Subsidies*⁵ and includes fee waivers and concessions. Fees are not controlled except for the FREE-TAFE courses.

CHC52015 Diploma of Community Services

NSW Targeted Priorities Full Qualifications Price \$10,810, no fee

Victoria Subsidy \$6 per hour for 1,400 hours or \$8,400, Free TAFE. To achieve this qualification, the candidate must have completed at least 100 hours of work as detailed in the assessment requirements of units of competency.

It would be desirable if the course proposed in this project could be listed as high value and Free TAFE.

Trade Support Loans

Trade Support Loans (TSL) replaced a previous grant, Tools for Your Trade, in 2014. The loans, which can total \$21,542, are spread over four years, with the largest sum available in the first year. On completion a 20 per cent discount is applied to the amounts borrowed.

TSL payments are made monthly: \$718.07 per month in year one (over \$8,500 for the year); \$538.56 per month in year two; \$359.04 per month in year three; \$179.52 per month in year four. The loan amounts are higher in the early years of training to compensate for lower wages. The lowest hourly rate for a first-year apprentice is \$12.48 or nearly \$25,000 a year.

These loans were provided to 56,000 trade apprentices in 2018-19. The government's outlay is more than \$200 million a year. The annual cost to the budget (largely the projected non-repayment of loans) is estimated at \$65 million annually (NCVER 2019 *Government Funding* and DET 2019 Budget Statements 2019-20).

⁵ [Skills First - 2020 Funded Course List and Subsidies](#)
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These loans provide a notable addition to the funds available to students, especially in the first year, and might be considered for the new diploma.

Commonwealth incentives and other apprentice support

A wide range of support is provided to trade apprentices.

The Commonwealth government makes incentive payments to employers recently totalling about \$400 million. The standard is \$1,500 on commencement and \$2,500 on completion. There are a number of variations including assistance for priority care occupations, designated equity groups, for apprentices in regional and rural and drought areas, disabled apprentices and for adults and for disadvantaged mature aged. Support is also provided to new workers in other traineeships but not for existing workers.

The 2019 budget included an 'Additional Identified Skills Shortage Payment' to employers totalling \$4,000 for employing extra apprentices in 10 selected occupations on the National Skills Needs List and grants of \$1,000 to the apprentice on commencement and \$1,000 on completion (DESE 2020). The additional payments in traditional trades will lift Commonwealth outlays on incentives by about 25 per cent to \$520 million by 2023-24.

- **Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN)**

The Commonwealth spends nearly \$200 million a year on the AASN for information and advice for employers and apprentices and trainees. Seven apprenticeship network providers deliver support services nationally through more than 480 field officers and 137 locations. The AASN might have a role with the new diploma.

- **Living away from home allowance (LAFHA) for apprentices**

The Commonwealth grant of a LAFHA, worth up to \$4,000 in the first year and smaller amounts in the next two years. A research study of incentives found that those paid to employers made little difference to apprentice retention and completion, while the LAFHA did show a positive effect on completions (DAE, 2012).

- **State support**

States and the Commonwealth provide various forms of other grants. They are largely to apprentices. For 2018 these were estimated at \$123 million (NCVER 2019c).

Victoria has an Apprentice Travel Allowance Scheme where attendance for block release requires travel and accommodation. NSW has a rebate for part of the costs of car registration.

Queensland provides support for travel and accommodation. Overall apprentices are provided with a considerably higher level of support than other areas of vocational training, a matter that could be reviewed.

Grants for full-time tertiary students living costs up to \$12,000 a year (single)

Full-time students and apprentices 18 and over can access benefits funded by the Commonwealth. For persons aged 18 to 24, Youth Allowance (Student) is provided, and for persons 25 and over Austudy is provided. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders can access ABSTUDY. The three forms of assistance provide very similar benefits.

Total numbers of students in tertiary education who are assisted are provided each year but the separate numbers in vocational and higher education are only reported up to 2015-16.

From 2017 there is no approval for diplomas in areas not approved for VET Student Loans (VSLs) or with providers not approved for VSL (though the student does not need to have a VSL).

For a single person living at home, the student rate is \$304.50 per fortnight or \$22 per day. For single students living away from their parents' home, the rate is currently \$462 a fortnight (\$33 per day) or \$12,000 per year. There are higher rates for those with dependents.

Unemployed persons aged 21 or under are paid Youth Allowance (Other), which is the same rate as Youth Allowance (Student). Unemployed persons aged 22 and over are paid under Newstart, now Jobseeker, at a rate of \$565.70 a fortnight or \$40 per day. Students aged 22 and over remain on \$462 a fortnight or \$33 a day.

Students aged 18-21 are generally treated as dependent on their parents and their benefits reduce where their parents' income exceeds about \$55,000 a year. Students are independent of their parents at age 22 but can be assessed as independent before that.

Students are subject to a personal income test, with their benefits beginning to fall when that income exceeds \$437 per fortnight. Apprentices who might be regarded as part-time in vocational education were declared eligible for these allowance in July 2005. However, the number of apprentices receiving benefits appear to be very small (Knight 2010). This is probably because of their earnings: the lowest wage rate for an apprentice in 2020 is \$12.48 per hour, which for a 38-hour week would mean nearly \$950 income per fortnight.

Benefits to students and to the unemployed are indexed by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). In contrast the age pension is adjusted in effect by male total average weekly earnings. These usually increase by more than CPI and can be taken to indicate changes in community living standards. Currently the single age pension is \$860.60 per fortnight or \$61 per day. From 2010 to 2020 the age pension increased 31 per cent while Youth Allowance increased 23 per cent. It seems reasonable that the pension should be higher than the allowance for students, who can often get part-time work. That the gap should widen over time seems less reasonable. The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) has been arguing for a permanent increase of \$75 per week in Youth Allowance - small compared with the temporary Coronavirus increase of \$275 per week.

There has been no analysis of the effects of these benefits for vocational students. A survey of university student incomes is carried out every five years for Universities Australia (2018). The latest study shows that a smaller proportion of recipients are in paid employment, which often has a negative effect on student performance. This fits with the findings of a study of tertiary students

summarised by Karmel (2013) that receiving youth allowance was associated with improved course completion rates.

Student start-up loans for higher education only

Student Start-Up Loans are available to university students receiving support under Youth Allowance, Austudy and ABSTUDY. Students receive \$1,094 twice a year over four years, which equates to more than \$8,000⁶.

About \$140 million per year is outlaid. (Department of Services 2019 Budget Statements).

VET student loans

VET student loans are available for diplomas in high priority areas relevant to industry demand. The provider has to meet stringent conditions to be approved. Three loan caps bands were specified to deter the charging of excessive fees. The highest cap is a little under \$16,000 per course in 2020 (DESE 2020).

The outlay on VET Student Loans was \$275 million in 2018 or only 10 per cent of the peak outlay in 2015 on VET FEE-HELP, the previous loan scheme. Some 55,000 students were assisted in 2019, less than a quarter of the peak number, and the students are now mainly with government providers. Only about 15 per cent of diploma and higher students received loans, or less than 2 per cent of all vocational students.

In sharp contrast, Australian higher education providers received more than \$5.6 billion from their loans schemes HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP in 2018 for about 800,000 undergraduate students and some coursework masters.

Possible new forms of support

New forms of assistance might be considered given the experience with the JobSeeker supplement. They might be directed at work integrated learning.

⁶ “When you apply, you can also apply for one or more future Student Start-up Loans while you study. This means we’ll pay them in future semesters without you having to do anything”.

Attachment 2

T Levels: what they are⁷

T Levels are new courses that follow GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and are equivalent to three A levels. These two-year courses, which launched in September 2020, have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses so that the content meets the needs of industry and prepares students for work, further training or study.

T Levels offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours (approximately 45 days).

In time, students will be able to take a T Level in the following subject areas:

- accounting
- agriculture, land management and production
- animal care and management
- building services engineering for construction (starting September 2021)
- catering
- craft and design
- design and development for engineering and manufacturing
- design, surveying and planning for construction (now available)
- digital business services (starting September 2021)
- digital production, design and development (now available)
- digital support and services (starting September 2021)
- education and childcare (now available)
- finance
- hair, beauty and aesthetics
- health (starting September 2021)
- healthcare science (starting September 2021)
- human resources
- legal
- maintenance, installation and repair for engineering and manufacturing
- management and administration
- engineering, manufacturing, processing and control
- media, broadcast and production
- onsite construction (starting September 2021)
- science (starting September 2021)

⁷ Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-t-levels/introduction-of-t-levels>

When they will start

The first three T Levels are available at selected colleges, schools and other providers across England.

A further seven T Levels will be available in September 2021, with the remaining courses starting in either 2022 or 2023.

We have published a [list of the providers](#) that are offering T Level courses up to September 2022.

How T Levels will work with other qualifications

T Levels will become one of the main choices for students after GCSE alongside:

- apprenticeships for students who wish to learn a specific occupation ‘on the job’
- A levels for students who wish to continue academic education

We are currently reviewing post-GCSE qualifications to create a simpler, high-quality system that students, parents and employers will all understand.

T Levels are based on the same standards as apprenticeships, designed by employers and approved by the [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education \(the Institute\)](#). We expect the total time to complete a T Level to be about 1,800 hours over the two years, including the industry placement. This is a significant increase on most current technical education courses.

This differs from an apprenticeship, which is typically 80 per cent on-the-job and 20 per cent in the classroom and is more suited to those who know what occupation they want to pursue, want to earn a wage and learn at the same time, and are ready to enter the workforce at age 16.

Attachment 3

Diploma of Professional Studies in Education and Childcare - General Competency Framework

General English Competencies	General mathematical competencies	General digital competencies
GEC1. Convey technical Information to different audiences	GMC1. Measuring with precision	GDC1. Use digital technology and media effectively
GEC2. Present information and ideas	GMC2. Estimating, calculating and error spotting	GDC2. Design, create and edit documents and digital media
GEC3. Create texts for different purposes and audiences	GMC3. Working with proportion	GDC3. Communicate and collaborate
GEC4. Summarise information/ideas	GMC4. Using rules and formulae	GDC4. Process and analyse numerical data
GEC5. Synthesise information	GMC5. Processing data	GDC5. Be safe and responsible online
GEC6. Take part in/lead discussions	GMC6. Understanding data and risk	GDC6. Controlling digital functions
	GMC7. Interpreting and representing with mathematical diagrams	
	GMC8. Communicating using mathematics	
	GMC9. Costing a project	
	GMC10. Optimising work processes	

Note: In year 1 in the proposed diploma it is expected that students will have literacy and numeracy levels to level 2.

At the completion of the diploma it is expected that graduates will have attained level 3 in literacy and numeracy.

Students may take challenge tests for level 2 skills on entry or at any stage.

The development of contextualised literacy and numeracy could be incorporated into subjects such as sociology, behavioural science and design related to the broad field of study. This strategy would develop a range of other skills in students that will enable them to do well in further study or employment.

Attachment 4

Fields in which AQF diploma qualifications are currently offered

Field of study	Qualifications
Architecture and Building	DIPLOMA OF BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION (BUILDING)
Architecture and Building	DIPLOMA OF BUILDING DESIGN
Architecture and Building	DIPLOMA OF INTERIOR DESIGN AND DECORATION
Creative Arts	DIPLOMA OF MUSIC INDUSTRY
Creative Arts	DIPLOMA OF GRAPHIC DESIGN
Creative Arts	DIPLOMA OF SCREEN AND MEDIA
Creative Arts	DIPLOMA OF VISUAL ARTS
Education	DIPLOMA OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE
Food, Hospitality and Personal Services	DIPLOMA OF BEAUTY THERAPY
Health	DIPLOMA OF NURSING
Health	DIPLOMA OF NURSING (ENROLLED-DIVISION 2 NURSING)
Health	DIPLOMA OF WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY
Health	DIPLOMA OF REMEDIAL MASSAGE
Information Technology	DIPLOMA OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY NETWORKING
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF QUALITY AUDITING
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF BUSINESS
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF FINANCIAL PLANNING
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF FINANCE AND MORTGAGE BROKING MANAGEMENT
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF ACCOUNTING
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF EVENT MANAGEMENT
Management and Commerce	DIPLOMA OF PROPERTY SERVICES (AGENCY MANAGEMENT)
Natural and Physical Sciences	DIPLOMA OF LABORATORY TECHNOLOGY
Society and Culture	DIPLOMA OF GOVERNMENT
Society and Culture	DIPLOMA OF SPORT DEVELOPMENT
Society and Culture	DIPLOMA OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
Society and Culture	DIPLOMA OF YOUTH WORK
Society and Culture	DIPLOMA OF LEGAL SERVICES
Society and Culture	DIPLOMA OF COUNSELLING
Society and Culture	DIPLOMA OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES
Society and Culture	DIPLOMA OF INTERPRETING (LOTE-ENGLISH)

Attachment 5

Selected outcomes for graduates of diploma courses (2019)

Program Name	Field of education	Number of respondents	Improved employment status after training	In further study at Bachelor or above	In the same occupation group as training course (of those employed after training)	Employed after training (of those not employed before training)
DIPLOMA OF GOVERNMENT	Society and Culture	269	86.7	8.6	0.0	95.9
DIPLOMA OF WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY	Health	225	84.5	6.4	7.8	65.1*
DIPLOMA OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT	Management and Commerce	830	83.0	5.3	10.8	65.8*
DIPLOMA OF PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING	Management and Commerce	105	82.7	2.8	7.6	np
DIPLOMA OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	Management and Commerce	1891	79.6	7.8	3.2	40.1
DIPLOMA OF QUALITY AUDITING	Management and Commerce	125	77.6	8.4	15.2	np
DIPLOMA OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE	Education	3578	77.4	10.0	63.4	64.2
DIPLOMA OF REMEDIAL MASSAGE	Health	690	77.2	6.6	55.1	67.2
DIPLOMA OF FINANCE AND MORTGAGE BROKING MANAGEMENT	Management and Commerce	331	75.7	3.2	49.2	51.0*
DIPLOMA OF NURSING (ENROLLED-DIVISION 2 NURSING)	Health	682	75.0	24.6	46.8	66.7
DIPLOMA OF BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION (BUILDING)	Architecture and Building	514	75.0	6.4	18.6	48.3*
DIPLOMA OF NURSING	Health	1264	74.3	35.6	46.6	62.3
DIPLOMA OF FINANCIAL PLANNING	Management and Commerce	472	73.4	11.5	42.0	50.6*
DIPLOMA OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT	Management and Commerce	287	72.7	9.1	11.0	64.8*
DIPLOMA OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT	Management and Commerce	319	72.0	7.0	17.3	53.3*
DIPLOMA OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	Society and Culture	1315	69.1	15.7	33.5	46.2
DIPLOMA OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	Management and Commerce	320	67.4	13.1	4.2	45.5

DIPLOMA OF YOUTH WORK	Society and Culture	130	66.7	17.7	37.0	40.9*
DIPLOMA OF BEAUTY THERAPY	Food, Hospitality and Personal Services	589	62.9	6.8	1.1	50.6
DIPLOMA OF BUSINESS	Management and Commerce	619	62.4	23.5	1.1	36.4
DIPLOMA OF PROPERTY SERVICES (AGENCY MANAGEMENT)	Management and Commerce	153	61.4	6.7	52.3	38.3*
DIPLOMA OF BUILDING DESIGN	Architecture and Building	141	60.0	16.3	25.3	48.1*
DIPLOMA OF ACCOUNTING	Management and Commerce	420	57.2	21.0	18.9	29.5
DIPLOMA OF EVENT MANAGEMENT	Management and Commerce	133	57.1	18.4	26.7	46.1*
DIPLOMA OF SPORT DEVELOPMENT	Society and Culture	101	55.1	39.3	21.8	57.8*
DIPLOMA OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES	Society and Culture	130	53.5	17.7	10.5	41.8*
DIPLOMA OF LABORATORY TECHNOLOGY	Natural and Physical Sciences	146	50.5	24.0	43.6	41.9
DIPLOMA OF INTERIOR DESIGN AND DECORATION	Architecture and Building	144	50.2	9.9	3.6	36.7*
DIPLOMA OF COUNSELLING	Society and Culture	358	48.9	28.2	13.3	35.1
DIPLOMA OF INTERPRETING (LOTE-ENGLISH)	Society and Culture	418	47.4	9.8	10.2	32.9
DIPLOMA OF MUSIC INDUSTRY	Creative Arts	134	46.4	18.9	8.8	31.4*
DIPLOMA OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY NETWORKING	Information Technology	172	46.2	20.5	17.6	32.9
DIPLOMA OF LEGAL SERVICES	Society and Culture	100	44.5	39.2	15.8	32.8*
DIPLOMA OF GRAPHIC DESIGN	Creative Arts	178	42.2	11.9	3.1	30.2
DIPLOMA OF SCREEN AND MEDIA	Creative Arts	645	37.7	9.5	7.6	25.9
DIPLOMA OF VISUAL ARTS	Creative Arts	190	26.3	18.0	8.3	20.2

Source: Student Outcome Survey 2019

Attachment 6

Employment to population ratio (%) by selected age groups, Australia First two quarters 2020

	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years
Postgraduate Degree				
Qtr1	100.0	85.2	82.0	87.1
Qtr2	0.0	66.0	77.4	82.9
Graduate Diploma/Graduate Certificate				
Qtr1	100.0	79.9	88.8	92.3
Qtr2	100.0	68.6	82.9	89.5
Bachelor Degree				
Qtr1	74.6	82.1	88.5	86.9
Qtr2	75.6	71.3	82.5	82.9
Advanced Diploma/Diploma				
Qtr1	73.5	77.5	81.4	83.6
Qtr2	47.9	65.2	69.7	76.2
Certificate III/IV				
Qtr1	68.7	82.4	86.2	85.7
Qtr2	48.2	74.7	78.7	82.7
Year 12 or equivalent				
Qtr1	61.8	72.0	74.0	78.8
Qtr2	51.9	58.8	66.5	72.0
Year 11 or equivalent				
Qtr1	49.7	61.6	60.9	57.9
Qtr2	36.2	55.0	54.7	63.6
Year 10 or equivalent				
Qtr1	38.7	59.2	55.7	60.1
Qtr2	28.8	58.4	61.1	57.4

Source: ABS 2020

The table shows that the proportion of persons in employment who have a qualification at Certificate III or higher is greater than for persons who only hold year 12 and much greater than for those who have not completed secondary schooling. For persons 20 and over 80 per cent of those with a qualification were employed in the first quarter this year compared with about 60 per cent of early leavers. Virtually all groups suffered a decline in the proportion in employment in the second quarter this year.

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