




**TAFE  
DIRECTORS  
AUSTRALIA**

# **#The Power of TAFE: The COVID Story**

December 2020





Further inquiries should be made to:

The Chief Executive Officer

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA)\*

Email: [memberservices@tda.edu.au](mailto:memberservices@tda.edu.au)

Phone: +61 (2) 6153 3458

Address: Canberra Institute of Technology, 37 Constitution Avenue, REID ACT 2600

Postal Address: GPO Box 826 CANBERRA ACT 2601

\* See Appendix 3 for information about TDA and the TAFE network

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# Foreword

This year has seen significant and unprecedented disruption to all aspects of society, here in Australia and globally. Every sector has been impacted, including education, which has seen major disruption at all levels; in schools, TAFEs and universities. This publication focuses on TAFEs' responses across Australia to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19.

TAFEs' long held plans and aspirations for online connected learning literally geared-up overnight. Teaching staff familiar with the classroom surprised even themselves with their creative responses in bringing digital tools to the teaching task. Many students appreciated the new forms of engagement in their learning, although the experience for some learners varies across the country with challenges with technology, anxiety and isolation.

This is the documentation of the approaches adopted by TAFEs, and how their staff adjusted, and how students coped.

Most importantly, the documented experience lays the foundation for us to consider what is next for vocational education and training and how does TAFE lead the way.

We need to learn from this experience and take forward the lessons from the innovation forced upon teaching and learning. TAFEs will not be the same again. This report celebrates the success but points to changes needed for TAFEs to continue to be at the core of the education and training response to Australia's COVID-19 recovery and future.

Many sites of work across Australia transformed their operating models by taking up technology in new ways to continue operating. If this is the new approach for work then it needs to be the core of teaching and learning in TAFEs.

TAFEs, committed to their public mission, have responded to the new world with technology based learning and new courses to support businesses that needed new skills.

If anything, this pandemic has shown the power of TAFE. TAFEs have shifted their efforts behind government responses. The power of the network of TAFEs has also been proven. Ideas, resources and professional development have been readily shared among TAFEs. TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) policy networks have proven a valuable forum for support and encouragement.

On behalf of the board of TAFE Directors Australia I thank all the TAFEs for the extraordinary work to ensure the delivery of education and training during 2020.

I hope you find this publication on the TAFE response to COVID-19 inspiring.

**Mary Faraone**

**Chair**

**TAFE Directors Australia**









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## 1. Sudden Disruption

For Australia, and the world, disruption in 2020 has been immense – COVID-19 came as a surprise, public health responses cut economic activity at record levels in record time and consumer confidence plummeted. Australians were still grieving the devastation and loss from once-in-a-century bushfires across large swathes of bushland and rural towns, fuelled by sustained drought. 2020 is like no other, especially for the 10.7 million working age Australians who have not lived through a severe downturn such as that of the early 1990s.

Closure of businesses and other regular activities to put isolation practices into place to reduce the spread of COVID-19 disrupted the teaching and training routine of TAFEs in a similar way. Virtually overnight staff transformed their teaching and training to be delivered into the home of students for over seventy percent of activity.

TAFE Directors Australia surveyed TAFEs covering the period 17 March 2020 to 12 June 2020 exploring the approaches they took to adapt to these unique circumstances. This report tells the story of this transformation – from the perspective of TAFEs, staff and most importantly, students.

True transformation tends to stick. The expectations of students and the newfound confidence of teachers to embed technology in their teaching and student engagement points to new operating models.

The extent to which TAFE business partners take up this new form of digital learning, and Australian industry embraces new ways that competency can be acquired, will determine the acceleration of the change across vocational and higher education in Australia.

The report concludes with implications for vocational education practice in Australia.



## 2.The Power of TAFE @ Home - Rapid Move to Digital Delivery



‘Something I figured out very early on was that I needed to rethink the way I was delivering. Normally I would talk at length at the start of the class and follow this up with activities or assignments that students would work on together. One of greatest challenges of teaching is actually getting your students to converse. This is exacerbated online as students are less likely to opt in when they are behind the safety of their screens. What I found worked better, was to break things up – talk for less time and give them a range of tasks in smaller groups.’ Lucas, Trainer,

**Melbourne Polytechnic**

When governments announced limited movement orders in late March 2020 it became obvious that Australian TAFEs would need to do something they had never done before – move almost all their courses to new modes of delivery.

Early term breaks were taken in most jurisdictions and TAFE managers, teachers and administrators began the sizable task of adapting courses for delivery into the homes of each student.

### Adaptation

The phrase ‘digital delivery’ is used as the descriptor of courses that moved from campus delivery to students in their home or workplace. It brings into its ambit the full range of strategies adopted by TAFEs: existing classes delivered via video-link; learning tools and skill practice kits delivered to homes; mailing and emailing course content to students; assessments online and fully integrated online learning.

TAFEs across Australia deliver over 1,200 courses to over 770,000 students<sup>1</sup>. Some courses have a strong knowledge base while others involve acquiring skills through practical exercises and projects under the guidance of a teacher deeply experienced in the field. Not all courses could be fully converted but most could have the knowledge content packaged in a new way and practical exercises conducted remotely with teachers able to observe and guide.

Early in the process, several TAFEs classified their courses into one of four categories as the way of planning for the conversion of delivery:

- Type 1 - **Digital already:** these courses were largely already online and teachers were able to switch campus students to digital delivery.
- Type 2 – **Digital suited:** these courses, when amended, were able to be moved to digital delivery, with some additional resources for students and support for teachers.

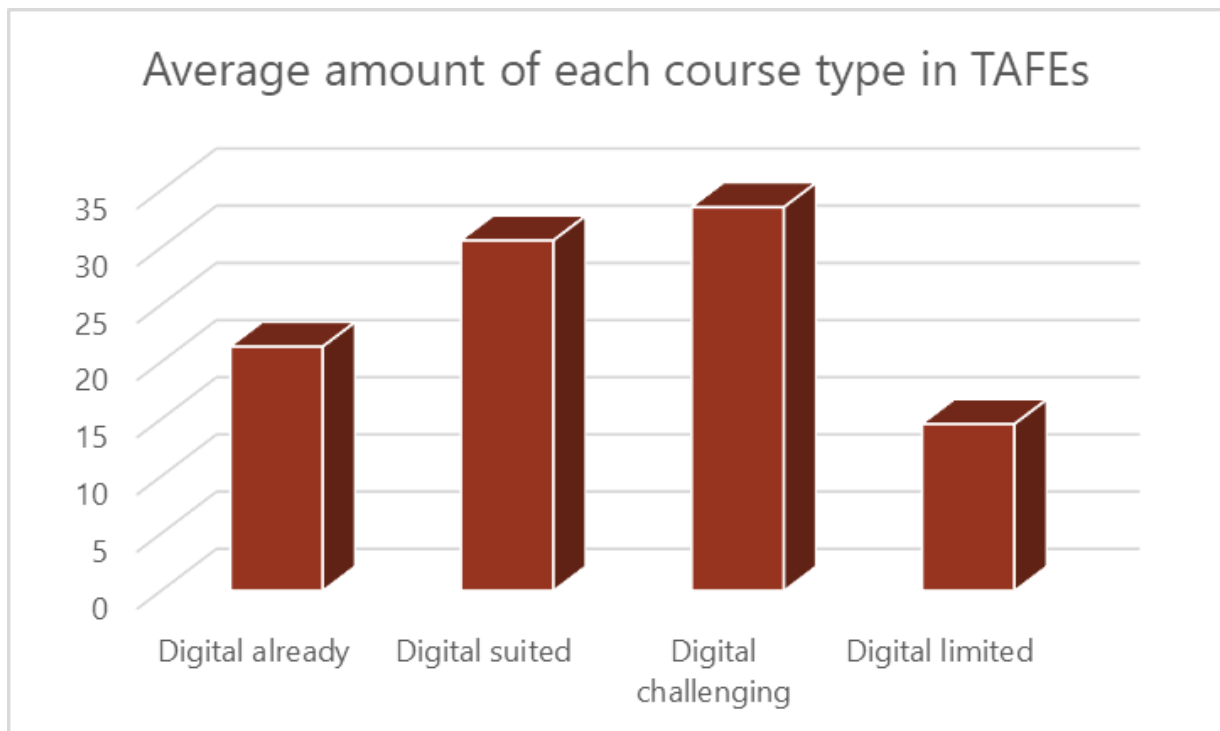
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1 NCVER, 2020, Total VET students and courses 2019



- Type 3 – **Digital challenging**: these courses had skill acquisition elements that needed equipment and close oversight from teachers, or it was felt the teachers were insufficiently prepared for delivery in this form.
- Type 4 – **Digital limited**: these courses were thought to be too difficult for even some element to be delivered in a digital context, typically traditional trades training.

**Figure 2.1** shows the average proportion of each course type delivered at TAFE institutes. With only 19% of courses digital already, most courses needed high levels of adaptation. One TAFE reported they had to build their digital delivery from scratch.



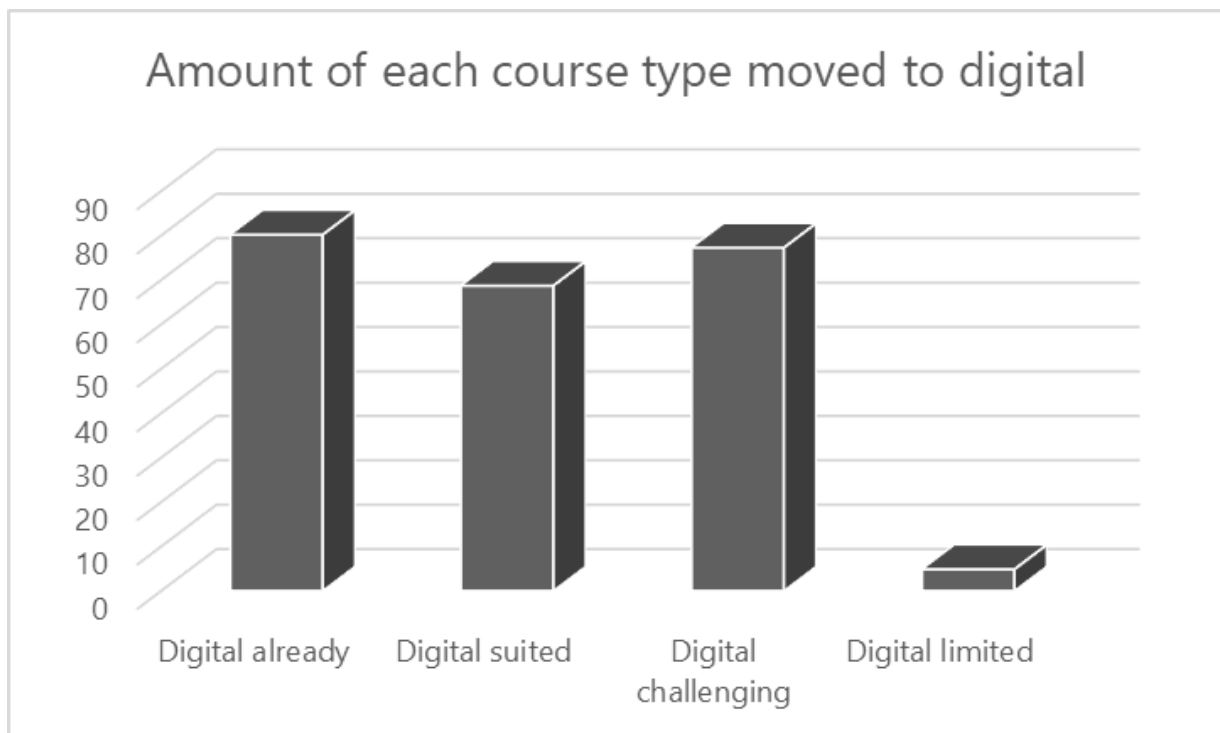
**Figure 2.1: Average proportion of each course type delivered in TAFEs**

TAFEs were able to shift a large proportion of type one, two and three to digital delivery, either wholly or in part – see **Figure 2.2**.

Only small proportions of courses, *digital limited*, were able to be shifted to digital delivery. Feedback from TAFE staff indicates this may have been more the result of the planning process – i.e. leaving this area to be dealt with after other courses were adjusted.

TAFEs reported that the high proportion of those courses categorised as *digital challenging* converted to digital delivery is testament to the commitment and enthusiasm of the teachers wanting to find solutions to deliver in new ways to students at home.

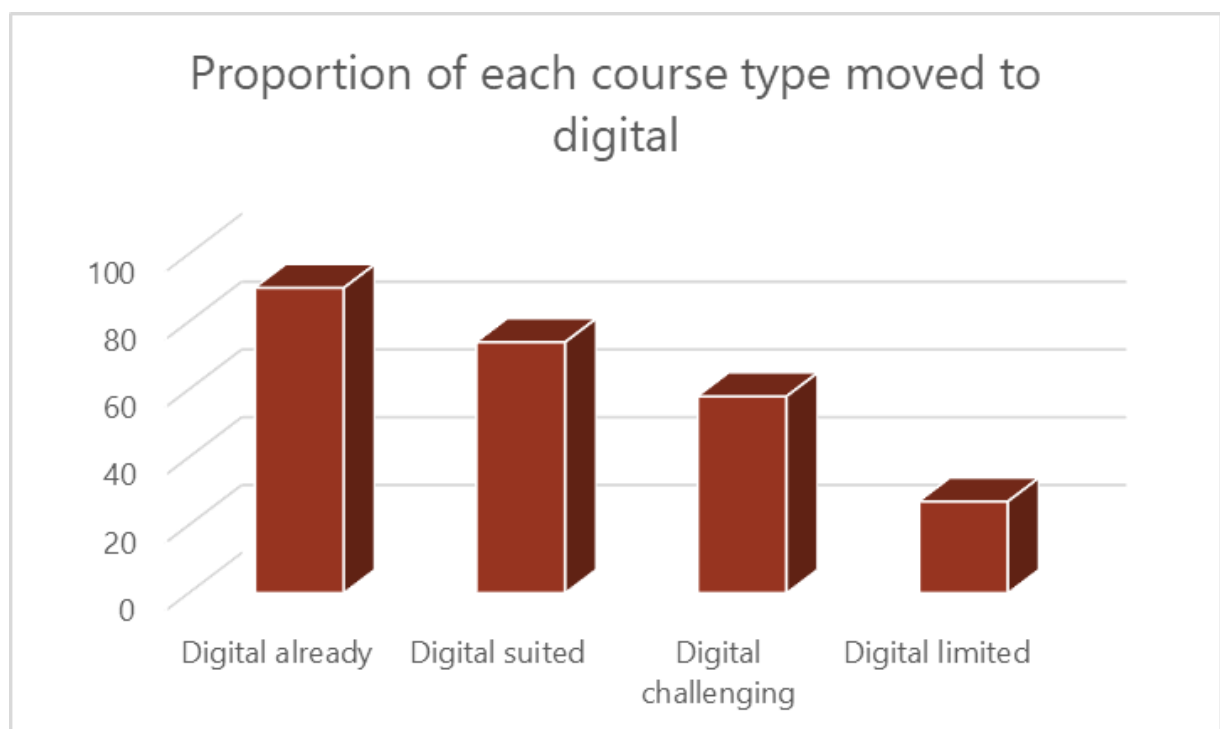




**Figure 2.2: Proportion of each course type that was moved to digital delivery, either wholly or in part.**

Not all elements of courses could be moved to digital, especially where workshops and practical exercises and work placements were involved. Figure 2.3 shows the amount of each course type where the mode was digital delivery.

For many courses the theory components were brought forward to enable continued delivery and other elements rescheduled for later in the year.

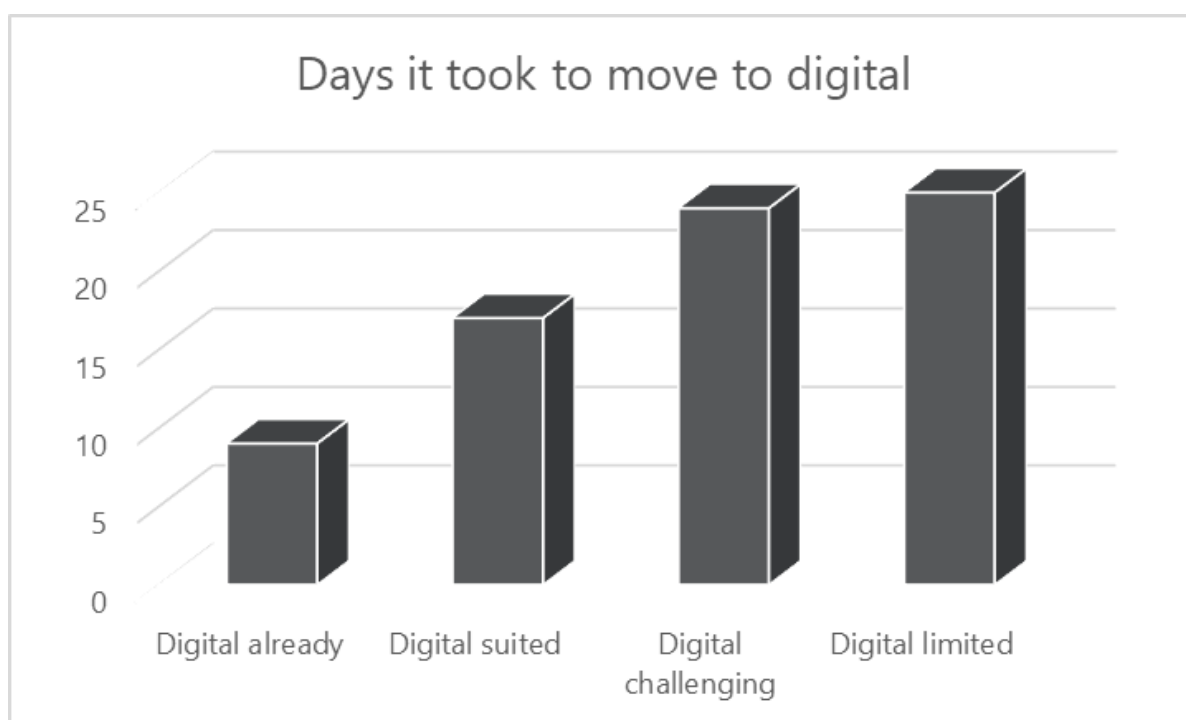


**Figure 2.3: The amount of each course type that was moved to digital delivery**

## Rapid adjustment

For many TAFEs COVID-19 brought forward their strategic plan for redesigning courses for digital delivery. What was planned as a multi-year process happened in a few weeks.

The speed with which TAFEs transitioned to digital delivery was significant. Figure 2.4 shows the time it took to prepare courses to be ready for digital delivery, noting that this includes weekend days.

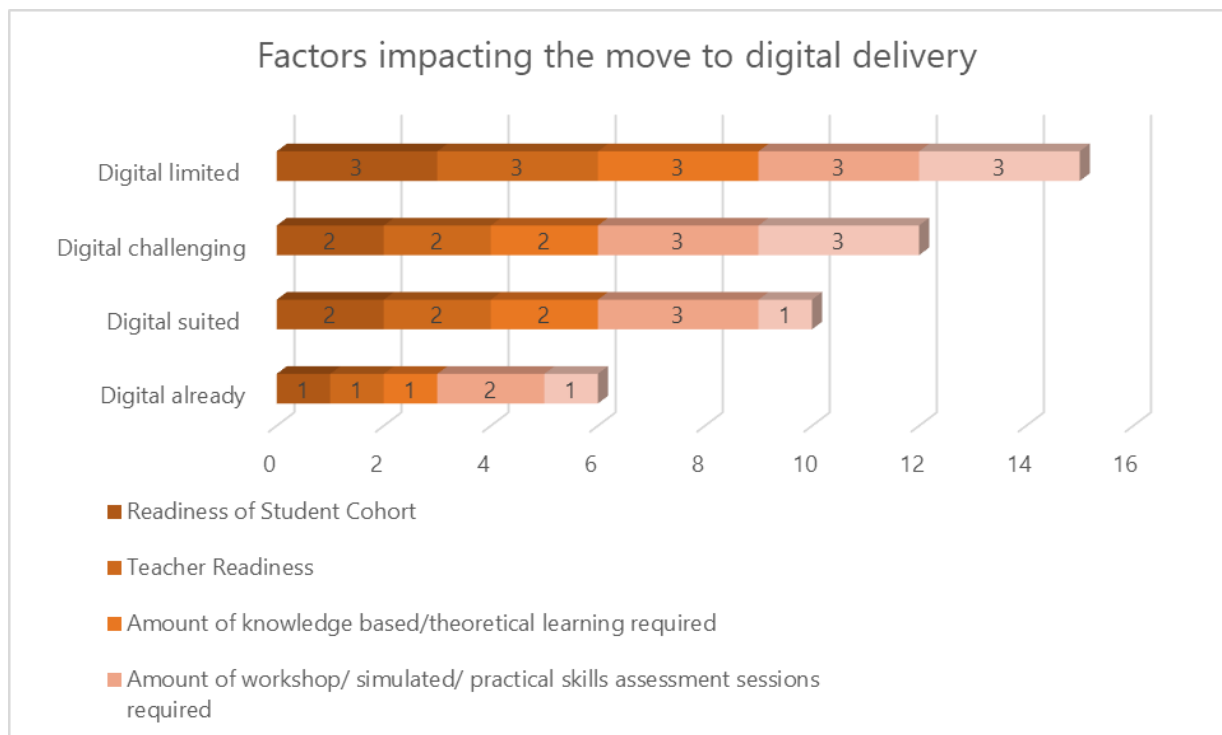


**Figure 2.4: The number of days it took to move to online delivery**

TAFEs ranked the factors that most impacted the redesign to digital – see **Figure 2.5**. For each course type TAFEs rated the extent certain factors impacted the move to new forms of delivery. The amount of practical training and assessment normally conducted on campus had the biggest impact. It might have been expected that courses categorised as *digital already* would not have elements impacting upon conversion to digital, however, the data across each element reflects that the *digital already* courses still had some non-online components in delivery.

Teacher and student readiness, the amount of planned work placements and the amount of knowledge elements in courses were consistent elements in making decisions to convert courses to digital delivery, particularly for type 4 – *digital limited*. Not unsurprisingly, the impact grew with the complexity of the course type.





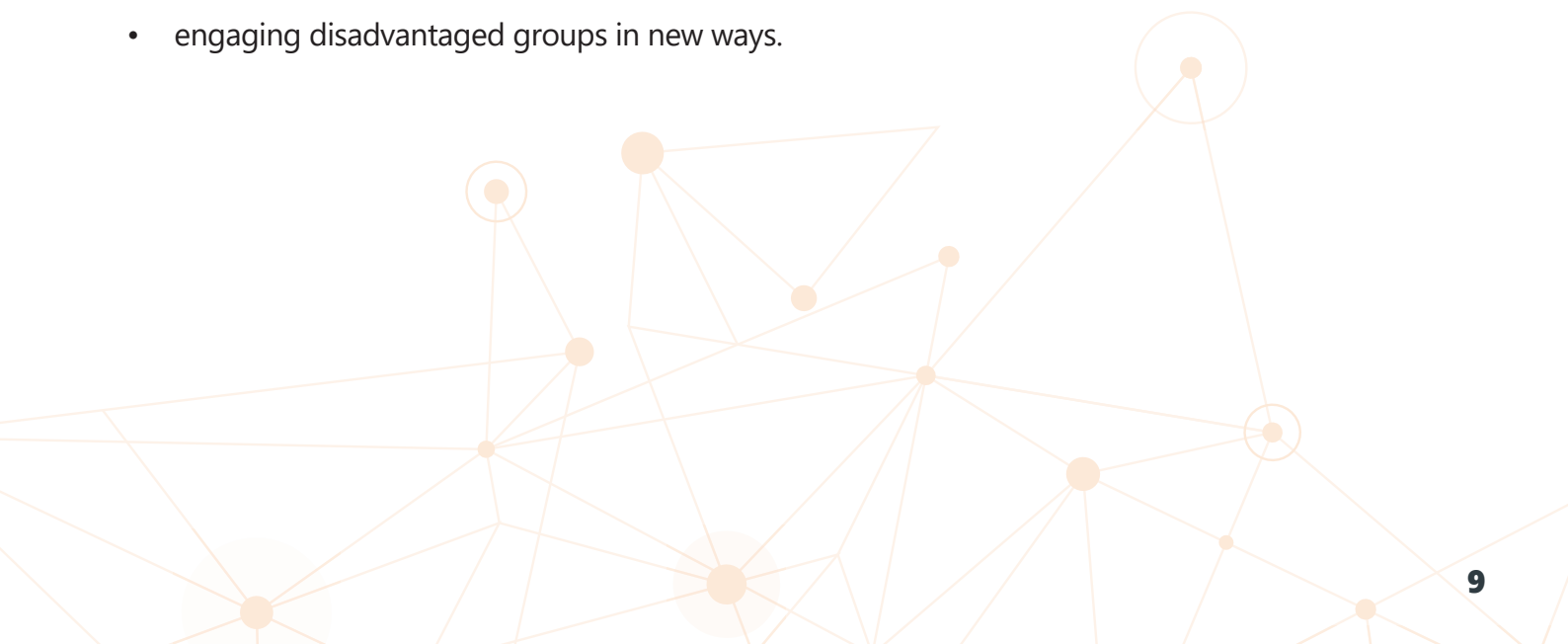
**Figure 2.5: Impact of factors on digital delivery**

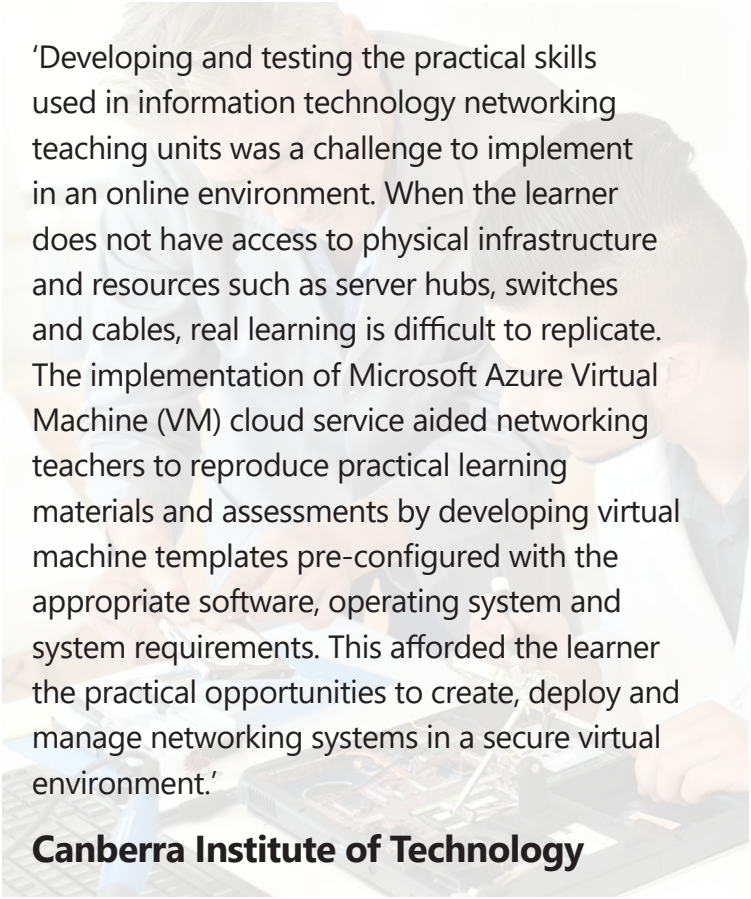
### The digital transformation journey

Each TAFE has a different story about their transition to digital delivery. Some are shared here and others can be found on [TAFEs responding to COVID-19](#).

These are the characteristics common to most of the stories of TAFEs' transformations:

- putting the right IT platforms and resources in place
- revising teaching and assessment strategies
- identifying new student engagement strategies for learning in a digital context
- collating verifiable assessment evidence in an online or COVID safe environment
- delivering professional development across the full teacher profile
- adjusting class and campus-based simulations to digital delivery
- engaging disadvantaged groups in new ways.





'Chaired by the Associate Dean of Scholarships a group was formed, focusing on online pedagogy, keeping aside technology, and developing contingency strategies for delivery online. Concurrently a skills audit was undertaken of VET teachers and their digital capabilities. The audit helped ascertain those who required assistance and identified 'online technology champions' to redesign/refine delivery templates, mentor staff and assist tailoring staff training activities. Staff are ensuring a holistic, team approach to delivery rather than just teaching units.'

**William Angliss Institute**

'Developing and testing the practical skills used in information technology networking teaching units was a challenge to implement in an online environment. When the learner does not have access to physical infrastructure and resources such as server hubs, switches and cables, real learning is difficult to replicate. The implementation of Microsoft Azure Virtual Machine (VM) cloud service aided networking teachers to reproduce practical learning materials and assessments by developing virtual machine templates pre-configured with the appropriate software, operating system and system requirements. This afforded the learner the practical opportunities to create, deploy and manage networking systems in a secure virtual environment.'

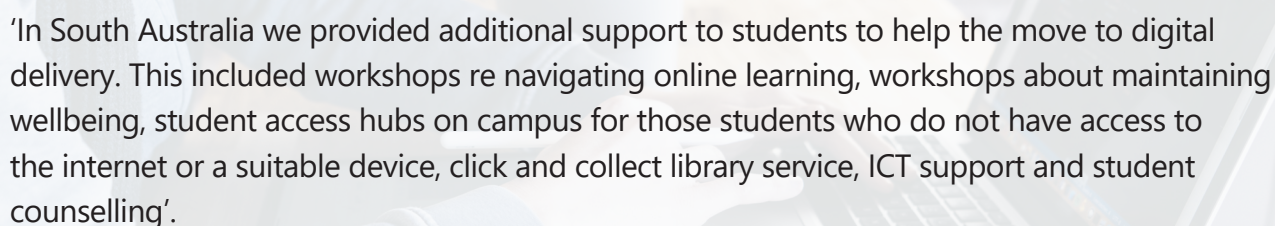
**Canberra Institute of Technology**

'We introduced new learning technology and each course product now has, a Minimum Online Presence (MoP) providing 'inbuilt' digital support for students (video tutorials and links to written and video guides, mobile technology written guides, linkages to the new Student Connect Quick Link Directory)...The timing, length and frequency of learning sessions were adapted for digital learning and to support learning flexibility. We initiated a stronger focus on data and analytics within Canvas to provide targeted learning support (i.e. low digital activity) and teaching staff used this to initiate pastoral care contacts by non-teaching staff through a newly created Encourage Service Desk'.

**TasTAFE**

'Innovative delivery strategies were developed to overcome the challenge of providing practical skills training in an online mode. For example, Diploma of Nursing students were posted clinical packs required to practice clinical skills which were delivered online by teachers via Zoom and video recordings.'

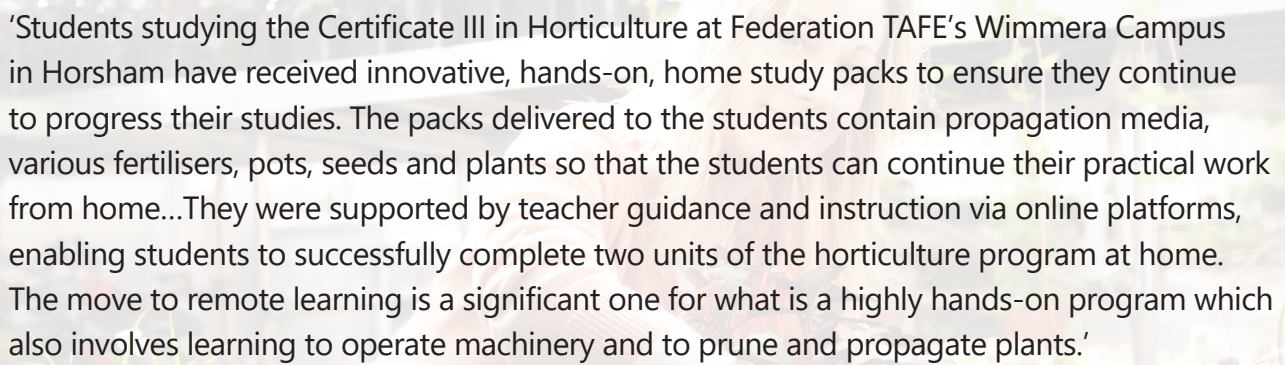
**TAFE in Central Queensland University**



'In South Australia we provided additional support to students to help the move to digital delivery. This included workshops re navigating online learning, workshops about maintaining wellbeing, student access hubs on campus for those students who do not have access to the internet or a suitable device, click and collect library service, ICT support and student counselling'.

**TAFE SA**





'Students studying the Certificate III in Horticulture at Federation TAFE's Wimmera Campus in Horsham have received innovative, hands-on, home study packs to ensure they continue to progress their studies. The packs delivered to the students contain propagation media, various fertilisers, pots, seeds and plants so that the students can continue their practical work from home...They were supported by teacher guidance and instruction via online platforms, enabling students to successfully complete two units of the horticulture program at home. The move to remote learning is a significant one for what is a highly hands-on program which also involves learning to operate machinery and to prune and propagate plants.'

### **Federation TAFE, Ballarat**

'Our teachers have adapted quickly to a changing environment. Firstly, with the move to remote learning for many courses at the beginning of Term 2, but also in adapting to a changed face-to-face delivery style for the courses that remained classroom-based. Teachers continued to transition their teaching for those that returned to campus delivery in mid Term 2 to keep students progressing. Because we could implement social distancing and other safety measures, split classes, stagger breaks, move equipment and furniture, and reschedule block releases we have been able to keep students engaged if they wanted to return to campus, especially in practical and trades areas'.

### **TAFE Queensland**

'Our culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) teaching cohort has quickly adapted to new delivery practices based on short – medium length video clips of ESL activities which cover speaking/pronunciation practice and listening and repetition exercises. These video clips have all been developed in a fun, informal manner with the resources made available via unlisted YouTube clips published to our WIOT channel. This method was agreed upon as the CALD cohort has limited IT literacy so were able to access the clips directly from their phones via links emailed to them by the teaching group.'

### **Wodonga Institute of TAFE (WIOT)**



'Sound production, composition, performance and hip-hop courses were quickly and successfully transitioned to remote delivery. Music and Production Manager Matt Voight said, "We try to get students kick-started collaborating on content...We've still been able to make sure that people are working together, they're just doing it in a different way."...Using technologies such as Microsoft Teams and Echo360 to meet face-to-face, while lectures, theoretical content and practical how-to sessions are pre-recorded. Matt said, "Students love the recorded content. We still have our class time and some live lectures, but they can watch the recorded material over and over again. So if they miss something, if they get distracted, they can come back and watch it again." Although coronavirus has been the driving force behind the changes at Box Hill Institute, it has only fast-tracked improvements that were already on the agenda.'

### **Box Hill Institute, Melbourne**

### 3.The Power of TAFE @ Home – The Teacher Experience

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'The shift to alternative delivery strategies created a great learning opportunity for educators and in some cases pushed some educators who had been resisting the move to online delivery.'

**TAFE Queensland**

Teacher readiness had a significant impact on TAFE's ability to move to digital delivery. Many teachers had little experience working on digital platforms or adapting student engagement in a connected way. As would be expected, teachers in courses of high practical content had the least experience. During the close-down many operated from home – their move to connect digitally with the campus and faculty leaders prepared them for digital delivery to students.

'A new teacher in the human services team was initially experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety as she felt that, with being a new teacher, she had fewer skills than others to deliver online teaching. Over time this teacher has become a champion in this space including developing videos and supporting other staff with online learning. She has demonstrated resilience, hard work and flexibility in adapting to new ways of working and has been an inspiration to us all.'

**Canberra Institute of Technology**

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During the first days and weeks of course transition dedicated teams within TAFE's worked with teachers to help them in areas such as changing lesson plans, accessing different technology platforms, management of the virtual classroom and etiquette and best practice digital delivery. A critical element of success was being able to trouble-shoot technology issues without over reliance on the technical team.

TAFE's were not asked in the survey to report on staff training hours, however many offered up the information. One TAFE reported delivering 254 digital and remote working webinars for teachers and professional staff in four weeks. Another TAFE trained 1,200 staff from April to June 2020. Communities of practice were formed. One TAFE established a COVID-19 learning and teaching community of practice in Microsoft Teams, providing an avenue for staff to share challenges and solutions in converting curriculum to digital delivery.



The willingness of educators to engage in professional development has been overwhelmingly positive. During March to May 2020 TAFE Gippsland offered 64 professional development activities with a total of 857 attendances with 95% of all educators engaging in at least one activity. In addition, evaluation data has indicated that '93% agreed or strongly agreed that they will change their teaching behaviour as a result of attending the professional development.'

One outcome of the rapid move to digital delivery is the way TAFE teams have worked together, and it may be that in the future these different ways of working together will continue.

'Adaption of face-to-face classroom delivery to remote/online platforms has been a major challenge for many program areas which has highlighted some major business improvement opportunities. Remote learning does require a level of understanding by teachers on how to use technology, which can be intimidating if they have low digital literacy...understanding how synchronous and asynchronous learning can occur in an online classroom has helped to clarify the delivery activities and build confidence in teachers and students on the learning outcomes.'

**The Gordon Institute, Geelong**

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## COLLABORATION IS THE KEY – TasTAFE

**Jenny Dodd, Chief Executive Officer**



TasTAFE took on the challenges presented by COVID-19 head-on with a clear plan that had the interests of our students at its centre.

TasTAFE transitioned to digitally supported learning early during COVID-19 restrictions, combining this with a plan to reinstate practical training as soon as it was safe to do so.

Thanks to the work of our delivery teams, supported by our educator capability and e-learning teams, we were able to act quickly. We converted some courses to online within a week.

This was only possible because of outstanding teamwork. I saw many excellent examples of teams collaborating to revise learning programs and to help each other to adjust to a new way of teaching. A great example is in our Certificate III Carpentry and Joinery. Four teachers who had online capability, located in different parts of the state, worked together to convert theory elements to the digital environment for more than 600 apprentices. They split up the different parts of the training package and then consulted with the other teachers to ensure all were involved.

While not easy, our teaching teams had to do things differently. Teams report that working together in this way has had many benefits including:

- tapping into teachers' individual strengths and knowledge
- reviewing resources and ending up with a more engaging course
- being confident that students are getting an identical experience state-wide.

Although the disruption to 'normal teaching' has caused angst with some employers, students and staff, the role technology plays in the development of skills is now core to TasTAFE's delivery. The spirit of collaboration and teamwork that occurred during COVID-19 have enhanced course delivery and has made TasTAFE more responsive and contemporary.

We will continue on that pathway knowing that we are responsible for embedding technology into learning. It will benefit our students' employability and lifelong learning skills, it will make them adaptive, especially when the next disruption inevitably occurs, and it will cement the collaboration that now exists between teams across our organisation.







## 4. The Student Response

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‘I actually find these online classes to be very engaging and it’s easier for me to focus on learning. I like the ability to chat directly with classmates and my teacher. I find this method of delivery removes a lot of stress.’ **Holmesglen Institute student**

‘It’s great, I love the screen share and recording part as I can get back to recording and listen to the lecture again.’

‘... I am enjoying learning this way, I would be happy to continue and have one day a week for lab work at TAFE. I am getting more done and not getting distracted by others around me.’ **South West TAFE student**

‘The answer is simple, COVID-19 affected the way the course was presented by changing from a classroom environment to online learning. I’m old school and need a classroom environment to learn new things like IT otherwise I struggle with my studies a lot.’ **TAFE student**

‘When I finished my Certificate IV, I was planning to continue with the Diploma but due to COVID-19 everything changed and all studies transferred online which was very hard for me because I have a big family and no place to study so I decided to stop my studies for now.’ **Canberra Institute of Technology student**

The student response to digital delivery was mixed. Many TAFEs surveyed their students to gather their views on the move to digital delivery. The most common method was quick pulse surveys to test how students were faring and to identify areas of additional support.

TAFEs achieved high levels of student satisfaction. **All pulse surveys showed that 70% of students were either satisfied or highly satisfied with TAFE staff support during digital learning.**

The surveys also confirmed, however, that most students deliberately select TAFEs for the face-to-face, interactive learning on offer. Students expressed strong preferences for a return to that form of learning. For example, in the survey conducted by the Bendigo Kangan Institute students said they were twice as likely to opt for face-to-face study than digital delivery and 78% of students surveyed at Chisholm Institute expressed a preference for face-to-face study.

But the story of student preferences is not one option or the other. Students expressed preferences for blended learning, a combination of face-to-face and remote learning. Digital delivery has no doubt changed what students expect of their TAFE.

TAFEs also used the surveys to identify students in need of additional support. TAFE Queensland asked students if they would like a follow up call from a member of staff. Fourteen per cent of respondents asked for this support and the team at TAFE Queensland has been able to guide these students with the additional support they needed to sustain their studies.

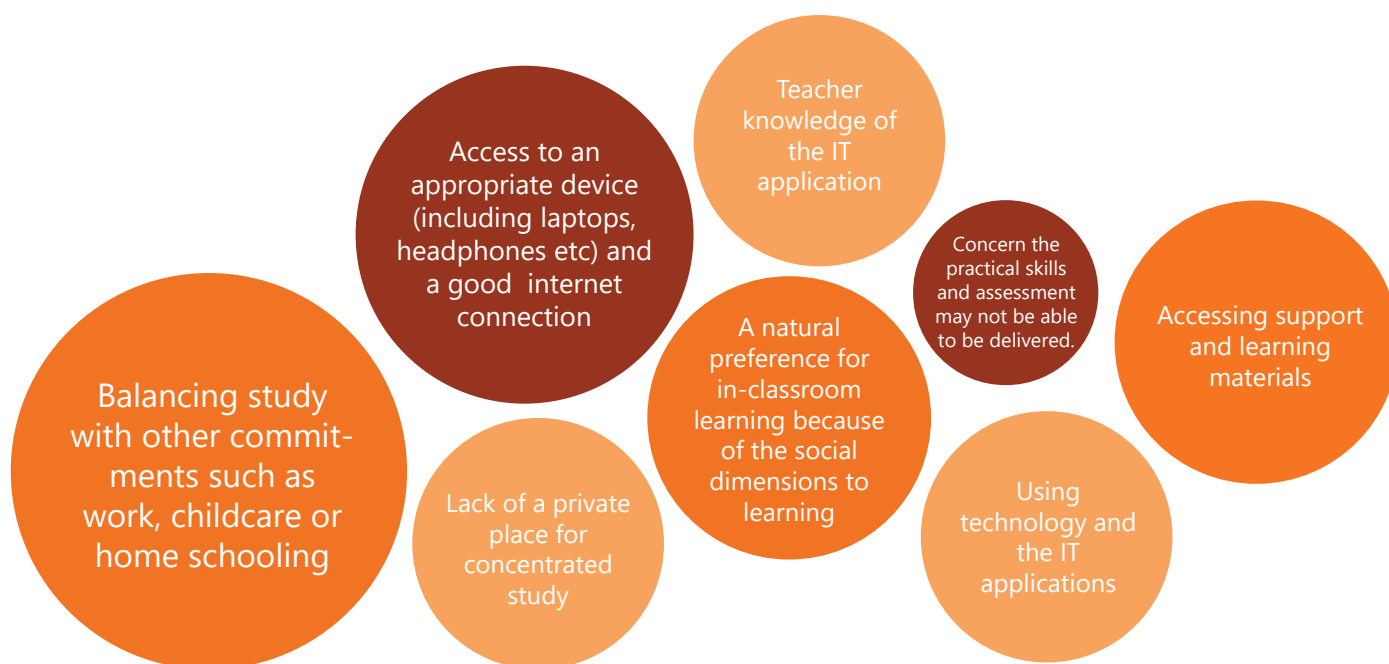


Some TAFEs were able to identify the elements of digital learning that were most appreciated by students. South Metro TAFE in Perth indicated that 90% of students were satisfied with the training resources, and almost 90% of students were satisfied with the quality of the teacher.

### **TAFE at home was challenging for some students**

The transition to digital and connected study was not easy for many students. They identified a set of limitations to studying from home, like those experienced by workers who started working from home.

The challenges for students moving course engagement to home are shown in **Figure 4.1:**



**Figure 4.1: Limitations to studying from home**

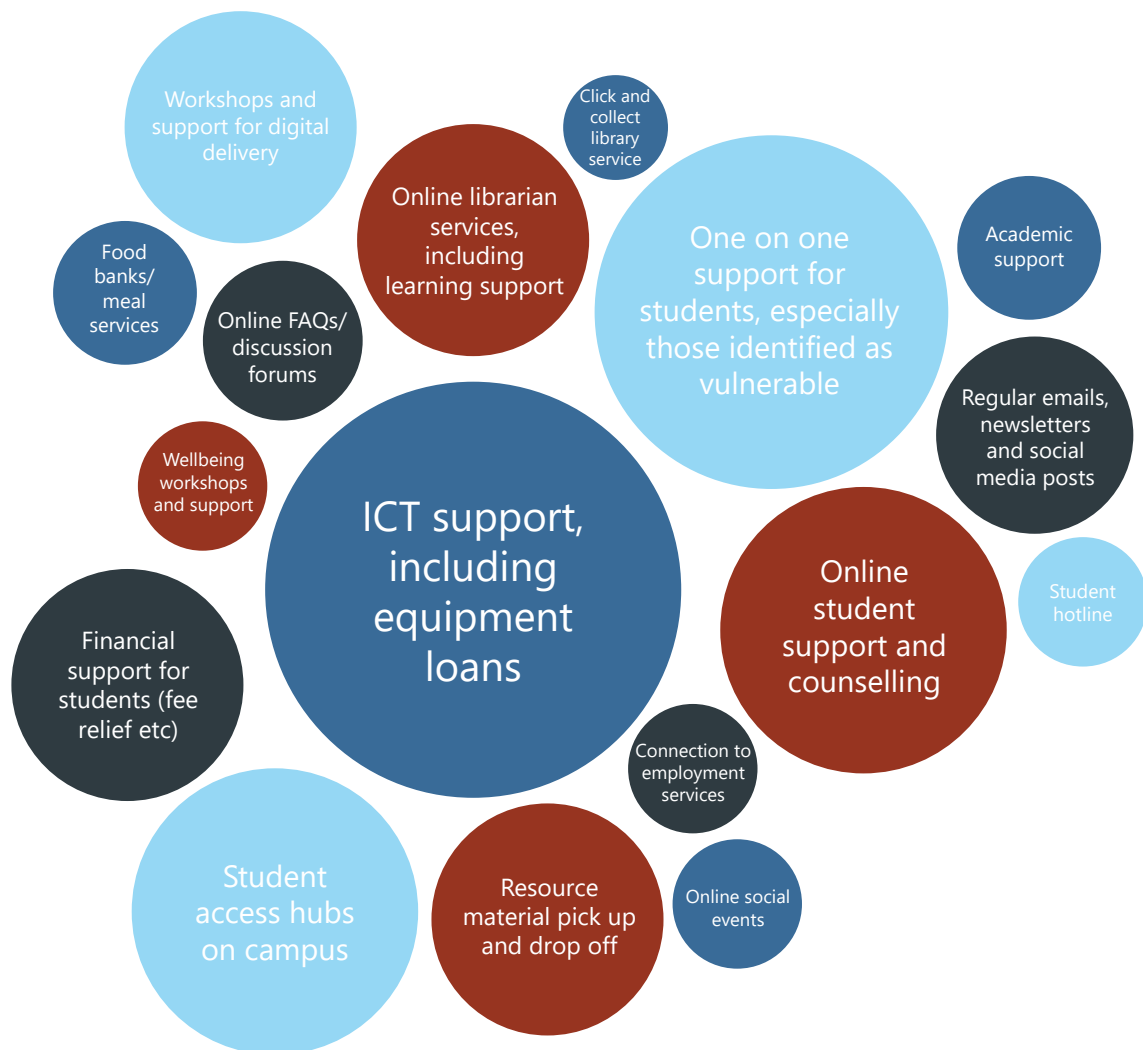
### **Students valued at-home learning**

Given the unprecedented circumstances, many students valued at-home learning. They said that the ability to learn at their pace and at any time of the day was a real benefit. They also felt that the engagement with the teacher was better, along with the learning experiences. Students also appreciated the ability to continue their learning journey in some way.

Continued access to learning was particularly appreciated by international students in Australia. Apart from the enormous assistance provided by each TAFE to help students who had lost their part-time jobs, the students were grateful they could continue with their studies.

## New forms of support to students during digital delivery

As well as adapting learning resources to accommodate digital delivery, TAFEs also focussed on supporting students to navigate the transition. **Figure 4.2** shows the range of ways students were supported.



**Figure 4.2: Support provided to students to study at home**

Examples of the types of student support are provided below:

The Gordon Institute instigated a remote retention team utilising staff from across the Institute to connect to students identified at risk of withdrawal due to low attendance within the first three weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several of these students identified issues with lack of access to computer equipment and/or lack of confidence to learn remotely via digital delivery. Forty-seven students were assisted by the team and none of these students withdrew.

The core values of TAFE – access, inclusion and equity – were maintained in the move to digital delivery.



TAFE Queensland's virtual library enabled the provisioning of approximately 90% of resources online. These included e-books, streamed video content, research databases, and specific subject guides designed to support student success. Library LiveChat allowed librarians to deliver support and be a valuable way for students to continue their studies. The library also trialled a virtual librarian service during this period.

The more vulnerable were a particular focus. Students in these circumstances were more likely to be of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent or from a disadvantaged economic background or in rural and remote areas. These students had limited access to support from home or their community. In the case of COVID-19, however, this vulnerability also extended to other student groups because the loss of their job and uncertainty about the future heightened anxiety and the need for support.

Indigenous students impacted by COVID-19 were engaged through an outbound calling process to ascertain the extra support needed to continue their studies and to access necessary technology or connectivity. Where required students were able to defer their studies if they were significantly impacted by financial, health or learning barriers. In addition, an online student wellbeing program was implemented acknowledging the importance of 'yarning'. Connections with the Indigenous community remained strong through this time with staff maintaining networks via video conferencing, phone and email. **Central Queensland University**

Once our baking students resumed on campus the access product (artisan bread etc) was forwarded to our student services area for distribution to students under hardship. **Federation University, Ballarat**

Delivery of Auslan interpreting services transitioned online. **South Metro TAFE, Perth**

Students with specific cognitive issues were actively identified so that learning materials could be printed and mailed to them rather than engaging online. **GOTAFE, NE Victoria**

Students with a disability, medical or mental health conditions were contacted by the specialist area to check in and revisit reasonable adjustments following a change in delivery mode. Staff discussed how enabling staff support (note takers, interpreters etc) would be transitioned to the remote learning environment. **Chisholm Institute, Melbourne**

While some students thrived in an online environment, others found it difficult to engage, and these students were often from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Canberra Institute of Technology reported that they struggled to engage in the 8 Aboriginal ways of learning which is the basis of their success. This included continuation and development of cultural and social interaction and connections, access to their safe learning environment at CIT's *Yurauna Centre's* where there is a commitment to community including sharing of food, yarning, and developing and maintaining support networks and access to childcare.



## TAFE SA's RESPONSE TO COVID-19

**David Coltman, Chief Executive**

COVID-19 has changed TAFE SA, the way we deliver, the way we work and the way our students access support.

During the height of the pandemic in South Australia, our educators transitioned approximately 400 courses from face-to-face to digitally enabled delivery in under four weeks. Then, only four short weeks later, were able to transition these courses and students back again.

For some students this was an easy transition and for others it was more difficult. We needed to ensure all students had access to the technology they needed in case this wasn't available in their homes. To achieve this, we established student access hubs at campus locations across South Australia so that students could access computers and the internet to continue their learning.

We also wanted to ensure our students were supported through this transition. We implemented virtual online wellbeing workshops, counselling services via phone and established a virtual team of digital support staff for students.

When I hear about how our educators and students have engaged in new and different ways of learning I am incredibly inspired - from our sculpting lecturer who was teaching students virtually from his kitchen table to the examples of students who are engaging more in class in an online environment than they were in face-to-face classes.

I know that the future semesters will bring with them their own challenges and successes, but I also know that this experience has and continues to show us what is possible when we work together to find solutions to meet the education and training needs of our students.

Vocational education and training are vital to support future economic growth and while our learnings over the past several months have resulted in significant change, the lasting lessons will shape the future of TAFE SA to ensure we are a key contributor to the state's COVID-19 recovery.

#POWEROFTAFE









## 5. Online to the Community

To support households and businesses through the closedown and as a preparation for recovery, governments turned to online courses to lift the skills of workers.

TAFE was at the centre of most of the skills recovery packages announced by states and territories. When launching the West Australian skills recovery package, Premier Mark McGowan said, 'TAFE is a major part of Western Australia's recovery from COVID-19. Our training-led plan will prepare Western Australians to get back into jobs to meet the economy's immediate workforce needs following the impacts of the pandemic'. In NSW the government's fee-free short courses passed 100,000 enrolments within six weeks of being offered. Premier Gladys Berejiklian said, 'The enthusiasm for upskilling during this period of restrictions showed that TAFE NSW is a vital educational provider. This program is assisting people look for a new job or allowing career progression at a time when we are facing enormous economic and social challenges.'

Packages differed across the country, from *Working for Victoria* to *SKILL UP for your future* in Tasmania, but all offered free courses to reskill and upskill for those impacted by COVID-19.

TAFEs were quick to respond to the call from governments, with many developing and offering courses online in record time. TDA's survey of TAFEs<sup>1</sup> included the approach to free COVID-19 TAFE courses online, the type and number of courses and the way in which the public embraced the offers.

### **Within weeks, TAFEs were offering over 250 free courses**

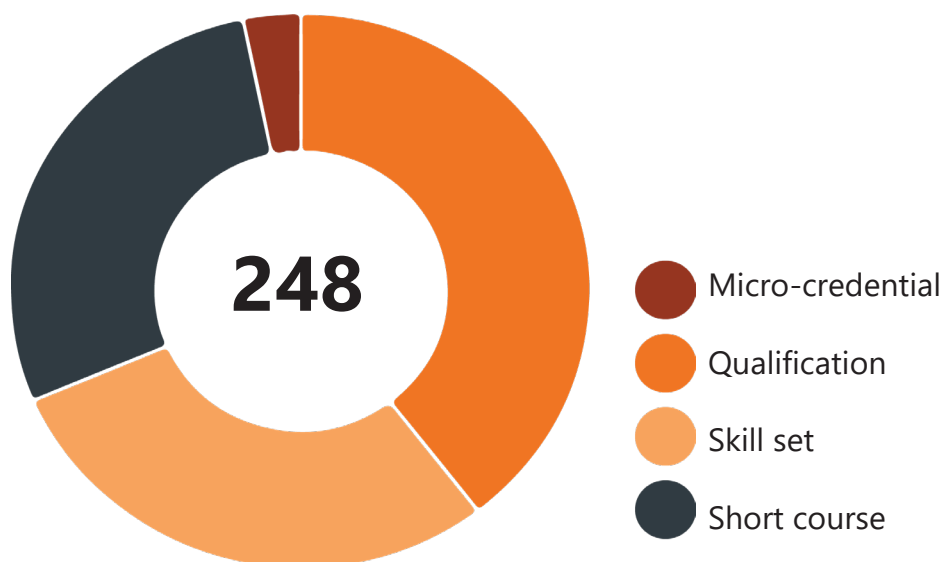
The first free COVID-19 TAFE courses<sup>2</sup> began in April 2020 in NSW, and courses continued throughout 2020. TDA's survey showed that TAFEs offered over 250 free courses in partnership with governments in the initial few months.

Courses are a mix of skill sets, micro-credentials, short courses and full qualifications, as shown in **Figure 5.1**. The full qualifications are largely part of the *Working for Victoria* initiative, with most other jurisdictions deploying skill sets or short courses, as rapid pathways to acquire new skills.

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1 Refer to Appendix 1, Survey methodology for definitions of different courses.

2 For the purposes of this publication, courses are referred to as free COVID-19 TAFE courses. This differentiates these courses from other types of free TAFE courses that may have been offered prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Figure 5.1: Type of free COVID-19 TAFE courses on offer**

### **Free COVID-19 TAFE courses to help economic and social recovery**

Free courses served a range of purposes.

Some were short courses developed under the guidance of the Australian Industry Skills Committee to deliver up to date infection control training for health and food handling settings. Others included telehealth and medical administration to support the roll-out of remote health servicing and introductory digital communication and technology to assist businesses adapt their operating models.

Some courses targeted industries crucial to maintaining essential services during the pandemic:

- Community services, including aged care
- Nursing
- Mental health
- Early childhood education
- Transport and logistics.

Others were offered to support key areas of economic growth outside of COVID responses:

- Business services, including practical skills and leadership
- Cybersecurity
- Building and construction
- Agriculture.

Appendix 2, ***Fee free courses offered during COVID-19 and beyond*** captures the range of fee free courses that were on offer by TAFEs during COVID-19.

## Almost 200,000 Australians engaged

Australians were quick to engage. TAFEs reported that **by mid-June 2020, 189,816 individuals had enrolled in free courses across the country.** Enrolments continued to grow as lockdowns and stand downs continued, unemployment grew, and more courses came online. For example, the figure above does not include data from Western Australia, which announced their skills package in early July 2020.

## Individuals are seeking high impact training

Individuals were pursuing TAFE training as it is likely to give them the best chance of employment. TAFEs nominated the most popular courses, as shown in **Figure 5.2.** This data is not surprising. Jobs in health, community services, building and construction and digital communication have proven to be the most robust against the economic impacts of COVID-19.



Figure 5.2: Comparative popularity of free COVID-19 TAFE courses

## Individuals are seeking short interventions

Most enrolments have been in micro-credentials and short courses. In the circumstances most were seeking short sharp training so they could participate or re-engage in workplaces. TAFEs also reported that individuals who were on stand downs appreciated the short courses as the right amount and level of learning.

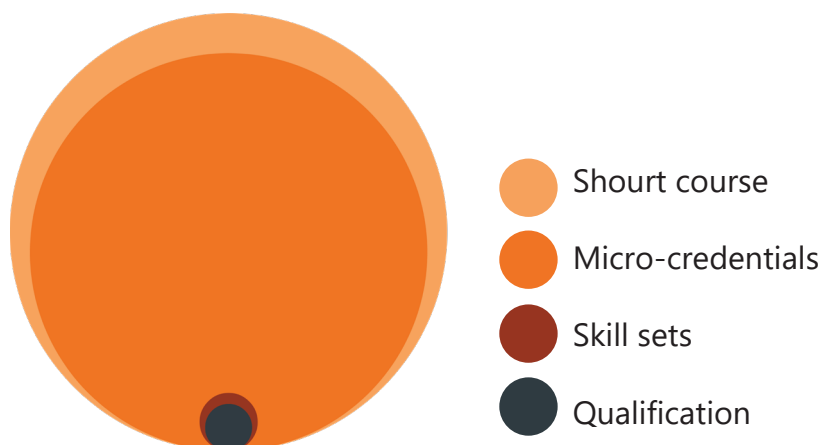


Figure 5.3: Preferred enrolments in course types



## **Patterns in enrolments**

Trends emerged about the attributes of those enrolling in free TAFE COVID-19 courses.

*Participants come from both regional and urban settings.*

TAFE Queensland reported 61% enrolments in metropolitan areas and 39% in regional areas.

*Many participants are engaging with TAFEs for the first time.*

In TAFE NSW 48% of participants are new to TAFE.

*More women than men are enrolling in courses.*

On average, TAFEs reported at least 60% of enrolments from women.

*Enrolments are highest from individuals aged 20-29 years.*

Enrolments are found in all age cohorts.

**Not all enrolments are from individuals stood down. Enrolments are being seen by workers who have more time to study.**

One TAFE reported enrolments 'are overwhelmingly mature age, female students seeking to return to the workforce'. This, in part, is driven by courses on offer that traditionally attract women, however some TAFEs commented it could be because more women have been displaced from work.

Overall though, enrolments across TAFES are in all age cohorts, but commonly among individuals aged 20-29 years, perhaps indicative of the uncertainty of employment for those in that age bracket or their disproportionate representation in the sectors impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions.

## **Free COVID-19 courses benefited individuals, industry and institutes**

The blend of courses and the attributes of students who enrolled show the multiple purposes TAFEs meet. Feedback from TAFEs indicate that some courses were taken up because the individual wanted to boost skills for job searching. Other enrolments were a direct result of the courses being seen as new skills needed to keep industries going. Some of the courses attracted the typical TAFE enrollee looking to prepare for employment in key growth industries.

The benefits are far-reaching. TAFEs are now providing education and training to new cohorts of students who may not have thought to access vocational education, or could not get to campus, or lacked the time or finances to commit to new learning.

TAFEs are assisting individuals as they navigate, in some cases, a long road back to employment, especially for those made redundant or stood down. Staff have commented that in addition to the courses boosting employability, they have given individuals purpose and, in some cases, combatted mental health issues.

An often-overlooked benefit of online courses is the power it puts in the hands of students. Free short courses have allowed students who may not be sure of their capacity to study to give it a go. They have explored areas that match their interests and aspirations. Some have used the courses as preparation for higher level ones. The breadth of education and training options within a TAFE opens a wide range of areas students can pursue.

Provision of free courses has allowed TAFEs to collaborate with industry in different ways, by contextualising training to meet workplace needs during and through COVID-19. TAFEs and employers are working together to increase the pool of employees to be quickly deployed in emerging areas.

TAFEs have helped hundreds of small businesses across the country that have been impacted by COVID-19. This has been through free courses, skill sets and webinars, especially those focussing on financial resilience, business planning, digital capacity improvements and COVID-19 infection control.

“

‘I was staying up at night with anxiety and confusion about how to get the government stimulus and keep us going’, Mrs Lakey said. ‘Having never done a webinar before, I didn’t know what to expect. But I came out with a clear sense of direction, feeling more at ease and with a lot more confidence about what to do to keep us on track. During the webinar I took a lot of notes, downloaded the tools and approached everything step-by-step. We quickly knew what path to take and applied for the government’s Job Keeper subsidy. These webinars were vital for businesses like ours. We can’t employ an accountant to do it for us, so it was great to do the work ourselves, knowing that we’re compliant, and apply for government assistance.’ Janelle Lakey, owner, Michael Lakey Racing, commenting on TAFE Queensland’s financial resilience webinar.

Natasha Hackett is the owner of Cocoa Lux, a small beauty salon at Clayfield, who was forced to close her doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As restrictions eased, Natasha was one of the first business owners to enrol in one of TAFE Queensland’s COVID Safe training programs.

‘To begin with, lockdown was a stressful time. The pressure of ongoing bills — commercial rent, personal mortgage etc — with no incoming wage was frightening and a position I had never been in before. I tried to take comfort in the fact that I wasn’t the only one in this situation,’ said Natasha, who has more than 20-years’ industry experience said.

‘It [her training] gave me the confidence to return to work with the latest COVID-19 information so I could protect both my clients and myself. I make sure all of my clients are aware that I have completed the course so they feel more comfortable too. I found it easy to navigate through the enrolment process and completed the course quickly. I would recommend it to anyone who is returning to the workforce so they can operate safely.’

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## POWERING PANDEMIC RECOVERY – TAFE QUEENSLAND

**Mary Campbell, Chief Executive**



The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly provided some unique challenges this year; lockdown, physical distancing and working remotely. It has made us all think differently about our operations and find new, more agile ways of working and delivering training. But above all, the pandemic has proven the power of VET and highlighted the vital role TAFEs play within industries and communities in Australia.

Almost overnight, workers were displaced across the country triggering governments to call on TAFEs to lead in the recovery response by delivering targeted skills development training – turning uncertainty into opportunity.

TAFE Queensland responded immediately by developing a range of 'isolearn' micro-credentials and skills sets aimed at not only enabling workers that were stood down during the pandemic to gain new skills, but also upskilling existing workers, allowing them to adapt to the changing demands of their workplaces, their industries, and their communities.

'Isolearn' training was designed in close consultation with both industry and government and is providing Queenslanders with valuable technical, digital and soft skills that will support businesses as they adapt and recover.

More than ever before, technology is a crucial component of our world and these courses are helping workers to address the skills gaps caused by the huge increase in online activity and digital interactions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our ability to respond quickly and effectively to the skills development and training needs of our governments, industries, students and communities during restrictions has proven that TAFEs play an essential role in providing employers with the skilled workforces needed to get through the pandemic period and drive the skills agenda that will underpin future economic recovery. **#POWEROFTAFE.**



## 6. TAFEs Transformed

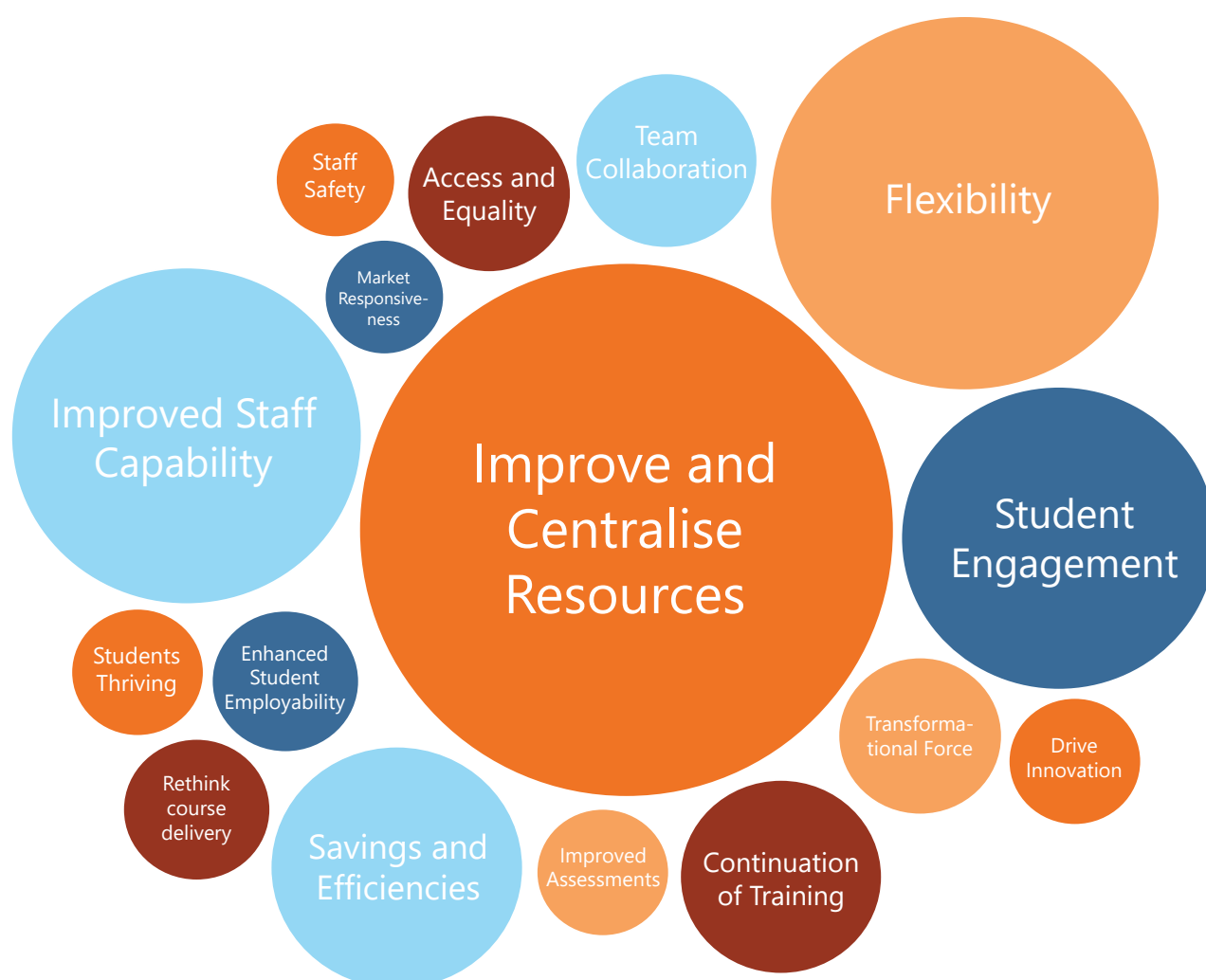
'Digital platforms gave staff the ability to target assistance and for teachers to tailor learning to an individual's circumstance.'

'Students with learning challenges who are easily distracted or overwhelmed by extra content delivered in a classroom engaged well because course materials were stripped back for electronic publishing and clearly showed the essential information.'

'Students with long commutes to attend campuses could engage virtually providing a boon to students in regional and remote locations.'

### Comments from TAFE teachers

TAFEs were asked to reflect on the benefits they received from moving to digital and online delivery – see **Figure 6.1**.



**Figure 6.1: Benefits to TAFEs of moving to digital delivery**

At the most basic level, digital delivery ensured students continued in their course, even though in a different way than before COVID-19. The short timeframe to digital delivery, so students could continue in education, created momentum for change across institutes.

The most common benefit identified by TAFEs was the uplift in quality of teaching and learning resources. This resulted from gathering existing resources from across the TAFE and selecting the best for digital delivery.

Teaching staff broadened their knowledge and capabilities and gained confidence in using technologies and lifted their capabilities in digital learning. Their fears that students would not engage were often unfounded. These teachers are now developing skills with this mode of teaching and learning and are more inclined to experiment with digital delivery. The innovation has made courses more engaging. Teachers have included gamification strategies for learning and assessment, for example. They have been able to connect with counterparts in their industry across Australia and in other countries to bring the latest in developments to their students.

Teaching staff also reported increased engagement from some student cohorts. Attendance, albeit via video link, improved and some students who were normally reluctant to speak in class found it easier to ask questions and engage in the online context. In perhaps what is a lesson for the VET sector, some students who are traditionally more practical learners were forced to commit to theory first, but as a result showed greater understanding in developing and refining the skills associated with the competencies of the course.

The ability to be more flexible was also highly valued by TAFEs. Staff felt empowered and proud because in extenuating circumstances they were able to continue teaching students. Digital delivery helped students better balance their study commitments with home, work and family responsibilities.

A concentrated effort in the short run put extra pressure on TAFE resources. The high level of demand from the public meant free COVID-19 TAFE courses had to be established along with course materials in quick time, and once they commenced that teachers were available for support and guidance. The same teachers were also busy transferring their regular classes to connected delivery.

**In the face of the emergency caused by COVID-19 TAFEs have proven their capacity to deliver online courses in rapid responses needed by their government partners. For example, Charles Darwin University (Vocational Education Division) developed 50 short courses, complete with training and assessment strategies, within six weeks, a feat that would normally have taken many months.**

The quality dimension extends to engagement with industry partners, as expected under quality standards. Engaging with their industry partners in the design of new forms of programs and cross-program and institute-to-institute collaboration have remained critical elements of success during the COVID-19 disruption.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, staff are also ensuring that the products and resources developed quickly to support the pivot to digital delivery are consistent and high quality. TAFEs are also focussed on compliance of learning strategies and assessment tools, ensuring they meet requirements of the relevant training packages.

## **Returning to campus**

Students' return to campus-based learning, workshops and assessment has varied by state and territory. Conducting practical training in workshops and simulated laboratories in COVID-safe ways has presented logistical challenges.

Different approaches were put in place to meet COVID safety requirements.

TasTAFE implemented a specific COVID Safety Plan following the easing of restrictions in Tasmania on 11 May 2020 and operated more than 200 small group practical sessions on TasTAFE campuses. From the start of semester two in July, students could return to campuses if classes complied with the COVID Safety Plan. Social distancing needs to be maintained during hands-on courses, meaning small group sessions continue to be part of TasTAFE's strategy moving forward.

Bringing forward theory and deferring practical teaching has risked a disconnect between theory and practice. Revision has been required before re-commencing practical skills.

The reduced flow of students to classes and assessments because of COVID safe requirements may mean some units may overflow in to 2021. TAFEs report these issues will be compounded when new students commence in 2021.

### **Returning to campus – North Metropolitan TAFE (NMT), Perth**

COVID-19 pandemic restrictions began easing in Western Australia early to mid-semester two around July 2020. This enabled NMT lecturers to commence the staggered return of students onto campus, to conduct practical skills demonstrations and to conduct practical skills assessment, while observing strict hygiene standards and social distancing. As restrictions continued to ease throughout the remainder of semester two, NMT re-commenced liaison with host employers to coordinate work placement opportunities where it was deemed safe to do so.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, NMT has worked closely with the WA Training Accreditation Council to gain approval for a range of alternative assessment strategies which included assessment on-campus using high quality realistic simulation in a purpose-built simulated work environment. This was particularly important in the health and nursing field where training was required to continue (observing strict hygiene and social distancing measures) due to its essential service nature.

Across a range of qualifications at NMT, challenges will exist in securing sufficient work placements for students to complete the practical requirements of their qualifications, and NMT continues to work closely with host employers to ensure students are not disadvantaged.

## **One remaining challenge – work placements**

Work placements remain the standout challenge. Many qualifications stipulate a mandated number of work hours in a workplace or for assessment to be conducted in a workplace.



In the early stages of the lockdown theory and content elements of courses were brought forward in the hope that access to work sites would increase toward the end of the academic year. This has not been possible in some states and territories where social isolation was extended. Ongoing public health concerns means businesses and organisations are unlikely to be able to accept visitors or students for some time to come.

A major issue for TAFEs in seeking the best for their students is how to support them toward completion when these restrictions are in place.

The surge of new students, whether school leavers or job seekers wanting new skills, is expected to put resources under pressure, including teachers. The impact on the employment prospects of students if they choose to withdraw without completing their qualification needs to be guarded against.

### **Looking ahead to 2021**

Looking forward against such an unsettled backdrop it is difficult to forecast vocational education activity in TAFEs in 2021. Some TAFEs reported fewer enrolment enquiries than the equivalent time in 2019. These TAFEs hypothesised that it may be students are reluctant to study off-campus on a false assumption that classroom delivery will not be available. Other TAFEs reported an increase in enrolment enquiries which they put down to the surge of Australians looking to TAFE to prepare for a new career or to gain skills to be competitive in job searches.



## 7. A New TAFE Model

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‘There are opportunities that come from this crisis that need to be harnessed and operationalised to ensure that the TAFE sector continues to build momentum, as the sector has proven through COVID-19 that TAFE is change ready.’

TAFE leaders do not expect vocational education and training to return to the way it was before the pandemic. The experience from online courses, alone, has revealed a new way that education and training can be delivered and for it to reach more of the community.

### Face-to-face training will remain, complemented with digital engagement

Although COVID-19 forced changes to the teaching model, strong feedback from many students is that they prefer the face-to-face experience. TAFEs are known and valued as trusted public providers of face-to-face skills training.

‘TAFE’s reputation and point of difference is in the practical, hands on training and learning offered.’

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However, the new capabilities developed, and the new demand unearthed during the COVID-19 disruption means TAFEs will be more than just face-to-face delivery. **Students will expect a variety of choices for learning. Businesses, which have seen workforce training delivered in new ways during COVID-19, are likely to see vocational education options in a new light.**

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‘The innovations in learning brought about by COVID-19 will enhance the way our courses are delivered and has made our TAFE more agile, responsive and contemporary.’

Looking to the future, one TAFE reported that up to 50% of learning could conceivably take place virtually, without losing focus on practical, hands on learning. This was a view expressed mainly by metropolitan TAFEs. Regional TAFEs, while incorporating changes, were careful to note that their communities are keen to see TAFEs return to face-to-face delivery.

The digital delivery model, nevertheless, means TAFEs will be able to redefine their ‘local community’, remove geographical boundaries and open up opportunities for some students whose circumstances, whether in cost, time or distance, prevented them from engaging in training.

TAFE training facilities will still need to be strategically located within communities.

## **New student experiences**

There may be two streams of students arising from the disruption.

‘There is a challenge in collating what we’ve learned to drive future pedagogies and approaches – how do we prevent returning to ‘the way things were’ and decide ‘what to bring into the new normal.’



Regular students have been able to continue their learning journey thanks to the rapid conversion to digital delivery. While many have said in survey responses they wish to return to campus and workplaces for learning they will also expect to be able to access resources and teachers on digital platforms.

The other students -those who picked up free online courses may be new to TAFEs or new to learning after long periods in work or with family responsibilities. The priority for these students is to encourage them to enrol in further learning to support their journey back into work or to upgrade their skills.

Both streams of students still have strong demand for engagement with teachers, either in the classroom and workshop or through digital platforms. The experience during COVID shows that students who do not have strong literacy skills or experience with self-directed learning require extra support.

## **New learning design**

Now that there is an uplift in learning resources available online and new channels to engage in learning, new courses and programs can be developed. They can be curated in different ways to meet student needs or to bring new capabilities to workforces.

This may result in course structures and programming unlike that envisaged by VET qualification developers.

This step jump, plus the growing acceptance of the place of micro-credentials and badges from outside the formal VET sector, portend a major shake-up of vocational education and training design.

How these elements come together to meet the learning aspirations of students while maximising their career options is difficult to predict but one thing that is clear is the VET sector should not expect to snap back to a pre-COVID normal.

Learning fully online may not meet education principles or deliver skills expected in some areas of industry, but this does not preclude some virtual learning for parts of the program.

Interestingly, with appropriate safeguards to validate the identity of the student being assessed, virtual assessment tasks can have greater reliability against assessment standards such as being fair and reliable and can test more scenarios than a structured campus or workplace assessment could offer.



## **New capabilities in teachers**

The urgency during the early days of social distancing to ensure students were able to continue with their study had teaching staff quickly turning to new approaches for delivery. TAFEs deployed rapid upskilling of teaching staff, some of whom had never used digital tools for reaching out to students at home.

Effectiveness online still needs strong engagement between students and teacher to facilitate the learning and keep the student on the path to success. In practice, there is more one-on-one connection and often outside of scheduled classes. The direct connection lifts the support and with it the quality of the learning experience for the students.

TAFEs have deep profiles of teaching expertise in central professional development and standards teams and within faculties. All teaching staff came together to ensure quality delivery was transitioned to students at home.

Many TAFEs are now refining their professional development programs for staff to see digital delivery and online student engagement as core skills. TAFEs are also sharing their approaches through the policy networks operating through TDA which helps spread expertise across the TAFE network.



## **New program design**

The approaches implemented because of COVID-19 may have opened new demand for learning and expectations for flexible delivery. This is likely to put pressure on the current approach to qualification design in vocational education and training, especially the length of time it takes to update qualifications.

The traditional model of VET is for competencies associated with an occupation to be bundled into qualifications or skills sets based on recommendations from industry.

The question is whether students will want to organise and aggregate episodes of learning that suits their unique skill needs for their career aspirations. The reshaping of economic activity that may arise from the COVID-19 period may have more people seeking out unique combinations of skills and knowledge to build a micro-business.



Some qualifications that are mandatory for entering an occupation such as the trades are likely to remain but the appetite from prospective students for other current qualifications is unknown. Time will tell.

Employers are also likely to see new opportunities. Workforce development programs can be delivered in new ways. Those businesses and organisations which have enlisted new technologies to continue their operations during closedowns are likely to need to reskill workers to strengthen these new business models. A sweep of new approaches across firms is expected as they emerge from the economic shock. The focus is likely to be on new applications of technology as well as new services. They will need new skills in workers to support the new approaches.

Against this new backdrop, students and employers are likely to be wanting to construct vocational education and workforce development activities which suit their circumstances.

Success rides on TAFEs as trusted providers with deep industry and education expertise to assemble these solutions. The dynamism across the economy expected from restructuring of businesses and worksites after COVID-19 means there will need to be quick solutions.

This report has shown that TAFEs are capable of rapid delivery of 'just-in-time' learning such as skill sets, micro-credentials and short courses. This may require new approaches to formalising (accrediting) these programs. Whether this involves assigning accreditation to TAFEs for some aspects of vocational education or a stronger reliance on non-formal learning to complement competency-based learning will need policy consideration. Otherwise the sector runs the risk of being seen as not able to respond.

### **A renewed network**

The survey of TAFEs which underpins this report was only possible because of the deep cooperation and collaboration across TAFEs. TDA's policy networks proved invaluable in this period for staff to share their experiences and assist in developing local responses.

TAFEs also shared learning approaches and resources. This network is powerful. It respects local autonomy and responsiveness but allows for learning and sharing to bring the best of approaches from across Australia to every TAFE.

TAFE as a network has proven a powerful tool for governments, students and industry during COVID-19. A network of TAFEs leveraging expertise within each is a key ingredient to lift quality and drive excellence. This sets the benchmark for the self-assurance aspirations the Australian Skills Quality Authority has set for VET.

## **Funding and new measures of success**

Public funding policies and fee structures, of course, are framed on a pre-COVID-19 delivery model. While it is difficult to determine at this point the extent to which education and training will alter once COVID-19 is addressed by a vaccine the current experience will leave permanent changes.

Governments have committed to examining whether consistent funding levels for VET qualifications can be established across the country. This will be a key focus of the National Skills Commissioner for 2021.

**'Demystifying the costs for quality online and connected learning will be crucial. The secret to successful education and training outcomes is the dynamic between the learner, the teacher as facilitator, and the learning process. Digital platforms can enhance and personalise this relationship, but good quality teaching is central.'**

Traditional measures of success for education and training, such as retention and completion, are unlikely to tell the full story of the outcomes from the initiatives implemented in response to COVID 19.

Popular opinion says that free courses mean students don't have 'skin in the game'. But the environment was extra-ordinary. From a student perspective, the question is whether to have tried a course but not completed should be recorded as a failure. Learning from the experience and building confidence to engage again with a TAFE down the track is a valuable outcome given people will increasingly need to re-train at points across their working life.





## 8. Next Steps



'We know the recovery from COVID-19 will not be easy. But having a multiskilled, agile workforce is the type of resilience that Australia will need to get our economy back on track.

As with all major market disruptions, the training sector will have a vital role to play in reskilling Australians. I am optimistic about the future.

Imagine the GP who has micro-credentials in cyber security, the warehouse and logistics worker who is skilled in infection control, and the boutique owner who has know-how in website design and e-marketing.

These are the types of multiskilled workers the vocational training sector is helping prepare for a post pandemic environment.' **Steffen Faurby, TAFE NSW, General Manager**<sup>1</sup>

Australia and the world will need to live with the coronavirus for the foreseeable future, until a vaccine is administered to the bulk of the world's population. Regardless of that timeframe some impacts from COVID-19 will be permanent.

**Australian TAFEs have responded rapidly to keep the business of learning and training going during the upheaval of COVID-19.**

That rapid response has unearthed new demand and new capabilities within TAFEs.

Free COVID-19 TAFE courses have opened training opportunities to many Australians and cemented TAFEs as trusted skills development partners.

As Australia now starts the long haul to full economic recovery and pursue new areas of economic activity the skills and capabilities of Australians need to follow.

New demand will need new responses.

Businesses have adapted their operating models to use technology more effectively. Consumers will buy more online. Students will demand easier online access to learning and teachers.

The extent to which TAFE business partners take up this new form of digital learning, and Australian industry embraces new ways that competency can be acquired, will determine the acceleration of the change across vocational and higher education in Australia.

Challenges lay before us. More people will be out of work for longer, a normal occurrence after a major recession. Young people are the most affected.

The disparity in opportunity is likely to widen for some members of society. Before the pandemic, opportunities for decent stable work were under pressure and those without skills and qualifications missed out.

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<sup>1</sup> Originally printed in The Daily Telegraph, 22 May 2020

True transformation tends to stick. The expectations of students and the newfound confidence of teachers to embed technology in their teaching and student engagement points to new operating models.

Paradoxically, effective learning is a social endeavour. The rhythm of class schedules, the dynamics of group learning and the power of the community of learners pushing all to succeed is likely to remain a strong feature of successful learning. Attendance on campus helps overcome isolation for many students.

COVID-19 will give rise to new dimensions of learning and engagement with students and business. Online courses have brought more people into a learning journey and this will need to continue as a buttress against the economic restructuring that will flow from the COVID experience.

TAFEs and governments will continue to partner throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond to offer training and skills-based support to individuals, industry and businesses and communities.

TAFEs across Australia, operating on behalf of their governments and working as a network, have proven capable of pivoting to new priorities. They will be the bedrock for a skills-led recovery.





# **SKILLS-LED RECOVERY**





# Survey methodology

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) surveyed TAFEs covering the period 17 March 2020 to 12 June 2020 to explore the approaches that TAFEs took to adapt to the unique circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The results of those surveys form the basis of the information included within this publication. The appendix outlines the broad approach taken to develop, disseminate and collate the surveys.

### Survey development

TDA aimed to capture information across the following areas:

- Focus area one: Delivery of free short courses
- Focus area two: Move to digital delivery
- Focus area three: Student reactions and experience

Staff in TDA's secretariat developed the draft survey instruments. Survey drafts were then disseminated to TDA's Quality, Regulation and Compliance Policy Network, Technical Working Group. The technical working group provided advice on all elements of the survey, with a focus on ensuring language consistency, and that the data sought would be able to be collected across most TAFEs.

In particular, Survey Two, which examined the transformation of courses to digital delivery, was the focus of significant consultation with the technical working group.

This consultation led to the development of the three separate survey tools, which are explained further below. Surveys included a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions.

Elements of these surveys asked for quantitative metrics that may have been hard to capture. TDA anticipated some of these metrics would be averages, aggregates or educated estimates. Where necessary, TDA asked TAFEs to use their best estimates to complete the quantitative elements of the survey.

### **Survey One – Free online courses March - June 2020**

This survey tool collected information about the free online courses being offered by TAFEs during the initial stages of COVID-19. The aim was to provide evidence about TAFEs' responsiveness during COVID-19 in assisting people who had lost their jobs or those seeking new skills and qualifications.



### **Survey Two – The transformation to digital delivery**

This survey sought data about the way TAFEs moved to digital delivery following the imposition of strategies to manage COVID-19 risks (e.g. limited movement, social distancing and extensive infection control). TDA used the phrase 'digital delivery' to represent delivery provided online that would have been delivered in a different mode prior to the onset of COVID-19 restrictions. TDA understands and appreciates that TAFEs use a variety of different 'language' to describe digital delivery in their own institutions.

The transformation data was developed on the premise that when seeking to move courses to some form of digital delivery, TAFEs were able to broadly categorise courses into four types based on their readiness to move to significant levels of digital delivery. The broad definitions include:

- Type 1 - **Digital already**: these courses were largely already online, and teachers were able to switch campus students to digital delivery.
- Type 2 – **Digital suited**: these courses, when amended, were able to be moved to digital delivery, with some additional resources for students and support for teachers.
- Type 3 – **Digital challenging**: these courses have reasonable practical requirements and/or teachers who are not skilled in digital delivery, and so theoretical learning was moved online, and practical work was deferred, as necessary.
- Type 4 – **Digital limited**: these courses, for example some traditional trades and/or courses where teachers had no digital delivery skills, were unable to be brought online.

### **Survey Three – The student experience**

This survey aimed to capture information about the following two areas:

- Student reactions to the transition to digital delivery
- The ways in which students, including disadvantaged students, were supported throughout the transition to digital delivery.

In this survey, TDA asked TAFEs to include outcomes from their own student surveys.

### **Other data sources**

In addition to survey responses, TDA also used publicly available information on TAFE responses to the COVID-19 global pandemic, including TAFE websites, media releases, direct requests and phone interviews.

## Survey responses

TDA sent the three surveys to TAFEs for responses. The following survey responses were received. For each survey, the total possible responses was 27.

Survey	Responses received	Response rate	Notes
<b>Survey One</b> Free online courses	25	93%	Some TAFEs were not offering any free COVID courses at this time, however, did submit a response indicating this.  Two of the responses were conducted via phone interviews and one was collected using publicly available information.
<b>Survey Two</b> Transformation to digital delivery	22	81%	Two of the responses were conducted via phone interviews.
<b>Survey Three</b> Student support	23	85%	Two of the responses were conducted via phone interviews.

## Collation of survey materials

TDA aggregated survey responses to produce the material in this publication. There were some qualitative answers where responses had enough commonality to produce a table or a figure. The information below provides a summary of the survey responses that contributed to the figures included in the publication. All qualitative information included in the publication represents information provided by TAFEs during the survey process and/or other information collated by TDA.



## Chapter Two – The Power of TAFE@Home – Rapid Move to Digital Delivery

Figure reference	Question
<b>Figure 2.1:</b> Average proportion of each course type delivered in TAFEs	Survey Two: Question 1a
<b>Figure 2.2:</b> Proportion of each course type that was moved to digital delivery, either wholly or in part.	Survey Two: Question 1b
<b>Figure 2.3:</b> Amount of each course type that was moved to digital delivery	Survey Two: Question 1b
<b>Figure 2.4:</b> Number of days it took to move to online delivery	Survey Two: Question 1b
<b>Figure 2.5:</b> Impact of factors on digital delivery	Survey Two: Question 1c

## Chapter Four – The Student Response

Figure reference	Question	Notes
<b>Figure 4.1:</b> Limitations to studying from home	Survey Three: Question 1b, 1c and 2c	
<b>Figure 4.2:</b> Support provided to students to study at home	Survey Three: Question 2a and 2b	The size of the text in the figure is an indication of the popularity of the course.

## Chapter Five – Online to the Community

Figure reference	Question	Notes
<b>Figure 5.1:</b> Type of free COVID-19 TAFE courses on offer	Survey One: Question 1a	
<b>Figure 5.2:</b> Comparative popularity of free COVID-19 TAFE courses	Survey One: Question 3a	The size of the text in the figure is an indication of the popularity of the course.
<b>Figure 5.3:</b> Preferred enrolments in course types	Survey One: Question 2	TAFE respondents provided information by course type, which enabled the creation of this figure.

## Chapter Six – TAFEs Transformed

Figure reference	Question	Notes
<b>Figure 6.1:</b> Benefits to TAFEs of moving to digital delivery	Survey Two: Question 2a	

### Further contact

Specific questions regarding the data and development of this publication should be directed to:

TAFE Directors Australia Member Services

[memberservices@tda.edu.au](mailto:memberservices@tda.edu.au)

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## Appendix 2

# Fee free courses offered by TAFEs during COVID-19 and beyond

This table describes the range of fee free courses that were on offer by TAFEs during COVID-19 (beginning from April 2020). These offerings were made possible by extra funding from state and territory governments as well as the Australia Government.\* The aim of these courses was to allow people to quickly upskill, reskill or gain new skills to get ready to enter into employment, or prepare people to change careers once the economy starts to recover.

Currently (as at 20 October 2020), TAFEs around Australia continue to offer a range of fee free COVID safe training courses (e.g. infection control skill sets) as well as job ready short courses while they adapt and transition to new courses, many of which remain heavily subsidised.

\* The Australian Government together with state and territory governments has established an \$80 million Infection Control Training Fund to fast-track fee free (or low fee) infection control training to support the re-opening of customer-facing businesses nationwide.

INSTITUTION	INITIAL COVID FEE FREE COURSES	LINKS and CURRENT FEE FREE COURSES
ONE TAFE SYSTEMS		
<b>Canberra Institute of Technology</b>	<p><i>Skilled Capital</i> training initiative offered free skills sets in infection control (food handling, retail, transport and logistics).</p> <p>During COVID-19 CIT also offered three fee-free short courses to existing students only (Introduction to organisational cyber security, Introduction to project management practice, Introduction to legal services).</p>	<p><a href="#">CIT Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">Fee Free Courses</a></p> <p>CIT is now offering fully funded (fee-free) infection control skill sets as part of <i>Skilled Capital</i> places.</p>
<b>TAFE NSW</b>	<p>TAFE NSW offered over 20 fee-free short courses in a range of subjects during</p>	<p><a href="#">TAFE NSW Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">Fee Free Short Courses</a></p> <p><a href="#">Subsidised Courses</a></p> <p>Current fee free courses - working from home, collaborating and leading dispersed teams.</p>

	<p>COVID-19 including e-marketing for small business, engaging customers using social media, writing and presentation skills, computing and leading teams.</p> <p>NSW online fee-free short course enrolments closed 31 July 2020.</p>	<p>Fee-free nationally accredited infection prevention and control training.</p> <p>TAFE NSW is transitioning from free courses back to subsidised courses some of which are fee free (traineeships, school-based trainees).</p>
<b>TAFE Queensland</b>	<p>Free COVID safe courses, skills sets and micro-credentials were offered online in a range of subjects.</p> <p>Micro-credentials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital literacy essentials</li> <li>• Cyber security essentials</li> <li>• Communication technologies for business success</li> <li>• Digital data essentials</li> <li>• Data security essentials</li> <li>• Data analysis essentials</li> <li>• COVID Safe for dining in</li> <li>• COVID Safe for beauty therapy, nail salons, tanning, tattoo parlours and spas.</li> </ul> <p>Skill sets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community care</li> <li>• Health service support</li> <li>• Assist clients with medication</li> <li>• Basic customer engagement</li> <li>• Mentoring and supervision</li> <li>• Mental health peer work</li> <li>• Food service</li> <li>• Farm labourer</li> <li>• Transport (driver).</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">TAFE Queensland Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">Funded Training</a></p> <p><a href="#">Micro-credentials</a></p> <p>Free skill sets online (health and community services, business skills, farm labouring and truck driving).</p> <p>Free infection control skill sets (retail, food handling, transport and logistics, health and community services). COVID safe training in hospitality, beauty, nail, tanning, spas and tattooing sectors.</p> <p>Isolearn - free micro-credential online courses (digital literacy, cyber security, communication technologies for business, digital data, data security, data analysis).</p>

<b>TAFE SA</b>	<p>In response to COVID-19 in South Australia there were no specific fee free TAFE courses. However, TAFE SA had a raft of processes to support students and staff during this time, and continues to do so.</p>	<p><a href="#">TAFE SA Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">Regionally Funded Courses</a></p> <p>TAFE SA offers subsidised short courses (nationally accredited training) across metropolitan and regional locations which include a limited number of free, face-to-face courses (Numeracy - maths for nursing, food safety – TAFE SA with local councils).</p>
<b>TasTAFE</b>	<p><i>SKILL UP for your future</i></p> <p>Skill sets (11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business (business computing, customer service)</li> <li>• Tourism and hospitality (Stepping up to supervisor)</li> <li>• Vocational preparation (career planning, basic reading and writing for work, IT get started, writing job applications, employability skills, workplace maths, ICT taster, trade maths)</li> </ul> <p>Short course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community services (mental health first aid) short course.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">TasTAFE Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">SKILL UP</a></p> <p>A range of short courses and skill sets are on offer covering a range of industries including health, community services, business, and hospitality and tourism.</p> <p>Also a number of skills sets designed to get people job-ready are available (writing job applications, enhancing employability skills, career planning, basic reading and writing for work).</p>
<b>VICTORIAN TAFEs</b>		
	<p><a href="#">Working for Victoria initiative</a></p> <p>In late March 2020, the Victorian Government announced a \$500 million Working for Victoria fund to connect workers with new jobs to support the state's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This included funding for training and re-training.</p> <p>Free TAFE for Priority Courses came into effect on 1 January 2019.</p>	<p>Free skills sets and free TAFE courses continue to be offered in all Victorian TAFEs. For more detailed information refer to the weblinks for each TAFE.</p>



	<p>In July 2020 four new courses were added to the free course list in priority areas with in-demand jobs. The additional free TAFE places were provided to support individuals affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).</p>	<p>The Victorian and Australian Governments have directly responded to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic by fully funding three infection control skill sets (food handling, retail and transport and logistics) to deliver to customer-facing employed workers.</p> <p><a href="#">Free TAFE</a></p> <p>Over 45 free TAFE for Priority Courses continue to be offered in Victorian TAFEs.</p>
<b>Bendigo Kangan Institute</b>	<p><a href="#">Working for Victoria initiative</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Kangan Institute Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">Free TAFE Priority Courses</a></p> <p><a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a></p> <p>Infection control skill sets (food handling, retail, transport and logistics, cross-sector infection control). Training is offered as a mixture of online and workplace learning and can be completed within eight weeks.</p>
<b>Box Hill Institute</b>	<p><a href="#">Working for Victoria initiative</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Box Hill Institute Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">Free TAFE Priority Courses</a></p> <p><a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a></p> <p>Free TAFE for Priority Courses help reduce the financial barrier for students wanting to train in courses that lead to jobs in demand. Box Hill Institute has developed 3 on-line courses (infection control skill sets in transport and logistics, food handling and retail).</p>

<b>Chisholm Institute</b>	<a href="#"><i>Working for Victoria initiative</i></a>	<a href="#">Chisholm Institute Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Priority Courses</a> <a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a> <p>As part of the <i>Working for Victoria</i> initiative, Chisholm is offering a number of free TAFE courses online that lead to a recognised qualification (such as a Certificate or Diploma) in areas where Victorian employers are likely to be looking for workers as the economy recovers. Cross-sector infection control skill set - Free, short, accredited cross-sector infection control skill set delivered through a mixture of online and workplace-based learning.</p>
<b>Gordon Institute of TAFE</b>	<a href="#"><i>Working for Victoria initiative</i></a>	<a href="#">The Gordon Institute Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Courses</a> <a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a> <p>30 fee free courses offered. Free infection control training is delivered online with a face-to-face assessment component.</p>
<b>GoTAFE</b>	<a href="#"><i>Working for Victoria initiative</i></a>	<a href="#">GoTAFE Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Courses</a> <a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a> <p>40+ courses offered at GoTAFE. More than 2,000 students have enrolled in a Free TAFE course at GOTAFE. Cross-sector infection control skill set, infection control skill set (food handling), infection control skill set (retail).</p>
<b>Holmesglen Institute of TAFE</b>	<a href="#"><i>Working for Victoria initiative</i></a>	<a href="#">Holmesglen Institute Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Priority Courses</a> <a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a> <p>To support Victorians during these uncertain times, the Government has expanded the Free TAFE program and opened up more Free TAFE places. Three free online infection control skill sets (food handling, retail, transport and logistics). On completion, students receive a Statement of Attainment for each unit.</p>

<b>Melbourne Polytechnic</b>	<a href="#"><i>Working for Victoria initiative</i></a>	<a href="#">Melbourne Polytechnic Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Courses</a> <a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a> <p>Currently working to transition Free TAFE courses to remote learning as well as introducing new courses. Skill sets in infection control.</p>
<b>South West TAFE</b>	<a href="#"><i>Working for Victoria initiative</i></a>	<a href="#">South West TAFE Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Courses</a> <a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a> <p>South West TAFE is offering over 30 free TAFE for Priority Courses.</p> <p>Offering 3 infection control skill sets.</p>
<b>Sunraysia Institute of TAFE</b>	<a href="#"><i>Working for Victoria initiative</i></a>	<a href="#">SuniTAFE Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Courses</a> <a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a> <p>Free TAFE for Priority Courses cover tuition fees for priority courses for students who are eligible for government-subsidised training. Includes: 30 priority non apprenticeship courses, 20 Victorian apprenticeship pathway courses (sometimes called pre apprenticeships).</p>
<b>TAFE Gippsland</b>	<a href="#"><i>Working for Victoria initiative</i></a>	<a href="#">TAFE Gippsland Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Courses</a> <a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a> <p>Free infection control skills sets - The delivery and assessment for this skill set is entirely online, where students have access to all their delivery material and assessments via the Moodle platform</p> <a href="#">Free Workshops</a> <p>TAFE Gippsland is also offering free workshops online about employability skills, resume writing and interview skills.</p> <a href="#">Online Service Standards</a>



<b>Wodonga TAFE</b>	<a href="#"><u>Working for Victoria initiative</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Wodonga TAFE Website</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Free TAFE Courses</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Infection Control Skillset</u></a>  Free TAFE for Priority Courses pay a student's tuition fees if eligible, to study one of the priority courses at TAFE. Infection control skill sets for eligible individuals (food handling, retail, transport and logistics).
<b>William Angliss Institute</b>	<a href="#"><u>Working for Victoria initiative</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>William Angliss Institute Website</u></a>  <a href="#"><u>Infection Control Skillset</u></a>  William Angliss Institute is offering free, short, accredited training to help customer-facing employees identify and manage the ongoing risk of Coronavirus (COVID-19) infections. This free training combines online learning and workplace-based assessment and involves up to 25 contact hours.  <a href="#"><u>Free Short Courses</u></a>  Food and wine matching, Indigenous cookery - "How to incorporate indigenous ingredients into your menu"  <a href="#"><u>Pre-recorded Short Courses</u></a>  Fancy French toast, Plate like a chef, Handle and serve cheese, Covid-19, Petit fours, Oysters, Indigenous cookery - "How to incorporate indigenous ingredients into your menu", Event management masterclass, Gin cocktail masterclass, Sourdough masterclass.
<b>WA TAFEs</b>		
		<a href="#"><u>Jobs and Skills - Skills Ready</u></a>  Free training focuses on two options: infection control skill sets (free for everyone) and job ready skill sets (some are free for everyone, and others are free for eligible students). There are already over 70 qualifications with course fees slashed by half or more, and from January 2021 when over another 100 qualifications will be added.  <a href="#"><u>Skills Ready Course List</u></a>

	<p>In July 2020 the WA Government unveiled a comprehensive \$57 million package for the training sector to deliver free short courses (skill sets) and cut course fees as part of the WA Recovery Plan.</p>	<p>There are specific courses for selected industries, tailored to the infection control needs of those industries. These courses include both online study and on-campus assessment. Students need to complete a literacy and numeracy quiz before studying online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadacre harvest operations</li> <li>• Business ready</li> <li>• Customer service</li> <li>• Entry into care roles</li> <li>• Infection control</li> <li>• Direct care skill set (on campus)</li> <li>• Cross sector skill set</li> <li>• Entry into care roles (on campus)</li> <li>• Infection control skill set</li> <li>• Infection control (retail) skill set</li> <li>• Infection control (food handling) skill set</li> <li>• Infection control (transport and logistics) skill set</li> </ul> <p>A range of job ready skill sets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure ready (White Card included)</li> <li>• Intro to cyber security</li> <li>• Intro to production horticulture</li> <li>• Job ready basic skill set</li> <li>• Logistics and warehousing</li> <li>• Operating a small business</li> <li>• Work safety in construction</li> <li>• Provide individual support skill set</li> <li>• Work in agriculture</li> <li>• Work in civil construction</li> <li>• Work in community care – health care support and social support</li> <li>• Work in hospitality</li> </ul>
<p><b>TAFE WA North Regional</b></p>	<p><i>Skills Ready training (expansion of the Lower fees, local skills initiative)</i></p>	<p><a href="#">North Regional TAFE Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">Skills Ready Courses</a></p> <p>Eighteen free skill sets are offered across campuses in northern WA and apart from the suite of infection control skill sets include several agricultural, transport, infrastructure, hospitality, care and business skill sets.</p>

<b>TAFE WA Central Regional</b>	<i>Skills Ready</i> training (expansion of the <i>Lower fees, local skills</i> initiative)	<a href="#">Central Regional TAFE Website</a>  <a href="#">Boost your Skills Future</a>  Skill sets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 direct care</li> <li>• Entry into care roles</li> <li>• Transport and logistics</li> <li>• Hospitality (food handling)</li> <li>• Retail</li> <li>• Infection control</li> </ul>
<b>TAFE WA North Metropolitan</b>	<i>Skills Ready</i> training (expansion of the <i>Lower fees, local skills</i> initiative) Seven infection control skill sets were offered initially with majority online. Direct care skill set (on campus) Cross sector skill set Entry into care roles (on campus) Infection control skill set Infection control skill sets (retail, food handling, transport and logistics)	<a href="#">North Metropolitan TAFE Website</a>  <a href="#">Free Courses</a>  <a href="#">Infection Control Skillset</a>  The seven infection control skill sets initially offered are still available with the majority online. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct care skill set (on campus)</li> <li>• Cross sector skill set</li> <li>• Entry into care roles (on campus)</li> <li>• Infection control skill set</li> <li>• Infection control (retail) skill set</li> <li>• Infection control (food handling) skill set</li> <li>• Infection control (transport and logistics) skill set</li> </ul>
<b>TAFE WA South Metropolitan</b>	<i>Skills Ready</i> training (expansion of the <i>Lower fees, local skills</i> initiative)	<a href="#">South Metropolitan TAFE Website</a>  <a href="#">Skills Ready Courses</a>  Offering eight free Skills Ready courses ranging from business skills, commercial cookery, cybersecurity, infrastructure.



<b>TAFE WA South Regional</b>	<i>Skills Ready</i> training (expansion of the <i>Lower fees, local skills</i> initiative)	<p><a href="#">South Regional TAFE Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">Skills Ready Courses</a></p> <p><a href="#">Free Skill Sets</a></p> <p>Eighteen free skill sets are offered across campuses in SW WA and apart from the suite of infection control skill sets include several agricultural, transport, infrastructure, hospitality and personal care skill sets.</p>
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#### TAFE DIVISIONS IN DUAL SECTOR UNIVERSITIES

<b>Charles Darwin University (NT)</b>	<p>At the beginning of the pandemic free VET short courses in hospitality, health, education, environmental studies, trades, business, finance and disaster management were offered.</p> <p>CDU also offered a free 13-part webinar series to help people navigate changes in the Australian jobs market and education sector that had been redefined by COVID-19. The live webinars answered questions about upskilling, changing careers and studying online.</p> <p>Infection control short course was offered free – applications were accepted until 31 July 2020. Standard tuition fees now apply.</p>	<p><a href="#">CDU VET Website</a></p> <p><a href="#">CDU Free Tax Clinic</a></p> <p><a href="#">Consent Matters: a free online course</a></p>
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<b>Central Queensland University (Qld)</b>	Free VET skill sets offered in community care, food service, health support, medication assistance and mentoring and supervision were offered. Courses available until December 2020.	<a href="#">CQU Study TAFE Website</a> <a href="#">Free Online Skill Sets</a> Free online infection control skill sets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infection control skill set for community services or health</li> <li>• Infection control skill set (retail)</li> <li>• Infection control skill set (food handling)</li> <li>• Infection control skill set (transport and logistics)</li> </ul> Free skill sets are available to job seekers or workers impacted by COVID-19. Eligibility criteria apply. This program is funded by the Queensland Government. Skill sets include: community care, health support, medication assistance, mentoring and supervision, food services.
<b>Federation University</b>	<i>Working for Victoria</i> initiative	<a href="#">Federation TAFE Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Priority Courses</a>
<b>RMIT University</b>	<i>Working for Victoria</i> initiative	<a href="#">RMIT Vocational Education Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Priority Courses</a>
<b>Swinburne University of Technology</b>	<i>Working for Victoria</i> initiative	<a href="#">Swinburne University Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE Priority Courses</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE</a>
<b>Victoria University Polytechnic</b>	<i>Working for Victoria</i> initiative	<a href="#">VU Polytechnic Website</a> <a href="#">Free TAFE</a>

## Appendix 3

# TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) and the TAFE network

TDA is the national peak body incorporated to represent Australia's public technical and further education (TAFE) institutes and the TAFE divisions of dual sector universities.

Each TAFE on behalf of its state or territory delivers comprehensive tertiary education, spanning technical and further education, senior schooling and higher education. In meeting the education and training needs of their students, the TAFE network serves the needs of Australian industry, enterprises and communities, and the Australian economy.

Australia's network of TAFE institutes is the largest and most diverse component of our national tertiary education sector, with over 600 delivery locations and campuses located across central business districts, suburban, regional, rural and remote locations. Many institutes offer further services throughout the Asia-Pacific and other offshore regions.

In 2019, there were 780,000 students attending TAFE institutes across the country.

TDA seeks to bring TAFEs together and link with key stakeholders in post-school education, including with other education bodies, industry and across all areas of government activity which rely on TAFEs. To support its work, TDA engages with TAFE leaders, including dual sector universities and works in partnership with the Victorian TAFE Association which brings Victorian members together. TDA also collaborates with its corporate partners to develop initiatives and priorities for mutual benefit.

The core business of TDA is supporting our member institutes, leading the advocacy for quality education and skills in Australia, and managing a range of international education and training projects in co-operation with our institutes.

TDA was established by TAFE Directors in 1998.

[www.tda.edu.au](http://www.tda.edu.au)

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