

Years 9-12 Project

REPORT ON SURVEY RESULTS

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SURVEY

Two surveys were open from November 2018 to February 2019, to allow educators, business, industry and community groups to have the opportunity to have their say about the future direction of Years 9 to 12 education in Tasmania. This report covers the responses to the 'community consultation'. There is another report available on the responses to the '[curriculum framework consultation](#)', which addresses Years 9 to 12 curriculum issues more specifically.

Forty-five individuals responded to the Community Consultation Survey. The majority of respondents (25) were teachers, approximately one fifth (11) were parents, three were from the VET sector, two were assistant principals, two were in administration and one was from the university sector. One student also responded. Student voice was specifically targeted through separate consultation in March and April 2019.

While a broad range of views were expressed by a variety of stakeholders, comments were generally positive and constructive. Responses to individual survey questions are summarised in this report.

The questions in the community consultation survey were:

How can we improve attendance, engagement and completion rates for Tasmanian students from Years 9 to 12?

What kinds of changes do you think need to be undertaken to update formal curriculum, assessment, reporting and accreditation requirements for Years 9 to 12?

How can we provide enhanced pathway options for students from Years 9 to 12?

What suggestions do you have to improve the status of vocational education and training (VET) and vocational learning (VL) in Tasmanian schools?

How can we improve attendance, engagement and completion rates for Tasmanian students from Years 9 to 12?

Respondents suggested a range of measures to improve attendance, engagement and completion rates for Tasmanian students. Broadly, these measures fell into the three named categories (attendance, engagement, completion), however a number of suggestions recognised the interdependent nature of these elements.

In the area of **attendance**, suggestions included:

- Extra support for at-risk students
- Early identification and intervention
- More flexible course delivery (such as half-day intensives), to accommodate students who work part-time or are otherwise unable to attend on a regular basis
- Greater engagement of parents
- More rigorous follow-up when non-attendance surfaces, and the resources to do this
- Reassure students that the door is always open, regardless of previous attendance patterns
- Identify and acknowledge the barriers and challenges to attendance.

Students cannot even start a pathway until their basic life needs are being met through food, shelter, etc. The TCE program needs to have flexibility to acknowledge the struggles of lower socio economic students which need to be addressed first. Attending and participating in a class is just as important as academic attainment.

- Teacher

In the area of **engagement**, suggestions included:

- Offer relevant, accredited learning opportunities with clear links to further education or the workplace.
- Integrate workplace learning into the curriculum
- Compulsory work experience in year 10 to assist with year 11-12 subject choice
- Ensuring that teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable in their relevant subject areas
- Introduce a greater variety of 'hands-on' and practical courses, including short courses
- Increase the amount of out-of-classroom learning
- Build into the curriculum the capacity to personalise learning
- Allow more time for teachers to work individually with students, which may mean less formal classroom time and smaller classes

I think there needs to be a major change and public education campaign about valuing all learning. Not just focus on finishing. Offer different pathways. Engage with the parents when students are at risk. Provide real work life opportunities.

- Parent/carer/guardian of a young person

In the area of **completion**, suggestions included:

- Increased financial support for students in rural areas
- Promote the VET pathway as a legitimate pathway to employment and a high earning capacity
- A major education campaign to promote the value of all learning and alter the perception that education is only something you do until you get a job
- Facilitate ways to blend education with employment more easily
- Emphasise the value of lifelong learning.

It is still common in the community to believe that education is something that you do until you get employment. As a result many students in years 11 and 12 are "waiting for a job" rather than focusing on learning. If education is only to prepare for employment students will readily drop out when a job turns up, and in my experience will sometimes skip classes for a few hours part-time work.

- Teacher

What kinds of changes do you think need to be undertaken to update formal curriculum, assessment, reporting and accreditation requirements for Years 9 to 12?

Respondents suggested a number of measures to update formal curriculum, assessment, reporting and accreditation requirements.

A number of respondents called for a review of examination practice, expressing the view that this was an outdated method of assessment that creates too much pressure for students and teachers alike. Some called for a scrapping of exams altogether, while others preferred a general review of examination practice, including the weighting given to exams and perceived inconsistencies in marking. Several respondents noted the limited time that teachers have for marking, and the difficulties this creates in consistency and quality of assessment. The validity and/or fairness of ATAR as a ranking method was questioned.

The value of ATAR needs discussion. It is a convenient measure of academic performance but only serves a small percentage of students. It fails to recognise and value forms of intelligence other than academic.

- Teacher

Several respondents called for a bigger range of subject options and/or greater flexibility in the way subjects are delivered. There was some support for the current Tasmanian model of year-long subjects, as opposed to the two-year model used in most mainland states and territories.

*More broad project level tasks which integrate across the subjects - ie starting a business incorporating maths, research, design and business. Financial knowledge.
Less pressure on formal assessment, more Tafe style certificates and staging of achievement.
Learning how to learn and critically think, not just following the marking scheme and ticking the boxes.*

- Parent/carer/guardian of a young person

Respondents also commented on the VET pathways currently available, with some calling for a greater correlation between VET courses and the TCE/ATAR. Several respondents noted that many VET students fail to complete their qualification after receiving full-time job offers in their chosen fields, resulting in a negatively skewed statistical representation of VET 'success'.

Finally, many respondents noted the need to consult widely with teachers, schools/colleges, industry and the community in reviewing curriculum, assessment and accreditation. The importance of supporting schools with strategic and professional learning plans while implementing the new curriculum was also highlighted.

Any reviews of existing curriculum, assessment and reporting processes etcetera need to be done in partnership with teachers and others with practical, hands-on experience. In order for structures/systems to be embraced and be successful, they need to be partnerships rather than structures imposed upon the participants.

- Teacher

How can we provide enhanced pathway options for students from Years 9 to 12?

A number of suggestions for enhanced pathways were made by respondents. Broadly, these fell into three categories:

1. Increase the number of options for years 9-12 students to participate in work experience, VET or TASC accredited courses. This was seen as an important step in increasing student engagement, giving students a 'taster' of possible career choices at an early age and broadening their horizons. It was also felt that having experienced 'pathway planners' on staff would greatly assist students in accessing these options.
2. Strengthen links with industry, universities and TasTafe to enhance apprenticeship, enterprise, work placement, internship and job-shadowing opportunities for students.

Enhancing opportunities for senior secondary students to participate in structured workplace learning or experience higher education in a non-formal setting would expose students to a wider range of education and career choices. This could also be achieved through school visits by professional from various fields who are able to provide insight and even mentoring opportunities to young people.

3. **Recognise that pathways will change and provide the necessary flexibility to facilitate this.** Several respondents noted that young people will frequently change direction, particularly early in their career and higher education choices. Micro-credentialing was seen as a possible solution to this, so that credits weren't 'lost' when students switched pathways. It was seen as important that choosing a particular pathway shouldn't close off future opportunities. Multiple entry and exit points for particular streams were suggested as a possible solution to address this.

Link with companies, businesses, owner/operators of specific fields/professions - open this up for student access, whereby they come in a do work within the school environment or students visit these successful working businesses/companies.

Have it structured, but also student centred, allowing for them to plan and guide themselves to the workforce.

- Teacher

Year 11 and 12 students need decision making skills and access to trained career professionals who can provide quality programs together with individual career support.

- Teacher

The secret to success is not so much planning a pathway, as being equipped to switch direction as opportunities present.

- Teacher

What suggestions do you have to improve the status of vocational education and training (VET) and vocational learning (VL) in Tasmanian schools?

Responses to this question were mixed. Some respondents felt that accredited courses should be made available to Year 9 and 10 students, while others felt that this age group did not have the level of maturity required to undertake full certificate courses (and associated work placements).

Be wary of making introduction of this too soon. Isolated units might work in grade 9 and 10 but year 11/ 12 are better for full certificates. Need maturity to truly understand the concepts and skills required for industry.

- Teacher

Several respondents highlighted the need to expose students to successful business and career role models with a VET background, through guest speakers, exposure to industry experts and the promotion of success stories.

Many respondents felt that there needed to be greater acknowledgement and understanding among teachers about the merits of vocational education and the future pathways a vocational education can lead to. It was felt that there was a need to put an end to the 'either/or' mentality of university vs VET, with both being seen as potentially complementary. This relationship could be strengthened through a clear correlation between VET qualifications, the TCE, and ATAR.

The relationship between UTAS and TAFE also needs to be strengthened and not seen as in opposition rather complementary and working in partnership. The system needs to continue to celebrate, market and explain the opportunities and value of VL.

- Teacher

A few respondents felt that VET was already well regarded in their setting, where there was a strong commitment to highly trained staff and meeting students' needs.

Background

The surveys were released following the development of discussion papers, available on the Years 9 to 12 Project website: <https://www.education.tas.gov.au/about-us/projects/years-9-12-project/discussion-papers/> and a series of consultation forums, more information is available: <https://www.education.tas.gov.au/about-us/projects/years-9-12-project/forums-and-workshops/>.

Who do I contact?

For further information about the Years 9 to 12 Project, to provide feedback and to get involved, please email: Years9to12project@education.tas.gov.au