

# LEADING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR VET TEACHERS

## FEDERATION UNIVERSITY TAFE – A SKILLS FIRST TRAINING PROVIDER CASE STUDY

In 2015, Federation University TAFE launched a professional development program that asks teachers to invest 100 hours each year to continually build their knowledge and skills.

The TAFE's Director of VET Practice, Claire Rasmussen, developed the program in collaboration across the organisation to lift the status of teacher training and the capabilities of teachers to improve the learning experience and outcomes for students.

### 160 professional development options

The professional development program introduces teachers to new teaching and training theories, tools and practices. It aligns with the ASQA National Standards for Registered Training Organisations, the *Skills First* Quality Charter and applies the VET teacher Capability Framework developed by Innovation & Business Skills Australia (IBSA).

A diverse 160 professional development opportunities are offered to the TAFE's teachers, all of them for free. Most comprise 8-hour workshops delivered by the TAFE's internal experts, as well as external specialists, including from the VET Development Centre.

Workshops are arranged under the themes of:

- Teaching
- Assessment
- Industry collaboration
- Systems and compliance
- Skills domain.

Teaching theme options range from strategies to activate learning, embedding literacy, numeracy and Foundation Skills into teaching practice, to strategies for challenging behaviours.

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*“Teachers are our greatest asset. Our professional development program emphasises our commitment to investing in high quality teaching and learner outcomes.”*

Claire Rasmussen, Director of VET Practice, Federation University TAFE

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Topics in the assessment theme range from mapping assessments to units of competency and design and development tools, through to developing detailed delivery plans.

Options under the industry collaboration theme range from conducting validation with industry to preparing, capturing and reporting industry release to workplace learning models.

An industry release program is also important to the program so that vocational competency and currency requirements are met. All professional development sessions must model best practice, embed the university's policy and procedures and align to the TAFE's strategic direction.

### Driving cultural change and quality

Claire says the program has raised awareness amongst teachers of the need to continually develop their skills and knowledge. There is greater collaboration between departments, and improved consistency in assessment development and practice. Teachers have a deeper understanding of what the TAFE teaches and how it teaches. The program has also strengthened links with local and regional employers and industries.

## TRAINING AND SKILLS

Teachers report the practicality of the workshops means they gain an immediate return on their investment, encouraging participation.

Teachers and education managers also contribute to the topics and delivery mechanisms of workshops, which are important for teacher buy in and enables managers to support professional development that adds value to individuals as well as departments. Sessional staff are encouraged and supported to attend.

### Tracking the outcomes

Participation in the TAFE's professional development program is captured in a central database, which enables reports to be generated by individuals, departments and at an organisational level to show uptake. It also allows for longitudinal benchmarking and tracking trends, which Claire says influences the program's ongoing development.

The tracking has shown that teachers trend towards professional development that relates to systems and compliance. This doesn't surprise Claire since teachers now operate in a highly regulated environment, and non-compliance can lead to financial penalty.

The TAFE thus encourages that teachers focus as much on the quality of their teaching and assessment by applying streamlined, systematic processes, templates and academic governance, with the intention this will embed compliance and quality into their practices that meet auditing requirements.

### The next step

The TAFE is now progressing to a new stage of professional development, with Claire applying knowledge she gained from a 2016 trip to the UK, Germany and Switzerland on a International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

She's exploring a peer enhancement program that involves teachers building connections with each other and identifying common challenges and goals in their teaching, with the TAFE supporting them to find or develop new approaches.

Claire says this is vital for the TAFE continuing to meet industry and learner needs.

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*"VET is pivotal for critical skills & innovation development across the economy. We need to be ready to respond to workforce automation and globalisation."*

Claire Rasmussen, Director of VET Practice, Federation University TAFE

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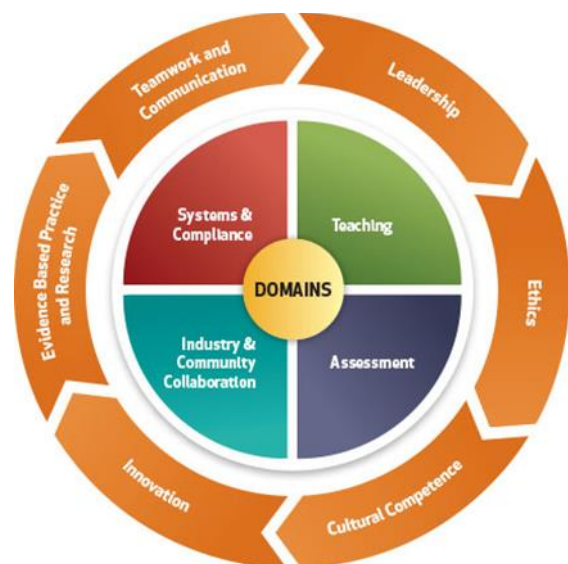


Figure 1: Themes under which Federation University's workshops are arranged