



What's the difference between  
**high school and  
post-secondary  
education and  
training?**



*National Disability Coordination Officer Program*  
AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE



## What's the difference between High School and Post-Secondary Education and Training?

This resource was developed by the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program to provide a comparison between a number of aspects of school, Vocational Education and Training and University. Areas covered include the learning environment, enrolment, classroom, managing your study, study expectations and support.

## What does Post-Secondary Education and Training include?

**Higher Education** or University Education consists of awards spanning Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels 5-10. This includes Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Associate Degrees, Bachelor degrees (including honours), Graduate Certificates, Graduate Diplomas, Masters Degrees, Doctoral Degrees, and higher Doctoral Degrees.

**Vocational Education and Training** is a vocational education and training (VET) qualification. This is a formal certification awarded by a Register Training Provider (RTO) in recognition of the successful completion of an occupational or work-related knowledge and skills-based educational program. There are 8 types of VET qualifications including Certificate I, II, III and IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma.



## Learning Environment

### High School

### VET

### University

#### How does the learning environment in tertiary education compare to high school?

High school is a young person's learning environment. It is assumed that you are dependent on your parents/guardians, and they can be contacted directly to discuss any matters related to your attendance or study.

VET and University is an adult learning environment. Any matters related to your attendance or study will not be discussed directly with anyone else (including your parents/guardians) without your permission.

#### How is attendance monitored in tertiary education compared to high school?

Attendance is generally compulsory, most of your timetable is structured, and the teachers follow up on your attendance and schoolwork.

Attendance is voluntary, there is less class contact time and you are responsible for your own attendance.

#### How about in relation to my studies who follows this up in tertiary education?

Your parents/guardians and/or teachers often follow up on matters relating to your studies.

You are responsible for following through on matters relating to your studies. This includes enrolling, submitting assignments, and accessing services and additional support when required.

#### Do students work online in tertiary education? Do you need knowledge of the internet?

Schools may access online resources to supplement teaching material.

Many VET providers and Universities use the internet for student enrolment processes, course information, online forums, submission of assignments and the delivery of some course material.



## Enrolment

### High School

### VET

### University

#### What is the difference between enrolling in tertiary education compared to school?

An enrolment form is submitted by your parents/ guardians prior to your entry into high school.

You apply for a place in a course. On acceptance into a course by the VET provider, you must complete and submit an enrolment form for specific subjects/units.

In most instances, you apply for a place on a course through the State or Territory University Admission Centre (UAC). After receiving an offer from the university, you are responsible for accepting that offer. You then enrol in specific subjects/units for that program/course.

#### Once enrolled in tertiary education do you remain enrolled indefinitely?

Once you enrol at your high school you remain enrolled until you leave or graduate.

You will need to enrol in subjects/units every semester/trimester or every year if you are doing a course for 12 months or longer.

#### Who keeps track of course enrolment and personal details?

The school keeps track of your course enrolment and can provide advice on subject choice.

You are responsible for keeping track of your course enrolment and keeping your personal details up-to-date. This is usually done online. A course adviser can help if you seek assistance.



## Classroom

### High School

### VET

### University

#### How long do courses take compared to school?

The school year is 36 weeks long. Subjects can run across the full year, there may also be shorter classes offered by your school.

Courses can be as short as one day or as long as two years.

The academic year is divided into separate semesters or trimesters, usually with a week at the end for exams preparation, followed by exams. There are also shorter, more intense courses from 2–6 weeks in duration.

#### How many hours per week are you expected to study when attending tertiary education?

You usually spend 20–25hrs in class between the hours of 8.30am–3pm, Monday to Friday.

If you are an internal student studying full-time you can expect to spend 12–16 hours each week in lectures or tutorials between 8am–9pm, Monday to Friday.

Classes and practical sessions can be held from as early as 7.30am or as late as 9.30pm, on any weekday, depending on the level, delivery mode and nature of the course.

#### Does anyone monitor attendance in tertiary education? Will they know if you are not there?

Teachers carefully monitor all class attendance.

Teachers may not formally take the roll, but they are still likely to know whether or not you attended. Failure to attend a practical session can lead to a grading of not competent.

Attendance in lectures is not monitored, but attendance at tutorials and practicals is monitored. Failure to attend a minimum number of tutorials or practicals can lead to a subject failure.

#### How many students are in a class at VET or University?

Classes generally have about 25 students.

Classes usually have about 30 students.

Lectures may have 100 students or more. Tutorials and practicals usually have about 20–30 students.



## Managing Your Study

### High School

### VET

### University

#### Is there homework and who checks it?

Teachers check your completed homework.

Trainers often don't check required reading, but will often base their assessment on the tasks given.

Lecturers and teaching staff don't check required reading. However, tutorial discussions, assignments and exams usually require that you have read and can reference the required readings.

#### Who will help if having difficulty with course work?

Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance.

Trainers may not be aware you are having difficulty until it comes time to assess your competence. Lecturers and teaching staff are helpful, but expect you to initiate contact if you need assistance. **It is advisable to approach them if you do not understand class material or task requirements.**

#### What happens in work is not completed?

Teachers remind you of any incomplete work.

Trainers may not remind you of incomplete work but often you will not pass the module until it is completed.

Lecturers may not remind you of incomplete work. You will receive assessment penalties for late assignments if you do not have permission for an extension.

#### So how many hours do you need to study outside of class?

You may need to study outside of class as little as 0–5 hours a week.

Depending on the course you are doing, you will need to spend approximately 5 hours a week in additional study.

You need to study at least 1–2 hours outside of class for each hour in class, e.g. 16 hours of class time may require up to 32 hours of private study.

#### Who sets study and revision tasks?

Study and revision tasks are often set by the teacher throughout the school year.

You will need to determine and plan your own study and revision tasks, as well as plan and manage your own study time. It is advisable to use a weekly study planner and a semester or trimester planner.



## Study Expectations

### High School

### VET

### University

#### Do you have to study and learn more compared to high school?

You generally need to read or hear presentations only once to learn all you need to know about them.

You regularly need to review class notes and text material, and practise skills.

Concepts and ideas can be more complex and difficult to understand. You may need to review lecture notes and other study material regularly.

#### Is there a lot of reading involved when studying in higher education?

You are expected to read short specific amounts of material, e.g. a book chapter.

You may be required to read, understand and demonstrate material. In some courses there are substantial amounts of required reading.

You will have extensive reading lists. You will also be required to read additional material from books or journal articles for your assignments.

#### How about writing skills? What is different when writing an assignment or essay?

Writing tasks may not require referencing or acknowledging information sources.

Always reference or acknowledge information sources, including the internet.

Universities have strict policies about plagiarism, which is using someone's work as your own. This includes the internet and other students' work. Always reference your information sources.

#### So, what else is different when studying at school versus tertiary education?

You are expected to reproduce what you are taught, or to solve the kinds of problems you are shown how to solve.

You are expected to competently demonstrate knowledge or complete a task using the skills and information provided in the course.

You are expected to analyse information, compare and contrast different theories, or apply new information to solve new kinds of problems.



## Support for your disability

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High School

VET

University

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### Who will disclose or share information about my disability?

High schools are advised of the learning needs of students with disability by their previous school or by parents/guardians.

Disclosure of disability is required if you seek reasonable adjustments. You will need to provide a Health Practitioner Report from a medical practitioner, psychologist or other accredited health specialist.

### How is disability support for study assessed in tertiary education?

The provision of support is based on an assessment of your support needs carried out by your teachers, the Department of Education and your parents/guardians.

The provision of support is based on a Health Practitioners report and personal negotiations between you, the disability practitioner, teachers and VET or University staff.