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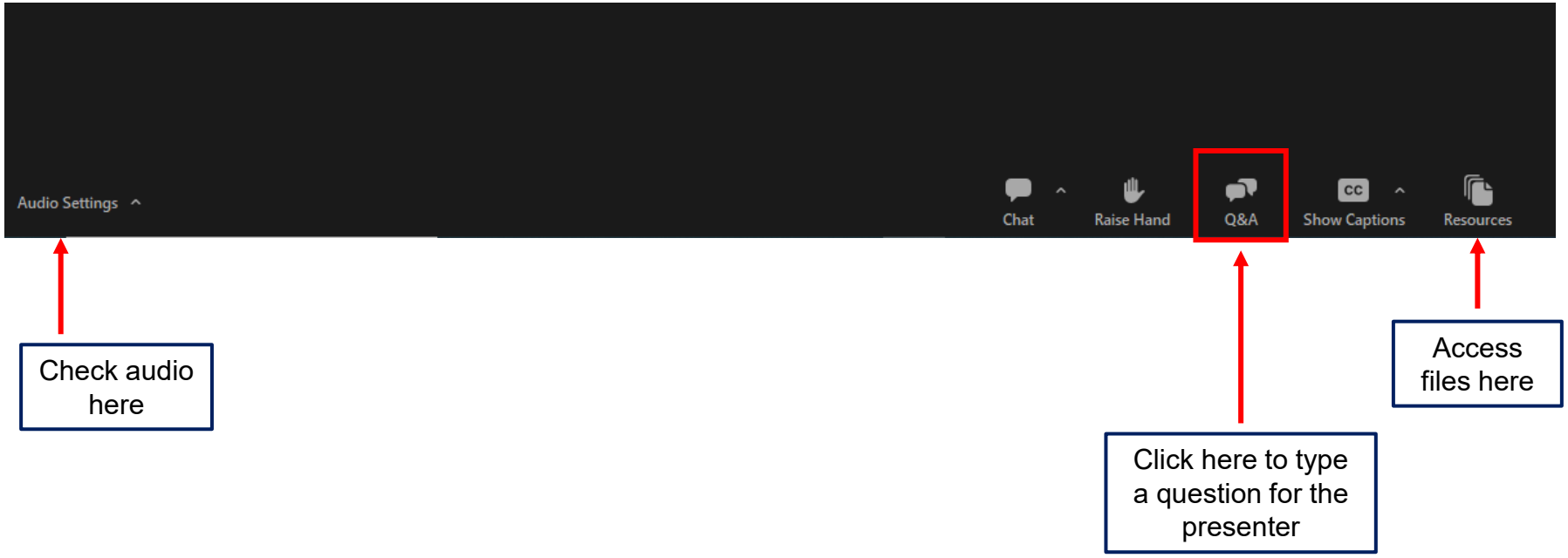
How to use Zoom



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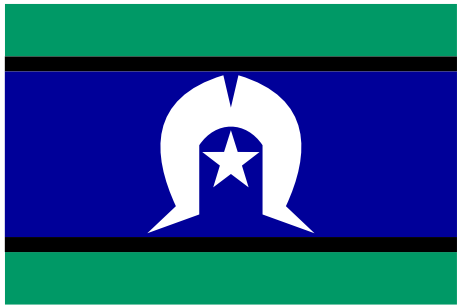
Acknowledgement of Country



NCVER acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continued spiritual connection to land. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

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Panellists

Susanne Francisco
Senior Lecturer,
Charles Sturt University

Debra Lunt
Professional Development Lecturer ASL 2,
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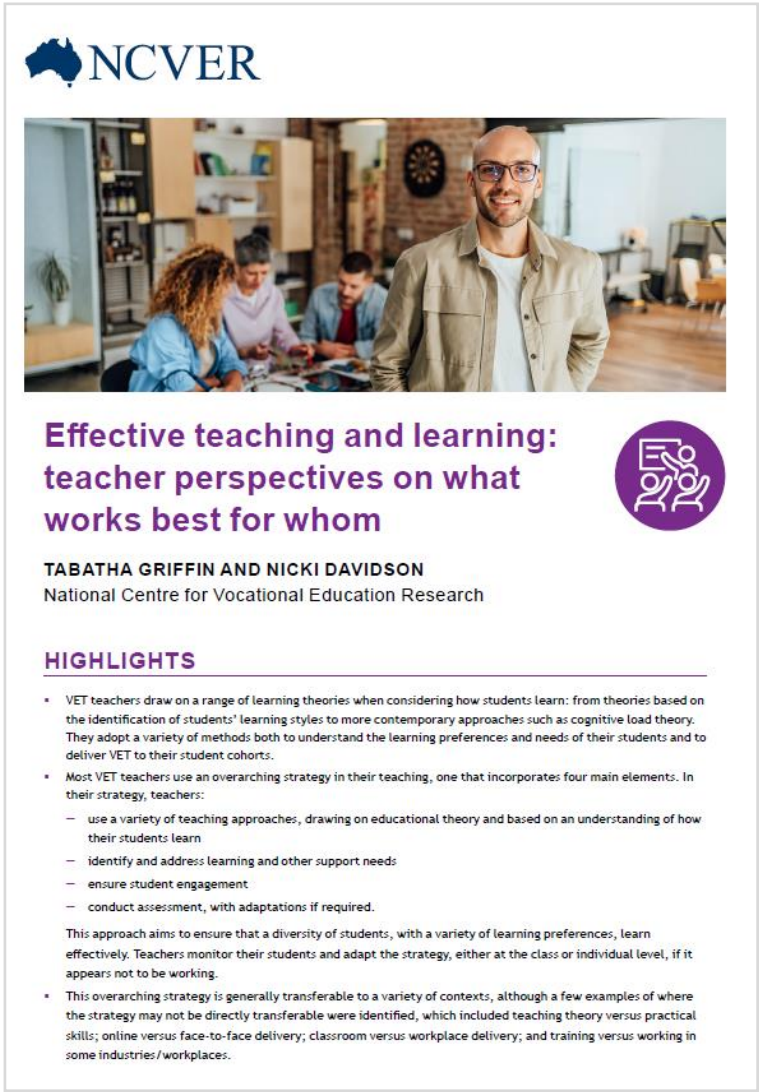
Project aim

To identify effective VET teaching practices which account for the various ways in which people learn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Effective teaching and learning: teacher perspectives on what works best for whom

TABATHA GRIFFIN AND NICKI DAVIDSON
National Centre for Vocational Education Research

HIGHLIGHTS

- VET teachers draw on a range of learning theories when considering how students learn: from theories based on the identification of students' learning styles to more contemporary approaches such as cognitive load theory. They adopt a variety of methods both to understand the learning preferences and needs of their students and to deliver VET to their student cohorts.
- Most VET teachers use an overarching strategy in their teaching, one that incorporates four main elements. In their strategy, teachers:
  - use a variety of teaching approaches, drawing on educational theory and based on an understanding of how their students learn
  - identify and address learning and other support needs
  - ensure student engagement
  - conduct assessment, with adaptations if required.

  This approach aims to ensure that a diversity of students, with a variety of learning preferences, learn effectively. Teachers monitor their students and adapt the strategy, either at the class or individual level, if it appears not to be working.
- This overarching strategy is generally transferable to a variety of contexts, although a few examples of where the strategy may not be directly transferable were identified, which included teaching theory versus practical skills; online versus face-to-face delivery; classroom versus workplace delivery; and training versus working in some industries/workplaces.

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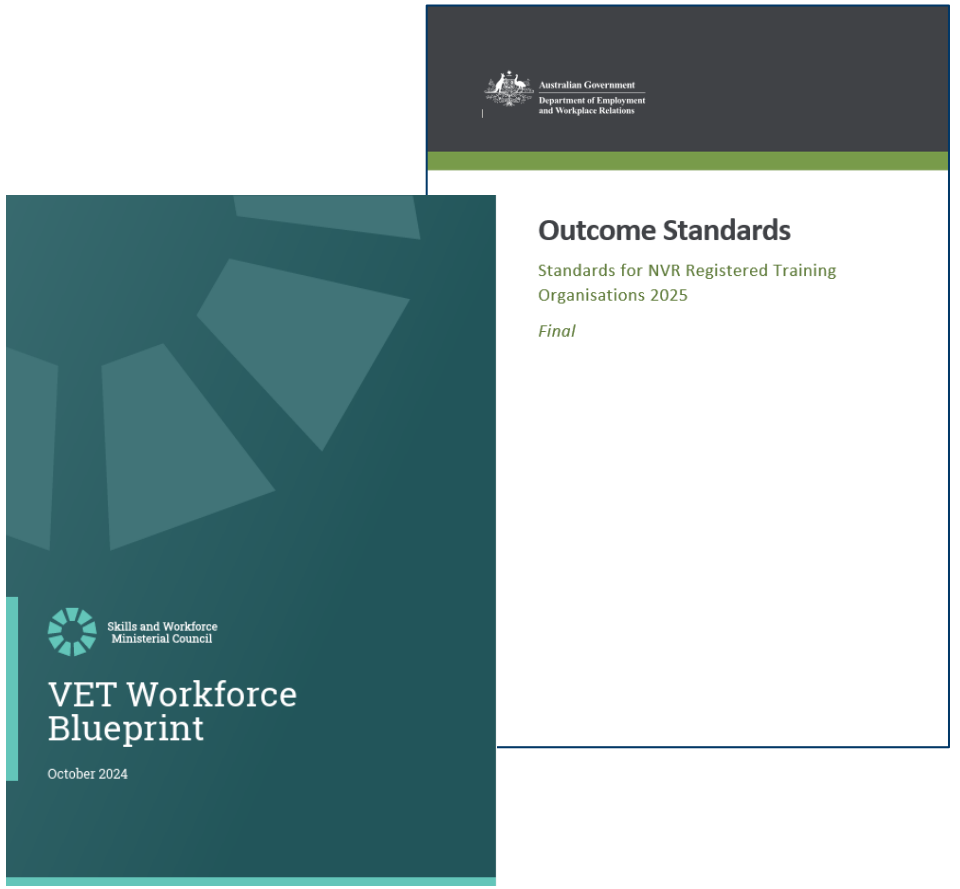
High-quality training

- Government priority
  - VET workforce blueprint
  - Revised standards for RTOs
- Important to:
  - industry
  - VET providers
  - peak organisations
  - regulators



Methodology

Interviews with teachers recognised for teaching excellence (16)

Focus groups with additional teachers and others (20)

The research explored:

- VET teachers' understanding of how people learn
- how teachers cater to the learning needs and preferences of their students across a range of contexts

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How adults learn

VET teachers' understanding

Understanding of educational theories

- Evolution of educational theory
- Differing levels of understanding and practice
  - Learning styles and preferences
  - Cognitive load theory
  - Strong focus on learning needs

Assessing learning preferences & needs

Relationship-building	• Seen as critical by many teachers • Easier in longer courses, and often easier in face-to-face training compared to online
Testing/surveys	• Learning style quizzes • Personality quizzes • Other types of quizzes, e.g. ‘what are your three goals?’ • Learner needs assessment – language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) testing; support needs
Students self-reporting to teachers	• Self-assessment/reflection (not always reported correctly; students can have a narrow view of what they’re capable of)
Ice-breaking activities	• Fun activities
Observation	• During orientation sessions, and/or throughout the course

Note that individual teachers did not necessarily use all of these methods

But not all teachers…

- Why not?
  - Confidence their training caters to all styles/preferences
  - Sound understanding of their student cohort
- Is this a problem?

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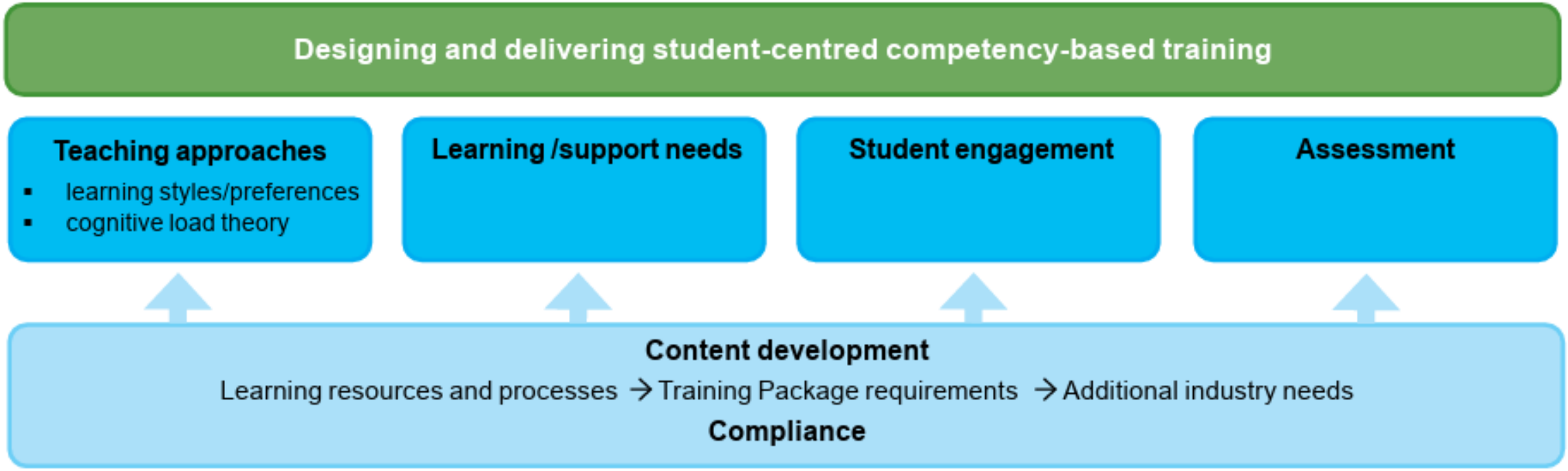
An overarching teaching strategy

Considerations when designing their training



Using a variety of teaching approaches

Draws on various educational theories (for example, learning styles, cognitive load theory); it aims to:

- provide opportunities for students to learn in ways they prefer
- teach students to learn in different ways, a transferable and lifelong learning skill
- keep students engaged

Examples

Mixing instructional materials and styles

- Teacher explanation (might include PowerPoint or whiteboard)
- Videos
- Group work/activities
- Reading
- Hands-on
- Interactive activities (can be online)
- Online materials
- Others

Bite-sized learning

- Does not overwhelm students (Cognitive Load Theory)
- Keeps students engaged

Accompanying the student on the learning journey

- Inquiry-based learning
- Teaches students how to find information themselves, in different ways
- Permission to make mistakes is important

Peer-to-peer learning

- Useful and effective in some (but not all) contexts/situations
- Can be used to keep more advanced students engaged by helping less advanced students
- Encourages networking, communication skills

Addressing student learning needs and the provision of support			
Needs assessed and support implemented to enable students with learning needs to succeed. Strategies overlap substantially with student learning preferences.			
Examples			
Inclusive classroom • Keeping everyone involved • Not making assumptions about capability • Providing content in different ways to suit different learners	**Individualised support** • Reasonable adjustment in training and assessments • Supports provided in and outside the classroom	**Holistic support** • Pastoral care, especially for younger cohorts and disadvantaged groups	**Relationship-building** • Can help understanding of why students may need support • Important for holistic support

Student engagement

Keeping students engaged increases and maintains motivation.
No teaching strategies will be effective if learners are not engaged.

Examples

Short sessions and switching between delivery techniques

- Overlaps with 'teaching approaches' element, whereby different delivery materials/styles are used
- Delivery might be kept to 10–40-minute sessions

Making things interesting and fun

- 'Fun' can mean different things: need to find what works for the course/cohort and use judgement
- Creating a relaxed environment where students are comfortable

Understanding and building learner motivation

- Relationships and knowing the students is important
- Increase 'buy in' from the students

Importance of reading the room

- If students do not look engaged, need to change tack

Assessment (for different learners)

To enable students to demonstrate competence, despite any challenges they are experiencing.
In some cases, the main goal is for the students to experience success, especially for disadvantaged cohorts.

Examples

Verbal assessment, rather than written

- A commonly used strategy
- Can enable assessment for students with LLN limitations

Mixing up assessment methods

- Provides students with opportunity to demonstrate competence in different ways
- Alleviates over-reliance on written assessment, which is difficult for some student cohorts and vulnerable to use of tools like ChatGPT

Enabling students to shape assessment

- Drawing on student preferences/interests to design assessment tasks
- Inviting students to collect their own evidence of competence

Adaptation: when it's not working

Class level	Individual level
Identified by: • Reading the room • Asking for feedback	When specific, individual, learning needs and/or preferences identified
Action: • Delivery approach changed	Action: • Individual adaptations offered

How transferable is this strategy?

Where the strategy may not be directly transferable:

Teaching theory versus practical skills	Online versus face-to-face delivery
Classroom versus workplace delivery	Training versus working in some industries/workplaces

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Supporting teachers

To deliver high quality training

Characteristics of ‘good’ teachers

- ✓ Passionate, about their industries and teaching
- ✓ Teaching for the ‘right’ reasons
- ✓ Lifelong learners
- ✓ Self-knowledge & self-awareness

Attracting the right kind of people to VET teaching roles is important

Developing teaching skills

Used and effective			
	Mentoring		Problem-solving sessions, potentially developing action plans for students experiencing difficulties
	Participating in Communities of Practice		Participating in peer review (teacher feedback)
	Engaging in reflective practices and sharing learnings through debriefing sessions		Drawing on internal and/or external networks
	Shadowing other teachers		In-house professional development, with others
	Team teaching		Being a learner (undertaking other courses/training)

Developing teaching skills

Additional ideas			
	The ability to draw on the skills, knowledge & practices of teaching award winners to improve practice		Resources on how to develop the skill of learning in adults (learning how to learn)
	Video examples of VET teachers' approaches in a classroom or online		A reflective practices toolkit
	A network to enable the collaborative development of resources and practices		Sample session plans, including examples of planned sessions incorporating UDL strategies and activities and accommodating diverse needs and/or preferences

Implementing good practice

1. Structured support and quality induction for new teachers
2. Dedicated time and space
3. Recognition of the skills and human element of teaching

Structured support and quality induction for new teachers	
Important for:	teaching skill development and retention
Important because:	initial teaching qualification is enough to get started but additional learning over the next 12 to 24 months can refine skills
Practice example:	Three-month orientation program that includes - • additional support • substantial PD • mentoring
Suggested solutions:	• lighter load in the first year, to enable time and space to hone skills • internship/cadetship model • access to coach or mentor • opportunities to shadow experienced trainers.

Dedicated time and space	
Barriers to implementing new practice:	• most trainers are time poor • teachers who excel are investing their own, unpaid time • sessional staff do not have the same professional development journey
Solution:	more time, used creatively – • to develop and refine materials and delivery techniques • can be done iteratively, and there are creative ways to build a suite of resources over time.
Solution:	support of managers - • manager support is important to allow sufficient time and flexibility to experiment with new ways of doing things.

Recognition of the skills and human element of teaching	
Teaching VET is complex:	VET educators are considering many things, including – • content development • teaching approaches • learning / support needs • student engagement • assessment • compliance.
Solution:	recognition of the strong human element to teaching in VET • VET teachers need a degree of freedom to use their own judgement in determining the most effective ways for teaching their student cohorts, drawing on their own individual styles and strengths.
Solution:	recognition of skills • progression and pathways for teachers are important, but progression into management roles can result in teaching expertise being lost from the classroom.

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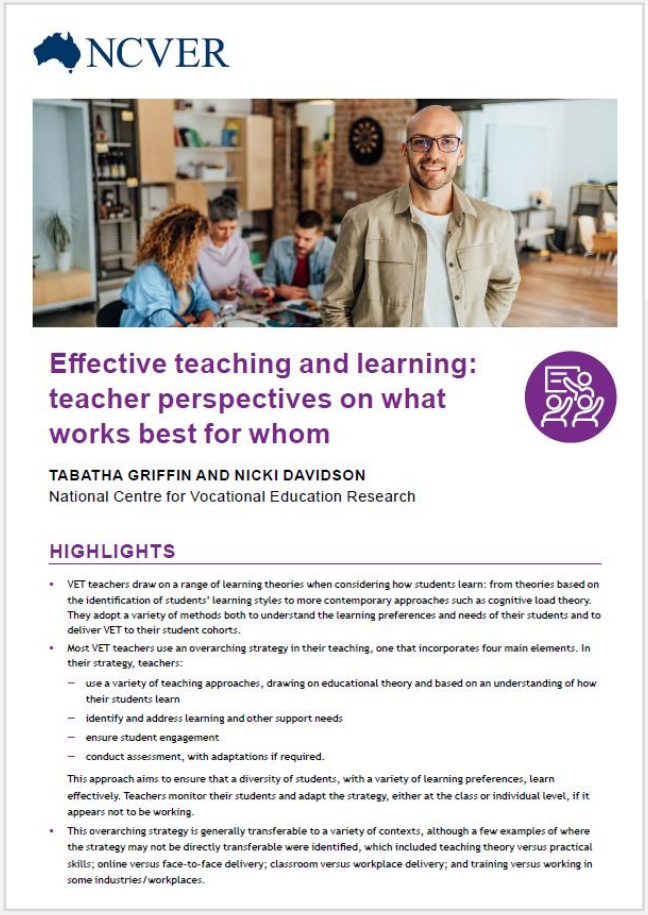
Publication available on the NCVER portal



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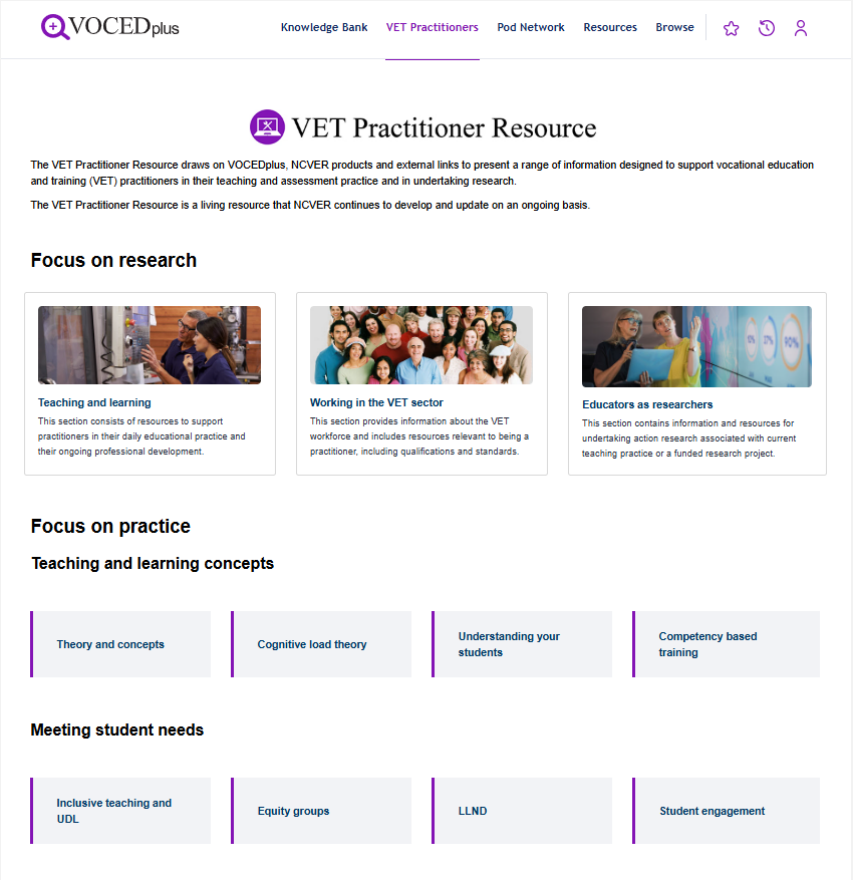
VET practitioner resource on VOCED+



VOCEDplus

Knowledge Bank | VET Practitioners | Pod Network | Resources | Browse

VET Practitioner Resource

The VET Practitioner Resource draws on VOCEDplus, NCVER products and external links to present a range of information designed to support vocational education and training (VET) practitioners in their teaching and assessment practice and in undertaking research.

The VET Practitioner Resource is a living resource that NCVER continues to develop and update on an ongoing basis.

Focus on research

Teaching and learning
This section consists of resources to support practitioners in their daily educational practice and their ongoing professional development.

Working in the VET sector
This section provides information about the VET workforce and includes resources relevant to being a practitioner, including qualifications and standards.

Educators as researchers
This section contains information and resources for undertaking action research associated with current teaching practice or a funded research project.

Focus on practice

Teaching and learning concepts

- Theory and concepts
- Cognitive load theory
- Understanding your students
- Competency based training

Meeting student needs

- Inclusive teaching and UDL
- Equity groups
- LLND
- Student engagement

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QUESTIONS

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Upcoming Events

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