

What to expect when considering a career in VET

A guide for anyone considering a career as a trainer and assessor in automotive and mining Vocation Education and Training (VET) contexts.

Part of the AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework



About this resource

This guide is for experienced automotive and mining professionals who are considering a move into a VET training and assessment role. It describes what the work involves, what varies across different organisations, what you are likely to find harder than expected and what questions are worth asking before you accept a role.

**This is a
second
profession,
not just a
change of
workplace**

Your vocational experience is foundational to this role. Students in automotive and mining contexts will quickly recognise whether you know the work and that credibility matters. It is what makes you valuable in the training room.

But entering vocational education and training (VET) means entering a second profession, not simply changing employers. The work is genuinely different from industry, and the transition involves a real adjustment that most people do not fully anticipate.

Understanding what you are moving into helps you decide whether it is right for you and prepare more effectively if it is.

What the role involves

Regardless of where you work, a trainer and assessor role in automotive or mining VET will involve the following.

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Teaching and assessing

You will plan and deliver training sessions, assess student competency against national standards and make assessment judgements based on evidence. Knowing how to do something does not automatically mean knowing how to teach it. Structuring learning, explaining complex concepts to people with different backgrounds and experience levels and assessing competency rigorously and fairly are professional skills that develop over time.

Supporting students

You will often be the first point of contact for students facing difficulties that extend well beyond the training content. Financial stress, mental health concerns, family difficulties, literacy and numeracy needs, and workplace pressures are common among apprenticeship and traineeship cohorts. Your students may range from school-age students on structured pathways to experienced, mature-aged workers returning to gain formal qualifications, and the needs and dynamics of those cohorts are quite different.

Completing a teaching qualification

If you do not already hold the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, you will need to obtain it, typically within the first year or two of employment. This means returning to formal study as an adult, often in an environment that feels unfamiliar after years of practical work. Many experienced trainers and assessors find the shift from expert to student confronting. Most organisations provide some form of support, but the arrangements vary considerably.

Using digital systems

You will use digital tools extensively, including learning management systems, student management platforms, digital assessment tools, and administrative systems. The specific systems vary by organisation.

What varies significantly depending on where you work

The aspects of the role described above apply in most contexts. What varies considerably is everything else. The training organisation you join will shape your day-to-day experience more than your job title. Before accepting a role, it is worth asking specifically about each of the following.

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Aspect of the role	What varies and why
Administrative and compliance load	Some organisations have dedicated compliance and administrative support teams, so you will focus primarily on teaching and assessment. Others expect you to manage substantial documentation, record-keeping, audit preparation and regulatory compliance alongside delivery. This is one of the most significant sources of variation and a common challenge for people entering the sector.
Resource development	Some organisations provide fully developed training resources and assessment tools. Others expect you to develop, adapt, and maintain most of the materials yourself. Both models are found through public and private providers and across large and small organisations.
Class sizes and cohort complexity	Class size, the mix of apprentices and direct enrolments, and the complexity of student needs vary considerably. Some contexts involve small, closely supervised groups. Others involve larger cohorts with significant diversity in prior knowledge, language and literacy levels, and personal circumstances.
Teaching load and workload design	The proportion of your time spent on direct delivery versus preparation, administration, compliance, mentoring and other duties varies widely. Some organisations have workload designs that account for these demands. Others do not.
Support for new entrants	Structured induction, mentoring, supervised practice, protected workloads and support for the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) qualification are available in some organisations and largely absent in others. The quality of early support significantly affects how well you navigate the first year.
Industry engagement	Some organisations actively support you in maintaining industry currency through placements, site visits, employer partnerships, and allocated time. Others expect you to manage this independently.
Employment conditions	Salary, leave entitlements, contract length, access to professional development funding, and job security vary across provider types and locations. Public providers and private registered training organisations (RTOs) operate under different conditions. Some roles are casual or short-term, while others offer ongoing employment.
Delivery location and travel	Some roles are based primarily at an RTO campus or training facility.

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What you are likely to find harder than expected

The following points reflect what people who have made this move consistently said they were not prepared for.

- **The administrative and compliance load.** You will likely find that documentation, record-keeping, validation processes and regulatory requirements take up far more of your time than you expected. Most people entering the role anticipated teaching and assessing, but not the volume of compliance work that comes with them.
- **The time assessment takes.** Reviewing evidence portfolios, conducting workplace observations, and making assessment judgements take substantially longer than most people expect. Managing this alongside your delivery load is a real and ongoing pressure.
- **The emotional demands of student support.** You will work with students who are dealing with significant personal difficulties alongside their studies. This requires emotional energy that is not typically included in most role descriptions. Many people who have made this transition describe finding themselves in an informal support role they were unprepared for, which can be draining if they lack adequate support themselves.
- **The identity shift.** In industry, recognition comes from doing the work and demonstrating technical skills. In VET, it comes from teaching, assessing and contributing to others' development. This is a different, less familiar form of expertise. You may experience a period of genuine uncertainty about whether you belong in the role, even when you are performing well. This is a normal part of entering a second profession, not a sign that you have made the wrong choice.
- **The digital demands.** You will need to navigate a range of digital platforms from the outset of your employment. Many people entering from industry find that the role of digital requirements exceed their expectations, particularly regarding administrative systems.
- **The pace of change.** Training packages are updated, systems change, technologies evolve, and regulatory requirements shift. You will need to adapt regularly, and the rate of change often exceeds what people anticipate from industry experience.

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What you are likely to find more rewarding than expected

Here is what the same people said: they did not expect to value as much as they do.

- **Seeing a student move into employment or progress in their trade.** Most people who have made this transition describe this as one of the most satisfying aspects of the role.
- **The variety of the work.** Teaching, assessment, mentoring, curriculum development, industry engagement and compliance are all present in most roles. Many people find this more stimulating than they expected after years of specialised operational work.
- **The sense of contributing to the sector you came from.** Playing a part in training the next generation of automotive or mining workers carries genuine professional meaning for many trainers and assessors.
- **Improved work-life balance relative to operational or FIFO roles.** This was consistently identified as a significant motivating factor, particularly for people moving from rosters or remote work.
- **The relationships built with students and colleagues over time.** These are among the most valued aspects of the career for many trainers and assessors.
- **The opportunity to keep learning.** Teaching complex topics to others often deepens your understanding.

Questions worth asking before you accept a role

Given how much the role varies across organisations, asking specific questions before you accept a position is time well spent. The following are based on what people who have made this transition consistently identified as the factors that most shaped their experience.

About workload and administration

- What proportion of my time will be spent in direct delivery versus administration, compliance and other duties?
- Is there dedicated administrative or compliance support, or will I manage those responsibilities myself?
- How many students will I be responsible for, and what are typical class sizes?

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About induction and early support

- What does the induction process look like for new trainers?
- Will I have a mentor or buddy during the first year?
- What support is available for completing the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, and will my workload be adjusted to allow for it?
- Will I have an opportunity to observe experienced trainers before taking on full delivery?

About industry currency

- What arrangements does the organisation have to support me to maintain industry currency?
- Is time allocated for industry placements, site visits or employer engagement, and will I be supported to undertake this without it affecting my workload?

About digital systems

- Which systems will I be expected to use, and what training or support is available to get started?

About delivery, location and travel

- Where will I primarily be based, and how much of my work involves travelling to employer sites or other locations?
- Is travel time counted as work time, and are travel costs covered?

About conditions and career

- Is this role ongoing or on a fixed-term contract?
- What professional development funding or leave is available?
- What does progression look like from this role

Learn more about the Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework

Explore more practical tools, guides and resources supporting VET capability, wellbeing, industry engagement and career development