What is the VCAL?

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is a new qualification designed to provide additional pathways for Years 11 and 12 students interested in vocationally orientated career options or moving straight into employment.

The VCAL builds on existing programs many schools have developed in response to a recognised need for additional learning options in senior years.

The VCAL will sit alongside the VCE (which will remain the main qualification undertaken by Years 11 and 12 students) to provide students with a wider range of education and training pathways.

Students studying VCAL are required to undertake a combination of accredited courses, as well as compulsory literacy and numeracy studies.

The certificate also requires studies in work-related areas and an industry-based component, such as automotive, information technology, electronics, multimedia, etc. It also includes a personal development program.

To obtain further information on VCAL visit www.vqa.vic.gov.au/vqa/vcal/default.htm
Duncan Storr’s struggle to understand how the VCE would help him get a job as a landscape gardener led him to consider leaving school at the end of Year 10.

“I like physical hard work and hands on learning, and I didn’t think the VCE was going to suit me,” Duncan said.

“But when I heard I could do the VCAL I decided it would be worth staying at school. I thought I would have a better chance of getting an apprenticeship if I completed Year 12 and left with a qualification.”

Duncan, 16, is studying VCAL at Foundation level at Corio Bay Senior College. His program is designed to give him hands-on experience in horticulture and a chance to learn some of the technical skills required to become a landscape gardener.

With his interest in learning renewed, Duncan is keen to go on and do further training in order to complete an apprenticeship in his chosen field.

VCAL Coordinator at Corio Bay SC, Graham Lee told how the school’s success in building supportive partnerships with local organisations has proven crucial to helping students like Duncan stay in school.

“The Geelong Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) has been wonderful in facilitating links between the school and other groups who share an interest in youth training and employment,” Mr Lee said.

“Through the LLEN, we’ve forged partnerships with Jobs- A New Approach (JANA), CREATE, Support Works and G Force.”
VCAL Recognises Achievement at The Island

For the past 30 years The Island, a Work Education and Training Unit attached to Collingwood College, has provided work-related training for students whose needs have not been met in the traditional classroom. So when the VCAL trial was introduced in 2002, the school swung its support behind what it saw as the first formal qualification to recognise the good work it had been doing for so many years.

VCAL Coordinator at The Island, Tracey Henderson said the new certificate builds on a program of applied learning that has worked incredibly well for young people who come to the school looking for a pathway into meaningful employment.

“The VCAL acknowledges what our students have been achieving for a long time,” Ms Henderson said. “Now they can walk away with a formal qualification.”

“We have always offered students a chance to successfully complete a program suited to their interests and particular style of learning. “We’ve been able to turn their lives around by getting them work ready and giving them a range of hands-on skills that employers are looking for.”

Ms Henderson said it is great that mainstream schools are going to be able to offer students these same opportunities.

The Island’s unique amenities, industry instructors and community partnerships make it ideally equipped to deliver the VCAL.

As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), The Island employs instructors with extensive industry knowledge in fields including hospitality and catering, mechanics, building, woodworking, metalwork and horticulture. Ms Henderson said this experienced team has the skills to instruct students in a range of programs that contribute to the learning outcomes required to complete the Industry Specific Skills and Work Related Skills strands of VCAL.

“Schools have been traditionally getting students ready for further learning,” she said. “Not every young person wants to go to University.”

“For ones that want to go straight into employment, we equip them with the work and personal skills to find and keep a job.”

“The VCAL recognises this pathway as worthwhile, and will help give students renewed confidence and sense of achievement.”

“I want to get my VCAL and get accepted into the army,” Rebecca said. “I couldn’t have hoped for this before.”

Rebecca never thought she would have the opportunity to complete a Year 12 qualification and is grateful that the VCAL has given her a new chance at success.

“I will have an equal qualification and equal opportunities,” she said. “This makes me feel really good.”

For further details contact: Tracey Henderson, The Island – Work Education and Training Unit, Collingwood College. Phone 9489 0611.

The Island’s Tracey Henderson and 17 year old Rebecca Blakie.

Rebecca Blakie, aged 17, is one such student. Rebecca’s dream is to travel with the army and work overseas, but without a formal qualification she thought her dream would be impossible to achieve.

“Things didn’t go very well for me at school before coming to The Island,” she said.

“But the chance to do VCAL has built up my confidence and given me another opportunity.”

Rebecca came to The Island thinking she might like to become a mechanic. “But once I began working in the kitchen I found hospitality was what I really enjoyed,” she said.

When the VCAL was introduced at the beginning of the year, Rebecca and her teachers designed an Intermediate level program to give her skills that would help her secure hospitality work in the army.

“I want to get my VCAL and get accepted into the army,” Rebecca said. “I couldn’t have hoped for this before.”

Rebecca never thought she would have the opportunity to complete a Year 12 qualification and is grateful that the VCAL has given her a new chance at success.

“I will have an equal qualification and equal opportunities,” she said. “This makes me feel really good.”

For further details contact: Graham Lee, Corio Bay Senior College. Phone 5275 1158.
Maryborough Regional College is forging a partnership with McPherson's Printing Group that will create jobs for young people and support regional growth.

With the assistance of the Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN), the school and McPherson's Printing are negotiating plans to design a VCAL program that will create a pathway into the local printing industry.

Together the three parties are also planning a range of activities, including a Careers Expo and workshop tours, to give students a greater awareness of the range of job opportunities available within the printing industry.

For further details contact:
Ian Kemp, Maryborough Regional College.
Phone 5460 4566.

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