

## ***Is VET vocational?***

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Is vocational education and training as narrowly vocational as the standard description seems to imply? This paper aims to throw some light on this question through a comparison of what VET graduates study and the jobs they get. It uses data from the NCVER Student Outcomes Survey. For those graduates whose destination occupation differs from the intended occupation (obtained by assigning an occupation to each course), the study investigates the skill level of the destination occupation and the extent to which the graduates view their training as being relevant. Key findings and implications are:

- The match between what people study and the jobs they get is high for the technicians and trades group of occupations, but relatively low for most other courses.
- Most of the mismatch between intended and destination occupations reflects the generic aspect of vocational education and training. Graduates mostly report their training as relevant to their job, despite not ending up in the 'matched' occupation.
- There is some skills wastage, however, with graduates reporting that their training is not relevant to the occupation in which they find themselves. The two courses with the highest skills wastage are those for arts and media professionals and sports and personal service workers.
- In thinking about the role of the VET system in addressing the needs of the labour market, it needs to be kept in mind that, with the exception of the trades, there is no neat match between courses and the occupations in which most people end up working.
- Those developing training packages need to be aware that many graduates will not work in their 'intended' occupation.
- Potential students need to be realistic about the likely occupation that a particular course will lead to.

### *Further reading*

Tom Karmel, Peter Mlotkowski & Tomi Awodeyi, 2008, *Is VET vocational? The relevance of training to the occupations of vocational education and training graduates*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research [www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/surveys/publications/sp05060.doc](http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/surveys/publications/sp05060.doc)