

Submission to the
Parliament of
Victoria
Legislative
Assembly
Economy and
Infrastructure
Committee



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Inquiry into student pathways to in-demand industries

1. Introduction

The University of Melbourne (the University) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Victorian Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee inquiry into how students can be better supported with advice and pathways for jobs in in-demand industries.

To enable more people the opportunity to build careers in in-demand sectors, consideration should be given to measures which lift aspiration and awareness, improve access to tertiary education, expand innovative course models, provide appropriate support to students, and develop better connections between tertiary education and in-demand sectors.

Recommendations

The University of Melbourne recommends that the Victorian Government:

Careers advice, outreach and lifting aspiration

- Works with other State and Territory governments and the Australian Government to implement the Universities Accord recommendations (11a and 11b) on the development of a consistent national framework for careers advice across all life stages, and to ensure post-school pathways are visible and integrated into secondary schooling.
- Supports innovative awareness and aspiration programs developed in response to the needs of specific communities and cohorts, and continues to fund the Raising Rural and Regional Student Aspirations program or a similar program.

Growth in government-funded student places in tertiary education

- Collaborates with Victorian universities in their advocacy to ATEC and the Australian Government for growth in student places and support for FEE-FREE Uni Ready funding, particularly in areas of in-demand fields of study.

Address barriers to employment in in demand industries

- Collaborates with the tertiary education sector and industry partners to develop and implement targeted initiatives that address gender imbalances in in-demand industries help create a more diverse and inclusive workforce that meets the evolving needs of Victoria's industries.
- Advocates to the Australian Government for more consistent and accessible post-degree work rights and pathways to permanent residency for high-performing international students in high-demand industries.
- Monitors the impact of global developments and technological change on the workforce and on particular sectors, highlights pathways into in-demand and emerging industries for affected workforces and addresses barriers to workforce participation. As a guiding policy principle ensures Victorians have diverse opportunities for reskilling, upskilling and retraining.

Curriculum innovation

- Advocates to the Australian Government and ATEC for regulatory, funding and Compact support for greater system and course diversity.
- Considers opportunities to support universities to expand their degree apprenticeship offerings, in particular in sectors for which the State is a primary funder, such as education and healthcare.
- Considers ways to promote innovative community-based models for supporting underrepresented cohorts into and through tertiary education.
- Continues to support the Victorian Medtech Skills and Devices Hub and considers support for additional industry skills hubs or other innovative initiatives to connect tertiary providers and students with industries, particularly emerging ones.

Student success and support

- Advocates to the Australian Government to (i) fund support for underrepresented students and (ii) support higher education policy settings which enable all universities to fund comprehensive wrap-around supports to underrepresented cohorts.
- Considers supporting a scholarship program for underrepresented students interested in in-demand sectors, modelled on existing similar initiatives.
- Supports the expansion of university study hubs into underserved areas and supports them to offer advice on employment pathways and to co-locate State-supported services.

2. Lifting aspiration and awareness

A career in an in-demand sector starts with aspiration. It is essential that students are aware of the opportunities to enter and develop professionally in these sectors and see that these opportunities are open to people with whom they identify.

The importance of good early advice and awareness of pathways

Students are more motivated at school and have greater focus in subject selection when they understand the breadth of potential careers available and are aware of the pathways into them. The study decisions students make in years 9 and 10 define how well prepared they are for future tertiary study, including whether they have the foundational knowledge and prerequisites required for entry into certain tertiary courses. High quality, up-to-date careers advice is an essential element. The [Universities Accord Final Report](#) emphasised the need for better career advice and clearer pathways for students. The Accord recommended that the Australian Government and State and Territory governments work together to drive a consistent national framework for careers advice across all life stages, and to ensure post-school pathways are visible and integrated into secondary schooling.

These themes were echoed by the Regional Education Commissioner in the Commissioner's most recent [Annual Report](#). The Commissioner noted that a key barrier to employment outcomes in regional areas, particularly for young people, was a lack of specialised careers advice. Helping regional students understand their options – from primary school onwards – can build aspiration, guide subject selection, and shape future career and economic outcomes.

Career Education Funding is provided to all Victorian Government schools, but with Victorian youth unemployment at 10.5% in May 2025, more can be done to make students aware of pathways into careers.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government works with other State and Territory governments and the Australian Government to implement the Universities Accord recommendations (11a and 11b) on the development of a consistent national framework for careers advice across all life stages, and to ensure post-school pathways are visible and integrated into secondary schooling.*

The importance of aspiration and awareness programs which respond to local needs

Designing aspiration and pathway awareness programs that respond to the local context and to specific cohorts is vital. As noted by the Regional Education Commissioner, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Good programs are designed with schools, communities, and students to ensure they are culturally relevant, locally grounded, and responsive to real barriers faced by young people. They also connect students with relatable role models, hands-on experiences, and practical information about tertiary education and careers, demystifying post-school options and broadening horizons.

For example, in the Goulburn Valley, the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University and GOTAFE have recently developed a place-based initiative called *Ignite* in collaboration with the local community and co-designed by students and industry. The program aims to build aspiration, confidence, and career awareness among Year 9 students who excel in specific subjects but lack career direction, particularly those who are often overlooked in traditional career support models. *Ignite* will involve students engaging in out-of-school learning experiences connected to industry and business in the local region.

Over 12 months, *Ignite* will include after-school sessions co-delivered by the education providers and industry professionals, and six full-day excursions during the school holidays hosted by regional businesses. On completion, students will be connected with early career professional mentors from regional businesses, and take part in tertiary institution camps, workshops and scholarship programs as well as work experience opportunities. Through the program students will learn what careers are available in the region's businesses, what is required to work in a professional job, how they contribute to the economy and what the pathways are into these careers. The [Jobs and Skills Roadmap for Regional Australia](#) released in July 2025 has referred to similar programs as an emerging area of focus for continued action. The

University notes that funding has been allocated by the Victorian Government for similar initiatives including under the *Raising Rural and Regional Student Aspirations* program. The University also notes that according to the Victorian 2025-26 Budget, funding for supporting rural and regional students is not allocated beyond 2026-27.

An initiative which emphasises culturally relevant advice and connecting students with relatable role models is the *Return to Country* program. The program invites selected Indigenous students and staff from partner universities to visit regional and rural communities to raise awareness and build aspiration for STEM careers. In 2025 staff and students from the University of Melbourne and Monash University are spending a week in Northam, Western Australia. Under the program university staff and students engage with primary and secondary school students to showcase pathways to higher education and careers in STEM. The group also meets with those providing support for students on this journey, including careers counsellors and parents. Through storytelling and other outreach activities, the program aims to inspire the next generation of STEM students and professionals and enhance access to STEM pathways. The program also enables Indigenous students and staff to reconnect or enhance their connection to Indigenous and surrounding local communities and to share and celebrate their success.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government supports innovative awareness and aspiration programs developed in response to the needs of specific communities and cohorts, and continues to fund the Raising Rural and Regional Student Aspirations program or a similar program.*

3. Improving access

Providing more Victorians with the opportunity to build careers in in-demand industries also requires expanding access to higher education relevant to those industries by growing the number of relevant university places, widening participation and removing barriers.

Growing the number of relevant university places

The Australian Government's establishment of an interim Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) and reforms to how student profiles are negotiated with universities presents an opportunity for the university sector to be more flexible and responsive to demand for particular types of degrees. The University, for example, has unmet demand in areas of need such as engineering, computer science, allied health, nursing and teaching. Graduates in these disciplines will be essential to various industries which Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) [projects to grow](#) rapidly over the next decade, as well as to fill vacancies in occupations which JSA has identified as [currently in shortage](#). Universities are capped in terms of the number of student places they can provide. In addition, Job Ready Graduates funding has perverse incentives due to the funding allocations to various disciplines, particularly the in-demand STEM disciplines.

The interim ATEC will negotiate mission-based compacts with providers that will support "a diverse, responsive and high performing sector." For the Victorian Government, these negotiations may be an opportunity to advocate for Victorian universities to ATEC and the Australian Government where universities are seeking to grow and diversify student places in line with Victorian Government priorities.

Widening participation through enabling programs

The establishment of the Australian Government's new FEE-FREE Uni Ready (FFUR) funding program presents an opportunity to widen participation and activate pathways into in-demand industries. For example, the University has developed an enabling program for students who have met other entry requirements for the University's Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Commerce degrees, but who have not satisfied the Year 12 VCE Mathematical Methods 3 / 4 prerequisite. Successfully completing the enabling program will allow students to subsequently enter the Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Commerce degrees. Completing an enabling course and a subsequent degree will open up the possibility of careers in a variety of in-demand sectors.

FFUR funding may be the subject of compact negotiations with ATEC, and the University would welcome the Victorian Government's advocacy for FFUR program funding.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government collaborates with Victorian universities in their advocacy to ATEC and the Australian Government for growth in student places and support for FEE-FREE Uni Ready funding, particularly in areas of in-demand fields of study.*

Widening participation by enabling people to study regionally

Those who study in regional areas are much more likely to stay and work in the regions – enabling people to study regionally is in part about building a pathway to a job in regional industry.

While the University's main campus is in the inner-city, it has campuses in various locations in regional Victoria including Shepparton, Dookie and Creswick. At Dookie the University offers a pathway course – the Diploma in General Studies. This diploma course, during which students stay on campus in Dookie, can be used as a pathway to one of several University of Melbourne bachelor's degrees.

Regional vocational education and university campuses are vital to enabling regional students to participate in tertiary education. However, for those living outside of regional centres, physical access to education can still be a challenge. This challenge is particularly pronounced for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds where the costs associated with relocation or travel can be significant barriers. In line with both the Universities Accord and the *Jobs and Skills Australia Roadmap for Regional Australia*, the University welcomes the growing number of Study Hubs in smaller towns and now also outer suburban areas. The University of Melbourne is an active supporter of the Melton Study Hub and is represented on its Advisory Committee.

Study Hubs support students undertaking tertiary education from any Australian institution to access campus-style study spaces, on-site administrative and academic support, and a range of student support services free of charge. The Hubs particularly support students from regional and outer metropolitan areas with low tertiary education participation, who face increased barriers to accessing tertiary study. Supporting students to stay in place regionally means that students are more likely to stay and get a job in a local industry once they graduate. Hubs also have the potential to serve as key centres for providing career advice and employment pathways to students.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government supports the expansion of university study hubs into underserviced areas and supports them to offer advice on employment pathways and to co-locate State-supported services.*

Widening participation by addressing gender barriers

Addressing gender barriers is crucial for unlocking the full potential of the educational pipeline in Victoria. Increasing the participation of women in STEM is essential to meet the demands of industry. Despite efforts to encourage women to pursue STEM careers, significant disparities remain. Similarly, encouraging more men to pursue traditionally feminised careers in education and healthcare will be key to meeting the workforce demands of these sectors.

Recommendation: *Collaborates with the tertiary education sector and industry partners to develop and implement targeted initiatives that address gender imbalances in in-demand industries help create a more diverse and inclusive workforce that meets the evolving needs of Victoria's industries.*

4. Expanding innovative course models

Enabling more Victorians the opportunity to build careers in in-demand sectors will also require more flexible and diverse course models which support a more adaptable and skilled workforce.

Supporting lifelong learning and retraining

Continuing global instability and technological change, including the roll-out of AI and the energy transition, will bring about profound labour market changes in coming years. For the Victorian economy and workforce these shifts represent risks but also opportunities. Government must respond by ensuring employees in affected industries are provided with appropriate opportunities for reskilling, upskilling and retraining, and support pathways from their former careers into in-demand and emerging sectors. Given Victoria's ageing population, education models which are attractive to the +35 population should be a focus.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government monitors the impact of global developments and technological change on the workforce and on particular sectors, highlights pathways into in-demand and emerging industries for affected workforces and addresses barriers to workforce participation. As a guiding policy principle ensures Victorians have diverse opportunities for reskilling, upskilling and retraining.*

The value of degree apprenticeships

Several Australian universities are now offering degree apprenticeships, which combine university coursework with paid employment in a relevant industry. For students there are several benefits – they earn a salary while studying, gain practical, industry-relevant experience, and graduate with a degree and work experience. Many graduates also gain ongoing employment within the organisation where they worked during the degree. Degree apprenticeships could be attractive to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who may be more risk averse to the accumulation of debt and may have less financial support during their studies. The course format also provides choice and responds to student study preferences, including those who are mature aged and returning to upskill or retrain while still in the paid workforce.

While course design is a matter for universities, State governments can play a role in facilitating the establishment of degree apprenticeship programs, particularly in industries for which they are primary funders. In Victoria, Teach Today and Teach Tomorrow (TTTT) qualifications (of which the University's Master of Teaching (Secondary) Internship degree is one), is an example. TTTT qualifications are employment-based teaching degrees which offer a pathway for individuals to become teachers while working as teaching paraprofessionals in Victorian public schools. With significant teacher shortages across Victoria (and Australia), the program is a way of encouraging swift growth in skilled employees while also making a teaching career more attractive by enabling students to better support themselves during their studies.

The Universities Accord also endorses the concept, with recommendation 7 d) arguing for increased opportunities for students to both earn and learn while studying by using models like degree apprenticeships.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government considers opportunities to support universities to expand their degree apprenticeship offerings, in particular in sectors for which the State is a primary funder, such as education and healthcare.*

The value of nested degrees

Another innovative course design is the nested qualification model. Nested qualifications are pathway qualifications which allow learners to gain recognised credentials—such as certificates or diplomas—at various exit points, which can improve employability even if the full degree is not completed. Because of the flexibility it offers, this model supports lifelong learning, accommodates diverse student needs, and reduces the risk associated with committing to multi-year study.

For students from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, nested qualifications can offer an accessible entry point into higher education, building confidence and capability over time. An example of a nested qualification is CSU's [Bachelor of Health and Medical Science](#) that has exit points for a Diploma (year 1), Associate Degree (year 2) and Bachelor degree (year 3). RMIT's Mechanical Engineering [apprenticeship degree](#) is also nested. In this RMIT program, the student not only 'earns and learns' but graduates with an Advanced Diploma of Engineering (Mechanical) at the 2-year point, and a Bachelor of Engineering

(Mechanical Engineering) (Honours) at the 5-year point. From 2026 the merged Adelaide University will offer exit points across all its degrees, across every year level.

The Universities Accord also endorses the concept, with recommendation 4 h) that higher education providers establish 'early exit and articulation pathways' from bachelor degree courses, at diploma and associate degree levels. The Productivity Commission made a similar recommendation in its [5-Year Productivity Inquiry](#), to lower the cost of early exits for students.

The value of the Melbourne Curriculum model

The Melbourne Curriculum model is another means of enabling students to move into in-demand sectors, by providing a differentiated education pathway which will suit some cohorts. At the University of Melbourne students are offered seven broad 3-year bachelor degrees, which are pathways into specialised professional postgraduate master's programs. The undergraduate programs at Melbourne allow students time for exploration as well as providing them with core disciplinary knowledge in their chosen major, before they specialise in a professional graduate program. This can help students make more informed career choices as they explore a range of diverse subjects to discover new passions. Many school leavers are unsure about the career direction they wish to take, and so a broader education in their first years of university, followed by later specialisation when they have a more developed idea of their passions and of the opportunities available in particular careers and sectors, can be attractive.

As the economy changes Victoria and the nation will be faced with a workforce that increasingly needs to reskill and retrain. A notable benefit of the Melbourne Curriculum is that it provides opportunities for people to professionally retrain and upskill via entry into the master's degrees. For those who already have a degree, a 2-year master's program of study may be a better – as well as quicker – way to facilitate career-change or the next step in their career, rather than another 3 or 4-year bachelor's degree.

In a rapidly evolving economy, a diversity of higher education models will be needed to meet shifting workforce and student demands.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government advocates to the Australian Government and ATEC for regulatory, funding and Compact support for greater system and course diversity.*

5. Providing appropriate support

Improving pathways into employment in high-demand sectors will require greater support for students to access and complete tertiary education, with particular attention to the needs of underrepresented cohorts.

An impactful education and support model aligned with local community needs

ASHE (the Academy of Sport, Health and Education), based in Shepparton, represents a successful model for supporting underrepresented cohorts – particularly Indigenous students – into education and training, and employment. ASHE was established in 2004, in a partnership between the University's Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and the Rumbalara Football Netball Club (RFNC). ASHE uses participation in sport to support young people to undertake education and training within a trusted, culturally appropriate environment. Its vision is to improve equality and overall life outcomes using a community development and whole-of-life support model, providing accessible, culturally-relevant education, training, health and employment opportunities primarily – but not exclusively – to Indigenous people. ASHE is now based in the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence.

ASHE also partners with Partners In Training (PTA) to deliver the Certificate III in Early Childhood, Certificate IV and Diploma of Community Services courses to young people and adult learners. 137 students are currently being supported including 17 Victorian Pathway Certificate students, 15 Nursing students, and 106 Partners in Training Students, approximately a third of whom are non-Indigenous, and a significant proportion of whom are migrants. ASHE, GOTAFE and La Trobe University have also collaborated to

develop clear pathways into a number of La Trobe's degree qualifications including the Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Social Work.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government considers ways to promote innovative community-based models for supporting underrepresented cohorts into and through tertiary education.*

The importance of wrap-around supports for underrepresented cohorts

Ensuring that students from underrepresented backgrounds can thrive in tertiary education and successfully transition into the workforce requires tailored and sustained support.

The University's Narrm Scholarship exemplifies the type of comprehensive support that can facilitate success for underrepresented cohorts. The University established the Narrm Scholarship as an element in its strategy to increase the representation of students from traditionally underrepresented cohorts—such as those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, regional or remote areas, and Indigenous communities—from 10% in 2023 to 25% of the domestic undergraduate student body by 2030. The Narrm Scholarship is awarded to both domestic students who are enrolled in an undergraduate degree and are experiencing disadvantaged circumstances, and Indigenous students who are enrolled in an undergraduate degree. The program currently supports 1524 students (who have commenced in 2024 and 2025), of which 278 are from regional or remote areas.

The Narrm Scholarship offers a living allowance of \$6,500 per year for four years, a one-off relocation allowance of \$3,000 for students from regional or remote areas, as well as a limited number of accommodation allowances of up to \$20,000 per year for four years. However, the University understands that financial support alone is not enough. Students from these cohorts often face additional challenges such as cultural isolation, limited academic preparedness, and reduced social capital.

All students who receive a Narrm Scholarship have access to a tailored Enrichment Program, designed to support them through all stages of their studies at the University. The program focuses on building an early sense of connection and belonging, then provides opportunities, supports, and resources to help students achieve their academic and career goals as they progress through their studies. As part of their onboarding experience, all Narrm Scholars are invited to join a Pre-Orientation Camp. Taking place over three days and two nights in mid-February, the camp provides scholars with a head start on making new connections, building a sense of belonging, and feeling prepared to start their studies.

Throughout their degree the University's Careers and Employability team provide support for Narrm Scholars offering services that meet their needs. The University's Students@Work team focuses on securing on-campus employment for Narrm Scholars. By collaborating with recruitment managers to offer subsidies for hiring Narrm Scholars, the team promotes a large number of roles exclusively available to the cohort for application. In addition to their regular service offerings, the University's Academic Skills and Library team regularly engages with the Narrm Scholar cohort, providing opportunities for additional support through regular drop-in sessions, tailored workshops addressing identified needs, and direct access to Academic Skills Advisers for appointments. Finally, the University's Student Equity and Disability Services team (SEDS) has two Student Inclusion Officers who work directly with Narrm Scholars, providing proactive outreach to students identified as needing additional assistance through phone calls and targeted communications, as well as regular in-person drop-ins.

The University notes the importance of Australian Government policy and funding settings that enable the University to offer the Narrm Scholarship program and that caps on international students limit the resourcing available for these types of widening participation initiatives.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government advocates to the Australian Government to (i) fund support for underrepresented students and (ii) support higher education policy settings which enable all universities to fund comprehensive wrap-around supports to underrepresented cohorts.*

Supporting students into in-demand sectors by reducing financial obstacles

The Australian Government's new Commonwealth Prac Payments (CPP) for eligible students undertaking teaching, nursing, midwifery, and social work degrees will provide important financial support for students who will, once they graduate, be heading into careers in in-demand sectors. The CPP addresses placement poverty and, by reducing the financial burden of placements, will make these professions more accessible to a wider range of students.

While the Australian Government is the primary funder of higher education and direct student support, the State Government can also play a role in supporting students financially to complete particular degrees and lessening financial obstacles to moving into particular sectors. State Government initiatives such as the *Making It Free to Study Nursing and Midwifery* initiative, and the *Secondary Teaching Scholarships* program, which include components to encourage employment in the public health system, and public education system respectively, are examples of how this can be done. By reducing financial obstacles to education such programs may be particularly valuable in supporting career-changers, and underrepresented cohorts concerned about taking on debt, into in-demand sectors.

The University notes that a legislatively required independent review is currently underway of the somewhat similar Australian Government *HELP Debt Reduction Program*. This program offers a waiver of indexation on accumulated HELP debt, and/or a reduction of accumulated HELP debt for eligible doctors and nurse practitioners living and working in rural, remote or very remote areas, as well as teachers working in very remote areas. While not presupposing any findings of this review, the University in-principle supports the continuation of this program.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government consider supporting a scholarship program for underrepresented students interested in in-demand sectors, modelled on existing similar initiatives.*

6. Developing better connections with industry

The Victorian Government should also consider how students, once they are in tertiary education, can be better connected into jobs in in-demand industries both through ensuring they have the right skills and education, and through work-integrated learning, part-time work, networking and other links. Most undergraduate and VET qualifications are relatively broad so initiatives which build awareness of, and make connections with, in-demand industries among students in tertiary education will be influential in the career directions they take.

More can also be done to ensure that Victoria's international education sector is connected into in-demand industries.

A means of developing tertiary education programs which are connected to industry needs

The [Victorian Medtech Skills and Devices Hub](#) (VMH) is an innovative connection-based initiative designed in collaboration between a specific industry and education and training providers. Officially launched in June 2023, VMH is supported by the Victorian Government and delivered by a consortium led by the University of Melbourne and including RMIT, Swinburne University, and the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery. By forging partnerships between leading universities and industry, VMH seeks to respond to the needs of this growing industry by building bespoke, and industry-aligned education offerings and pathways to employment.

VMH runs a variety of micro-certs and other courses in-person or online developed in collaboration with the sector and targeted at a variety of career stages including current university students, PhD students and researchers, industry professionals, and people who want to move into the industry. VMH also works with consortium members on identifying ways medtech can be integrated into their curricula. This includes looking at ways of providing new practical medtech training courses and elective subjects to relevant VET and higher education students, and initiating the development of a new Master of Medtech degree which will be offered to students from July 2026. VMH will be based in the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery building, once it is completed, and manage a purpose-built laboratory space enabling practical and realistic cleanroom and laboratory specialist training in a mock manufacturing environment.

A means of connecting the tertiary sector and students with industry

An important function of the VMH is to act as a connection point between industry, the tertiary sector and students. As it is an emerging sector, awareness among students and career advisors of the scope of the medtech industry, and the career opportunities it presents, has not previously been high. Emerging industries, including medtech, tend to be dominated by smaller businesses and startups which are less likely to have the capacity to engage with the tertiary sector or to host internships and other student placements. Careers advisors, when providing information to students or organising work integrated learning or other events with industry, tend to engage with large, established industries and businesses. Even if a small business wants to engage with the tertiary sector, managing relationships with several different large and complex organisations quickly becomes very time-consuming, and so the level of engagement, and awareness-remains low. Other similar sectors, particularly emerging ones, are likely to face similar issues.

One of the ways VMH seeks to overcome this absence of familiarity is by purposefully connecting with university careers advisors and other staff involved in work-integrated learning to ensure they are alert to the opportunities the sector offers. Communications campaigns, including special events, are organised for careers advisors as well as students. Without strong connections, the lack of familiarity goes both ways. In the medtech sector there is not always an appreciation by businesses of the skills pipeline that the tertiary sector offers to them. While there are currently no medtech specific VET courses, there are a number of courses which provide students with highly relevant skills – they just do not have ‘medtech’ in the title. This means that medtech businesses do not necessarily realise that those holding these qualifications may have the skills required. VMH’s engagement with industry helps to overcome this.

When there is a ‘skills gap’ in an industry, the gap is often in people with experience – experience that has not traditionally been provided during formal tertiary education. VMH has observed that even those studying biomedical engineering subjects often find it hard to access industry experience. To help provide people with experience, and to grow awareness, VMH has developed a *Medtech Industry Connections* (MIC) program, for which it is building a database of university and VET students and new graduates. When a business is interested in offering an internship position, hiring a student or a new graduate – usually in a contract or part-time role – VMH accesses its database and is able to provide the business with a list of students with relevant training.

The MIC program is boosting awareness of the sector amongst students with relevant skills and training, and within the sector of the skills pipeline, and providing students with the early experience that will help them make a career in the sector.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government continues to support the VMH and considers support for additional industry skills hubs or other innovative initiatives to connect tertiary providers and students with industries, particularly emerging ones.*

Making in-demand industries more accessible for international students and graduates

International education, the State’s largest export industry, benefits Victoria in many ways – economically through job creation and local spending, socially through cultural exchange and diversity, and academically through enhanced global collaboration and innovation. However, many international students with the skills and expertise the State needs find it difficult to navigate Australia’s visa system. Enabling high performing students and graduates to be employed in in-demand industries as quickly and easily as possible would further benefit the State and industry as well as students.

Recommendation: *The Victorian Government advocates to the Australian Government for more consistent and accessible post-degree work rights and pathways to permanent residency for high performing international students in high-demand industries.*

The University of Melbourne

Grattan Street, Parkville, Victoria 3010 Australia

t 13 MELB (13 6352)

+61 3 9035 5511 (International)

unimelb.edu.au



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE