

INTERVIEW PREPARATION: ROLE PLAY

TEACHER/TRAINER OF THE YEAR

Read this in conjunction with the [official Victorian Training Award resources](#).

These interview questions are prompts so that a shortlisted candidate can practice thinking on their feet and responding to interview questions.

There is not a script to follow for a right or wrong answer. The goal is to encourage candidates to consider the key themes of a question, and to develop the skills and confidence to respond confidently and clearly with a *good* answer.

A good answer is comprehensive – it shows that the teacher/trainer understands their impact and can connect their experiences and activities to broader contexts. That might include vocational education principles, the local community, government policy, an industry sector, the TAFE institute's strategy, student cohorts, peers and colleagues, or the teacher's own professional development.

Candidates should demonstrate, with examples, that their excellence is making a difference – not by chance – but because their work is underpinned by engagement, intent and outstanding practice.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Sample questions have been mapped against the category criteria. There are prompt points underneath each question. You can make up other questions too.

Individual practice: write questions on cards, set a timer and answer out loud. Encourage the candidate to record responses on a device to listen back.

One-to-one practice: Encourage a peer or colleague to ask the candidate questions and provide constructive feedback about the content and delivery style.

Mock panel: Set up two-three people in a panel scenario to engage in conversation and ask the candidate practice questions.

Remember that this resource is a guide only – it's not a perfect answer script to follow. There's inevitably many ways to answer a question and a range of 'good answer' topics to canvass.

Candidates should think widely and answer honestly. This resource and the role play exercises are designed to help people practice broad and in depth thinking, so they can respond confidently when the real interview comes around.

FEEDBACK

Encourage the candidate to provide responses that are both broad and specific.

Use the prompt bullet points to check their answer content or use the points as a guide to ask follow up questions. The latter can highlight gaps, and encourage the candidate to dig a little deeper to respond.

In addition to reviewing ‘what’ they said in the practice run, try to provide supportive feedback on ‘how’ the candidate answered.

For example, did they respond with clarity, composure and confidence? Did they fidget, look ‘panellists’ in the eye or could they slow down their talking pace? What might improve their delivery? Did it feel like they believed in what they were saying?

Warm up questions:

Q. What part of your work gives you the most satisfaction and why?

- There might be a number of reasons. It’s perfectly ok to identify more than one part but don’t just run off a random list. Be clear and specific.
- Don’t forget the why – drill down into the detail of what matters to you.
- Maybe there’s a back story from your own experience that inspires or motivates you to do what you do.
- You might introduce an anecdote or feedback that demonstrates important and valuable outcomes making a difference - your work in action.
- It might be that you have certain traits, skills or values that are satisfied by this work, its challenges and opportunities. Show the judges that you are a reflective practitioner who pursues personal and professional development.

Q. What prompted you to apply for this award and what happens if you win?

- Be honest. You might have been reluctant, and a colleague tapped you on the shoulder. Maybe you were motivated by pride in your work or because you think your sector is undervalued. Be reflective and considered here.
- Perhaps you have feedback or learnings that are worth sharing. The awards are a good platform to spread the word or boost the profile of a practice, community or industry, or to create change. You’re a good spokesperson.
- Don’t be shy if you have career goals and professional development in mind. Identify if this award is a stepping stone for you and tell the judges where the exposure might take you and how you’re a worthy representative.
- The judges want to feel your confidence and belief in your work and the training system. So share your story and passion with them.
- Talk about promotional or development opportunities this will open up for you. And share any ideas you might have to spend the career prize money.

Criterion 1: Excellence and initiatives

Consider:

- what involvement you have had in the development of new learning methodologies and training delivery
- an initiative you have implemented which has led to innovation or improvement in your delivery and/or assessment practice
- how you have shared the outcomes of your innovation or improvement with your colleagues
- the impact of these initiatives or improvements on your learners, your colleagues and your industry partners.

Q. How would you describe excellence in VET and Assessment?

- The judges want you to go beyond ‘excellence’ as a buzzword. Don’t fall into the trap of explaining it just by using other buzzwords (e.g. ‘quality’).
- Drill down into the detail to describe excellence. Talk about how you identify and measure it – give concrete examples of what excellence means in practice. Identify what innovation, improvement or outcomes eventuate when excellence is practised.
- A comparative example of what is not best practice can help you to tease out excellence, if you illustrate the learnings or key differences.
- Think about what excellent means across different stages of VET and assessment – you could use examples from development, design, delivery or evaluation, for example.
- Show the judges that you are aware of the big picture goals of the training sector – e.g. industry-led, diversity, accessibility. Explain how excellence supports these objectives to be realised.

Q. Tell us about an initiative you have implemented that has had a significant impact on learning methodologies and training delivery. How has it impacted you and how could it impact others?

- Share the back story of what led to this initiative and why it was implemented. Outline the nuts and bolts of what it was, how you delivered it and what it has achieved as a result.
- Take ownership of your ideas or actions that led to the implementation. Acknowledge influences, colleagues or peers, but be clear and confident about your own leadership that drove this initiative.
- Show the judges that you are a reflective VET practitioner who can recognise the personal and professional development impact on you – maybe you’re more confident and connected, perhaps you’ve harnessed new skills or developed career aspirations.
- Demonstrate the impact with formal and informal examples of outputs and outcomes. Include feedback or evaluation examples, student results, learning anecdotes, personal transformations, and changes in training practices - or whatever other impacts you’ve measured or observed.

- Talk about the potential of your initiative to go beyond what's been done and seen so far. Share ideas about who or what it might influence now and into the future – be it peers, students, your TAFE or the industry sector...

Criterion 2: Learner needs and focus

Consider:

- how you support your learners' diverse needs and ensure they continue to be engaged in their learning journey
- what evidence there is of the effectiveness of the design and delivery methodologies of your training program
- examples where you have initiated a new idea or activity etc. in response to feedback
- what learner, industry and/or community feedback mechanisms you have utilised.

Q. Often there are unexpected outcomes from your work as a teacher/trainer, give us an example (good or not so good) of an unexpected outcome and tell us how you have learned from that experience.

- Tell the story of this outcome with some background context. It might be an outcome for just one student, for a local community or for an alternative program that's become redundant as a result of your innovative work.
- Mention how this the outcome was discovered. It might have been through formal feedback, professional reflection or even a student complaint.
- Show that you are receptive and responsive to new discoveries and learning opportunities. You can talk about your initial reaction, what steps you took to understand the outcome, and the actions you've since taken to leverage it, problem solve or avoid a similar experience.
- Outline what emerged and try to explain why it was unexpected. Maybe there were blind spots, timing issues or new circumstances that created an unanticipated opportunity.
- Perhaps you could share about how you felt when this outcome emerged, and discuss the impact it's had on your own professional practice.

Q. What are the first principles that drive your approach to designing, developing and delivering your training programs?

- Discuss what underpins the work that you do, what motivates and drives you – it might be values, a set of goals, learning theories or industry experience.
- Demonstrate your awareness of training sector principles (e.g. industry-led, flexible, accessible, engaged learners), and translate the big picture to your own practices.
- Articulate why these principles matter to you and what the impact is when training programs have these principles embedded.
- Show the judges that you understand and utilise principles in practice; give examples of how you've brought them into design, development or delivery.

- You could talk about the origins or beginnings of a project to showcase how you tackled a problem or created an opportunity. By identifying what was important in the planning stage you can demonstrate principles in action.

Criterion 3: Commitment to VET teaching and learning

Consider:

- how you maintain and grow your own skills and knowledge
- how others are supported by you to develop skills and knowledge
- examples of your engagement with other VET professionals.

Q. What do you think are the most effective ways to help others develop their skills and knowledge?

- Give an answer that is grounded in learning theory and real practice. Call on your own vocational education knowledge and direct experience.
- Show the judges that you understand a range of ways to help others; that you have deep and broad connection to VET teaching and learning.
- Consider the range of ‘others’ in your answer. It might be learners, peers or colleagues, and there might be different ways for each cohort. Identify how you engage with others and the forums or platforms on which you participate.
- Be specific and identify, through examples, some of the skills and knowledge areas that are relevant to your teaching/training area. Explain how you know whether something is effective or not. Outline what needs to be in place to evaluate whether skills and knowledge are well developed.
- Don’t be afraid to talk about what has not worked so well, and how you modified practices to better support others to achieve.

Q. What do you think defines commitment to VET teaching and learning?

- Think about this as both a practical and a philosophical question.
- You could talk about how VET aligns with broader social and economic objectives, and consider what or who flourishes with the commitment.
- Explain how VET’s style of learning and types of learners sets it apart, and what makes it a unique sector worthy of commitment. What’s at its core?
- Outline your own personal contribution to show what you have committed; maybe that’s time, professional development or industry experience. Perhaps it’s a willingness to adapt, transform and improve.
- There might be practical enablers (e.g. resources, ideas or policies); things that government, industries or institutes need to put in place to show commitment and enable the VET sector to deliver its mission.

Criterion 4: Links with industry and the community

Consider:

- how active links with industry and the community are implemented in practice
- the major issues confronting the industry/industries your program engages with
- how VET practices can help address these issues
- what level of engagement you have with industry and professional bodies
- how you promote VET in industry and the community.

Q. The fast pace of technical change and disruption are major issues for many industries. How does your work contribute to addressing these and other issues?

- Articulate how your work is part of the bigger picture, not just an isolated practice. Offer details about how your work directly responds to a problem or is an innovative solution that addresses key issues.
- Offer a specific example of an industry issue that altered the way you do things or enabled you to contribute to broader discussions and solutions.
- Explain to the judges how you retain your industry currency. Maybe list memberships, events you attend, or research you access.
- Outline your connection to and participation in industry conversations. Demonstrate your awareness of the major issues in your sector. Talk about what's being discussed or canvassed and how you know about it.
- Show the judges that you are forward thinking, engaged and adaptable. You could give them a snapshot of recent changes to your industry and how VET made a real difference. Offer your assessment of the challenges ahead, with suggestions on what can be done.

Q. If a family member came to you for advice about choosing VET or another education pathway how would you put the case for VET?

- Think about this at both generic and specific levels.
- Talk about outcomes – some of the big picture VET achievements that can be translated into an individual story or opportunity.
- Explain how VET is different from other education options and why you are passionate about it – show that you understand what is unique about the learning style, methodologies, demographics, opportunities, outcomes etc.
- There might be statistics, data, research or anecdotes you can draw on to articulate the case for VET – for example job outcomes, pathway options, completion rates, learner support or some students you know who experienced ABC...
- Consider the individual and what is right for their unique circumstance – that there is not necessarily a one-size fits all case to be made. But that might also be the strength of VET too – the flexibility, adaptability and diversity it enables.