

Drivers of student training choices – a focus on student support services

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About the research

Drivers of student training choices – a focus on student support services Bridget Wibrow, NCVET

The vocational education and training (VET) information landscape is complex. The multitude of training providers, the diverse range of courses available, varying fees, and differences among providers can present a daunting environment for students.

Prior studies have identified several key influences on student choice of training provider, such as the views of trusted influencers, course timetables, location of the training, perceived quality of training provider and affordability. However, how these drivers of student choice compare with one another and whether student support services also play a role remain unclear.

Using a discrete choice experiment, this research investigates the influence of student support service offerings on students' choice of training provider and how they compare with other drivers of student choice, for example, course cost, delivery mode and travel time. In particular, the research focuses on health and welfare support, career counselling and job-search support, and tutoring and guidance on study skills.

Key messages

- Student support services have some influence on student choice, but it is not as significant as that of course cost, delivery mode and travel time. Course cost was found to be the most influential factor on student choice of training provider.
- When examining the availability of different levels of student support services, any type of support was considered much more valuable than none at all.
- The desire for support offerings does not vary greatly with course cost, with participants indicating they would be willing to pay extra for student support services.
- To help students with their decision-making, training providers could provide more detailed information online about their student support services. They could also provide information on the student support services available to all students, rather than merely for certain groups, such as people with disability, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, or those from a non-English speaking background, as may currently be the case.

Simon Walker
Managing Director, NCVET

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Executive summary

Understanding the reasons why students choose to study at a particular registered training organisation (RTO) and the factors that may influence their decision-making is not new to vocational education and training (VET) research. Previous work by Brown (2017) found that, in no particular order, training location, trusted influencers, timetables, fees and affordability, and perceived quality of the training institution are the main factors influencing choice. Additionally, EY Sweeney (2021) highlighted that flexibility, study mode and support from providers have become more important drivers of student choice since the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus of this current research is different, in that it is among the first in Australian VET research to investigate the influence of the availability and provision of student support services and to use a discrete choice experiment to understand the trade-offs that individuals may make between different factors when choosing an RTO.

Student support services can involve a range of training-related supports, such as literacy and numeracy support or flexible learning options, as well as non-training-related supports, for example, wellbeing supports and advice on job-search activities. This research focuses on three student support offerings – tutoring and study skills guidance; career counselling and job-search support; and health and welfare support – and how these relate to other drivers of student choice; namely, course cost, delivery mode, and travel time. It also considers how better choices can be facilitated.

To inform the research, an initial manual scraping of a random sample of 100 RTO websites, their affiliated social media pages and MySkills¹ webpages was undertaken. The aim was to gain an overview of the ease with which students could locate information on support options, as well as to get some idea of the types of student support services on offer. On the whole, there is great variability in the information relating to student support offerings given on RTO websites, with some having very detailed information in an easy-to-locate position; others with less accessible information in downloadable student handbooks; and others with no information at all. Information on student support services on the individual RTO pages on the MySkills website was even more sparse, while social media posts mainly shared wellbeing tips or support for causes, such as R U OK Day. These sources of information helped to inform the design of the discrete choice experiment.

The discrete choice experiment, which involved 650 participants between the ages of 16 and 64 who were either undertaking tertiary (post-school) study or interested in doing so, showed:

- Overall, student support services have some influence on student choice, but it is not as strong as the influence of course cost, delivery mode and travel time. Course cost was found to be the most influential factor in student choice of RTO.
- In terms of the availability of different levels of student support services – personalised one-on-one support, groups sessions, or no support at all offered – students are much more likely to select either the one-on-one support or group sessions than the no support offering, demonstrating that any type of support is regarded more highly than none at all.

¹ MySkills is an Australian Government initiative that allows users to search for, and compare, nationally recognised training courses and providers.

- Additionally, when considering the sensitivity of student support services to increases in course cost, overall, the desire for support offerings does not vary significantly with course cost. In fact, willingness-to-pay estimates demonstrate that students will pay at least \$300 extra for student support services.
- It would be reasonable to assume that individuals from certain demographic groups may have a greater preference for student support services being available, for example, those with a learning-related disability or who are unemployed; however, this is not reflected strongly in the results.

What does this mean in terms of facilitating better choices?

- RTOs could revise the information associated with student support services on their websites and MySkills webpages to ensure that it reflects what is actually available at the RTO and also that this information is easily located by prospective students. At the moment, great variability exists across RTOs in terms of the amount of information they disclose. Providing this information might mean that more students become interested in attending the RTO.
- Moreover, only highlighting the support available for certain groups of students, such as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples or people with disability, may influence other students' deliberations on whether to enrol at the RTO. RTOs could ensure general guidance relating to support offerings is provided for all students.

Furthermore, the findings from this research build upon and support outcomes from other research:

- The finding that course cost is the most influential factor in student choice of training provider builds upon the previous work by Brown (2017) and Maxwell, Cooper and Biggs (2000).
- Highlighting that student support services do indeed play some role in student choice of RTO and that students are willing to pay extra for student support services provides further evidence for the findings of EY Sweeney (2021), which argued that support from providers has become more important in student choice of RTO following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Lastly, the preference for blended and online delivery modes over face-to-face delivery by participants in the discrete choice experiment and their willingness to pay more for these delivery modes should provide some assurance for training providers looking to transition more courses to blended or online delivery modes following the COVID-19 pandemic, as highlighted in Hume and Griffin (2021).

Introduction

The VET information landscape is complex, a fact collectively acknowledged by students, career counsellors, training organisations and governments. The range of courses on offer, the sheer numbers of training providers (over 4000 both public and private), the differences among training providers, and variations in fees constitute an overwhelming environment for students (Scobie, Griffin & Stanwick 2021).

Adding further to the complex VET training market is the plethora of online information, the inconsistencies in the information presented and the credibility of the sources and advice available, with students potentially being deterred by an over-abundance of complex information or swayed by the way it is presented (EY Sweeney 2017; Joyce 2019).

Previous work by Brown (2017) explored student choice in the Australian VET context through focus groups with 150 VET students in Victoria. Brown found that training location (often a ‘non-choice’), trusted influencers, timetables, fees and affordability, and perceived quality of the training institution were the main factors influencing choice and that there was no consistent order to these factors. This is similar to the findings of Maxwell, Cooper and Biggs (2000), who determined that student choice of training provider is a combination of factors relating to course offerings, location, timetable, program affordability, opportunities for practical experiences, and quality issues such as reputation and ambience. Additionally, EY Sweeney (2017) found that factors such as study mode, location and duration are the most relevant to students over other factors such as course price, RTO performance and course indicators.

Furthermore, research undertaken more recently by EY Sweeney (2021) on behalf of the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) examining the transition of students to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic highlights that, prior to the pandemic, cost, location, word of mouth and future opportunities were key drivers of VET course choice. However, flexibility, study mode (particularly blended learning) and support from providers, such as technological, academic or practical support, have become more important since the onset of the pandemic (EY Sweeney 2021). A further selection of national and international literature relating to choice factors for both VET and higher education is in appendix A.

This research sets out to better understand whether the availability and level of student support services offered by RTOs influences student choice of RTO and how this relates to other drivers of student choice, such as location, course cost and delivery mode. It also seeks to identify how better choices can be facilitated.

What are student support services?

Student support services can include a range of training-related supports, such as literacy training, extra supervision and flexible learning options, and non-training-related supports, for example, wellbeing supports and career counselling.

Possibly not known by most students considering enrolling in VET are the mandated supports for students that RTOs must provide as a condition of registration, as set out in the *Standards for RTOs 2015* (ASQA 2020). These include identifying support needs for individual learners before they commence training; providing access to the support throughout their training (for example, literacy and numeracy support, extra tutorials or assistive technology); keeping students informed of changes that may affect their training; and having a clear complaints and appeals process (ASQA 2020). State and territory governments also require RTOs to provide certain supports to students, particularly if the students receive funding for

subsidised training. For example, in South Australia all students undertaking government-subsidised training must complete an Upfront Assessment of Need, which includes an assessment of suitability, support needs, and literacy and numeracy capabilities. If any support needs are identified, then supports are provided either through the RTO or, if the needs are complex, through a Learner Support Services Provider (South Australian Department for Education 2021).

To gain a better understanding of the types of supports for students offered by RTOs and the level of information provided, a manual scraping of a stratified random sample of 100 RTO websites, their associated social media pages and MySkills webpages was conducted. (Further information can be found in appendix B.) This revealed that RTOs varied greatly in whether they disclosed information about student support services on their websites and, if they did, the level of information provided. It should be noted that, even if an RTO's student support services are not disclosed on their website, it does not mean that they are unavailable or, if limited detail is provided, that they are of low quality. However, for a potential student looking at RTO websites, the amount of information provided on supports for students, and the ease with which it can be found, may affect their choice of RTO.

Understanding student support services as a driver of student choice

To explore student support services as a driver of student choice of RTO more fully, a discrete choice experiment was conducted. A discrete choice experiment has the capacity to elicit 'individual preferences that are otherwise difficult to identify, measure and compare' (Nicholas & Shah 2014). This approach has the advantage of providing quantitative information on the relativities of the importance of various selected choice factors. Based on random utility theory and the Lancaster model,² the method thus assumes that rational choices are made based on the attributes of a product – including trade-offs between attributes – in order to maximise utility (Sheppard & Smith 2016).

In a discrete choice experiment, a representative sample of people are given a set of hypothetical scenarios to consider. In each of these, individuals are asked to select one of the three or four alternatives; in some cases they have the option to choose none of them. In each alternative, a number of attributes (choice factors) are displayed, and for each attribute there are two or more levels (Nicholas & Shah 2014). So, for example, if fees per annum were an attribute, the levels associated with this might be \$2000, \$4000 and \$6000. Setting the experiment up in this way enables an analysis that provides an estimate of the relative value of each attribute.

For the purposes of this research, the discrete choice experiment explored the interplay of six different attributes on student choice: course cost; delivery mode; travel time; health and welfare support; career counselling and job-search support; and tutoring and study skills guidance (see table 1). The selected attributes were based on a literature review and findings from the RTO website-scraping exercise. The levels were defined with input from the project advisory committee to ensure that they were a realistic reflection of VET. A sample of 650 participants between the ages of 16 and 64, who were either undertaking tertiary (post-school) study or interested in doing so, were recruited to participate in the experiment.

2 Assumes that a consumer's optimal choice is the bundle of goods that provides them with the highest level of utility within a given level of affordability.

They were presented with a scenario which asked them to imagine that they had decided to enrol in a certificate III level course to help them to prepare for skilled work or further study. The duration of the hypothetical course is 12 months full-time equivalent, and they need to decide on a training organisation at which to complete the course. Traditional trades, usually completed as an apprenticeship, were excluded due to the different cost structure (that is, ability to earn a wage as an apprentice while studying) and delivery mode (that is, both classroom and workplace-based). More information about the design of the discrete choice experiment can be found in appendix C.

Table 1 Attributes and levels for the discrete choice experiment

Attribute	Levels
Cost/course fees	\$300 \$1500 \$3000 \$5000
Travel time	N/A (if online only) Fewer than 30 minutes 30 to 60 minutes More than 60 minutes
Delivery mode	Face-to-face Online Blended (combination of face-to-face and online)
Health and welfare support	This support is not offered Group sessions on health and welfare topics (online or face-to-face) available One-on-one (personal) counselling sessions (online or face-to-face) and various health and welfare resources available
Career counselling and job-search support	This support is not offered Group sessions on topics related to job searching available (online and face-to-face) Personal sessions with a career counsellor to assist with job searching (online and face-to-face) and other job-search resources available
Tutoring and study skills guidance	This support is not offered Group sessions on course content and study skills are available (online and face-to-face) Personalised learning plans and supports (e.g. tutoring) are provided to help students to complete their study, as well as general study skills advice

Interpreting the results of the discrete choice experiment

The discrete choice experiment is based on a series of hypothetical scenarios, and participants are asked to indicate their preferred option. While every attempt was made to ensure the scenarios presented were realistic in relation to the current VET environment, there are some instances where an option may not be valid in real life; for example, a person living in a remote area may be more limited in their choice of training provider. Additionally, the results of the discrete choice experiment are limited to the characteristics of the particular sample of participants; for example, the unemployed participants in the sample may not be actively looking for employment and this could influence the level of career counselling and job-search support they prefer. These limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

By means of the choice sets, the discrete choice experiment allows for the calculation of the importance of each attribute in driving the participant's selection of one training provider over another. The approach indicates the implicit influences on student training choices and the trade-offs made between attributes. This is one of the benefits of this method.

The findings from the discrete choice experiment are presented in the following section of the report.



Does the availability and level of student support services matter when choosing an RTO?

Role of different types of student support services on RTO choice

One of the aims of the research is to understand whether the student support services offered by RTOs influence an individual's decision to study at a particular RTO. This section presents the results from the discrete choice experiment that relate to the three student support offerings explored: health and welfare support; career counselling and job-search support; and tutoring and study skills guidance.

When looking at the overall importance of the attributes in the discrete choice experiment, tutoring and study skills guidance had slightly higher importance than health and welfare support or career counselling and job-search support (10% compared with 7.9% and 7.8% respectively; see figure 6 on page 17). This means that the availability of tutoring and study skills guidance had slightly more influence on whether an individual will choose an RTO by comparison with an RTO offering health and welfare support or career counselling and job-search support.

The discrete choice experiment was also designed to investigate whether different levels of the same student support offering affected how likely an individual was to choose an RTO. There were three levels for each support:

- Personalised or individualised one-on-one support, for example, private sessions with a tutor, therapist or career counsellor. This could be offered either face-to-face or online.
- Group sessions and general advice, such as group study sessions, health and welfare tips in student handbooks and group sessions relating to health or job-search topics. These sessions could be either face-to-face or online.
- No support offered.

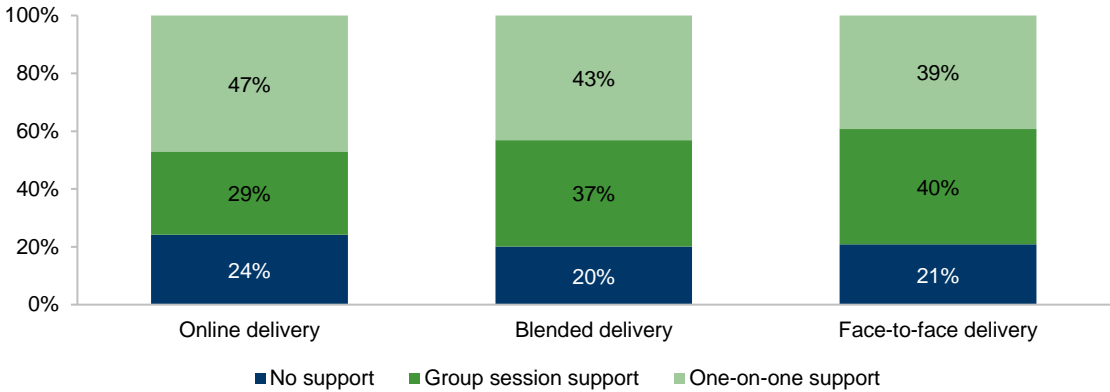
Figures 1, 2 and 3 indicate the share of preference for each student support offering by level of support and delivery mode.

With health and welfare support, one-on-one support was preferred to group session support or no support for the online delivery mode. For blended delivery, one-on-one support and group sessions were preferred to no support at all. For face-to-face delivery, preference for one-on-one and group session support was similar. However, any type of support (either one-on-one or group) was preferred to no support at all (figure 1).

Key points

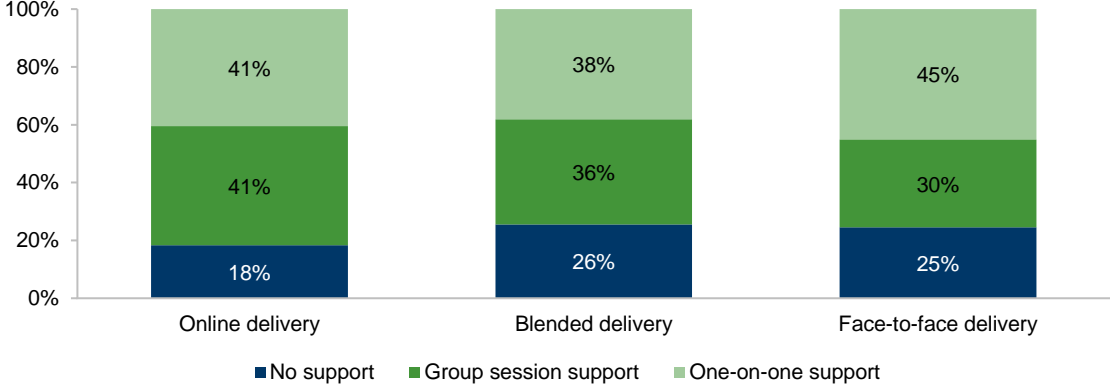
- The availability of student support services has some influence on student choice of RTO, although it is not as great as course cost, delivery mode and travel time.
- Overall, the preference for student support offerings is not sensitive to changes in course cost and participants indicate a willingness to pay extra for student support services.
- Individuals from certain demographic backgrounds, such as with disability or who are unemployed, are not more strongly influenced than the remaining sample by student support services.

Figure 1 Share of preference by VET delivery mode and level of health and welfare support (%)



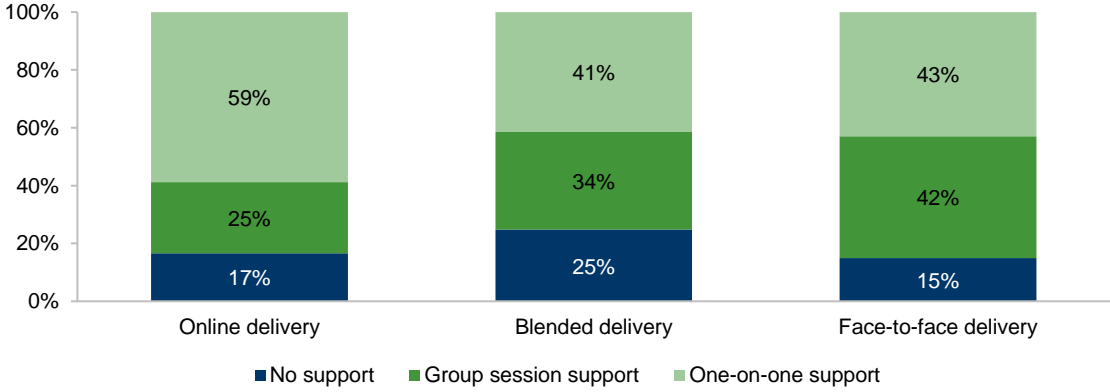
The picture was different for career counselling and job-search support. For face-to-face delivery, one-on-one support was preferred to group session support. For both online and blended delivery modes, preference for one-on-one support and group session support was similar. Once again, any level of support was preferred to no support at all (figure 2).

Figure 2 Share of preference by VET delivery mode and level of career counselling and job-search support (%)



When it came to tutoring and study skills guidance, preference for one-on-one support and group session support was similar for face-to-face delivery. For both online and blended delivery modes, preference for one-on-one support was higher than for group session support. As with the other two student support services, any level of support was preferred to no support at all (figure 3).

Figure 3 Share of preference by VET delivery mode and level of tutoring and study skills guidance (%)



Student support services and course costs

The inclusion of course cost as an attribute in the discrete choice experiment enabled the sensitivity of student support services to changes in price for each delivery mode³ (in other terminology ‘price elasticity’) to be calculated, as well as willingness-to-pay estimates. Further information on both methods and results can be found in support document 2.

Price sensitivity of student support services to course cost

The shares of preferences are displayed in figure 4, where the change in preference for each support offering is plotted against course cost in the graphs, while the average price elasticity of demand⁴ is shown in the tables.

Looking at the graphs, the online and blended delivery modes indicate a steep drop in preference for all support offerings between the \$1500 and \$3000 price points, demonstrating that participants are quite reactive to this increase in cost. Between the \$3000 and \$5000 price points, the preference evens out, meaning that the support offerings are not as reactive to this change in course cost. For face-to-face delivery, preference for all support offerings continues to decline steadily between the \$1500 and \$5000 price points, indicating that there is a consistent decline in preference for support services as the cost of the course increases.

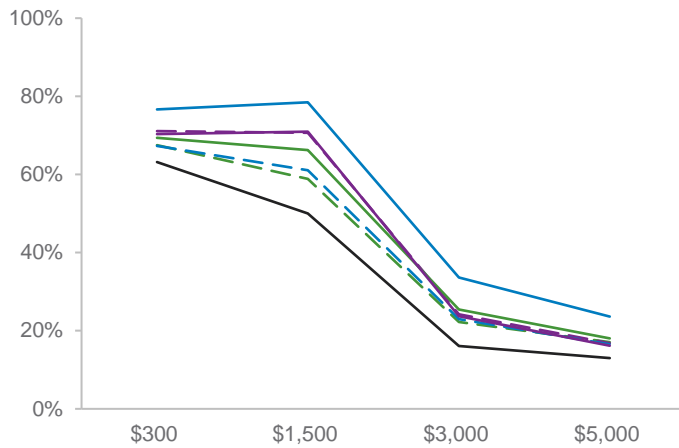
In relation to the average price elasticities of demand presented in the tables, however, all student support services across all three delivery modes are inelastic (fall between -1 and 0), meaning that overall, the demand for the support offerings is not strongly affected as the course cost varies. Of the three support offerings, tutoring and study skills guidance is the least reactive to price and there may also be more willingness to pay for one-on-one tutoring over group sessions (as seen in the average price elasticity of demand).

3 This was calculated by setting up scenario simulations of the model-estimated share of preference for hypothetical course offerings across the full range of prices in each delivery mode and by support type. Each hypothetical scenario was compared against a reference offering of ‘no support offered’ at the \$1500 price point.

4 The average price elasticity of demand shows the responsiveness of quantity demanded to a price change. It is the ratio of the percentage change in quantity to the percentage change in price across the full range of prices (\$300 to \$5000).

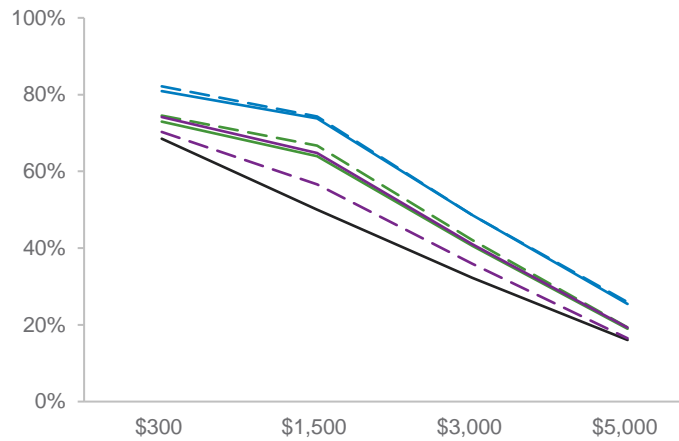
Figure 4 Sensitivity of preference for support offerings to course cost by delivery mode against an offering of no support at \$1500 (%)

A. Online delivery



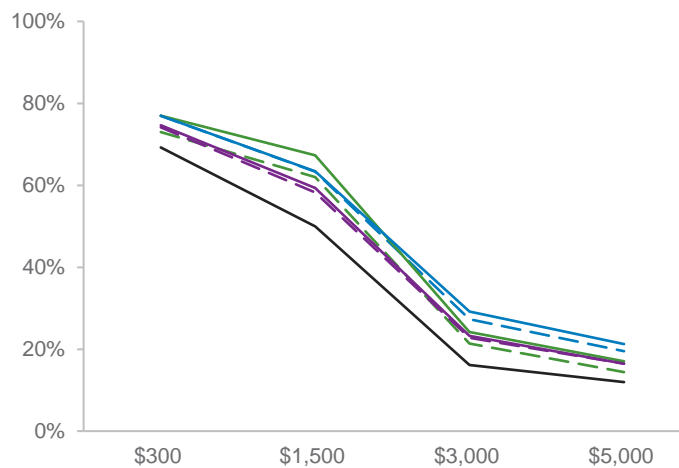
Support	Drop in share for full range of price		Average price elasticity of demand	
	Group	One-on-one	Group	One-on-one
Health welfare	50%	51%	-0.67	-0.66
Career	54%	54%	-0.70	-0.71
Tutoring	51%	53%	-0.68	-0.60

B. Face-to-face delivery (30–60 mins travel time)



Support	Drop in share for full range of price		Average price elasticity of demand	
	Group	One-on-one	Group	One-on-one
Health welfare	55%	54%	-0.66	-0.66
Career	54%	55%	-0.70	-0.66
Tutoring	56%	55%	-0.59	-0.59

C. Blended delivery (30–60 mins travel time)



Support	Drop in share for full range of price		Average price elasticity of demand	
	Group	One-on-one	Group	One-on-one
Health welfare	59%	60%	-0.76	-0.72
Career	58%	58%	-0.72	-0.72
Tutoring	57%	56%	-0.67	-0.64

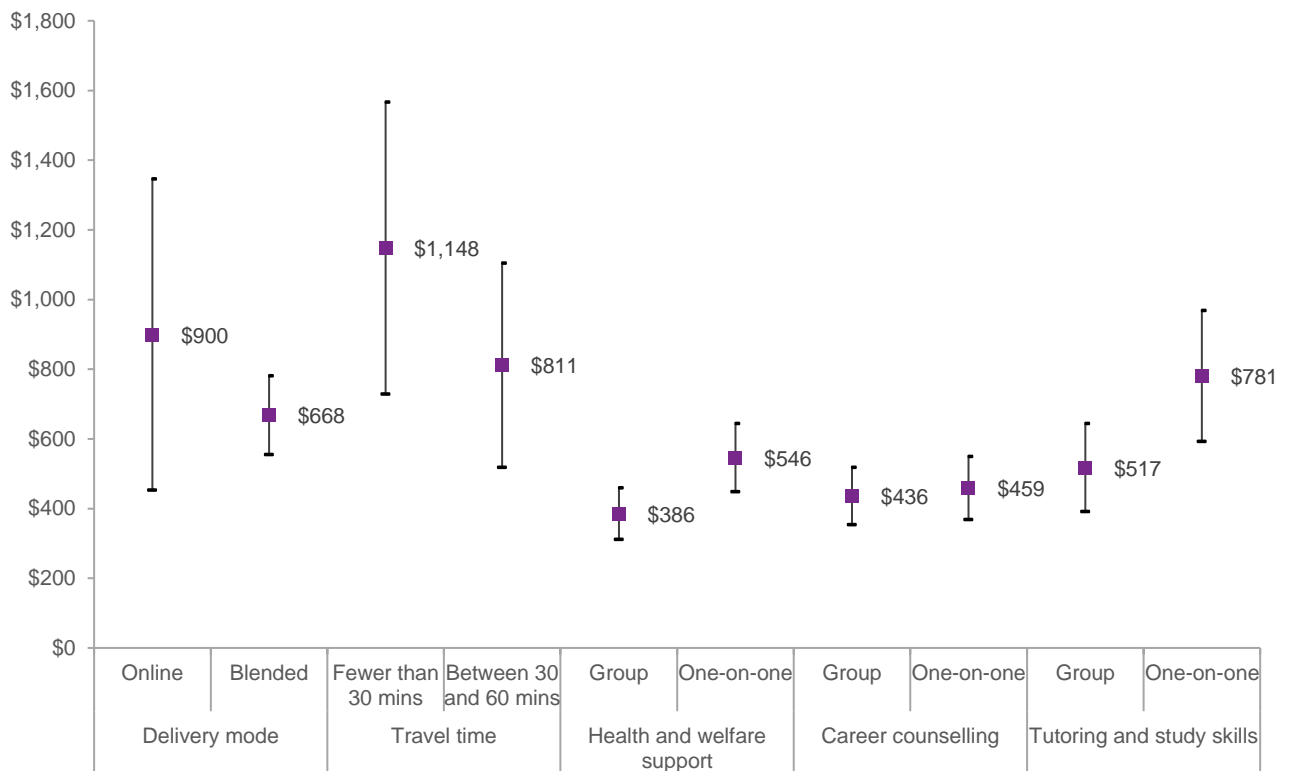
- No support (baseline)
- Group – Health welfare
- Group – Career
- Group – Tutoring
- One-on-one – Health welfare
- One-on-one – Career
- One-on-one – Tutoring

Note: Share of preference is shown on the y-axis and course cost on the x-axis of the graph. This indicates how the preference for a support offering changes as the cost of the course increases. For example, for online delivery mode, the preference for one-on-one tutoring rises from 77% at the \$300 price point to 78% at the \$1500 price point; it then drops to 34% at the \$3000 price point and declines further to 24% at the \$5000 price point. The table next to the graph shows that for one-on-one tutoring the share of preference dropped 53% across the full price range; however, the average price elasticity of demand is -0.60. Anything that falls between 0 and -1 is considered inelastic, meaning that it is not sensitive to changes in cost.

Willingness-to-pay estimates for student support services

Potentially of greater interest to training providers are the willingness-to-pay estimates, which indicate how much prospective students are willing to pay for a certain feature. Figure 5 shows the median additional cost participants are prepared to pay for the different levels of each attribute in the discrete choice experiment.

Figure 5 Median willingness-to-pay estimates with 95% confidence levels by attribute (\$)



Note: Willingness-to-pay results were estimated against the following reference levels for each attribute: delivery mode: face-to-face; travel time: more than 60 minutes; health and welfare support: none; career counselling and job-search support: none; tutoring and study skills guidance: none.

The figure highlights that participants are willing to pay at least an additional \$300 for any level of student support services compared with no support. Of all the forms of support, group sessions for health and welfare support (\$386) has the lowest willingness to pay, while one-on-one tutoring and study skills guidance has the highest willingness to pay, at \$781. For these two supports – health and welfare and tutoring and study skills guidance – participants are willing to pay more for one-on-one support compared with group sessions. On the other hand, for career counselling and job-search support there is little difference in the willingness to pay between group sessions and one-on-one support (only \$23).

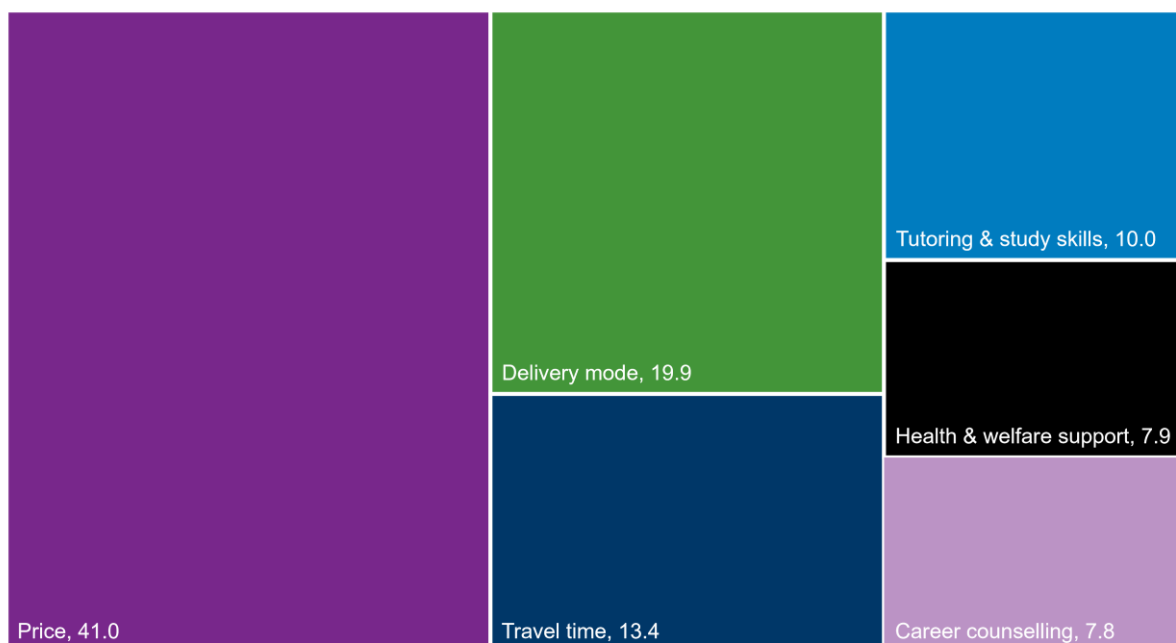
Compared with the other attributes included in the discrete choice experiment, participants are more willing to pay for online or blended delivery modes and shorter travel times than for the student support services. The only exception is for one-on-one tutoring and study skills support, where participants are willing to pay an extra \$781 for this feature compared with \$668 for blended delivery.

Overall, these results highlight that students are willing to pay more to have access to student support services during their studies and that it is a driver of student training choice.

Student support services as a driver of RTO choice compared with other factors

The research was also interested in how the availability of student support services fared by comparison with other potential influences on RTO choice, particularly course cost, delivery mode and travel time. One way to understand this is to look at the overall importance of each attribute across the entire sample of the discrete choice experiment. Figure 6 shows the importance of each of the six attributes included in the experiment. Overwhelmingly, price (or course cost) was the most important attribute when it came to choosing an RTO, followed by delivery mode and travel time. The three student support services influenced the choice of RTO to a lesser extent than the other attributes. However, if they are considered in combination, support for students represented approximately 26% of the total importance when selecting an RTO. Further information can be found in support document 2.

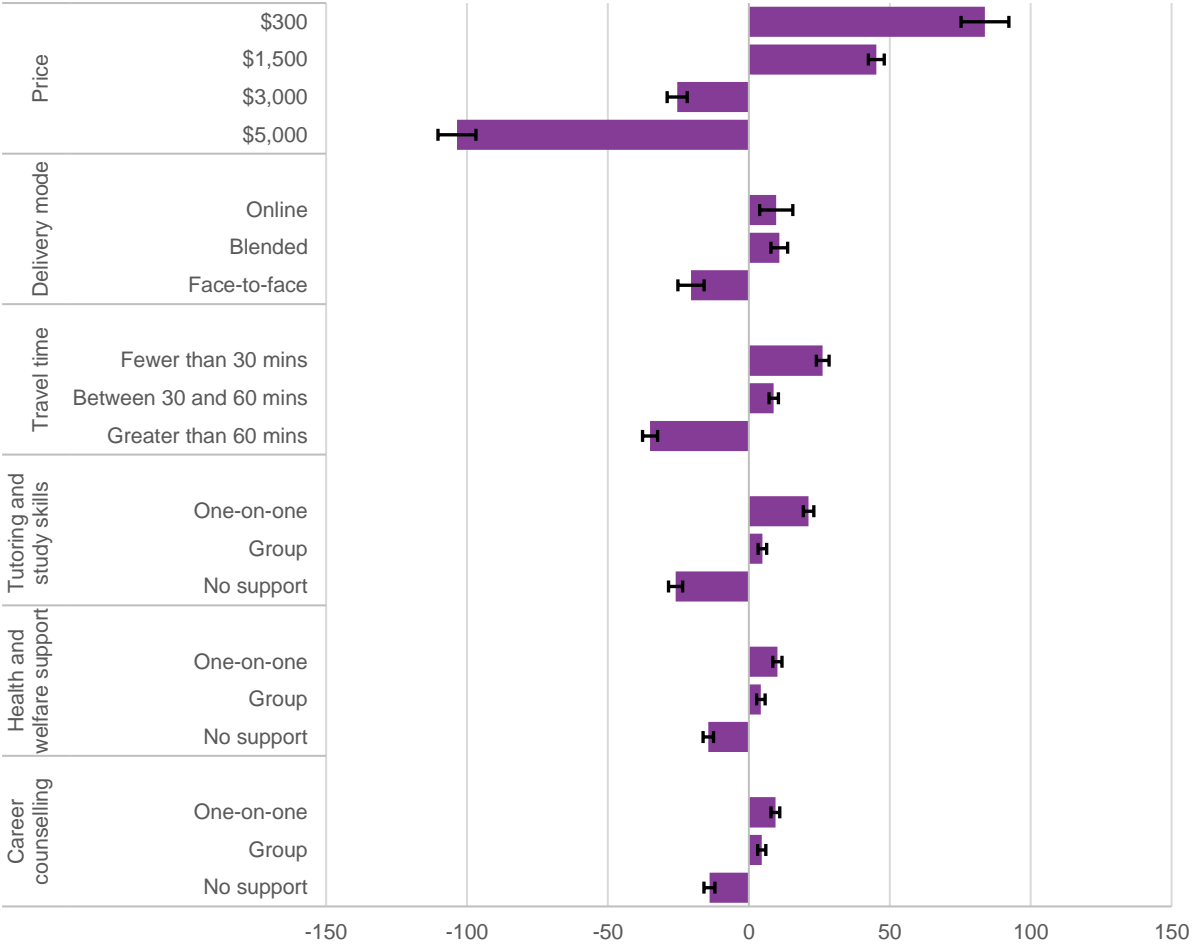
Figure 6 Overall importance by course attribute across full sample, 2022 (%)



Each of the six attributes included in the discrete choice experiment contains a number of different levels; for example, there are four cost levels: \$300, \$1500, \$3000 and \$5000. Figure 7 shows the average utilities for each attribute level, which have been summed to zero within each attribute. A positive average utility represents a higher level of value relative to other levels within the attribute. In simple terms, this shows how individuals' preferences are shaped by the levels of each attribute.

Price has the largest variations across the levels, with a very strong positive utility at the \$300 price point and a very strong negative utility at the \$5000 price point, meaning there is a strong preference for the least expensive course options. Online and blended learning were preferred to face-to-face delivery among the participants. In addition, a shorter travel time is also much preferred. In terms of the student support services, one-on-one support has the highest positive utility, particularly for tutoring and study skills guidance. RTOs not offering any supports for students had a negative utility, meaning that individuals are far less likely to choose this option.

Figure 7 Average utilities within each attribute

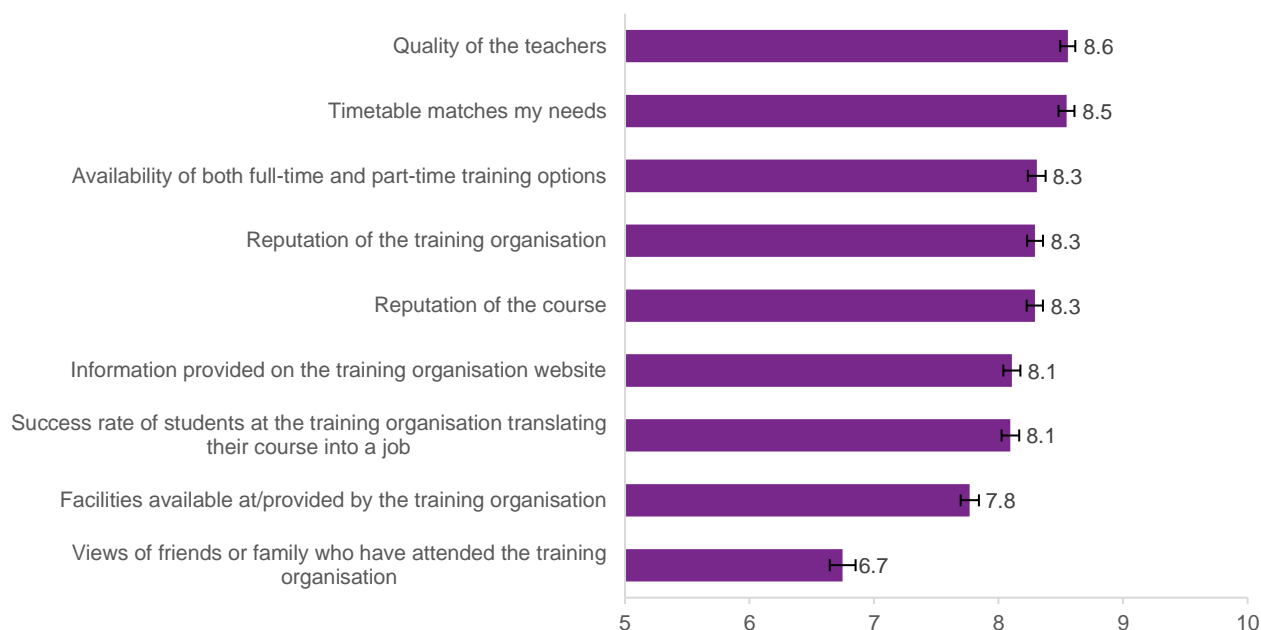


Additional characteristics influencing choice of RTO

To supplement the results of the discrete choice experiment, the same sample of participants was also asked to indicate on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 represented ‘not at all important’ and 10 ‘extremely important’, other potential influences on individuals in their choice of RTO. This exercise was undertaken separately from the discrete choice experiment, so it is not known whether they are more or less important than the attributes in the experiment. Figure 8 shows the average importance rating for each of these additional influences.

Of the additional characteristics, quality of teachers and having a timetable that matches an individual’s needs were the most important in deciding at which RTO to study. There was little variability between most of the factors (around 0.2 percentage points between the five middle factors). The views of friends or family who have attended the training organisation were the least important factor in choosing an RTO.

Figure 8 Average importance rating on nine VET course provider characteristics on a scale of 0 (not important) to 10 (extremely important)



Differences between demographic groups

The research also explored whether there were any differences in the results for different demographic groups. The specific groups of interest were:

- location (major cities, inner regional, outer regional and remote)
- disability (learning-related,⁵ physical, mental health and medical condition-related)
- highest level of education (school leaver, VET, higher education)
- age⁶ (those 24 years and under and those 25 years and older)
- employment status (employed, studying, unemployed, unable to work, carer/other)
- language spoken at home (English and non-English speaking)
- First Nations status (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples).

Average importance of each attribute

The average importance of each attribute across the different demographic groups is similar to the total sample, in that they follow the same order – of most to least importance – with price and delivery mode the most important, followed by travel time and tutoring and study skills guidance. Health and welfare support and career counselling and job-search support were the least important (see table 2).

However, some differences amongst the groups were identified, whereby preferences for the supports are higher than for the total sample. For example, those who identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, younger students and those with schooling as their highest level of education

⁵ Learning-related disability includes forms of learning, vision, hearing, intellectual, and acquired brain impairments.

⁶ Age sensitivity threshold analyses can be found in appendix A of support document 2.

assign greater weight to tutoring and study skills guidance. Some unexpected nuances were also revealed. While certain demographic groups may be more likely to benefit from the provision of student support services, the findings show that they do not have stronger preferences than is reflected in the total sample. For example, it might be expected that those who are unemployed may have a greater need for career counselling and job-search support, but the results show they have a lower preference for this.

Table 2 Average importance by demographic group, 2022 (%)

	Price	Delivery mode	Travel time	Tutoring and study skills guidance	Health and welfare support	Career counselling and job-search support
Location						
Major cities	40.5	20.1	13.3	10.2	7.9	7.9
Inner regional	44.6	18.6	13.2	9.1	7.4	7.1
Outer regional and remote	39.7	19.8	15.0	10.1	8.0	7.5
Disability						
Learning-related	37.3	20.5	14.4	10.6	8.5	8.6
Physical	40.1	16.3	13.7	11.8	9.5	8.6
Mental health	36.2	21.2	13.3	13.1	8.2	8.0
Medical condition	43.9	16.0	13.6	10.7	7.8	7.9
Highest level of education						
School leaver	37.4	21.2	13.3	12.2	8.1	7.7
VET	43.4	20.1	13.5	8.8	7.0	7.2
Higher education	40.8	19.5	13.4	10.1	8.2	8.1
Age						
24 years and below	36.9	18.3	12.7	12.6	10.1	9.3
25 years and above	41.5	20.1	13.5	9.8	7.6	7.6
Employment status						
Employed	41.4	19.8	13.3	9.8	7.9	7.8
Studying	35.9	21.6	13.4	12.3	8.8	8.1
Unemployed	45.1	19.0	11.5	9.8	7.4	7.2
Unable to work	37.0	18.9	14.7	13.1	8.5	7.8
Carer/other	41.1	21.0	14.5	8.9	7.3	7.3
Language spoken at home						
Non-English speaking	39.9	19.0	12.0	11.9	8.6	8.6
English	41.2	20.1	13.6	9.8	7.8	7.6
First Nations status						
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples	32.1	21.4	15.0	13.6	8.9	8.9
Non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples	41.7	19.9	13.2	9.8	7.8	7.7
Total sample	41.0	19.9	13.4	10.0	7.9	7.8

Level of student support services

Overall, there are differences across the various demographic groups when it comes to their preferences for level of support across the three delivery mode options. The key results – where differences were found to be statistically significant⁷ – for the demographic groups are highlighted below, with the full results presented in support document 1. It is important to note that in this analysis all other attributes have been fixed (that is, price, delivery mode, travel time and the two supports not under investigation), such that only changes in preference related to altering levels of the support of interest are explored.

The statistically significant results for the different demographic groups are also given in table 3 on page 23.

Regional locations

- Those in outer regional and remote areas are less likely than those in major cities to choose the no support option for career counselling and job-search support in the online delivery mode ($p = 0.007$).
- They are also less likely to choose the no support option for tutoring and study skills guidance in the online delivery mode ($p = 0.004$).

Disability

- For people with disability, the only statistically significant results were for those with medical condition-related disability, who, compared with those without a medical condition related disability, are:
 - less likely to choose the no support option for health and welfare support for online delivery ($p = 0.005$)
 - more likely to prefer the one-on-one support option for health and welfare support for online delivery ($p = 0.002$)
 - less likely to prefer the no support option for career counselling and job-search support for online delivery ($p = 0.005$).
- It is interesting that those with learning-related disability are not statistically significantly more likely to choose greater levels of tutoring and study skills-related support compared with those without a learning-related disability, given that it might be assumed that this type of support may assist with course completion.

Highest education level

- When looking at highest education level, the three groups – school leavers, VET and higher education – had similar preferences. The only statistically significant results were for those with VET as their highest education level: they are less likely than those with a higher education qualification to choose the:
 - no support option for health and welfare support in the face-to-face delivery mode ($p = 0.005$)
 - no support option for career counselling and job-search support in the online delivery mode ($p = 0.000$)
 - no support option for tutoring and study skills guidance in the online delivery mode ($p=0.004$).

⁷ Due to the large number of comparisons between subgroups, a more stringent alpha level of 0.01 has been adopted to control for false positive rates. See support document 1 for more information on the significance testing method.

Young people

- Younger people (those aged 24 years and under) are more likely to prefer group sessions for health and welfare support compared with those aged 25 years and older in the online delivery mode (p = 0.007).

Employment status

- When it comes to employment status:
 - Participants in the carers/other category are less likely than those who are employed to prefer the no support option for tutoring and study support in the online delivery mode (p = 0.008).
 - Carers/others are also less likely to choose one-on-one support for tutoring and study skills guidance support than those who are currently studying in the blended delivery mode (p = 0.007).
 - Those who are studying are more likely than those who are employed to prefer one-on-one support for tutoring and study skills guidance in the blended delivery mode (p = 0.007).
 - Those studying are also less likely to choose the no support option for tutoring and study skills guidance than those who are employed for face-to-face delivery (p = 0.004).
 - Participants who are unemployed are less likely than those who are employed to prefer the no support option for tutoring and study skills in the blended delivery mode (p = 0.007).
- It is interesting to note that those who are unemployed do not have a greater preference for career counselling and job-search support than those in the other employment categories (that is, there were no statistically significant results indicating this), given that it could be assumed they may see more benefit in this type of support.

Language spoken at home

- For participants who speak a language other than English at home, the following findings were statistically significant. In the blended delivery mode, they are:
 - less likely to choose no support for health and welfare support than those who speak English (p = 0.003)
 - less likely to choose no support for tutoring and study skills guidance than those who speak English (p = 0.000)
 - more likely to prefer group sessions for health and welfare support than those who speak English at home (p = 0.004)
 - more likely to prefer one-on-one tutoring and study skills guidance than those who speak English at home (p = 0.000).

First Nations status

- Compared with those who do not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples are:
 - more likely to prefer group health and welfare support in the online delivery mode (p = 0.004)
 - less likely to prefer one-on-one health and welfare support in the online delivery mode (p = 0.002)
 - less likely to prefer group health and welfare sessions in the blended delivery mode (p = 0.010).

Table 3 Statistically significant results for demographic groups

Demographic group	Delivery mode	Support	Support level	Group 1	Group 2	Group 1 share of preference (%)	Group 2 share of preference (%)	p-value
Regional locations	Online	Career counselling and job search	No support	Major cities	Outer regional and remote	19.2	13.7	0.007
	Online	Tutoring and study skills	No support	Major cities	Outer regional and remote	17.3	11.4	0.004
Medical condition related disability	Online	Health and welfare	One-on-one	No disability	With disability	46.3	56.3	0.002
	Online	Health and welfare	No support	No disability	With disability	24.8	17.1	0.005
	Online	Career counselling and job search	No support	No disability	With disability	18.8	13.3	0.005
Highest education level	Online	Career counselling and job search	No support	Higher education	VET	20.5	14.8	0.000
	Online	Tutoring and study skills	No support	Higher education	VET	18.3	14.1	0.004
	Face-to-face	Health and welfare	No support	Higher education	VET	22.5	18.5	0.005
Young people	Online	Health and welfare	Group sessions	24 years and younger	25 years and older	35.1	28.1	0.007
Employment status	Online	Tutoring and study skills	No support	Employed	Carer / other	17.8	12.6	0.008
	Blended	Tutoring and study skills	One-on-one	Employed	Studying	40.5	52.3	0.007
	Blended	Tutoring and study skills	One-on-one	Studying	Carer / other	52.3	38.5	0.007
	Blended	Tutoring and study skills	No support	Employed	Unemployed	25.8	17.6	0.007
	Face-to-face	Tutoring and study skills	No support	Employed	Studying	15.3	10.7	0.004
Language spoken at home	Blended	Health and welfare	Group sessions	English speaking	Non-English speaking	35.7	43.0	0.004
	Blended	Health and welfare	No support	English speaking	Non-English speaking	20.7	16.9	0.003
	Blended	Tutoring and study skills	One-on-one	English speaking	Non-English speaking	40.0	51.5	0.000
	Blended	Tutoring and study skills	No support	English speaking	Non-English speaking	26.0	16.9	0.000
First Nations status	Online	Health and welfare	One-on-one	Non-ATSI	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	47.7	35.2	0.002
	Online	Health and welfare	Group sessions	Non-ATSI	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	28.1	39.3	0.004
	Blended	Health and welfare	Group sessions	Non-ATSI	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	37.3	28.8	0.010

Demographic groups and additional characteristics influencing choice of RTO

The discrete choice experiment results for the demographic groups of interest were also supplemented by an analysis of other potential influences on individuals in their choice of RTO. The full results can be viewed in support document 2.

The additional nine characteristics explored were:

- views of friends or family who have attended the training organisation
- reputation of the training organisation
- success rate of students at the training organisation translating their course into a job
- availability of both full-time and part-time training options
- information provided on the training organisation website
- facilities available at/provided by the training organisation
- quality of the teachers
- reputation of the course
- timetable matching needs.

Most of the characteristics were very similar in their importance, averaging over eight out of ten. A timetable that matches an individual's needs and quality of teachers regularly had the highest mean importance of these nine characteristics for most demographic groups, while the facilities available at/provided by the training organisation and views of friends or family who have attended the training organisation consistently had the lowest mean importance. The only exceptions were for those 24 years and under, who ranked the facilities higher than availability of full-time and part-time options and the information on the RTO website. The other exception was for those who speak a language other than English at home, who had a higher mean importance for facilities than the information on the RTO website. Those with mental health-related disability also placed greater importance on the availability of part-time and full-time study options than on the suitability of the timetable.

Overall findings

What does the research mean?

While some factors, such as the cost of a course, delivery mode and travel time, have a greater influence on choosing an RTO, the availability of student support services does play some role in helping a prospective student to select their preferred RTO.

Generally, RTOs that offer any type of student support, whether it be group sessions or personalised, one-on-one support, are more favoured by individuals than RTOs offering no support. Additionally, the preference for student support services tends not to be strongly impacted by course price, so students are likely to want a similar level of the available support, whether they are paying \$300 for a course or \$5000.

In fact, willingness-to-pay estimates show that individuals are prepared to pay extra for student support services, particularly one-on-one tutoring and study skills support.

Another interesting finding from the discrete choice experiment is that, while it might be assumed that individuals from a certain demographic background, such as those with disability or who are unemployed, may be more strongly influenced by the availability of student support services, particularly one-on-one support, when choosing an RTO, this is not reflected as strongly in the results as might be expected.

It should also be noted that these results only indicate what factors might influence a potential student at the point of choosing their RTO. Further research is needed to understand whether the type and level of support becomes more significant if a student is likely to require those services during their studies.

How can better choices be facilitated?

- If more detailed information on student support services was given on RTO websites and their associated MySkills webpages, students could be greatly benefited when making decisions on their future RTO. The initial RTO website-scraping exercise indicated that there are great variations across RTO websites in the amount of information provided on student support services and the ease with which it can be located. For example, some RTOs had very detailed information about the types of support they offer and how to access them; the information was also easily located on their website, usually under its own tab on the homepage.

On the websites of other RTOs, the level of detail on student support services is very limited or not disclosed. Instead, it is contained in student handbooks, which need to be downloaded. Furthermore, RTOs have the capacity to add information to their page on the MySkills website, but in many cases no information is included on the available supports for students, making it difficult for students to compare the services that different RTOs offer. Their failure to provide information may deter a student from enrolling at that RTO. RTOs could consider providing more information on student support services on their websites and taking more ownership of the information on their RTO's MySkills webpage.

- Moreover, some RTOs only provide information on student support services for people from certain backgrounds, such as those with disability, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and those

Key points

- More comprehensive information about student support services on RTO websites and My Skills webpages could better assist students in choosing an RTO.
- This information should include general guidance for all students, not merely those from certain backgrounds, such as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with disability or non-English speaking.

from a non-English speaking background. Lack of general guidance on supports for other students may dissuade a student from enrolling at the RTO. Therefore, RTOs could provide information on their websites covering student supports for all student cohorts, including the general student population, thereby assisting students to make more informed choices of training providers.

How does this research link to the findings of previous research?

The findings from this research provide further supporting evidence to other research. In particular:

- It builds upon the previous research by Brown (2017) and Maxwell, Cooper and Biggs (2000) by clearly showing that course cost is the most influential factor for student choice of RTO.
- In addition to the findings of EY Sweeney (2021) that, following the COVID-19 pandemic, support from providers has become more important in student choice of RTO, this research also highlights that student support services play some role in their choice of RTO and that students are willing to pay extra for student support services.
- The preference for blended and online delivery modes over face-to-face delivery by participants in the discrete choice experiment and their willingness to pay more for these delivery modes provides further assurance for the training providers looking to progress to more blended or online delivery modes following the COVID-19 pandemic, as highlighted in Hume and Griffin (2021).

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Appendix A – Literature on choice factors

Table A1 Choice factors noted in a selection of literature

Reference	Main choice factors	Methodology (in addition to literature review)	Focus (HE, VET, other)	Choice of course or institution
Brown (2017)	Training location (often a 'non-choice'), trusted influencers, timetables, fees and affordability, and perceived quality of training institution	Focus groups with 150 enrolled VET students in Victoria	VET – Australia	Institution and course
Maxwell, Cooper & Biggs (2000)	No single overwhelming influence in choice of VET course, rather a combination of influencing factors Factors involved in selecting a particular VET institution include: course offerings, location, timetable, program affordability, opportunities for practical experiences, and quality factors such as reputation and ambience	Questionnaire survey of a national sample of VET students In-depth discussions with students and personnel in selected VET institutions	VET – Australia	Institution
Gille, Moulignier & Kövesi (2021)	Individual factors (academic achievement, self-efficacy and passion for STEM, self-determination, group influences) Economic factors (salary, career opportunities, job security) Social factors (prestige, social status and impact, social capital-building, capacity-building opportunities) Institutional factors (academic program, ranking, support system , learning environment, student life) Pre-university model (preparatory classes) found to be a key influence	Semi-directive interviews	French graduate engineering schools	Institution
Walsh, Flannery & Cullinan (2018)	Course attributes and work placement most valued. Some differences in willingness to pay fees by socio-economic level	Discrete choice experiment (DCE) methodology with final year upper secondary school students in Ireland	Higher education institutions in Ireland	Institution
McManus, Haddock-Fraser & Rands (2017)	Fees (largest), accommodation, league tables, student satisfaction, teaching score, employability, and contact hours, with some variability in strength of factors according to demographic variables	Revealed preference methodology, then discrete choice modelling	Higher education institutions in the UK	Institution
Jooste, Cullen & Calitz (2020)	Top influencers on decision (in order): recommendation of former students, university website, and parents Top factors considered in choosing (in order): quality of academic programs, variety of academic programs, specific career-related programs, university reputation/ranking, university's level of technology, reputation of faculty, and fees	Structured questionnaire (survey) design	Higher education institutions in South Africa	Institution
Sheppard & Smith (2016)	Staff expertise, and flexibility of teaching platform	Student satisfaction survey, then discrete choice experiment methodology	UK postgraduate institution	Course/institution
Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka (2015)	Demographic and academic factors Institutional factors: quality, outcomes and benefits, facilities, characteristics of institutions Students and institution: price and price sensitivity, information and its sources, travel and geographical factors	Review of 75 papers on university choice	Higher education	Institution

Dickinson (2019)	Factors in this study related to choice for post-school pathways come under the broad headings of the individual and their intrinsic factors, home and family, financial, work, learning environment and provision, wider social relations, and information, advice and guidance (IAG)	Review of literature (143 reviewed) and grey literature (85 documents)	Higher education and further education UK	Course and institution
Canadian University Survey Consortium (2019)	Most important factors in selecting current university were: university has program they wanted, followed by program had a co-op, practicum or other work experience (these factors can vary from year to year of survey)	Survey of first year university students	Higher education	Institution
Archer et al. (2021)	Socioeconomic differences in course choices (disadvantage, gender, prior education attainment etc.) Geography and course availability play a role	Linked administrative data, and in-depth interviews with senior leaders, curriculum managers, teachers and learners from five providers.	Academic (A levels) /technical post-16 pathways	Course/institution
Vevere & Mons (2020)	For choice of study program, top ranked factors were: high-quality teaching, good reputation, and it is well ranked For choice of university, top-ranked factors were: high-quality teaching, and it is well ranked For factors related to high quality teaching: foremost top-ranked factor was teaching staff are highly qualified	Interviews with representatives of higher education institutes and behavioural economic experts, and survey of undergraduate students.	Higher education – multi-country	Institution
Czajkowski et al. (2020)	Examined the following factors in a DCE: tuition fees, expected salaries upon completion, quality of higher education institution, interest in the field of study, distance from home, and mode of study. Found a great deal of heterogeneity in results partly depending on respondents' current higher education status but much heterogeneity remained unobserved	Discrete choice experiment	Higher education Poland	Program/institution
Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) (2016)	Responses on factors that make a university good: quality of teaching, appropriate delivery and assessment, academic reputation and commitment to research, a good record for graduate job prospects, facilities (academic, social, and accommodation) For disadvantaged applicants, there were greater concerns about the affordability of accommodation and living costs, and a desire to not move away from home	Survey of all 18 to 19-year-old UK domiciled University and College Admission Service (UCAS) undergraduate applicants in 2015	Higher education UK	Institution
Diamond et al. (2012)	Research indicates the following factors most important in the choice of study: academic reputation, location, distance from home, course suitability, employment opportunities Research also indicates the most useful types of information. These include: standard of teaching, satisfaction with course, graduate employment statistics, recognition of course by professional bodies, satisfaction with support and guidance	Systematic review and interviews with experts in behavioural economics and student decision-making Qualitative fieldwork with key stakeholders Mapping exercise, bringing together theories from behavioural economics with evidence from studies on student choice	Higher education UK	Institution/course

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Appendix B – RTO website-scraping exercise

Purpose

An analysis of information on RTO websites and social media regarding the availability of student support services was undertaken to determine the extent to which RTOs disclose information on supports for students, given that such information could potentially inform a student’s choice of RTO.

It is noted that RTOs may not list all their available supports on their website or social media and that disclosure of student support offerings does not necessarily imply that the support is of high quality. However, in terms of informing the discrete choice experiment, the exercise provided useful information on the types of supports mentioned on RTO websites and the level of support provided.

Method

The search was conducted on a stratified random sample of 100 RTOs. Explicit stratification variables were RTO size, state of delivery and provider type, while implicit stratification variables included student characteristics of the RTO such as gender, First Nations status, English-speaking background status, disability status and student location.

RTO codes were used to locate the RTOs on Training.gov and to check that the websites searched were for the correct RTOs. These websites were manually searched by examining different sections on the websites and using search bars where available. Associated social media accounts (that is, those with links provided on the RTO website) were also examined to determine whether they mentioned any supports for students. Additionally, the RTO page on MySkills was examined to check whether the information provided matched that on the RTO website. The results were collated in an Excel spreadsheet.

A list of training and non-training supports was used as a starting point when searching the RTO websites (see below).

Table B1 Types of student support services

Training supports	Non-training supports
Study skills guidance and tips	Wellbeing advice and tips
Flexible learning options	Adequate and safe physical spaces
Out-of-class support for course content/skills	Peer-support services
Flexibility in assessments/changed exams conditions	Student support/liaison officers
Accessible learning materials	Student community/culture events
Access to assistive technology and equipment	Career counselling/support
Personal learning/support plan	Health and welfare services
Out-of-class support for literacy and numeracy skills	Formal industry and employment events
	Complaints processes
	Partnerships or referrals to other external resources
	Financial or hardship services
	Wider local community events or partnerships

Findings

- RTOs varied significantly on whether they disclosed information about student support services on their websites and, if they did, the level of information provided. It should be noted that, even if student support services are not disclosed on individual RTO websites, it does not mean that they are unavailable or, if limited detail is provided, that the services are of low quality.
- Unsurprisingly, larger RTOs and public RTOs have more readily available information on student support services on their websites. They will quite often have an easy-to-find, separate section on their website describing student support services.
- For many RTOs, information on support for students is not available on their website, or it is contained in student handbooks, which need to be downloaded and scrolled through, or sometimes located in their policies.
- The most commonly listed training supports are language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) support and flexible learning options. The most common listed non-training supports are complaint processes and partnerships or referrals to other external resources.

Most of these are mandatory requirements of ASQA or state and territory governments.

- The least listed training supports are personal learning/support plans, access to assistive technology and equipment, and accessible learning materials. The least listed non-training supports are wider local community events or partnerships, formal industry and employment events, and peer support services.
- Other supports for students noted on websites that were not listed in table B1 are:
 - integration advice and cultural awareness
 - spiritual support
 - accommodation
 - living in Australia advice
 - overseas health cover advice
 - orientation programs
 - work to pay off court fees for Indigenous learners program.
- The level of detail on supports varied greatly across the RTO websites. Some RTOs simply provided a list of the types of support that may be available, whereas other RTOs provided detailed information about what the support may entail and how to access it.
- For most RTOs, supports were available for all students, although some supports were specifically available for the following groups:
 - people with disability
 - Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - LGBTIQ students
 - English as a second language students
 - international students

- people with special needs
 - learners who are carers
 - people who live in rural or remote regions.
- Individual RTO pages on the 'MySkills' website contained very limited information on student support services. In most instances, RTOs did not provide any information to MySkills, or flexible delivery was the only type of support mentioned. Given that the MySkills website is intended as a tool to enable potential students to compare RTOs, the lack of information will make it hard to do this. RTOs could be encouraged to take more ownership of their RTO's page on MySkills by providing additional information.
 - Posts on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, are used mainly to show support for causes or groups (for example NAIDOC week and R U OK? day), provide wellbeing tips and promote student support teams.



Appendix C – Discrete choice experiment design

The lead researcher, with advice from the project advisory committee and informed by a literature review and findings from the RTO website-scraping exercise, developed the basis for the discrete choice experiment. Ipsos Public Affairs was then engaged to finalise the design, conduct the fieldwork and analyse the data. A report by Ipsos Public Affairs on the discrete choice experiment can be found in support document 2.

Screening and sample

To participate in the experiment, respondents needed to be between the ages of 16 to 64 years and either currently undertaking post-school study or considering undertaking such study in the future.

The discrete choice experiment was conducted in September 2022 and a sample of 650 participants was recruited, with respondents sampled proportionally by both jurisdiction and gender from across Australia.

Scenario presented

Respondents were presented with the following scenario:

We would like you to imagine that you are interested in undertaking a vocational education and training (VET) course.

VET providers offer a range of programs, such as short courses, certificates, diplomas, apprenticeships, and traineeships.

The educational offerings in the VET sector cater to a variety of areas, such as:

- Leadership and management
- First aid
- Forklift training
- Childcare
- Traditional trades
- Bookkeeping
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Hospitality

As well as offerings covering many other areas.

VET programs are typically delivered by TAFEs and private providers but may also be delivered through schools, community education providers and enterprise providers.

We would like you to imagine that you are looking at a VET course for career development purposes or to change career pathways.

You have decided to enrol in a certificate III level course (excluding traditional trades usually completed as an apprenticeship), which will prepare you for skilled work or further study.

The duration of the course you select will be 12 months full-time equivalent.

You will need to decide which training organisation you would most like to complete this course with.

For the next several screens you will see sets of different training organisations that each offer their own version of your selected Cert. III level VET course.

Each organisation has six characteristics for you to compare. These characteristics include:

- How the training is delivered (online, face-to-face, blended)
- Travel time (if applicable)
- Health and welfare support offered
- Career counselling and job search support offered
- Tutoring and study skills guidance offered
- Course fees (\$AUD).

Your task is to select the ONE training organisation that you would MOST like to enrol in, based on these characteristics.

Attributes and levels

The attributes were chosen based on the literature and findings from the RTO website-scraping exercise. The levels were defined with input from the project advisory committee to ensure that they were realistic for VET. Table C1 below lists the attributes and their associated levels.

Table C1 Attributes and levels for the discrete choice experiment

Attribute	Levels
Cost/course fees	\$300 \$1500 \$3000 \$5000
Travel time	N/A (if online only) Fewer than 30 minutes 30 to 60 minutes More than 60 minutes
Delivery mode	Face-to-face Online Blended (combination of face-to-face and online)
Health and welfare support	This support is not offered Group sessions on health and welfare topics (online or face-to-face) available One-on-one (personal) counselling sessions (online or face-to-face) and various health and welfare resources available
Career counselling and job search support	This support is not offered Group sessions on topics related to job searching available (online and face-to-face) Personal sessions with a career counsellor to assist with job searching (online and face-to-face) and other job-search resources available
Tutoring and study skills guidance	This support is not offered Group sessions on course content and study skills are available (online and face-to-face) Personalised learning plans and supports (e.g. tutoring) are provided to help students complete their study as well as general study skills advice

Demographics collected

To help with the analysis of the discrete choice experiment, the following demographic information was collected:

- gender (male; female; other)
- exact age
- main language spoken at home
- First Nations status (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples; non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples; not stated)
- disability status and disability type
- residential postcode
- labour force status
- highest level of education completed.

Ranking of additional influences on choice

To supplement the results of the discrete choice experiment and to understand other factors that may potentially influence a person's choice of training provider, respondents were asked to indicate how important each of the following characteristics were to them using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all important and 10 means extremely important.

- views of friends or family who have attended the training organisation
- reputation of the training organisation
- success rate of students at the training organisation translating their course into a job
- availability of both full-time and part-time training options
- information provided on the training organisation website
- facilities available at/provided by the training organisation
- quality of the teachers
- reputation of the course
- timetable matching needs.



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