

VISITOR ECONOMY WORK READY PROGRAM (FRONT-OF-HOUSE SPECIALISATION)

Evaluation Report
2022-23





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1. Introduction

This report documents the evaluation of the Visitor Economy Work Ready Program (Front-of-House Specialisation) delivered in 2022-23 by Victoria University Polytechnic.

Designed in consultation with industry partners, the short course delivered and tested a new model of training to support entry-level workforce creation in the hospitality industry, with the aim of supporting the recovery and transformation of the Victorian visitor economy. The project was funded by the Victorian State Government through the Workforce Skill Set Fund (WSSF).

1.1 Background

Pre-pandemic, tourism contributed more than \$32 billion per year to Victoria's economy and supported 263,300 jobs. In 2020-21, the state's tourism industry generated \$10.7 billion, representing a decline of 63.7 per cent compared to pre-COVID estimates from 2018-19. The devastating impacts of the pandemic on the sector are also reflected in the tourism employment figures, which were down 53.7% compared to 2018-19 estimates.

The research findings presented in Victoria University's School for the Visitor Economy RESET (Resilient Enterprises and Sustainable Employment in Tourism) Report 4 on the resilience and recovery roadmap for Melbourne's West show the multiple ways in which the visitor economy has been negatively impacted and disrupted by the pandemic.

This includes significant financial losses, labour and skill shortages, mental health and wellbeing challenges faced by the industry stakeholders, as well as the long-term uncertainty due to sudden and on-going changes to the regulatory environment.

To help the tourism and hospitality sectors to recover from the impacts of the 2019–20 bushfires and COVID-19, in 2021 the Victorian Government's Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan and investment of \$633 million includes a whole-of-state strategy.





The industry is now rapidly reopening with a strong demand for service, but many businesses report that they are unable to find skilled workers following an exodus of hospitality and tourism staff during COVID-forced business closures. The lack of secondary labour markets, such as international students, backpackers, and other temporary migrants, who normally fill entry-level roles, has compounded this workforce shortage.

With Victoria's visitor economy targeted to reach \$35 billion in annual visitor spending supporting 300,000 jobs by mid-2024, there are significant opportunities for career growth in the industry. It is within this context that the Visitor Economy Work Ready Program was designed to address acute industry labour and skills shortages by supporting and rapidly upskilling new entrants into the tourism and hospitality workforce.

1.2 Aims of the project

- 1 Development and testing of a new, short training model for Front-of-House work readiness
- 2 Development of all learning resources to support the proposed new training model
- 3 Recruitment of students to enrol into the program
- 4 Employment of students into industry who undertake the program or pathway into further training (including apprenticeships/ traineeships)
- 5 Support the recovery and resilience of industry in Melbourne's West as well as key industry partners
- 6 Written report on project, overview and outcomes and including industry employer, teacher and participant feedback

Figure 4 – VU Polytechnic's LinkedIn and Instagram post carousel

THE VISITOR ECONOMY WORK READY PROGRAM

In this program, you will complete units such as:

- ◆ SITSS00055 Responsible Service of Alcohol
- ◆ SITSS00050 Use hygienic practices for food safety
- ◆ introduction to food and beverage service
- ◆ introduction to spirits, wines, beers & liqueurs
- ◆ introduction to coffee
- ◆ job preparation skills and industry representative presentations

WHEN:

Round 1:
19-22 September and 26-28 September 2022

Round 2:
8-30 November, 1 December and 5-7 December

WHERE:

Footscray Nicholson Campus
VenU Restaurant, Corner of Nicholson Street & Buckley Street, Footscray, VIC

COST:

The program is free (fully subsidised).



2. Program design and delivery

The Visitor Economy Work Ready Program provides customised training at Victoria University Polytechnic (VUP) to fast-track participants into entry-level hospitality roles in Victoria's rapidly recovering hospitality sector. While such short training programs are usually only available to domestic students, this program was also open to international students, expanding the opportunity and talent pool.

Upon completion of the training, participants are guaranteed job interviews at prestigious leading employers partner organisations, listed in Section 3. Participants who complete the program can also pathway into further training and education at VU/VUP, which offer courses in hospitality, tourism, events and cookery at a range of levels, from short courses and certificates to postgraduate degrees.

2.1 Front-of-House training program

The training program is delivered across 7 days and includes 2 accredited units (14 hours) packaged with non-accredited training (28 hours), addressing foundational knowledge and skills in food and beverage service operations. Potential employment outcomes and roles for participants include food and beverage/ function/ room attendant, bar/ café/ restaurant floor and wait staff, customer service or front office staff, porter, receptionist. A breakdown of the schedule is provided in Table 1.

DAY	CODE	NAME/ TOPIC
1	SITSS00050	Use Hygienic Practices for Food Safety
2	SITSS00055	Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA)
3	Non-accredited	Introduction to food and beverage
4	Non-accredited	Introduction to food and beverage
5	Non-accredited	Introduction to spirits, wines, beer and liqueurs
6	Non-accredited	Introduction to coffee
7	Non-accredited	Career training with industry partner presentations

Table 1 – program schedule

3. Industry partners

The Visitor Economy Work Ready Program industry partner employers includes high-profile and prestigious tourism and hospitality organisations.

Participating organisations and associated venues are listed as follows:

- ◆ **Accor Hotels:** Art Series, Ibis, Mantra, Mercure, Movenpick, Novotel, Peppers, Pullman, The Como, Sofitel, Quay West Suites
- ◆ **Comfort Apartments Royal Gardens**
- ◆ **Delaware North:** Marvel Stadium, MCG, Melbourne and Olympic Parks
- ◆ **LUCAS Restaurants:** Baby, Chin Chin, GOGO Bar, Grill Americano, Hawker Hall, Kisumé, Society, Yakimono
- ◆ **Pancake Parlour**
- ◆ **Overnewton Castle**
- ◆ **Quest**
- ◆ **RACV Resorts and Clubs:** City Club, Cape Schanck, Cobram, Goldfields, Healesville, Inverloch and Torquay
- ◆ **Riverland Group:** BANG BANG, Hotel Railway, Pilgrim, Riverland, The Boatbuilders Yard, The General Assembly

The selected industry partners provided participants with a range of entry-level employment opportunities, such as food and beverage attendant, function and catering staff, bartender or barista, kitchen attendant, porter, housekeeping, front office, reservations, sales and visitor information staff. The size and scale of the businesses also provides opportunity for career progression and support through dedicated talent acquisitions teams.





3.1 Industry site visits and support from industry partners

Strong support for the program was received from the industry partners, who offered program participants means to fast-track their applications and interviews for employment within the organisation.

Students were supported to find work in the industry with a 'Careers Day' that involved resume/cover letter writing and interview training. Industry partner representatives gave presentations to introduce their organisations and employment/career opportunities and to provide guidance on how to apply for jobs. Students were invited to visit their venue/s for a site tour and/or partake in paid trial shifts.

3.2 Feedback from industry partners

"This program is of great benefit to our industry. Personally speaking, before COVID we would have approximately 20 trained staff for one trainee. Coming out the other side though we've got one trained staff per 10 trainees, so to have a program that teaches the basics and has the people job ready for employment is hugely beneficial to us and it will help get our people on the floor faster".

Ms Mandy David, CEO, Pancake Parlour

"I think the program is great because it gives the students a direct conduit to the industry and equally vice versa. The industry can reach out and talk about the realities of what the hospitality industry is like, take away the angst, the fear, the anxiety of coming into a strange place, and we try to make it really easy and comfortable. We provide a very safe, nurturing environment to work in. We try to connect from the very minute we talk to students with this program".

Ms Rochelle Choyna, Regional Director of Talent and Culture, Accor Hotels

"This partnership that we've gained through VU and Delaware North is there to provide [Work Ready participants] with an opportunity. It's to let them know that there are opportunities that are out there, the things that they might be studying, and how they can use that study or use that knowledge to gain opportunities within the workforce, whether it is just their job or the start of a career. Our job is to help with that journey."

Mr Adrian Hobbs, Talent Acquisition Advisor, Delaware North



4. Marketing

A cross-university multi-channel marketing campaign was utilised with marketing activities and the communication channels used summarised in Table 2 overpage. An event webpage was created to capture registrations for information and enrolment sessions and a news articles were published to drive traffic to the site (see Figures 1 and 3). A flyer was developed (see Figure 2) and distributed using a multi-channel marketing campaign.

The screenshot shows a VU website navigation bar with links like 'VU Home', 'Current students', 'Staff', 'Researchers', 'Alumni', 'Library', 'Campuses', 'Donate', 'Contact us', 'Login', and 'Q'. Below the navigation is a 'Study at VU' section with a dropdown menu. The main content area features a large heading: '8 SKILLS THAT WILL HELP YOU SUCCEED IN HOSPITALITY, TOURISM & EVENTS'. To the right of this heading is a 'Find on this page' section with a list of skills: 1. Culinary skills, 2. Food & beverage service skills, 3. Entrepreneurial skills, 4. People management & human resources skills. Below the list is a 'More' button. The text below the heading reads: 'Events are up and running, we're eating out, and travel is back on the cards. The problem? With a huge increase in demand and workforce shortages, many businesses in hospitality, tourism and events are struggling to find skilled people for the roles they need to provide great experiences for their customers and guests. It's a challenge affecting businesses across Australia, including the west of Melbourne. So, what skills are employers looking for, specifically? Here are some of the top skills that are needed in the hospitality industry - from cafes and start-ups, to global hotel brands, major events, and everything in between. Many of these skills are transferable across other industries. And, who... ping'. At the bottom, there is a 'Want a job in food and beverage service?' section with a photo of a woman and a 'DATES & REGISTRATION' button. A 'No thanks' button is also visible.

Figure 1 (above) – Pop-up advertisement on the VU Study Space Blog for World Tourism Day on 27 September

The flyer is titled 'VISITOR ECONOMY WORK READY PROGRAM'. It lists the following details:

- DURATION:** 7 DAYS
- COST:** FREE (FULLY SUBSIDISED)
- STUDY MODE:** FACE TO FACE
- LOCATION:** VENU RESTAURANT, FOOTSCRAY NICHOLSON CAMPUS

 The program description states: 'The Visitor Economy Work Ready Program (Front of House specialisation) will upskill you fast to enter the hospitality workforce. After completing intensive training with VU Polytechnic, you are guaranteed an interview for an employment opportunity with an industry partner.'

 In this program, you will:

- > undertake both accredited units and non-accredited training, including:
 - > SITSS00055 Responsible Service of Alcohol
 - > SITSS00050 Use hygienic practices for food safety
- > introduction to food and beverage service
- > introduction to spirits, wines, beers & liqueurs
- > introduction to coffee
- > job preparation skills and industry representative presentations
- > access pathways to further education and training
- > gain hands-on practical learning at our state-of-the-art simulated environment, Venu Restaurant
- > receive guidance from expert tourism and hospitality trainers
- > develop skills in resume writing and interviewing
- > be supported to gain an interview for employment with one of Victoria's most prestigious and high-profile employers in the sector.

 The 'Front of house program' section describes learning foundational knowledge and skills in food and beverage operations, preparing for an entry-level role such as food and beverage attendant, function and catering attendant or barista.

 'Course dates' are listed as:

- Round 1:** 19-22 September and 26-28 September 2022
- Round 2:** 28-30 November, 1 December and 5-7 December 2022
- Round 3:** 3-6 and 9-11 January 2023

 'Industry partners' include:

- > Accor: Art Series, Ibis, Mantra, Mercure, Movenpick, Novotel, Peppers, Pullman, The Como, Sofitel, Quay West Suites
- > Comfort Apartments Royal Gardens
- > Delaware North: Marvel Stadium, MCG, Melbourne Airport, Melbourne and Olympic Parks
- > LUCAS Restaurants: Baby, Chin Chin, GOGO Bar, Grill Americano, Hawker Hall, Kisumé, Society, Yakimono
- > Overnewton Castle
- > Pancake Parlour: Highpoint, Werribee, Docklands, Melbourne Central
- > RACV Resorts and Clubs: City Club, Cape Schanck, Cobram, Goldfields, Healesville, Inverloch and Torquay
- > Riverland Group: BANG BANG, Hotel Railway, Pilgrim, Riverland, The Boatbuilders' Yard, The General Assembly
- > Quest: Caroline Springs and Werribee

 The 'Enrolment & Orientation Day' section states: 'Attend an information session to find out more about the program and tour the Footscray Nicholson campus facilities which includes commercial kitchens, a training bar and our award-winning 150-seat restaurant, Venu. You will also have the opportunity to enrol in the course. Allow one hour for the information/enrolment session. Date: Wednesday 2 or 16 November 2022. Time: 6pm. Location: Room D141, Building D, Footscray Nicholson Campus, Cnr Albert and Buckley Street. What to bring: Photo ID, proof of Australian/NZ citizenship if applicable, ImmiCard if applicable, pen and notepad. For further information, contact Shawn Vlaeminck, Manager Hospitality, Tourism & Events at Shawn.Vlaeminck@vu.edu.au. A QR code is provided for registration.'



The information in this publication was current at the publication date, 19/09/2022. It is provided as information only and does not form any part of a contract between any person and Victoria University Polytechnic. CRICOS Provider No. 00124K (Melbourne) CRICOS Provider No. 02475D (Sydney), RTO Code 3113.


Figure 2 (right) – Flyer (digital and printed)

VU Home Current students Staff Researchers Alumni Library Campuses Donate Contact us Login

Study at VU Partnerships Research About VU

VU Home > About VU > News & events > News >

FREE TRAINING FOR ENTRY-LEVEL HOSPITALITY & TOURISM JOBS



CONTACT US

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Manager

Hospitality, Tourism & Events
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Email: shawn.vlaeminck@vu.edu.au

More information about Visitor Economy Work Ready Program [↗](#)

School for the Visitor Economy [↗](#)

Hospitality, tourism & events courses at VU Polytechnic [↗](#)

Visitor economy is reopening quickly and set for strong future growth

Wednesday 23 March 2022 [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Email](#)

Victoria University Polytechnic [↗](#) is offering free courses to fast-track new workers into entry-level roles in Victoria's rapidly recovering hospitality and tourism sectors – known broadly as the visitor economy.

The sector is now reopening with a strong workforce demand, but many businesses report they are unable to find skilled workers following an exodus of hospitality and tourism staff during COVID-forced business closures.

The lack of international students, backpackers, and other temporary migrants who normally fill entry-level roles has compounded this workforce shortage.

GUARANTEED JOB INTERVIEWS

The [Visitor Economy Work-Ready program](#) [↗](#) will provide hands-on practical learning at VU Polytechnic's state-of-the-art training restaurant, [VenU](#) at the [Footscray Nicholson Campus](#).

Upon completion, students have guaranteed job interviews at prestigious leading employers and partner organisations. They include:

- **Accor:** Art Series, Ibis, Mantra, Mercure, Movenpick, Novotel, Peppers, Pullman, The Como, Sofitel, Quay West Suites
- **Delaware North:** Marvel Stadium, MCG, Melbourne and Olympic Parks
- **LUCAS Restaurants:** Baby, Chin Chin, GOGO Bar, Grill Americano, Hawker Hall, Kisumé, Society, Yakimono
- **RACV Resorts and Clubs:** City Club, Cape Schanck, Cobram, Goldfields, Healesville, Inverloch and Torquay
- **Riverland Group:** BANG BANG, Hotel Railway, Pilgrim, Riverland, The Boatbuilders Yard, The General Assembly
- **Comfort Apartments Royal Gardens**

PROGRAM INFORMATION

The program starts on Tuesday 26 April in three streams:

- **Travel and Tourism** – (roles such as front office, trainee tour guide, or retail attendant)
Course duration: 26 April – 3 May
- **Front-of-House** – (food and beverage attendant, function and catering attendant or barista)
Course duration: 26 April – 4 May
- **Back-of-House** – (kitchen hand, cook or commis/larder chef)
Course duration: 26 April – 9 May.

SECTOR SET FOR STRONG GROWTH

With Victoria's visitor economy targeted to reach \$35 billion in annual visitor spending supporting 300,000 jobs by mid-2024, there are significant opportunities for career growth in the sector.

Students who complete the Work-Ready Program can pathway into further training and education at VU Polytechnic and Victoria University. The [School for the Visitor Economy](#) offers a range of courses at all levels in hospitality, tourism, events and cookery.

Both domestic and international students are welcome to apply for the program.

[Find more information and registration](#) [↗](#)

[See all news articles](#)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Victoria University acknowledges, recognises and respects the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Bunurong/Boonwurrung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung of the Kulin who are the traditional owners of University land in Victoria, and the Gadigal and Guring-gai of the Eora Nation who are the traditional owners of University land in Sydney.

FUTURE STUDENTS

Information for:

- Early school leavers [↗](#)
- Secondary school students [↗](#)
- Mature-age students [↗](#)
- Postgraduate students [↗](#)
- School teachers & career practitioners [↗](#)
- Parents of students [↗](#)
- International students [↗](#)
- Exchange & study abroad students [↗](#)

STAFF & STUDENTS

Information for:

- Current students [↗](#)
- Staff [↗](#)
- Researchers [↗](#)
- Alumni [↗](#)

Tools:

- MyVU (students) [↗](#)
- MyVU (staff) [↗](#)
- Student email [↗](#)
- VU Collaborate [↗](#)

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

- 1300 VIC UNI
- [Enquire online](#)
- [All contact options](#)

VISIT US IN PERSON

- [VUHQ \(student service centres\)](#)

VU APP

Keep track of your classes, assignments, results and more.



CONNECT




Figure 3 – VU website news article about the Work Ready Program

PINNED POST

Victoria University Polytechnic - RTO 3113
9 August at 11:28 · 🌐

Learn foundational knowledge and skills in food and beverage operations in the FREE 7-day Visitor Economy Work Ready Program. You will be prepared to start an entry-level role, such as a food and beverage attendant, function and catering attendant, or barista.
Register at <https://www.vupolytechnic.edu.au/.../visitor-economy-work...>

FAST TRACK YOUR CAREER IN HOSPITALITY



VUPOLYTECHNIC.EDU.AU
Visitor Economy Work Ready Program Information Sessions | Victoria University Polytechnic Sign Up

👍 13 8 shares

Figure 5 – VU Polytechnic's LinkedIn post

4.1 Communication channels

CHANNEL	DETAILS
	Direct eDM from Student Services to all current students in Victoria
VU and VUP Current Students	Series of social media posts across VU's Student Life social media accounts, including Facebook and Instagram All Higher Education students in Hospitality, Tourism, Event Management, Human Resource Management and Work Integrated Learning courses Visitor Economy Higher Degree by Research (HDR) student list
VU Future Students	Shared with networks
VU and VUP Social Media	Series of boosted social media posts across VUP's social media accounts, including Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram (Figures X)
VU in the Community	Shared with networks, including all City Councils in West Melbourne
VU Media	Arranged media release to attract media attention
VU Polytechnic March Newsletter	Feature in the monthly newsletter to all VU Polytechnic staff
Young Tourism Network (YTN)	Posted on YTN Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn
Brimbank City Council	Feature in The Networker newsletter that goes out to Career Networks in the Brimbank area
Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC)	Feature in VTIC's e-Newsletter

Table 2 – Communication channels

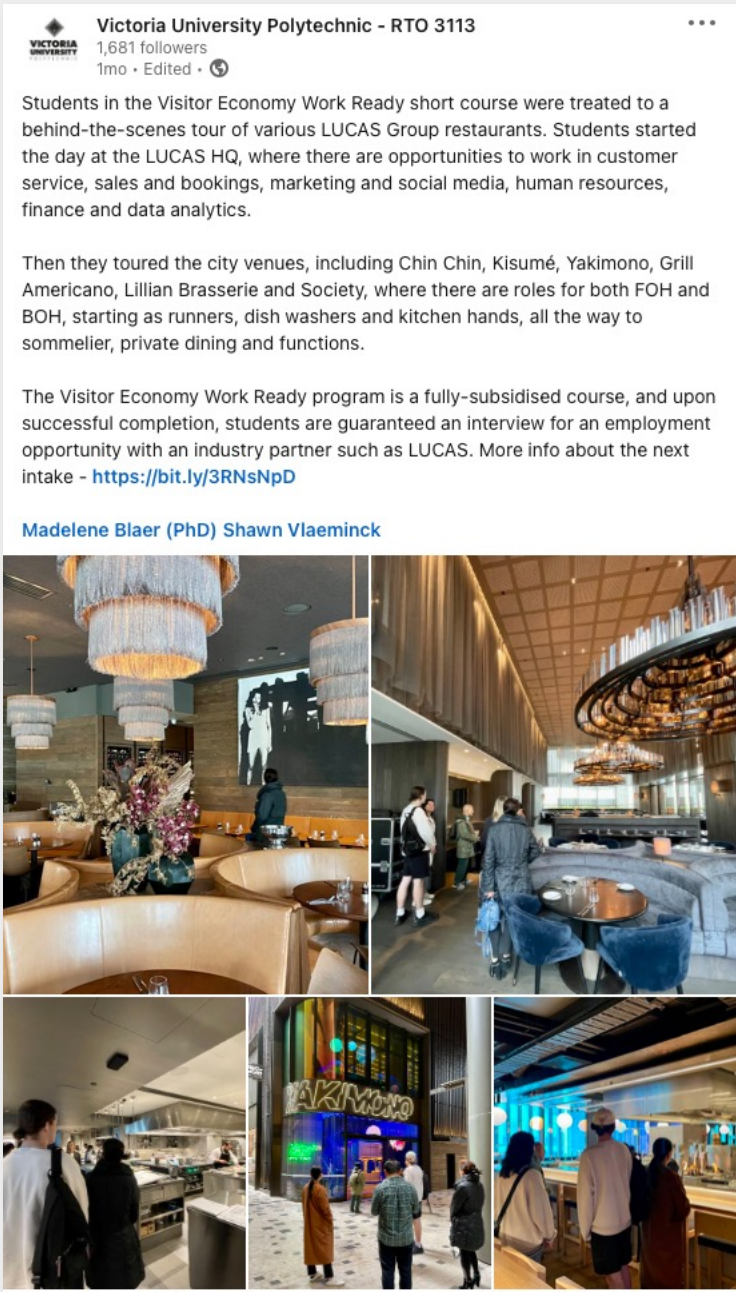


Figure 6 – VU social media post about industry site visits

Paid social media posts were also utilised to reach markets of interest through VU and VUP’s Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts. Examples are shown in Figures 4 to 8.

A promotional video was developed during the first round of the program to show the course in action. Several industry partners were featured to explain the benefits of the program. The video can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8b5krGnE4c>

A direct email to all current students in Victoria was sent out before each delivery round (Figure 9 provides an example).

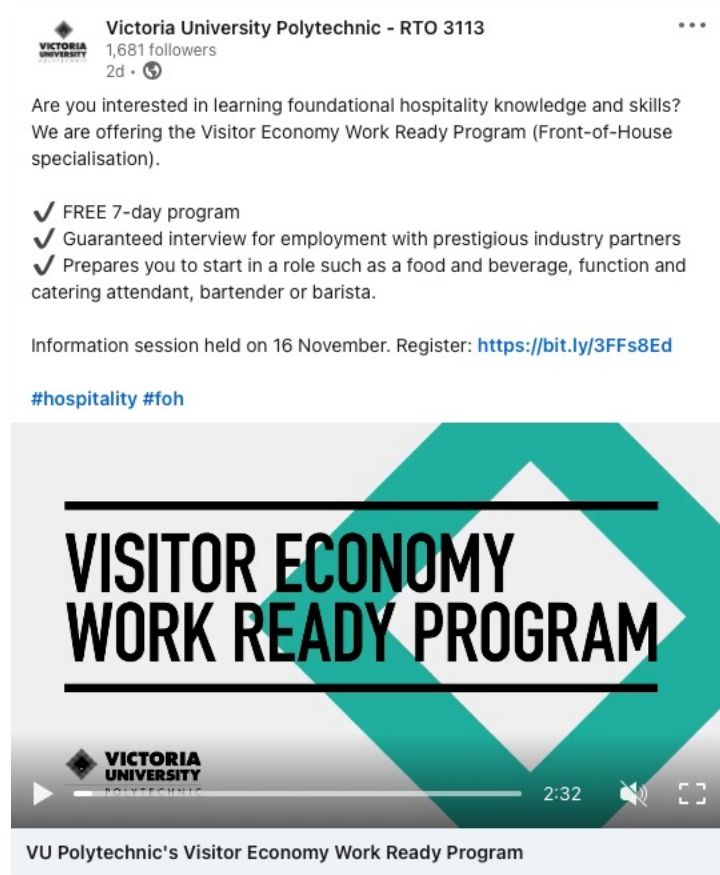


Figure 7 – VU social media post featuring the promotional video

WANT TO LEARN
KEY HOSPITALITY
SKILLS FOR FREE?



VISITOR ECONOMY WORK READY PROGRAM

In our Front of House program
you will learn:

- How to make the world's best coffee
- Hygienic food safety
- Responsible service of alcohol
- Hospitality interview preparation skills
- Spirits, wine, beer & liquor knowledge

[EXPLORE MORE](#)

BECOME FULLY HOSPITALITY QUALIFIED

Information session

14 September 6-7pm
Footscray Nicholson Campus

OR

Register your interest now!

[REGISTER](#)



READY TO LAND A JOB?

After completing the program, you can be supported to gain an interview for employment with one of Victoria's most prestigious and high-profile employers in the sector.

What kind of hospitality role interests you?

Host

Barista

Bartender

Figure 8 – VU Polytechnic's Instagram Story



Dear Student,

Registrations are now open for VU Polytechnic's Visitor Economy Work Ready Program (Front-of-House Specialisation).

This **FREE** (fully subsidised) program runs for 7-days from 9am-5pm starting **28 Nov 2022** (Round 2) or **3 Jan 2023** (Round 3) and is designed to fast track your entry to the workforce - whether you're looking for a career in tourism and hospitality or a casual or part-time job while you study.

You will attain your **RSA** and **Food Handlers certificates** and be trained in foundational skills and knowledge in food and beverage operations, coffee-making, beers, wines, spirits and liqueurs.

Upon completion, you are **guaranteed a job interview** with leading high-profile industry partner employers, including Accor, Delaware North (venues and events such as Melbourne Airport, MCG, Marvel Stadium and Australian Open), Lucas Restaurants' venues (such as Chin Chin, Society and Yakimono), Overnewton Castle, Pancake Parlour, Quest Apartments and Riverland Group's venues (such as The Boatbuilders Yard and The General Assembly) and more.

Available roles include: food and beverage attendant, table runner, dish washer, kitchen hand, bar staff, barista, function and event staff, hotel receptionist, corporate roles in HR, sales, marketing, finance etc.

Register for an information/ enrolment session: Wed 2 Nov or Wed 16 Nov, 6pm at VU Footscray Nicholson campus.

All are welcome and eligible to apply, including international students.

For more information and to register to attend an information/enrolment session, click the button below.

REGISTER NOW

Contact us

If you have any questions, you can access [ASKVU](#), [email us](#), speak to us via [live chat](#), call us on [+61 3 9919 6100](#).

Kind regards,

School for the Visitor Economy
Victoria University Polytechnic

Figure 9 – Direct email to all current VU and VUP students in Victoria



5. Overview of key outcomes

Figure 10 shows a summary of some the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) developed for the program and their outcomes, highlighting the overall success of the Work Ready program.

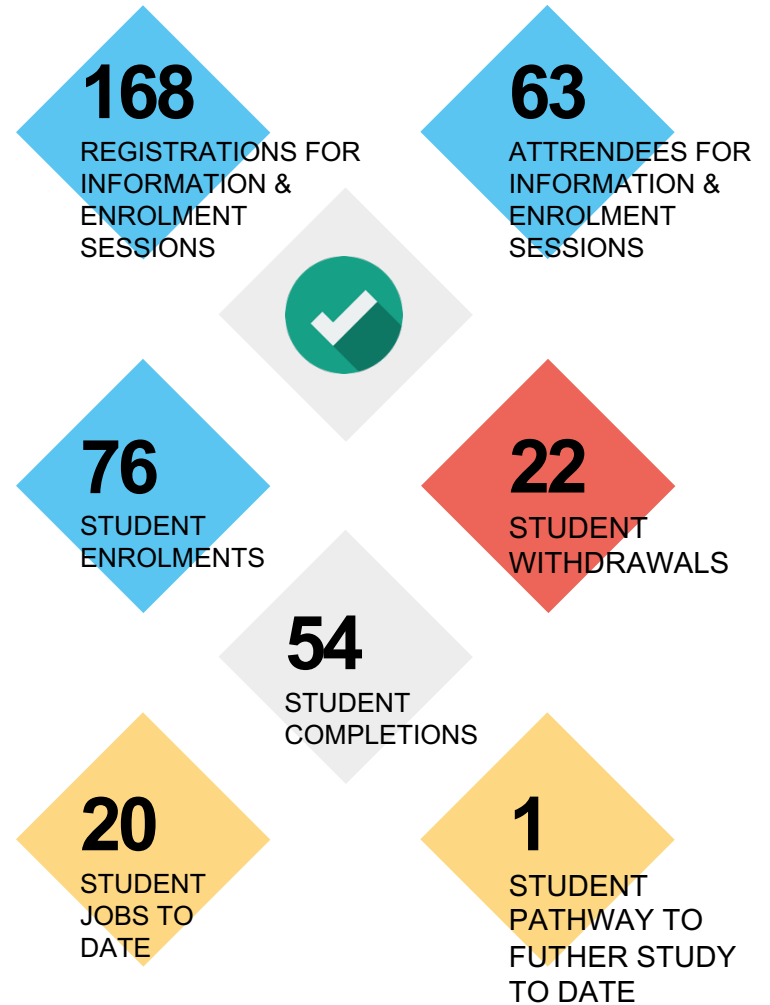


Figure 10 – Snapshot of program outcomes

6. Student surveys and feedback

Participants were invited to complete a pre-program survey in-person on the first day of the program to establish a baseline of their expectations, as well as a post-program survey on the final day to evaluate their satisfaction. After completing the program, participants were emailed and/or called to record whether they were successful in securing employment.

6.1 Response rates

Round one:

- ◆ Pre-program survey: 87.5% response rate (14 respondents)
- ◆ Post-program survey: 81.25% response rate (13 respondents)

Round two:

- ◆ Pre-program survey: 94.12% response rate (16 respondents)
- ◆ Post-program survey: 94.12% response rate (16 respondents)

Round three:

- ◆ Pre-program survey: 100% response rate (21 respondents)
- ◆ Post-program survey: 95.2% response rate (20 respondents)



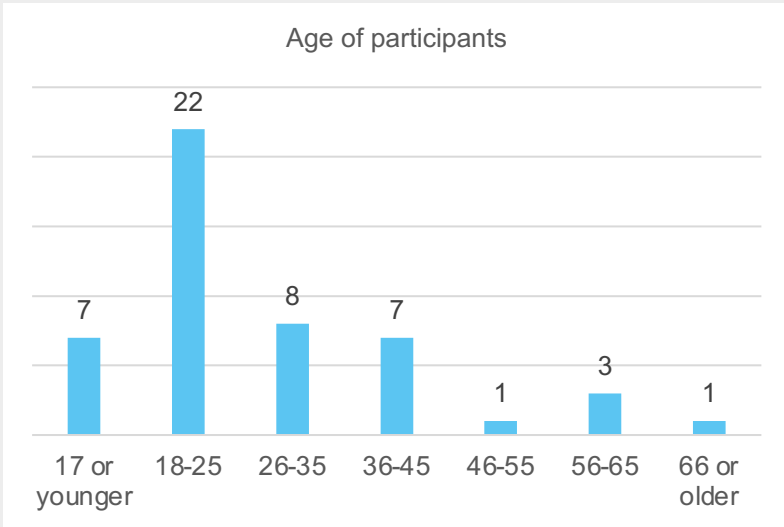


Figure 11

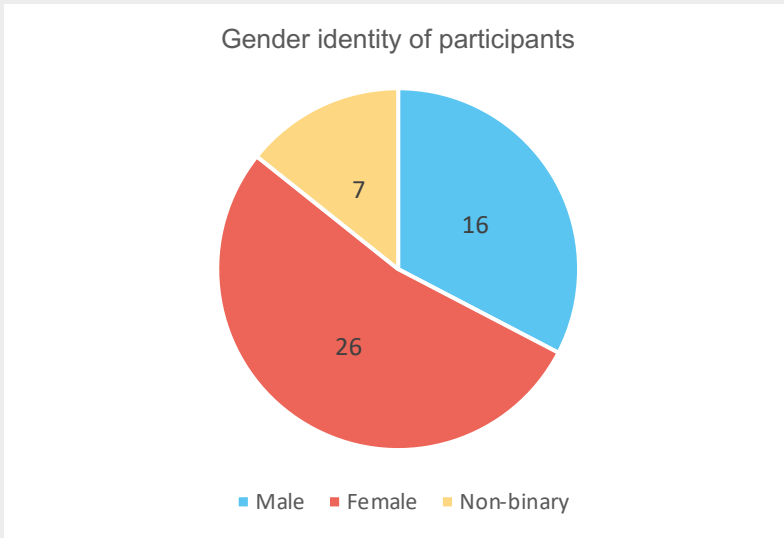


Figure 12

6.1 Student demographics

The program participants were highly diverse in age (see Figure 11) with the youngest participant aged 16 and the oldest aged over 75. Most participants were aged between 18-35 (40.7%), followed thereafter by those aged between 26-35 (14.8%). More participants identified as female (48.1%) than male (29.6%) and seven (12.9%) identified as non-binary (see Figure 12).

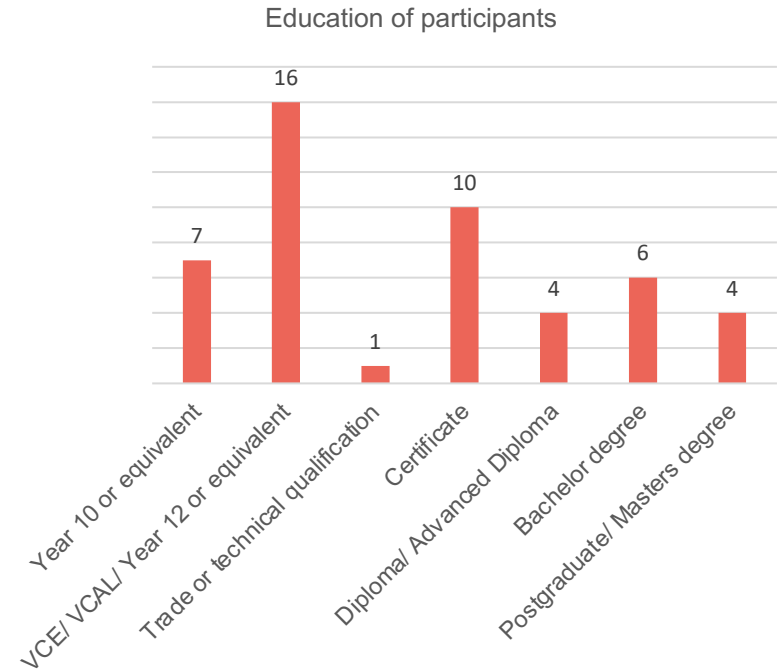


Figure 13

Participants' education reflected the average age of the cohort, as shown in Figure 13. Many participants were still completing high school (42.5%), whereas older participants had vocational qualifications (27.7%) or university degrees (18.5%).

Figure 14 displays the diversity of participants' cultural backgrounds. Most participants were Australian (44.4%), followed by Malaysian (11.1%) and Filipino (7.4%). Twenty-seven participants (50%) spoke a language other than English, including Arabic, Burmese, Cantonese, Filipino, Mandarin, Malay, Nepali, Russian, Thai and Vietnamese, shown in Figure 15.

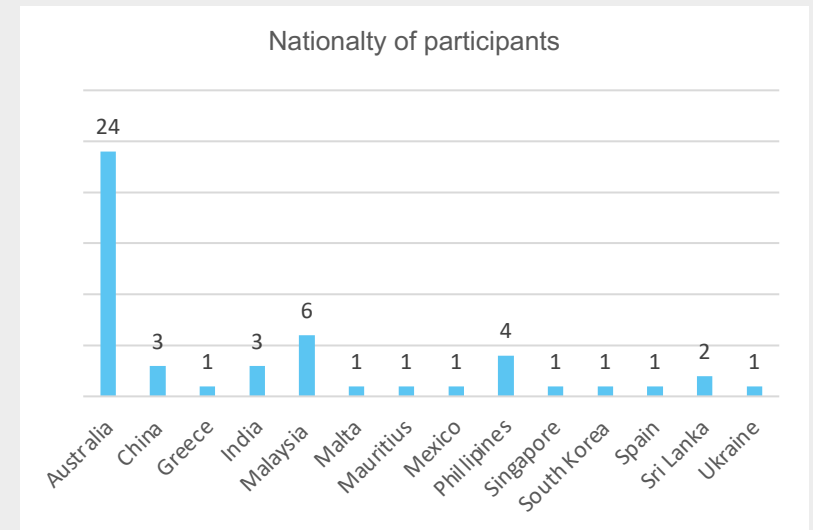


Figure 14

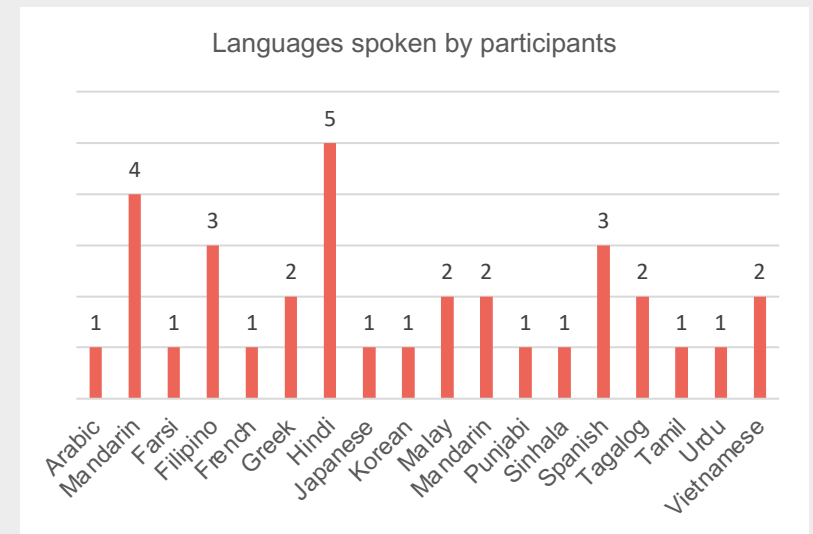


Figure 15

Figure 16 details the range of participants' employment/professional backgrounds. When asked what best describes their employment/professional status immediately prior to enrolling in the training program, most participants reported either studying and looking for work (35.1%) or employed on a casual basis (25.9%). Thereafter, participants were unemployed and looking for work (12.9%) or employed full-time (9.2%) or part-time (9.2%).

As shown in Figure 17, most participants heard about the program through direct email from VU (24%). The next most common information source was personal word-of-mouth from friends, family and colleagues (22.2%). Thereafter, participants selected VU social media channels (14%) and other sources (12.9%). These included a local library, as well as Youth Projects, which is not-for-profit organisation providing support for disadvantaged young people, and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

Both of these organisations were connected to program through VU in the Community and partnerships with local councils. Equal fifth selected by five participants (9.2%) each were Secondary Schools and recommendations through VU staff. None reported hearing about the program through industry partners or networks (e.g. VTIC newsletter). Direct and online communication channels were hence most effective in reaching markets interested in the program.

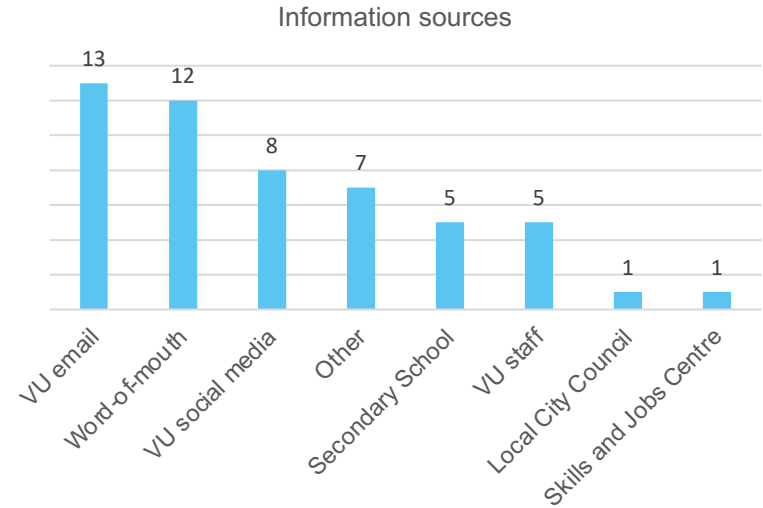


Figure 17

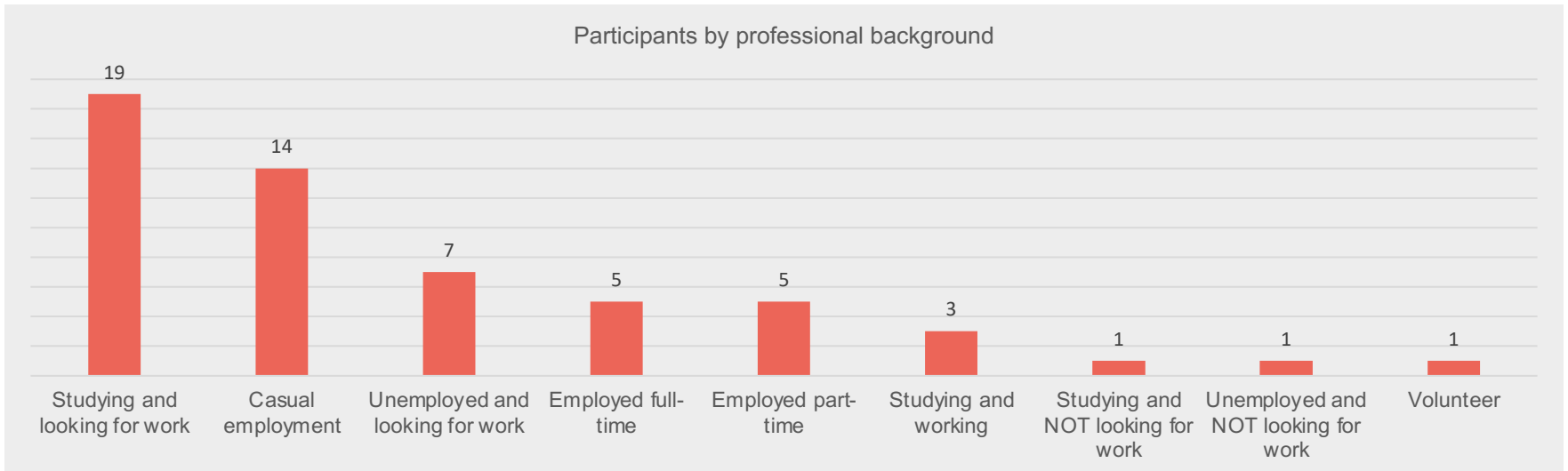


Figure 16



Over half of the participants reside in West Melbourne (55.5%), shown in Figure 18. The full list of local government areas is shown below:

- ◆ City of Brimbank (4)
- ◆ City of Hobsons Bay (7)
- ◆ City of Hume (3)
- ◆ City of Maribyrnong (7)
- ◆ City of Melton (6)
- ◆ City of Wyndham (3)
- ◆ City of Boroondara (1)
- ◆ City of Casey (1)
- ◆ City of Glen Eira (1)
- ◆ City of Melbourne (4)
- ◆ City of Merri-bek (1)
- ◆ City of Monash (1)
- ◆ City of Maroondah (1)
- ◆ City of Port Phillip (1)
- ◆ City of Yarra (1)
- ◆ City of Greater Dandenong (1)
- ◆ City of Whittlesea (2)



Figure 18 – West Melbourne (Source: Western Melbourne Tourism)



6.2 Student motivations

Participants reported that they chose VU Polytechnic to undertake the training due to the institute's reputation (in particular regarding hospitality training) as well as convenience and accessibility factors, such as cost, location and the short time-length of the course and already being enrolled in another course at VU/ VUP.

Figure 19 shows that the majority of participants were equally motivated to join the program by the free hospitality training (55.5%) and the free RSA certificate (55.5%), closely followed by the free Food Handlers certificate (48.1%). Thereafter, participants were drawn to the program by the employment opportunity with the industry partners (37%), the guaranteed job interview (22.2%), a career change (14.8%) and lastly, pathways to further education (9.2%).

Other motivating factors mentioned by participants included upskilling in their current career and gaining experience for additional employment opportunities and to be given more shifts at their current workplace in hospitality.

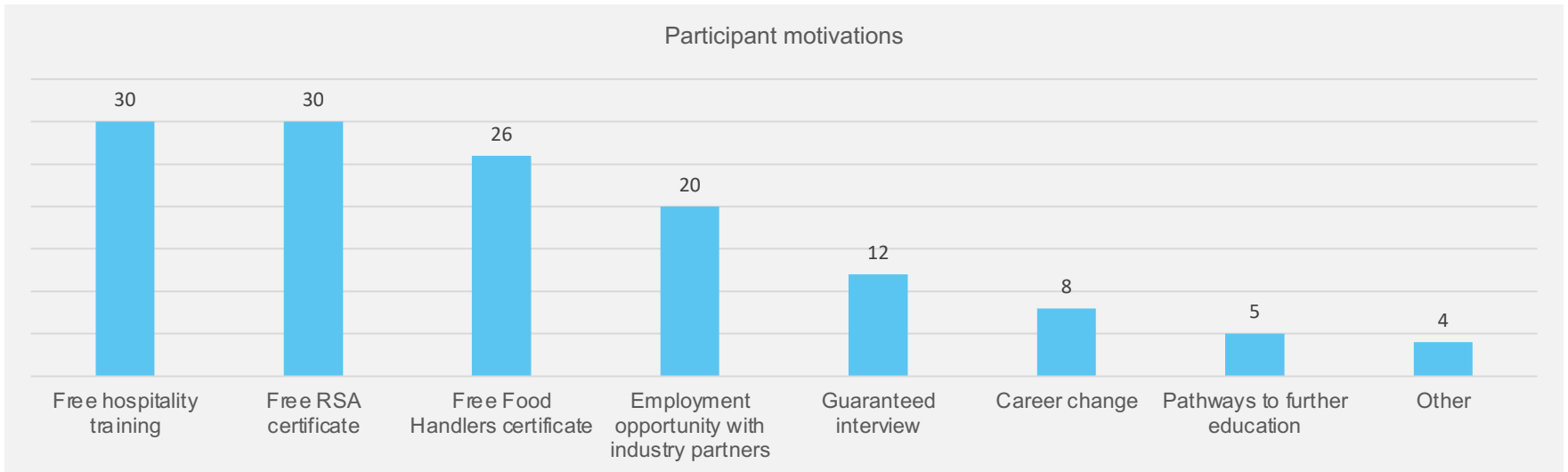


Figure 19

6.3 Student expectations

Participants' expectations of the program mostly reflect the program benefits advertised (e.g. gaining practical hands-on experience, certification for RSA and Food Safety and guaranteed job interview). Beyond this, participants expected to learn new skills, have an opportunity for networking, be prepared to work and to secure employment.

"I'm excited to gain new skills and employment in a new industry."

"Employment, gain new skills, and knowledge"

"To get employed with a highly reputed organization"

"I learn more about food handling. In future I can become a chef."

"I hope to gain new skills in the hospitality industry, as well as attaining an RSA license."

"Gaining skills, qualifications and experience which can benefit me in both my current and future roles."

"I hope to build upon and refresh my pre-existing skills in hospitality to hopefully gain employment, preferably part time so that I can work around my course."



6.4 Student satisfaction

Figure 20 shows the overall high levels of satisfaction with the program, as well as satisfaction with components such as the workload, the skill and support from trainers, learning activities and the usefulness of the skills they learnt for working in the industry.

- ◆ 100% strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with the program
- ◆ 100% strongly agreed or agreed that they would recommend the program to others
- ◆ 100% strongly agreed or agreed that the trainers were skilled and supportive
- ◆ 100% strongly agreed or agreed that the activities helped them to learn

When asked about the best aspects of the program, participants highlighted the 'hands-on' and practical nature of the course and learning activities, support from the trainers and their expertise, as well as the involvement of the industry partners especially during the Careers Day presentations.

"Hands on and engaging learning"

"High quality teachers"

"The opportunity to learn about amazing businesses and have a wide range of options as to where we can work"

"A concise tailored approach to the essentials of FOH service within a short time. And the bonus of 2 certificates. Plus it was free."

"I originally had no intentions of thinking to apply for any positions, however the presentations intrigued me in looking further into some of the positions".

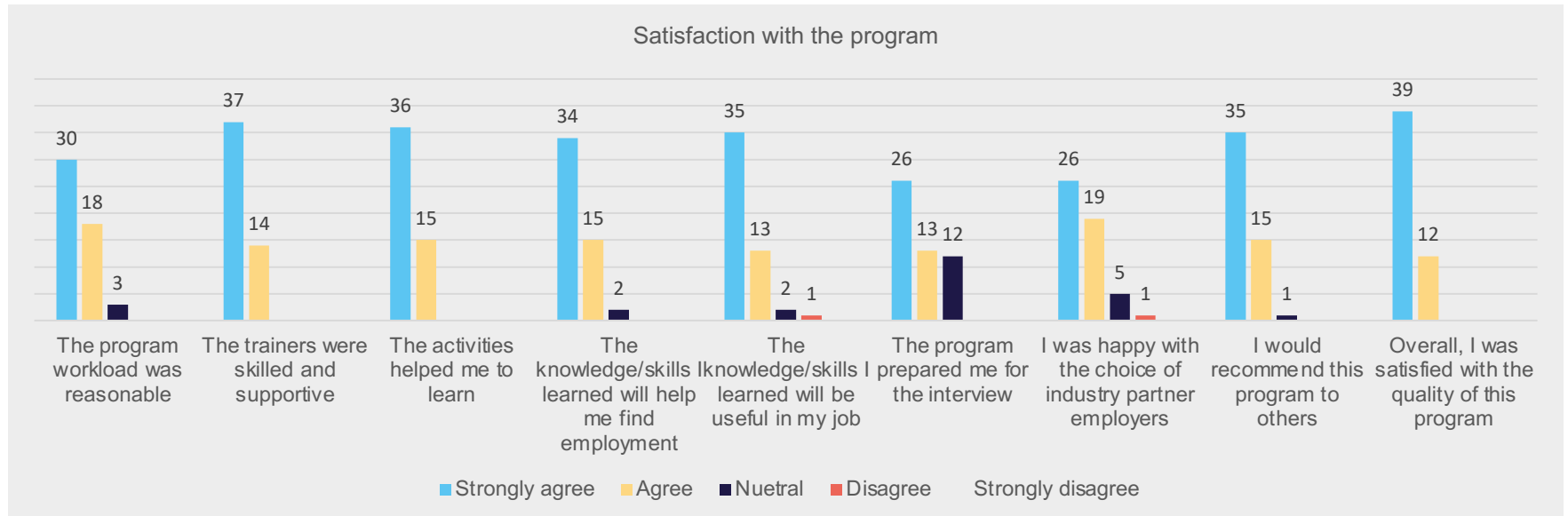


Figure 20



6.5 Program improvements

When asked about what could be done to improve the program, participants' answers mostly concerned the timing. Most suggested extending the program over more days. Other students were interested in other specialisations, such as Back-of-House training and Event Management training.

"Adding an extra day to review and summarise things we did"

"More focus for skills to learn outside of food and drink service"

"More time dedicated to the wine component of the course"

"More coffee days"

"Spending more time on certain aspects of the knowledge components"

"Add a half day before careers day to give more flexibility, and touch more on interview skills and how to notice bad/shady businesses."

"The Work Ready Program is fantastic. Hope you can continue to get funding to run this course. Most useful! Would be great to have a BOH stream (eg Food Preparation and Sandwich making etc)."

"I'm interested in future funded Events Management course."

6.6 Student education pathways

In terms of education pathways, most participants were motivated to consider further training or education (20 participants were interested in courses at VU/VUP; four were interested in courses with other education providers; 24 were not interested in further training or education). Figure 21 shows the VU/VUP courses of interest.

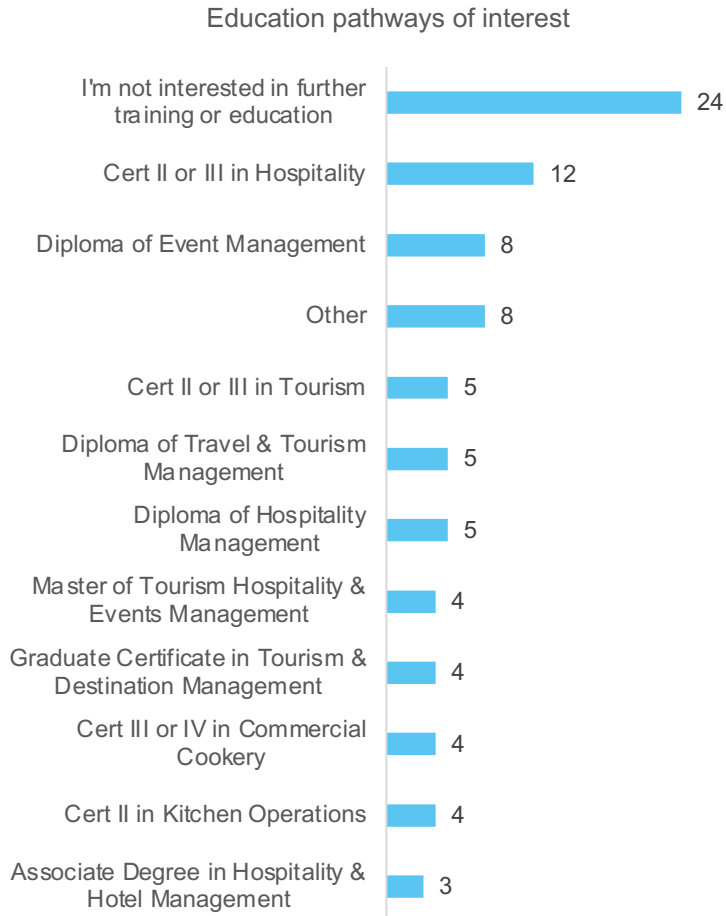


Figure 21





6.7 Student employment outcomes

While eight students indicated that they did not want to work for an industry partner, the vast majority expressed interest in working in the industry in a range of roles (see Figure 22). Those who chose not to apply for hospitality jobs cited a number of reasons, including a focus on school, travelling or interest in another industry. While some students are still in the process of applying for jobs, 20 students have secured employment to date.

"I have recently secured a job [at a local restaurant]. I am enjoying it thoroughly and am thriving due to the teaching I received in the work ready program course provided by VU."

"Thanks again for all your help. I am employed as a Casual Kitchen Hand (learning and observing lots) with Grill Americano at the Lucas Group. I am enrolled for Commercial Cookery III this year at Vic Uni. BTW, my wife is also enrolled together with me. We are taking advantage of the free TAFE offered by the State Govt! PS the Work Ready Program is fantastic."

Student sector preference

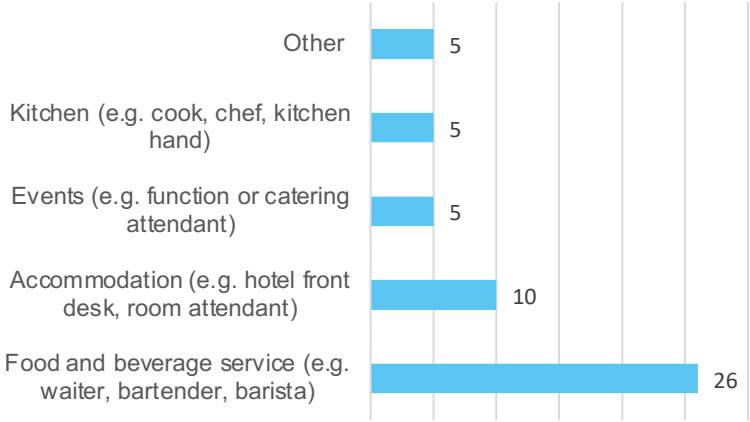


Figure 22

"I really enjoyed the bar component of the course ... I was lucky enough to be offered a position in a bar in Werribee. Thank you for offering the course it was so worthwhile."

"Yes I have received work in the corporate dining section of the MCG for the upcoming AFL season thanks to the work-ready hospitality industry."

"I just want to thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to jump start my hospitality career. I'm hired by Delaware and I worked for 4 days already! And Pancake Parlour is about to schedule me a paid trial! Its all because of the program, it boosted my confidence to take hospitality to next level."

"The VU Work Ready program really helped me boost my career in hospitality! I've been working with Delaware for almost 2 months already, also I've worked for them as F&B on concerts and Australian Open 2023 event! Not only the experience is exciting but I also learned a lot! I am also accepted as F&B for Compass Group and Deck Out West! This is all thanks to VU Program and partnership with hospitality companies!"



6.8 Student learning outcomes

When asked to rate their level of agreement with their confidence in their ability to demonstrate course learning outcomes, the vast majority of students reported high levels of confidence (see Figure 23).

- ◆ 100% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident in their ability to apply the skills/knowledge learned in the program to the workplace upon completion
- ◆ 96% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident in their ability to write a cover letter and resume (two were unsure)
- ◆ 84.5% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they felt confident in their ability to prepare for an interview (five were unsure and three were not confident)

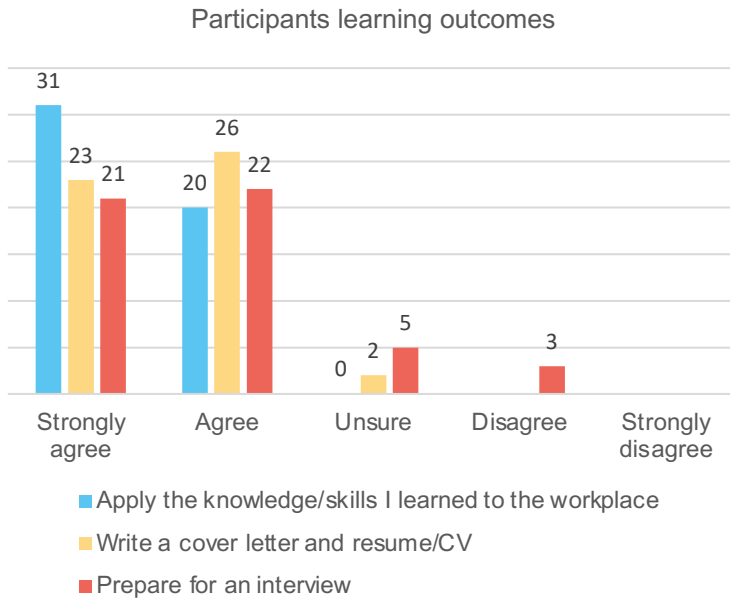


Figure 23





7. Conclusion

This report has detailed the development, delivery and evaluation of VU's Visitor Economy Work Ready Program (Front-of-House specialisation), which was created to support industry workforce needs.

Fifty-four participants successfully completed the program; all of which are currently arranging interviews for employment or have secured employment with the program's industry partners.

While 60 places were available in the program and there were 168 expressions of interest and 76 participants enrolled in the program, there was a relatively large attrition rate and 22 withdrawals and 54 students completed the course.

These outcomes reflect the current state of the industry in terms of workforce shortages and support recent research findings that the visitor economy has received immense brand damage due to the pandemic and travel restrictions, especially with young people.

This suggests that some more time is needed for a change in perceptions as the industry recovers from the impacts of the pandemic. In addition, while international student numbers are still significantly less than pre-pandemic, interest in these types of programs from international students is expected to grow as border restrictions and concerns about travel and lockdowns continue to ease and the market gradually returns.

The program evaluation provides further support for the recommendations presented in RESET Report 4 on the resilience and recovery roadmap for Melbourne's West with respect to addressing the severe skills and labour shortages.

These include transformational short-term and long-term actions and changes, such as ongoing support and funding for the delivery of rapid and customised skills training programs to domestic and international workers that connect businesses with job ready candidates, continued relaxation of work hours for student visa holders, as well as increasing business capacity to attract talent and re-engage employees, for example through incentive schemes, safe workplace processes, job security, work flexibility and opportunities for career progression.

While training programs designed to upskill a new workforce provide excellent professional development opportunities at an individual level, the program outcomes suggest that there are still significant barriers preventing more uptake, which is required to make a real difference for tourism and hospitality businesses on a larger scale.

The issue of labour shortages is complex and a whole system approach involving extensive industry, government and education provider collaboration is needed to address employment conditions and attract talent back into the workforce.





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VU's School for the Visitor Economy (SVE)

- SVE undertakes and facilitates cross-disciplinary research that underpins **growth and sustainability** in tourism destinations and visitor-economy-related businesses.
- Strong **industry links and partnerships** allow researchers to respond nimbly to industry problems and evolving opportunities.
- Key current **research themes** include: the green economy and planetary health, risk, recovery and resilience, management and evaluation, jobs and skills.
- Website: <https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/our-teaching-colleges-schools/visitor-economy>

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Date: March 2023

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