

Headstart to health: Allied Health Student Information Kit

Do you imagine yourself in a job working with people?
Want to help people and do work that matters?
Interested in a career in health?



This guide is NSW specific. However it has information that may be relevant to students in all states and territories involved in Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance (HLT 32407) VET in Schools programs

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Project Team

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Project Steering Committee

Name	Organisation
Susan Scowcroft	NSW Community Services and Health ITAB
Christine Manwarring	TAFE NSW
Catherine Tucker	NSW Board of Studies
Julie Sheridan	VET in Schools Directorate NSW DET
Patricia Strauss	Catholic Education Commission
Ros Bauer/Deb Stead	Greater Southern Area Health Service
Marie McCarthy	NSW DET

Developed by: NSW Community Services and Health ITAB

Developer Team: Gael Kennedy

Further copies of this resource are available from
Website: www.skillsonline.net.au

For further information contact:
Email: skillsonline@det.nsw.edu.au

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What's Allied Health all about?

Allied Health covers a wide range of important health services like physiotherapy, speech therapy, nutrition, podiatry and occupational therapy. These services are all about improving the quality of life for people by helping them stay fit and healthy.

Allied health staff work with people of all ages and health backgrounds, including babies, children and teenagers, and people who have had accidents or who are getting older and more frail.

There are many different career directions you can take when working in allied health. You may like to work in health promotion, sports medicine, in community health or in a hospital.

The allied health industry is made up of both professionals, like physiotherapists, dietitians, occupational therapists and audiologists (university trained) and a growing number of allied health assistants who work with them to provide high quality services to patients/clients.

What do Allied Health workers do?

Allied health assistants (also known as therapy aides or therapy assistants) work under the direction of health professionals like physiotherapists, speech pathologists or dietitians, who develop the programs the assistants work to.

If you are an allied health assistant you will be helping with people's care, for example by running exercise programs, providing special recreational therapy activities, constructing aids and equipment like splints, preparing equipment that will be used by patients or clients, providing speech therapy programs devised by a speech pathologist, teaching patients to use special communication systems, helping with patient movement and explaining meal plans devised by a dietitian.

It can be very varied, depending on the path you choose. You might be working on a program helping children who have problems with walking or assisting older frail people to choose a nutritious and well balanced diet.

Where do they work?

Allied Health assistants work in almost all locations, the city and country, in large and small towns, in hospitals and community health services, nursing homes, disability services, day care centres, clinics and private practices and in clients' homes.



Did You Know?

- **The health industry is one of the fastest growing industries in Australia today.**
- **It is the 4th largest employer in Australia,** together with the community services industry, employing around 1 million people.
- **Allied health services are growing** to meet the changing needs of the Australian population. New jobs are being created and new types of workers are needed.
- **Allied health assistant jobs are increasing.** Researchers predict that there will be a growing demand for workers to support allied health professionals.



NEW Allied Health Assistance HSC course

This is a new and exciting opportunity if you're interested in a job in health or like the idea of helping people. This VET in Schools course is 360 (HSC indicative) hours over 2 years. It provides 6 units of HSC credit. Besides going to TAFE or another training organisation, you'll get to spend time in a workplace like a hospital or community health centre or local allied health clinic.

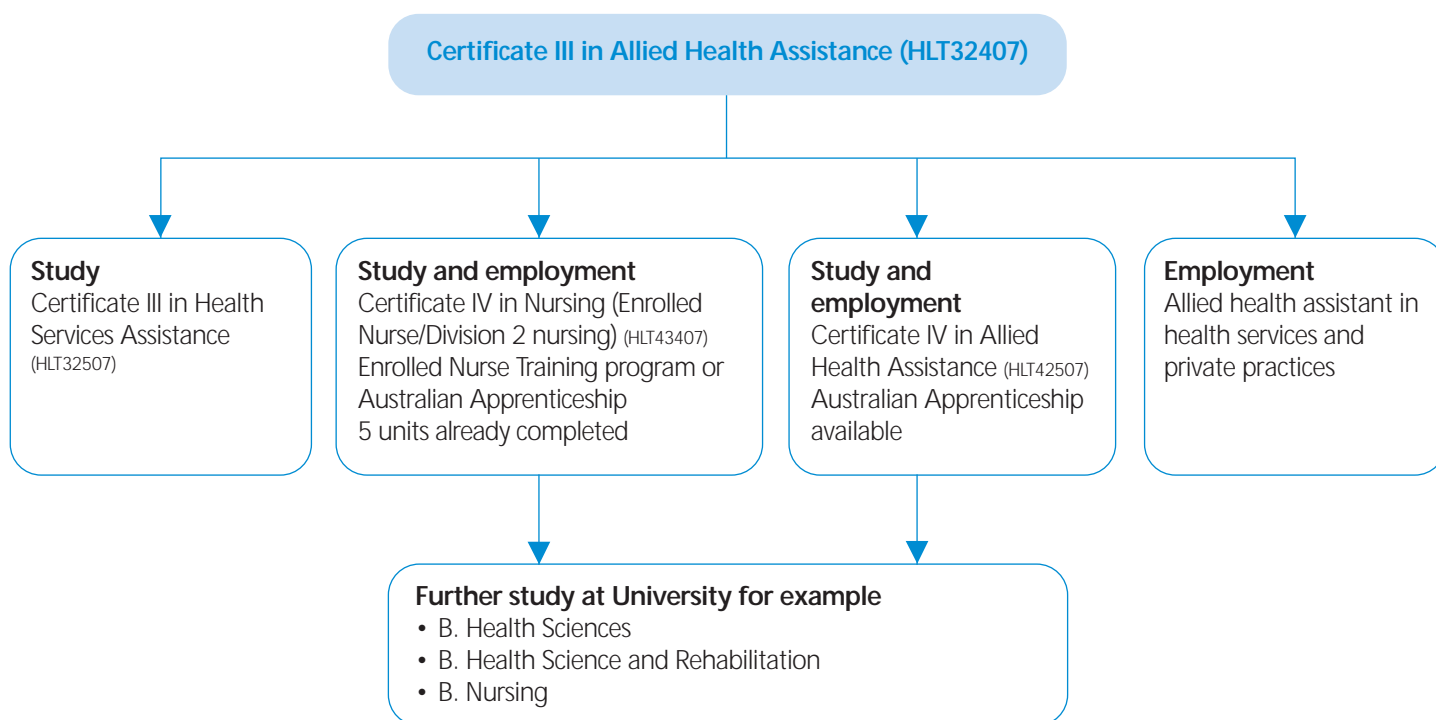
Where does it lead?

If you successfully complete the course you will gain 6 units of credit towards your HSC and the Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance (HLT32407) qualification. Additionally:

- You may be able to go straight into work as an allied health assistant or you can go on to further study at TAFE or another training provider.

- You may also be able to get a traineeship, leading to a Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance (HLT42507) and specialise in, say, physiotherapy. In fact, in Year 12 you will cover some units that are at Certificate IV level so if you do decide to study more you'll have a great head start.
- The course also has 5 units from the Certificate IV in Nursing (HLT43407) (this is the pathway to become an Enrolled Nurse) and 11 units from the Certificate III in Health Services Assistance (HLT32507), so you have the additional options of moving into a career in nursing too.
- These qualifications are recognised across Australia so in the future you'll have the option to travel and work, as this is a growth industry with lots of new jobs being created all the time.

There's also the possibility of further study at university. In the future this Certificate III qualification may assist you with entry into a degree program at Charles Sturt University.



Case study



Steff gets started in an allied health job while still at school

Steff began studying an allied health assistance VET in Schools course when she was in Year 11. She had always had an interest in health care work and had researched careers and even done a massage course before she started. The VET course seemed a great practical way to get a head start into a career in this area of health care whilst she was still at school.

Steff was lucky and got her work placement with a local physiotherapist. Her placement there included assisting the physiotherapists with positioning patients, preparing hot packs and electrotherapy for treatments, measuring patients for certain braces as well as helping with reception, data entry and general administration. Steff plans to continue study, specialising in physiotherapy assistance and is keen to continue working in the industry as a physiotherapy assistant. She really enjoyed the VET in School experience; "It's a real eye opener to see whether you are capable of working in this environment," she said. An extra plus was that Steff got casual work with her employer in the Year 12 school holidays, which she continued once she left school.

Her employer is more than happy with the opportunities the VET in Schools pathway provides to both students and her business. She believes the Certificate III training is important and students will gain a more holistic picture of the allied health industry this way, as well as improving their communication and interpersonal skills.

"It's great! It's a wonderful opportunity to have exposure to the workplace in an area of interest, and to get a practical understanding and a qualification at the same time," says Claire, who organised Steff's training.

Steff's career path: Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance begun at Year 11 and completed the following year. She is now able to continue with further study in Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance (HLT42507) specialising in Physiotherapy. She also has the additional option of moving into nursing, doing some extra study to qualify with a Certificate III in Health Services Assistance (HLT32507) or Certificate IV in Nursing (Enrolled/Division 2 nursing) (HLT43407). Steff plans further study in Massage Therapy and one day would like to move into Complementary and Alternative Therapies.



Things you need to know about the Allied Health Assistance HSC course

The Basics:

- It counts for 6 units of HSC credit delivered over 2 years and takes approximately 360 hours to complete
- You will also gain the Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance (HLT32407) qualification when you successfully complete the course
- It does not contribute towards a UAI score so make sure you have discussed this option carefully with your careers adviser and parents or carer, especially if you think you'd like to apply to university at the end of Year 12

The Structure:

RTO This section will be altered to meet the needs within a local area ►

- The course will be delivered one full day a fortnight during term times and then during three blocks during the school holidays over years 11 and 12. This will include both course work and work placement. (See Delivery Timetable)
- It is not taught by teachers at school. It's delivered by training providers like TAFE (through the TVET program *or change here...depending on training provider ►*)

Work placement:

- Part of the course involves 25 hours in the workplace each year, where you will get the chance to learn from allied health professionals or allied health assistants and practise your new skills 'on-the-job'
- Work placements may be at a hospital (public or private) or in a community based health service or at private allied health practices
- You will hear more about the details of the work placement from your trainer

Add additional information:



Immunisation – Important!

- You will need to be fully immunised if your work placement is at a Department of Health site
- This is to protect you from catching or spreading illnesses such as TB or Hepatitis B. NSW Health expects all staff, including students and volunteers, to be fully immunised
- There will be costs involved so you should get further information from the course coordinator

(relevant costs to be added) ▶

- If this is a problem for you please speak to the course coordinator

Criminal Record Check (CRC)

- Whatever your age you will need to complete the Criminal Record Check (CRC) and Working with Children Check.
- You will then be issued with a card from the NSW Health which you must take with you on all clinical work placements
- You will find out more about these forms and NSW Health cards from the course coordinator

Student selection – adapt as necessary

adapt as necessary ▶

- You'll be selected on the basis of your commitment to do the course, your interest in a career in health, your attitude and maturity
- The process involves you filling in an application form (expression of interest form), attending an information / orientation session with your parents/carers and if you are still interested, coming to an interview
- There may also be the opportunity for work experience at a relevant workplace at the end of Year 10

Add additional information:



What to expect during work placements:

- You will always be fully supervised and will work alongside health care staff
- You will be fully prepared for your work placement and have an idea of what to expect. You may also get to go to health services on visits too before you start
- Sometimes however, you may be faced with challenging experiences especially if you are helping with ageing, frail or sick people. Experience shows that you'll be able to deal with this with the support and help of your teacher, the allied health staff and your fellow students. Talking about it will help and can deepen your understanding of working with people in a health care environment
- If you are unsure or concerned at any time about your work placement talk to your teacher, course coordinator or VET coordinator at school

Assessments and Reporting:

- As this is an HSC and Certificate III level course there will be assessment tasks and assignments for you to complete both in class time and for homework. These will be based on the topics covered in the course work and work placements. Your practical skills are assessed in a simulated health environment and during work placements.
- Reporting takes place during and at the end of each competency unit (the knowledge and skills you will be developing) and will be included in your school reports. If you or your parents/carer want to know more about your progress or have any concerns, contact the course coordinator or school VET coordinator.

Student selection

Find out about course through your school and/or TAFE subject selection information sessions

Fill in an application form

Attend a special allied health information session with your parents or carers to find out all the details and requirements

Register your interest and then attend an interview

If you are suitable for the course... you're in!

RTO OPTION: Insert a diagram of the delivery timetable ▼



Frequently Asked Questions

Is this course for me?

Yes, if you're interested in a career that involves working with people and like the idea of helping them keep fit and healthy. You'll be working as part of a team that makes a difference to people's lives, in a workplace where there is flexibility and variety, as no two people are the same and their treatments will vary.

This course will give you a great start into the health industry, which is one of the fastest growing and largest employers in Australia. There are a few different ways to get into a career in health besides going to university straight from school and this is one of them.

What will I be learning about?

- Year 11 topics include first aid, anatomy and physiology, communication in the health workplace, infection control, and underpinning nursing skills, such as how to help with patient movement. You'll also begin to learn about allied health services and how they encourage healthy lifestyles and improve people's lives. You will begin to develop the skills you need for your role as an allied health assistant and the importance of occupational health and safety.
- Year 12 topics will deepen your understanding of working with allied health professionals and the way that they support people with programs such as exercise, nutrition and therapy activities. In addition you will increase your knowledge of medical terminology in relation to allied health. During your time on work placement you will get to work alongside practitioners such as physiotherapists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists and become familiar with working in a busy public hospital, allied health service or private practice.

How does it fit into my HSC study pattern?

The course will take around 360 hours altogether over Year 11 and 12. It counts for 6 units of HSC credit. Your local TAFE or training provider running the course and your school VET coordinator or careers adviser will have the exact information. Part of this time (25 hours per year) is for actual work (clinical) placement.

How much time does it take each week?

RTO OPTION: Amend to reflect your delivery ▼

Usually one long afternoon a week, at the time that is allocated for VET in Schools subjects, plus some other times in the school holidays. This may vary, for example it could also be one day a week or once a fortnight. There's also time allocated for work placement which may be throughout term time or it may also be in the school holidays. Your school and training provider will give you the exact timetable.

How much time do you spend out of school?

RTO OPTION: Alterations and/or additional information ▼



The whole course is delivered outside school, either at TAFE or with another training provider, and also in a workplace like a hospital or community health service. You'll get to spend at least 50 hours over the two years learning in a workplace with health professionals.

Are there assessments and assignments to do?

Yes, this is an HSC and Certificate III level course. Assignments will be based on topics you cover in your course work and work placements and some practical skills will be assessed in a simulated health environment and the workplace.

What if I'm not doing that well at school or have health problems?

This shouldn't stop you doing the course. In fact it might be the best thing you could do! But you should talk to your careers adviser, VET coordinator and parents/carer first before applying, to work out whether it's the right option for you at this time. If you have special needs your training provider needs to know, so they can provide you with the right support.

Does this course count towards a UAI?

No, not at present. However, it does count towards your HSC and the Certificate III qualification is recognised by the health industry across Australia. Check with your careers adviser as there may be an alternate pathway from this course into your selected university course. If you want to study an allied health degree at university in the year following your HSC you MUST check carefully with your school careers adviser before choosing this course.

How can I get onto the course?

The training provider (for example, TAFE) offering the course will give you the exact details. You will need to attend a parent/student information session and may get a chance to visit a hospital if they are going to be involved as the employer. If you are interested you may then be asked to fill in an Expression of Interest form. You'll then be asked to an interview to see if you are suited to the course. It's also a chance for you to make sure that this is what you really want to do as it is a big commitment.

What will I be doing in the workplace?

You'll be learning how to assist allied health professionals or allied health assistants in a variety of tasks such as using correct appliances, communicating with patients or clients, recording patient information correctly, using correct body alignment to move people and how to prevent cross contamination of infections.

How much does it cost?

If you are at a government high school the course cost is covered via the schools staffing allocation and this means that there is no direct cost to students. However, you will be responsible for the cost of immunisations and police checks. If you are at a non-government high school your school VET coordinator will explain about the different costs involved.

Why do I have to have lots of injections?

This is immunisation which protects you from catching or spreading a number of illnesses, such as TB or Hepatitis B. All NSW Department of Health staff, including students and volunteers, working in hospitals or community health services must be fully immunised. You will need the following vaccinations to be completed - note you may have had some of these already, so check with your Doctor:

- Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Chickenpox
- Diphtheria/Tetanus/Pertussis
- Hepatitis B
- TB
- Influenza (recommended)

This will be fully explained at the course information session.



Allied Health Services and Professionals

Some of the allied health professionals you may be working alongside on your work placement include:

Physiotherapists

Provide treatment for people of all ages who have physical problems caused by injury, illness, disease or ageing, including for example, children with disabilities, teenagers with sports injuries, adults or older people with spine or joint problems (following an operation).

They assist patients/clients with exercises for muscles and joints, use a wide range of treatments such as hydrotherapy, ultrasound, joint manipulation, and provide education to patients, their families and the community on healthy lifestyles and how to prevent injury and disability.

They work in a wide range of settings such as hospitals, specialist disability services, community health centres, schools, sports medicine centres and private practice. They can specialise in many areas including sports therapy, paediatrics (working with children and babies), spinal injuries, obstetrics (pregnancy/birth) and aged care.

Dietitians

Educate people on proper nutrition, set up specific dietetic plans when needed if people are underweight, overweight or need special diets because of illnesses such as diabetes, cancer or if they have food allergies and intolerances.



They also work with people of all ages, from babies to the elderly. Dietitians can also work in health planning and public health education programs. They can work and specialise in a wide range of food and health services such as patient care, public health, education in hospitals, food services and management, food industry, sports industry, research and private practice.

Podiatrists

Diagnose and treat people who have problems with their feet, due to injury, disease or deformity. For example they may help children develop good walking patterns, treat problems such as flat feet or high arches, help people with diabetes avoid foot problems, treat skin or nail infections. Their work includes minor surgery, developing exercise programs, prescribing orthotics (inserts for shoes) and ultrasound therapy.

They work in places like hospitals, community health centres, sports clinics, fitness centres, nursing homes and in private practice. They can specialise in areas such as sports, surgery, paediatrics (working with babies and children) or diabetes management.



Speech Therapists / Pathologists

Work with people to improve their speech, language or voice difficulties that affect their ability to communicate. They also work with people who have problems swallowing after an illness, stroke or accident.

They work with people of all ages, for example with small children whose speech is hard to understand, with young people who stutter, with adults whose job involves speaking all day (like teachers), to help them from losing their voice, or with older people who have had a stroke and can't eat or swallow properly.

They work in many different places including schools, child health centres, nursing homes, community health centres, hospitals as well as in private practice. They can specialise in areas such as early childhood development, literacy development, voice therapy and intellectual or physical disability.



Occupational therapists

Work with people who have problems managing their daily lives as a result of injury, illness, psychological or emotional difficulties, developmental delay or the affects of ageing. This includes working with all ages, from babies, children and adolescents to adults and the elderly. Occupational therapy assists people to improve their independence, well-being and ability to manage their everyday lives.

Treatments may include rehabilitation and exercise programs, re-training people to manage their own care at home, organising changes to the home environment, prescribing equipment, living skills training and/or counselling.

Occupational therapists may work in many places like hospitals, community health services, home care services, aged care facilities, schools and in private practice. They can specialise in areas such as paediatrics, psychiatry, hand therapy and work rehabilitation.