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**Engaging with India's skill development system:** Australian vocational education and training (VET) experiences

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APRIL 2024



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

Australia India Institute acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.

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To cite this report: Mohr, D.J., Harinandini, H., & Rangan, H. 2024. Engaging with India's skill development system: Australian vocational education and training (VET) experiences. Australia India Institute, Melbourne

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# Foreword



In promoting shared prosperity between Australia and India, shaping the next generation of skilled professionals is pivotal. As both nations strive for economic growth and development, the intersection of Australia's VET sector with India's dynamic skills development agenda offers opportunities for mutual growth and exploration.

This report delves into the experiences of Australian VET providers as they navigate the intricate landscape of India's skills ecosystem. By presenting five distinct case studies, this report serves as a valuable resource for stakeholders interested in international skill development partnerships. From longstanding collaborations to early-stage explorations, each case study reflects the provider's unique engagement experience, offering a nuanced understanding of the opportunities and challenges inherent in transnational VET delivery.

We extend our gratitude to the five Australian VET providers – Bendigo Kangan Institute, Holmesglen Institute, Engineering Institute of Technology, BSI Learning and GeSS Education

Queensland – for participating in this study and sharing valuable perspectives that inform the report's findings. Additionally, we sincerely thank the Australian Government Department of Education for supporting the Australia India Institute in conducting this important research. With the insights gleaned from this report, we can work towards unlocking the full potential of transnational VET collaboration between Australia and India.

**The Hon. Lisa Singh**

Chief Executive Officer,  
Australia India Institute

# Executive Summary

This report offers five case studies on Australian vocational education and training (VET) providers with different experiences of engaging with India's skills development system. The case studies included in this report outline the engagement trajectories of five government and private Australian VET providers in the Indian market and examine their experiences of market entry from a holistic perspective. This includes their interaction with local stakeholders and community, the tailoring of engagement strategies to be culturally responsive, and key principles guiding future relationship-building. The case studies provide insights of lessons learned, good practices, challenges and strategies for navigating systems, institutional levels, business and financing models. They are intended to serve as reference points for learning and assessing strategic opportunities for Australian VET providers seeking to venture into the Indian market.

The five Australian VET provider case studies included in this report are:

- Bendigo TAFE Kangan Institute – the International Automobile Centre of Excellence (i-ACE)
- Holmesglen Institute
- Engineering Institute of Technology (EIT)
- BSI Learning
- GeSS Education Queensland

The five case studies reflect experiences at different points in time in the continuum of engagement with India. Holmesglen and Kangan Institute's transnational activities in India span close to a decade, while EIT, BSI Learning and GeSS Education are at an early stage of establishing relations and scoping opportunities.

While every case study outlines a set of key lessons unique to its engagement model and nature of transnational VET activities undertaken, some key findings common across all experiences are as follows:

- **Engaging government and industry support:** Seeking assistance from in-country government representatives for introductions to senior national and state government officials and industry bodies.
- **Finding the right partner(s):** Performing critical due diligence before onboarding local partners is crucial to ensure future compatibility.
- **Scale not a substitute for quality:** Maintaining the high quality of program offerings is top priority, with establishment of critical entry requirements for courses and rigorous governance processes around partnerships.
- **Optimising regulatory environment and qualification-mapping:** Mapping qualifications to establish equivalence is critical to improving domestic employment outcomes for students and professionals undertaking transnational VET.
- **Leading with principles of equity and respect:** Adopting culturally responsive and respectful engagement strategies are key to building enduring connections with local stakeholders and community.
- **Bilateral agreements for transnational VET infrastructure:** Establishing mutually beneficial frameworks which sustain the quality of Australian course offerings while being responsive to the price sensitivities of the Indian market.



## Strategic context

Australia-India cooperation in skill development has been driven by a range of strategic reforms pursued as part of bilateral relationship-building or domestically to maximise international engagement. India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) commits to allowing new models of transnational higher education and greater market access for foreign universities and providers to improve the quality and competitiveness of India's higher education sectors. The NEP, along with India's policy actions to reform the regulatory environment of its education sector, is creating an enabling environment for Australian education stakeholders interested in expanding their footprint into India.

Skills development has been a substantial component of the bilateral agenda. The Education Ministers of both countries pledged commitment to scope out opportunities for Australian providers to supplement Indian capacity in skills development at the 2022 Australia India Education Council. Following the launch of the Australia-India Future Skills Initiative (AIFSI) by Austrade in 2022, an extensive consultation and engagement phase has taken place to grow new

bilateral opportunities for TNE VET sector partnerships. A strategic approach to the key sectors for engagement has been adopted in line with Australia's capability and India's growing demand. This includes Future Technologies, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Logistics, Renewables, Health, and Executive Education.

These commitments were reaffirmed at the first Australia India Education and Skills Council (AIESC) meeting in November 2023, where a range of issues pertaining to skills development and internationalisation of VET were discussed, including:

- The identification of six priority sectors for targeted skills partnerships
- Cooperation between the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and India's National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET)
- The initiative of an India-Australia Skills Summit; and
- The development of an Australian *Skills Strategy for India*.

# Methodology

Following background research and assessment against key parameters, the Australia India Institute invited case study submissions from five select Australian VET providers on their transnational VET activities in India. Each case study reflects the experiences of public providers who entered the skill development ecosystem in India at different points in time in the continuum of engagement with India. Holmesglen and Kangan Institute's transnational activities in India span close to a decade, while EIT, BSI Learning and GeSS Education are at an early stage of establishing relations and scoping opportunities.

The VET providers were given a set of questions to guide the structure of their responses:

- Outline of project(s) involving Australia-India transnational VET engagement
- Lessons learned from Australia-India VET engagement (including transnational VET

and/or related services)

- Best practice in undertaking transnational VET delivery
- Investment/financing models for transnational VET
- Structural and institutional factor affecting transnational VET engagement for Australian providers; and
- Potential/future opportunities for Australia-India transnational VET engagement

Additional follow-up interviews were conducted after receiving their case studies (list of interviewees provided in Appendix 1). The information collection was completed by mid-September 2023 and analysed to draw out key themes and findings. Important insights were also gathered from presentations by some case study participants on the same topic in an online [Skills Masterclass](#) hosted by the Australia India Institute.





# Case studies





# International Automobile Centre of Excellence (i-ACE)

Established in 2006 in Melbourne, the Automotive Centre for Excellence (ACE) at the Bendigo Kangan Institute (BKI) is one of the largest and most sophisticated automotive training centres in Australasia. It offers 28 courses, most of which are Certificate III apprenticeships and trains approximately 3000 students, with a new intake of roughly 1800 students per year. ACE focuses on:

- globally positioning Victoria and Australia in the automotive industry
- showcasing industry competencies
- attracting top talent to the industry
- addressing emerging issues in retail, service and repair practical training
- improving the quality of and coordination within the education and training sector
- strengthening manufacturing and

engineering capabilities

- building a critical mass of leading-edge research and product development capability; and
- providing a base (on-site and virtual) for industry-education collaboration and communication

## Background for BKI i-ACE

In August 2016, Kangan Institute forged a non-financial, delivery-focused partnership with the Indian State Government of Gujarat and Maruti Suzuki India Limited to develop the first International Automobile Centre of Excellence (i-ACE) in India. Based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, the i-ACE was envisioned as the apex centre for skill

Image provided by International Automobile Centre of Excellence



Image provided by  
International Automobile  
Centre of Excellence

development and R&D for the Automotive sector in India. The aim was for i-ACE to cater to the entire value chain of the Automotive industry and encompassing three key elements: design, manufacturing and servicing.

Kangan Institute's chief role was as consultant and knowledge partner stemming from the development of its own ACE designed as a cutting-edge facility at the forefront of automotive training, with industry collaboration and input being one of its key strengths from the time of inception.

Given the scale of the Indian automobile industry (the world's fourth-largest), the development of i-ACE was viewed as a natural progression for industry training and designed to provide similar benefits as Kangan Institute's ACE in Melbourne. Kangan Institute's involvement in the project spans across two phases:

- **Phase 1 (Aug 2016 - Nov 2019):** Advising the State Government of Gujarat and Maruti Suzuki on the architecture, design and development of the site.
- **Phase 2 (2019 -2022):** Co-developing the operating model, curricula and program offerings.

## PHASE 1 (AUG 2016 - NOV 2019): BUILDING THE FACILITY

Kangan Institute worked in conjunction with the State Government of Gujarat and Maruti Suzuki India Limited to develop architectural, structural and environmental plans to design and construct the facility. This included participation in the initial feasibility study and scope analysis of the i-ACE in close consultation with the Indian partners. Due to the substantial financial commitment involved in the project, the process involved engaging with industry and government stakeholders across multiple locations and time zones to discuss and approve plans for various stages of development. Frequent visits by i-ACE leadership to Kangan Institute's existing ACE in Melbourne were also facilitated to share best practices. Key features of i-ACE borrow from its ACE counterpart in Melbourne, including:

- Open-plan workshops and training spaces
- Sleek modern façade
- State-of-the-art industry learning technology and systems; and
- Environment-friendly, smart elements including natural lighting and natural ventilation.

Phase 1 was successfully completed in April 2019.

## PHASE 2 (2019 – 2022): DEVELOPING THE OPERATING MODEL, TRAINING CURRICULA AND PROGRAM OFFERINGS

The key focus areas identified for i-ACE in consultation with leadership were:

- Long and short-term training programs for Engineering students and graduates
- Train the Trainer programs for Industrial Training Institute (ITI) and Engineering College faculty
- Upskilling programs for entry-level and mid-career industry professionals; and
- Building research capability in the areas of content development, training, and delivery modes

The conceptual blueprint for i-ACE was developed in line with the industry requirements and projected skills gaps in the sector. Drawing on its expertise as a world-class automotive training provider, Kangan Institute provided guidance and models for i-ACE to develop and deliver its training programs.

- *'Class of One' operating model*  
The Class of One is an operating model that focuses on providing students with a highly flexible learning environment supported by robust infrastructure of systems and processes to facilitate this unique individualised student-focussed delivery. This is borne from the recognition that workers can be hired at any time of the year, training schedules, systems, processes and faculty must be able to cater to students studying different units at their own pace. The Class of One provides:
  - » Flexible training environment customised to meet the needs of learners
  - » Self-paced learning
  - » Workplace delivery
  - » 24/7 learning access for students through the dedicated e-learning management system

- » Tailored learning experience for individual students or enterprises
- » Consistent customer experience through a centralised and digital Student Management System

To adequately equip i-ACE to adopt Class of One, Kangan Institute provided operational support for:

- » Administering 'Train the trainer' programs to equip teachers with knowledge and features of digital platform. This training took place in the ACE facility in Melbourne and involved shadowing ACE teachers in the workshop.
  - » Training administration staff for smooth operation and maintenance of platform.
  - » Assisting i-ACE team with recruitment of i-ACE trainers in India to ensure commensurate skills.
- *Training partnership and support*  
Kangan Institute was the training partner for three non-accredited automotive courses:
    - » Course in Advanced Technician Automotive Systems – 132-day program for Graduate Engineers
    - » Course in Technician Automotive Systems – 66-day program for Diploma Graduates
    - » Automotive Competency Enhancement Program – short course
  - *Content and curricula development*
    - » Kangan Institute developed online curricula for approximately 90 automotive units, including automotive electrical, EV and automotive body repair and refinishing.
    - » Bespoke ACE support systems and student management practices were incorporated into i-ACE operations.

i-ACE was on track to enrol its first batch of students in mid-September 2023.

## Lessons for success

Government and industry backing a big factor for success

Kangan Institute's involvement in the development of the i-ACE has provided immense opportunity to showcase its facilities and training model internationally. Like ACE, the i-ACE began as an industry initiative backed by strong government support. In India, this was achieved under the leadership of Maruti Suzuki (which boasts more than 50 per cent of automotive market share in India) and backing from the Government of Gujarat State. This collaborative effort culminated in a unique project that leveraged political and industry support to deliver world-class education training for the benefit of local youth and communities.

### Clear objectives and milestones

Setting clear expectations and establishing transparent lines of communication through virtual and in-person meetings was critical to the progress of collaborations. Having

systems in place to effectively monitor and evaluate progress is also beneficial for the smooth functioning of activities.

### Consultations with third party organisations and agencies

Regular and ongoing consultations with third party government and industry stakeholders are beneficial for gathering insights into evolving market dynamics and pivoting engagement strategies accordingly. These interactions also helped to expand existing networks and avail new opportunities for collaboration.

### Exercising agency and voice in the partnership

Despite the non-financial nature of the partnership between Kangan Institute and Indian stakeholders, Kangan Institute has been consistently involved in decision-making processes relating to the development and training structure of i-ACE. This example of good practice leads to the building of trust, knowledge-sharing and meaningful collaboration that is not dictated by financial gain.

# Holmesglen Institute

Holmesglen Institute is one of the largest public TAFEs in Victoria, Australia, hosting over 20,000 students at the senior secondary, Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education levels. Holmesglen operates six campuses in Melbourne and delivers workplace-based training. Their collaborations with and for industry have been recognised with numerous Victorian and Australian Training Awards.

Holmesglen's International Collaboration Centre has managed offshore projects and partnerships for over 25 years. This Centre delivers both Australian qualifications and customised training solutions for key industry areas including engineering, electrotechnology, English language, hospitality, teacher training, tourism, business and accounting. Holmesglen has offshore partnerships in a range of countries across South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Pacific region. They also provide project management and customised programs with international industry partners and educational institutions in Bahrain, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Qatar, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu.



Image provided by Holmesglen Institute

## Background for the Partnership with GMR Infrastructure, India

In 2008, an independent international development consultancy working with and for GMR Infrastructure India (GMR) approached Holmesglen Institute to explore the development of a workforce capacity-building project for the company. When Holmesglen was approached, construction training in India was challenged by limited skills development infrastructure that lacked systematic curricula for master training in construction trades. This resulted in most training completed on-site by supervisors with limited formal training themselves. GMR's operations were impacted by the inability of their workers to adapt to advancements in construction technology and methods.

### The Client

Since its establishment in 1978, GMR Infrastructure has emerged as one of the leading companies in the India infrastructure space, its portfolio including airports, energy, highways and broad civil construction. In 2012, GMR reported an operating gross value of US\$9.25 billion. It was the world's fourth-largest airport developer, largest national highway developer and had 4963-megawatt power projects under construction.

While the growth in GMR projects had been significant, reliability on outside contractors had been low. The lack of a skilled labour force was highlighted as a major challenge. GMR identified that (i) the vocational training system in India was inadequate to meet the demands of their business; (ii) the migratory nature of the semi-skilled/unskilled labour necessitated constant re-training; and (iii) variations in construction methods/processes by various contractors

led to varying degrees of quality outcomes. The lack of supervisor competency also had negative implications for project outputs and quality and emerged as a key area in which GMR sought to build capacity.

## The Project

Holmesglen staff visited GMR in Hyderabad in 2008, starting the process of project scoping, planning, costing and contract development. Through this process, GMR and Holmesglen chose a model of direct engagement between the parties (i.e., not through the consultancy) to better meet GMR priorities and reduce time frames to deliver commercial results.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) were established and agreed upon between GMR and Holmesglen, clearly detailing the respective responsibilities of the parties. These ToR covered the distinct stages of the project, outlining Holmesglen's responsibilities as:

- undertaking a skills needs analysis of GMR designing and developing bespoke curricula to meet those training needs
- developing and delivering a bespoke 'train the trainer' program
- preparing teaching and learning resources for the GMR Master trainers; and
- establishing a training facility (later named the Skills Development Institute) for GMR in Hyderabad, India

The project was extended several times (up to four contracts) and financed by a combined value of over \$1m (AUD).

In 2010, Holmesglen entered a contract with GMR to assist the company to train its employees to improve their performance and capabilities in the building and construction trades. Holmesglen conducted a needs analysis that was informed by site visits to GMR projects, interviews with on-site engineers, supervisors and GMR executive staff to assess the current capabilities of the organisation. Training programs were designed to:

- train GMR trades workers in technical, applicable building and construction skills, including occupational health and safety and quality assurance skills; and
- to train supervisors ("Master Trainers") and Trainers to prepare and deliver the training themselves.

This was followed by Holmesglen dispatching a cohort of ten teachers to deliver training in rotation. First, the teachers delivered a 14-week 'train the trainer' program to thirty Master Trainers. This was followed by a series of 14-week programs focussing on carpentry skills, bricklaying, tiling and plastering. The final 14-week program was delivered by the GMR Master Trainers under the supervision of the Holmesglen teachers, who acted as mentors for the duration of the program.

Whilst tailoring content to the needs of the client, Holmesglen based the teaching and assessment program on Australian Training Packages, mainly on the Building and Construction package. Holmesglen assisted GMR to design a procurement acquisition plan and to refit an existing facility at the Hyderabad Airport to create a fit-for-purpose Skills Development Centre. A total of 120 GMR employees graduated from the Master Trainer program.

## Major components and activities

Holmesglen delivered three major components: the Skills Development Institute, the Master Trainer Program, and the Trades Worker Training Program.

### Skills Development Institute (SDI)

Holmesglen worked with GMR to renovate an existing facility located at Hyderabad Airport to be a fully functional, fit-for-purpose training facility named the Skills Development Institute (SDI). The SDI included residential facilities for Trainers and students. Where appropriate, the refit was conducted using program participants as an example of, and exercise in, on-the-job training. The SDI was a high-quality training

facility featuring practical and classroom teaching environments, stores, and rooms for the institute's administrative functions.

### **The Master Trainer Program**

The Holmesglen model was designed to build GMR's capacity to train its own workforce through the preparation of a fleet of "Master Trainers". This model was premised on building self-reliance and a sustainable workforce development model for GMR beyond the scope and lifespan of the Holmesglen partnership. Holmesglen's original proposal was to fly a cohort of GMR staff to Melbourne, Australia for six months of training at a Holmesglen Institute campus. Subsequent negotiations reached an agreement to arrange for Holmesglen faculty to deliver the training in Hyderabad.

The Holmesglen training focused on experienced GMR supervisors to be both Trainers and Master Trainers (Master Trainers to train future Trainers). A customised program was developed using the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and specific building and construction skills from the construction training packages. There was a strong focus throughout on both Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and Quality Assurance practices.

The program was designed to weave together four strands of learning:

- Teaching skills - 14-week 'train the trainer'
- Trade skills - bricklayer, plasterer, renderer, concrete finisher, carpenter, form worker and steel fixer
- Professional skills - English, computer, project management, site management
- Personal development

There was a high level of demand for this program, with one in 40 applicants selected into the Master Trainer program. All participants were required to have a high school certificate and were aged between 20-25 years. Applicants were assessed against selection criteria, including technical proficiency; teaching skills; ability to learn; verbal expression; and understanding of teaching. Holmesglen

graduated 120 GMR supervisors through the Master Trainer program. Each of these graduates was considered capable of training up to 30 trades workers on-site.

### **Trades Worker Training Programs**

The trades worker training programs were specially developed for delivery by GMR's Master Trainers and Trainers. The training programs for GMR trades workers were intended to not only increase the current level of hand skills and practice, but to also raise the level of skills awareness and commitment of the workforce. Trades workers were trained and assessed both in classrooms and on-the-job.

The bespoke training program Holmesglen designed for GMR sought to ensure that the company would have a consistently reliable workforce, with increased performance levels in both hands-on skills and application of theory and maintenance of rigorous OHS standards.

The GMR trainers used contextualised learning resources to prepare trade workers for ongoing skill needs and compliance. The learning resources introduced trade workers to local building and construction best practices, an understanding of local construction authority regulations and comprehensive scope of their work environment and safety requirements.

The training was a combination of on and off-site delivery. This approach ensured there was sufficient flexibility for Trainers to deliver training in the SDI classrooms (off-the-job) and on construction project sites (on-the-job) as appropriate and/or available.

Holmesglen determined that there were two distinct trades worker 'streams' which would require two different programs. These were:

STREAM 1: Bricklayer / Plasterer / Renderer / Concrete Finisher

STREAM 2: Carpenter / Form worker / Steel Fixer

The training packages and course content



for each were tested and validated by GMR's subject matter experts and management. The opportunity to skill its workers in more than one trade was viewed favourably by GMR as it would equip workers to work flexibly and competently across multiple trades.

The training programs matured to the point where they were self-sustaining – repeated cycles of Holmesglen delivery built GMR's capacity to 120 fully trained Master Trainers who were readied to train up a new fleet of GMR trainers. The Master Trainers were also equipped to continue to develop their own teaching and assessment materials, as the skills needs of GMR evolved into the future.



Image provided by  
Holmesglen Institute

## Main Challenges

Holmesglen tackled several challenges while developing and delivering their project for GMR. These included:

- Initial challenges with visas, which led to a revision to project deliverables and plans.
- Lack of comparable local VET institutions to work with
- Understanding local resourcing practices
- Building networks to ensure efficient procurement of materials required for training delivery

- Staffing – there were complex administrative and preparation requirements to ensure smooth in-country experience. The Holmesglen staff needed to be flexible and adaptable to local conditions. They required extensive preparation to ensure that there was a good 'fit' with project objectives.

## Lessons for Success

The Holmesglen Institute completed its contract with GMR successfully and on good terms. The staff involved in the project highlighted six major factors that enabled their Institute to deliver the project.

### Having a strong, established industry partner

A strong, well established local industry partner who valued the skills of their own workforce was the most important component for the project's success. GMR recognised the productivity reward from up-skilling and cross-skilling their workforce and were willing to invest in training and developing ongoing training expertise within their organisation.

### Engaging government interest and support across state and national levels

Holmesglen found that the Victorian and Australian Governments' interest in supporting high-quality offshore endeavours through their in-country offices yielded strategic and practical returns. The in-country offices have local networks and knowledge channels that were able to facilitate or expedite formal processes with the state government and garner their support for Holmesglen's training partnership with GMR.

### Preparing their Australian staff well ahead of their in-country work

This involved a process of identifying staff with the appropriate fit, adaptability and flexibility to work in unfamiliar and sometimes difficult circumstances. An

important aspect was to ensure they maintained focus on the project aims and goals and avoided being drawn into local politics and issues.

### **Spending time getting the training model right**

Holmesglen spent time with GMR to thoroughly scope the project, assessing existing capacity and resources, and jointly identifying the company's training needs. This led both parties to prioritise flexibility and adaptability in training delivery at the outset in the project proposal and development.

### **Establishing good governance around the project**

Holmesglen and GMR brought their relevant staff and trainers regularly together to keep track of and discuss problems encountered with training delivery. The partners ensured regular and clear communication and reinforced common goals and value alignments for the implementing the project.



# Engineering Institute of Technology (EIT)

The Engineering Institute of Technology (EIT) is a private registered training organisation (RTO) offering higher education and VET courses registered and accredited by the Australian government as well as corporate training programs. It has been in operation for over 30 years and has student enrolments from over 140 countries.

EIT offers a range of online qualifications under its unique delivery infrastructure, including undergraduate, postgraduate, diplomas and professional certificate courses. These courses are delivered via systems that utilise live and interactive webinars, an international pool of expert lecturers, dedicated learning support officers, and state-of-the-art technologies such as hands-on workshops, remote laboratories, and simulation software. Practical learning experiences such as remote labs are contextualised within relevant industry settings and aim to equip students with applied technical knowledge. EIT currently delivers 35-40 professional certificate qualifications to approximately 1500 students.

## Background for engagement with India

EIT's engagement with India remains at an early, exploratory stage. It is seeking to leverage its position as a private engineering training provider both at the industry and education level to meet India's skilling and corporate training needs.

## CORPORATE TRAINING

EIT has a history of delivering corporate training to Indian engineering companies for upskilling or reskilling technicians and engineers. Some of these programs are delivered by IDC Technologies, a global corporate training platform featuring short courses for professional development in engineering disciplines including Chemical, Civil, Data Communications, Electrical, Electronics, Information Technology, Instrumentation, Mechanical, Project Management and Engineering Preparation.

Image provided by Engineering Institute of Technology

Corporate training programs are delivered either online or onsite and feature customisable content to meet specific client needs. These courses also utilise practical and cutting-edge teaching resources such as remote labs, virtual site tours and live webinars. Currently, EIT has training partnerships with Rolls Royce, Tata and other artificial intelligence (AI) companies based in India.

## ONLINE COURSE DELIVERY

EIT offers a diverse and niche suite of online courses to engineering professionals and graduates who want to upskill or explore pathways for further study in either India or Australia. Its professional certificate courses are non-accredited and typically run for three months online. The courses are attractive to engineers for their flexibility and alignment with industry needs.

Instead of engaging third party services for in-country delivery, EIT operates a reseller model wherein its engineering courses are sold by reliable professionals to on-ground stakeholders (engineering companies and education institutions) for a commission. This set-up allows EIT to retain full control over the onboarding of prospective buyers and delivery while sidestepping issues relating to direct in-country delivery such as accreditation, quality control and faculty recruitment. Instead of mobilising an in-country team of representatives, the reseller model is promoted transnationally through EIT's extensive social media network, instead of in-country representatives approaching local prospects.

The second model that EIT is exploring for transnational delivery in India is that of setting up in-country Study Centres where students engaged in online courses can gain practical experience. The Australia India Future Skills Initiative (AIFSI) has been instrumental to inspiring discussions with Symbiosis University to set up these centres by leveraging their already existing engineering infrastructure.

## Key partnerships

### GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS

EIT's partnerships are mostly concentrated in Southern India, with a presence in Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. Rajasthan, Mumbai and Gujarat also constitute key markets owing to their significant undergraduate demographic. The choice of regions is motivated by critical research into state government approaches to international VET providers' entry, corporate training demand, and industry footprint. EIT is also in the process of recruiting an in-country manager to be based out of Chennai to guide local engagement strategy and provide in-depth market intelligence on the evolving market needs.

### INDUSTRY FOCUS

EIT's training focus is across multiple areas of engineering, including technical, civil, mechanical, electrical engineering and industrial automation. As one of the few providers in Australia offering industrial automation at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, EIT regards itself as well-positioned to leverage its expertise to engage with emerging players in the Indian industry. One such company that EIT is seeking to partner is Delta, a Taiwanese electronics manufacturing company with four manufacturing plants in India. It aims to establish a partnership for training technical engineers recruited by Delta to helm the company's India operations in the AI field. This will allow it to expand and develop its Bachelor of industrial automation program for transnational delivery.

### MOU WITH GUJARAT TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (GTU)

Due to limited competition in the private sector as an engineering VET provider, EIT's growth strategy is premised on evaluating the scope and content of engineering qualifications offered by universities and

other education institutions. This extends to developing knowledge partnerships with Indian technological universities that enable access to local industry, student mobility and blended learning models.

Since 2019, EIT has partnered with the Gujarat Technological University (GTU) and navigating key elements of recognition of prior learning (RPL) and academic mobility which will enable Indian students to pursue pathways to further qualifications in EIT's Australia campus. The partnership with GTU enables EIT to access its vast pool of half a million students, over 400 schools and strong industry network. While student exchange has been difficult to facilitate under this program on account of logistical issues, EIT has committed to faculty mobility programs, with two academics from GTU set to visit and work in EIT's mechanical and civil engineering labs in December.

## Main Challenges

### SCALE VS PRICE

Catering to the price sensitivities of the Indian market while ensuring strong returns on its transnational investment continues to be a challenge for EIT. While negotiations with the Indian government around establishing appropriate pricing models are ongoing, the lack of adequate awareness around the various infrastructure and miscellaneous costs of delivering in-country remains a point of caution. Scale – a recurring point of endorsement of the Indian market – is not considered a substitute for price, especially in the context of India's impressive domestic engineering training infrastructure.

EIT views this risk factor as one that needs to be mapped thoroughly at the high level by bilateral policy dialogues such as the AIFSI and trade missions. This can ensure that Australian providers venturing into the Indian market are on an upward trajectory, yielding strong returns to invest back into high-quality programs.

## ACCREDITATION

EIT's advanced diploma, bachelor's and master's degrees are accredited by Engineers Australia (EA) which poses a challenge for these courses to be delivered in-country by third party providers. Establishing equivalence standards between the Indian National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is critical to pursuing in-country delivery. However, EIT does not view qualification-mapping as an urgent priority under its current approach of online TNE engagement which is mainly pursued through the reseller model and focused on directing in-country students to pathways for further learning in Australia.

## FULFILMENT OF CRITICAL ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

EIT has established rigorous entry standards for its programs to prevent student attrition and dropout. This involves performing critical due diligence to ensure that students fulfill all criteria, including adequate English language proficiency. While non-negotiable entry requirements mitigate risk and ensure a high quality of cohorts graduating from EIT programs, they are also antithetical to the 'scale' argument. EIT's process of vetting prospective students against established standards can result in a smaller scale of in-country engagement.

## Lessons and future opportunities

Establish tailored engagement strategies for key states and regions

EIT's engagement strategy in India is built on undertaking in-depth research and gathering market intelligence data on consumer patterns for its specialised engineering training. It uses sophisticated business analytics methods to scope out key Indian states and regions with promising online VET or corporate training markets. The success of its operations is based on tailoring course

offerings to meet the unique demographic needs of each state or regional market. EIT's intends to raise its profile in major cities in these states by appointing an in-country manager in Chennai to grow its regional presence and engagement in southern India.

## UTILISE IN-COUNTRY PROVIDERS TO DELIVER CUSTOMISED CONTENT

EIT's strategy of delivering practical training through locally based study centres enables it to develop partnerships with reputed Indian VET institutions and industry. Under this model, EIT delivers proprietary content while relying on the infrastructure and expertise of Indian partner institutions. This allows Indian students to access workshops and labs housed within the study centres to gain practical training in addition to their online modules. Currently, EIT is negotiating with ESP Global Services, an IT company, to set up a lab in Pune, in addition to potentially setting up a study centre at Symbiosis University.

Image provided by Engineering Institute of Technology

## FORMALISE AGREEMENTS AND SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

A rigorous vetting process to ensure onboarding the right partners is critically important for a successful partnership. Exercising transparency around set expectations with Indian partners and agents is crucial to avoid potential conflict and misunderstandings between parties. Formalised agreements are essential for reflecting the educational priorities of both parties.

## GRADUAL EXPANSION TOWARD POSSIBLE IN-COUNTRY DELIVERY

EIT views in-country delivery as being a realistic possibility, subject to the successful configuration of pricing models, accreditation, and quality assurance frameworks. The role of the Australian government and bilateral initiatives such as the AIFSI is seen as crucial for optimising its entry and potential expansion into the Indian market. An additional advantage for expansion is the presence of Indian diaspora in key leadership positions at EIT who can connect and establish relations of trust with regional partners, state governments, and business stakeholders.



# BSI Learning

BSI Learning (hereafter BSI) is a private Australian accredited VET provider and RTO which offers corporate-level training, EdTech, digital learning and development solutions. BSI is also the largest provider of Inmate Education in Australia. It delivers 26 qualifications nationally and internationally, spanning Leadership, HR, IT, Cybersecurity, Logistics, Supply Chain, Manufacturing and Hospitality.

BSI has developed a long-term market strategy to take VET to international markets. Using Austrade's Market Information Package (MIP), the company analysed relevant market intelligence and data to formulate a strategy to launch its transnational education strategy in India.

## Background for entry in India

BSI is a recent entrant in India's VET sector. Its approach is driven by a heightened recognition of India as a potential 'global skills capital' which can meet the global demand for diverse workforce skills. It is strongly focused on the employability outcomes of its VET programs in directing Indian students towards jobs aligned with their skill levels.

BSI began its exploration of India's skills development market in September 2022 through meetings with Austrade representatives. This interaction was key to building awareness around India's ambitious skilling agenda and opportunities for BSI to contribute to this vision. The [Australia India Future Skills Initiative](#) provided the opportunity to attend several events in India and interact with various trade and investment commissioners to design international engagement strategies tailored to the Indian market.



Image provided by BSI Learning

## Partnership development

### STRATEGY

The process of identifying key partners was made easier through Austrade's efforts around the Australia India Future Skills Initiative. It offered several opportunities to attend events in India and meet with various stakeholders from universities, corporations, and community organisations. Austrade representatives in India assisted by providing information and advice on education services suitability, assessing market potential, local regulatory frameworks, business matching, introductions, and facilitation of meetings with relevant local market and industry experts and international education representatives. These opportunities and assistance enabled BSI to develop a framework for designing a VET engagement strategy for India.

BSI recognised that Indian market dynamics are unique to every state or region, based on emerging industries and their workforce needs. Its strategy has thus centred on identifying these market needs for particular states and then working with partners to introduce qualifications that benchmark the vocational skills needed to upskill the workforce. Its VET strategy focuses on the top three emerging fields for skilling: IT, cybersecurity and manufacturing.

## KEY PARTNERS

After assessing around 40 potential partners, BSI identified 5 partners for establishing partner relationships. These include:

- An NGO which focuses on cyber awareness & cyber defence
- A Skills University where 80% of the learning is job-based and 20% is classroom-based
- An executive education provider for the corporate training market
- A science-focussed university in Bangalore to solidify a market position in southern India; and
- A tech company with Government contracts for delivering cybersecurity solutions

The process of finalising a working MOU was preceded by a year of meetings, discussions, capability presentations and due diligence checks between both parties. BSI staff made several visits to India to build trust and working relationships with these partners.

With the groundwork on MOUs well-advanced, a BSI delegation visited India in September 2023 to officially launch its partnerships. The launch strongly emphasised the quality of training along with reinforcing the equal status and commitment of Indian and Australian partners in the venture.

## Engagement model

BSI does not have an in-country presence in India. Its transnational VET activities will be carried out by its Indian partners, with regular online meetings and biannual visits to India by the BSI leadership team and relevant education staff.

The model of engagement involves setting the standards for entry requirements for student recruitment to ensure effective delivery of training. BSI will work with partners to establish the eligibility criteria, English language requirements, volume of learning, assessment conditions, learning environment and well-being needs of all

students. In preparation for launching its courses and programs, BSI will train the trainers and supervisors of the Indian partner organisations. Once the partners are well-equipped and confident with the BSI curricula and training methods, they will be fully in charge of recruitment, provision of facilities, including providing any placement or internship for their graduates.

BSI aims to maintain steady student numbers and a continuous pipeline of potential enrolments to keep the model sustainable and profitable. Its programs will be designed to be agile to changing technologies and industry demands while being responsive to the price sensitivities of the Indian market.

## ACCREDITATION

BSI will lead quality assurance and compliance responsibilities in all training delivered in India. It will assess Indian students against the same quality standards as Australian VET students to ensure equal competency. All assessments will be graded by Australian trainers/assessors before the issuance of qualifications and certificates. BSI recognises the importance of mapping the AQF against the Indian NSQF so that Indian students can have compatible standards for maximising the benefits of transnational VET qualifications. However, it does not intend to undertake this significant exercise on its own due to the lack of clear benchmarks and validation for comparative analysis.

## CONTRACT AND FUNDING

BSI aims to enter into multi-year contracts with Indian partners after undertaking a pilot program to review the market appetite, operational quality, outcomes for students and industry feedback. Currently, its transnational VET programs are financed by fee-paying students or working professionals who undertake corporate upskilling training. BSI has committed to fund all activities in 2023 from its own operating expenses with an additional back up of investors and shareholders if required in 2024-25.





## Main challenges

BSI recognises several challenging factors in the Indian skills development ecosystem. The central issue is that there is limited awareness among the Indian public and industry employers of the rigorous quality and standards of Australian VET and its positive and responsive integration with industry, national economy, global economic trends, and student workplace experience. The Indian vocational training courses are not designed in the way that Australian VET courses are designed to meet performance and assessment standards outlined in the AQF. The Indian NSQF and the AQF have

not been mapped against each other to show correspondences between qualification levels. This leads to misguided comparisons between Australian VET programs and domestic Polytechnic and Diploma courses.

Price sensitivities, regional differences in language, literacy, numeracy English proficiency, and industry links for student work placement are additional challenging factors affecting program delivery that is compliant with AQF standards.

The following table summarises BSI's assessments of the main barriers to entry.

<b>Barriers to entry</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Price sensitivities (ability to generate sufficient revenue)	x	
Scaling up VET programs		x
Student recruitment		x
System complexity		x
Credential creep (e.g., VET qualifications deemed inferior to higher education degrees)	x	
Limited brand awareness/visibility in India	x	
Graduate employment placement (i.e., in employment)	x	
Compliance with Australian regulatory frameworks and quality assurance systems	x	
Compliance with India's regulatory framework and quality assurance systems		x
Medium of instruction (e.g., English, or local language)	x	
Other language, literacy and numeracy proficiency issues	x	

## Lessons for Success

As a recent entrant into India's skills education market, BSI sees a vast market potential for VET education with many opportunities for multiple foreign providers to fulfill India's needs for a diverse range of VET education and skills. It attributes its successful entry to four factors:

- The role of Austrade in facilitating and formalising transnational education ties with Indian institutions and industry.
- A specific regional focus for building relationships with state governments and major industries within them to establish groundwork for entry.
- Careful assessment of existing VET providers in the region to identify different partners for delivering programs and courses
- Strategic partnership development, which involves long-term investment in building trust with education partners, industry, government, and students for achieving a sustainable scale of quality program delivery which complies with Australian and Indian qualification standards.



Image provided by GeSS Education



## GeSS Education Queensland

Established in 2012, GeSS Education (hereafter GeSS) initially operated as a resource and education compliance management company. During this phase, they developed and provided resources to various registered training organisations, in addition to offering compliance management services and conducting audits. By 2016, this journey led to the creation of their own Learning Management System aimed to address the evolving needs of students in the context of the growth of online learning platforms.

In 2018, GeSS conducted a promotional event in Bangladesh in collaboration with the Institute of Business & Management, one of their longstanding partner RTOs in Sydney. This event played a pivotal role in gaining firsthand insights into the preferences and attitudes of Bangladeshi students regarding online learning for obtaining international qualifications.

Key insights emerging from this event were:

- Students showed limited interest in online education. They were predominantly inclined towards classroom-based instruction and pursuing their studies abroad.
- GeSS' lack of a physical campus posed a considerable hurdle in establishing its

presence as an education provider. The market demanded a brick-and-mortar foundation for educational presence in Australia even though such a need was not felt at the time. This preference was primarily attributed to a trust factor in international education.

In response to these evolving dynamics, GeSS made the decision in 2019 to reroute its focus from transnational VET delivery to a novel mode aimed at delivering qualifications on behalf of their trusted partner Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The Gold Coast was strategically identified as the ideal location for the delivery site given its regional significance. GeSS inaugurated its campus in January 2020.

The GeSS campus in the Gold Coast was designed to accommodate an 80% to 20% ratio of international to domestic students. However, this plan took a dramatic turn when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted international education mobility. GeSS was able to swiftly adapt to this challenging situation by leveraging its online education expertise and extensive network of partner RTOs and pivot towards the domestic market with government funding.

While this approach boosted domestic student intake and expanded program



Image provided by GeSS Education

outreach during the pandemic period, GeSS continued to search new opportunities and partners for its expansion into international education.

## Background for Entry into India

GeSS' entry into India was facilitated through high-level guidance and introductions to local education providers by Austrade's in-country representatives. It established an initial agreement in late 2020 with Z3 Consulting in India. Following extensive discussions and collaborations over two years, the agreement developed into a partnership between GeSS and Z3 Consulting in 2022.

Due to complexities surrounding student visas for vocational study headed to Australia, GeSS embarked on innovative strategies for training international students. Starting in 2022, it developed an offshore in-country training model which offered 'reality training' expertise in domestic aged care training and a user-friendly Learning Management System (LMS). This model delivered online training and provided extensive support to students through its in-country partner.

## PARTNERSHIP MODEL

In collaboration with Z3 Consulting, GeSS established partnerships with reputable institutes delivering nursing training in India

to offer in-depth online training in aged care. Students enrolled in the program undertake online instruction as per their training plan combined with weekly virtual classes led by GeSS' qualified trainers and assessors. The Indian partners provide the necessary infrastructure, including study centres, electricity, computers, internet access, practical rooms, and most importantly, Indian nursing educators and administration/support staff who ensure students actively participate in virtual classes. The educators collaborate closely with the qualified trainers and assessors to monitor students' progress in their online studies. They work with a student services manager to ensure students adhere to the training plan established during induction.

By complementing online learning with in-country training experience, GeSS was able to address the challenge of self-motivation for completing online education. Its staff make regular trips to India to meet students, oversee practical training, and ensure that work placements align with Australian standards.

## PARTNERSHIP WITH ERAM TECHNOLOGIES

In August 2022, the GeSS leadership visited India to engage with key stakeholders and assess opportunities for enlarging its in-country footprint. This resulted in a partnership with Eram Technologies in Kochi, Kerala to establish an innovative program aimed at Indian nursing graduates. The

program was set to commence in February 2023. Over the course of 12 months, the program would prepare these graduates for registration as Australian Registered Nurses, a prerequisite for obtaining a Skilled Visa for migration. At the time, aged care was not included in the Skills Shortage List and hence this program responded to the specific skill demand for nurses.

The marketing for the nurse registration program happened to coincide with the Department of Home Affairs' announcement of the addition of the New Aged Care Industry Labour Agreement to the Skilled Visa 482 in May 2023. This decision led GeSS to quickly recalibrate its course objectives and speedily pivot to a comprehensive, full-time 6-month Skilled Visa Program for aged care. This program caters to students with considerable experience in aged care, as well as newly graduated nurses with an Indian diploma or a bachelor's degree. The primary aim of this program is to position graduates for sponsorship by aged care providers in Australia, facilitated by either a company-specific labour agreement or the new Aged Care Labour Agreement for the Skilled Visa 482.

## PROGRAM MODEL

The Skilled Visa Program for aged care includes an extensive recruitment process that runs concurrently with study. This process involves pre-screening, resume development, coaching for interview

techniques, and preparation of final resumes and recorded interviews. At present, GeSS oversees three active cohorts participating in the Skilled Visa Program based in Kochi, Kerala. These students are at different phases of the program and focused on building their resumes with volunteering and industry experience.

GeSS' pricing and profit-sharing model is tailored to the unique governance infrastructure developed with its partners. The financial model negotiations typically run for three months to arrive at mutually favourable outcomes. Course pricing is set at a uniform level across all partners within India to ensure fairness for students. Since GeSS's program offerings are oriented to achieving migration pathways for trained students, the placement for the Skilled Visa Program carries an extra cost of AU \$1,000 to \$2,000 per student.

GeSS has commenced a partnership with the Indian Institute of Learning & Advanced Development (INLEAD), Gurugram, Haryana India in August 2023, offering offshore delivery of Australia Quality Frameworks (AQF) certificates and diplomas to Indian students with the option of pathways to finish the course in Australia. INLEAD have launched an Australian Healthcare Bridge Program (AHBP) to provide training to Indian youth on Australian level-III certifications as per Australian employment standards to help students qualify for career opportunities via sponsorships in the Australian healthcare industry.

Image provided by GeSS Education





Image provided by GeSS Education

## Lessons for Success

GeSS identifies the following factors as fundamental to its success in India:

- Role of Austrade as a crucial government catalyst:** Austrade plays a very important role in offering market advice, high-level guidance and introductions to state government officials and local VET provider networks.
- Leveraging Credibility and Trust through local partners:** GeSS partnership with Z3 Consulting resulted in opening avenues for other partnerships. The Z3 founder is now the CEO South Asia for GeSS and has a long-standing reputation for trust and credibility in the domestic VET education market. Potential partners are more forthcoming to engage with organisations represented by established and credible industry figures.
- Continuous communication as the cornerstone of successful engagement:** The interplay between continuous communication and strategic introductions ensure that partner collaborations are productive built on a foundation of trust, understanding, and mutual respect. Sustained dialogue allows GeSS to gain deeper insights into the unique needs, concerns, and expectations of prospective partners. This in-depth understanding enables the tailoring of programs and support to align precisely with their specific requirements. Consistent and transparent communication fosters a profound sense of partnership and shared commitment, further solidifying the sustainability and mutual benefit of collaborations.
- Iterative improvement:** Continuous communication enables GeSS to adapt and enhance its offerings based on partner feedback. This iterative process ensures that programs remain dynamic, responsive, and, most importantly, effective.
- Timely problem resolution:** Respectful and friendly communication between partners allows for acknowledging cultural nuances, addressing doubts, and facilitating early identification and swift resolution of issues.
- Regular visits to India by GeSS leadership:** Regular visits by GeSS leadership signals recognition of Indian partners' contributions at the highest levels and conveys a strong sense of commitment to the partnerships. Including trusted in-country partners and Indian diaspora colleagues in the visits also facilitates ease of communication in local languages and understanding of cultural nuances.
- Word-of-mouth referrals from satisfied partners and students** have led to numerous opportunities for new partnerships. However, the overwhelming interest has required GeSS to follow a careful screening process to safeguard its core principles and ethical commitment towards both domestic and offshore employability of its Indian students.



## Conclusion

The case studies provided in this report are aimed at building an evidence base for past, current and emerging engagements shaping the transnational VET space between Australia and India. By highlighting the unique strategies, challenges and best practices characterising the experiences of Australian VET providers in the Indian skills market, these case studies can inform future strategies of engagement by the Australian government and VET providers for optimising transnational VET delivery in India.

Each case study offers a set of key lessons that is unique to its engagement model and undertaking of transnational VET activities. The common insights emerging from their lessons for success are:

### **Engaging government and industry support**

The role of the Australian government via Austrade, the AIFSI and trade initiatives

of state governments is critical for gaining market intelligence and access to high-level decision makers in the Indian national and state governments, regulatory agencies, peak industry bodies and networks associated with the skills education ecosystem.

### **Finding the right partner(s)**

Performing critical due diligence before onboarding local partners is crucial to ensure future compatibility. All five Australian VET providers point to the importance of open and transparent communication regarding key expectations and responsibilities prior to advancing partnerships. Complementing virtual meetings and discussions with in-person visits is viewed as an efficient way to assess compatibility with prospective Indian partners. All providers emphasise the importance of dedicating time and resources to establish strong systems of governance for guiding successful partnerships with in-country providers.

### **Scale not a substitute for quality**

Maintaining the high quality of program offerings is a non-negotiable, top priority for Australian providers. All have established critical entry requirements for their courses. Although these standards ensure the recruitment of handpicked, high-quality cohorts, they can initially be counterproductive for the financial sustainability of the engagement model by reducing revenue streams. However, over the longer term, the brand reputation of high-quality courses and student employment outcomes can lead to increased demand and potential for scaling up program delivery.

### **Optimising regulatory environment and qualification mapping**

Mapping qualifications to establish equivalence is critical to improving domestic employment outcomes for students and professionals undertaking transnational VET. For private Australian RTOs like EIT and BSI Learning, mapping AQF levels against the ones outlined in the Indian NSQF is essential for securing prospective students who want to pursue employment or further study in India, Australia, or other countries.

### **Leading with principles of equity and respect**

Adopting culturally responsive and respectful engagement strategies are key to building enduring connections with local stakeholders and community. Australian providers highlight the importance of treating all partners equitably, and the benefits of key leadership being directly involved in these interactions. A key advantage to effectively navigating cultural norms and communication is having Indian diaspora representatives in executive positions and engaged in meetings with partners. Investing in local managers based in-country is critical for accessing market intelligence and understanding local skilling needs for sustained engagement and program delivery strategies.

### **Bilateral agreements for transnational VET infrastructure**

Increased government-to-government dialogue is viewed as important to establishing mutually beneficial infrastructure of transnational VET that enables Australian providers to sustain the quality of their offerings while being responsive to the price sensitivities of the Indian market.



# Appendix 1: Follow-up interviews

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Ms Kala Philips	Director/CEO	BSI Learning
Mr Rolf Baum	International Recruitment Manager	Engineering Institute of Technology (EIT)
Mr Leo Bremanis	Trade & Investment Commissioner – South Asia – New Delhi	The Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade)

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