

AT A GLANCE



Target Participants

Newly arrived migrants and refugees with less than functional English language skills in Queensland



Aim

To develop English language skills, digital literacy, and practical skills for living and working in Australia during COVID-19 restrictions



Organisations Involved

TAFE Queensland



Location

Online



Funding

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), Department of Home Affairs



AMEP teacher Jennifer Andres Ruiz leading a Zoom online class

CASE STUDY

TAFE Queensland

Queensland's newest migrants and refugees turned to TAFE Queensland for critical online support during the COVID-19 pandemic. As restrictions were introduced, TAFE QLD's English Language and Literacy Services quickly activated plans for the remote delivery of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

About the program

Each year, TAFE Queensland delivers the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) to thousands of migrants and refugees. For students like Ibrahim Khalif Hussein, who normally attends TAFE Queensland's Inala campus, the Australian government-funded program is life-changing.

'Before moving to Australia, I was in a refugee camp in Kenya for fourteen years,' says Ibrahim. 'When I arrived in Brisbane, everything seemed hard. I did not know how to buy things from the supermarket or catch the bus.'

For students like Ibrahim to continue their learning, TAFE Queensland made the swift decision to adapt its delivery of the AMEP in response to COVID-19 restrictions.

'Students and educators across the program have all had to quickly adapt to this new teaching and learning environment,' says AMEP Program Co-ordinator Deb Favier. 'While it's been a big learning curve and adjustment for everyone, students are loving the opportunity to keep learning.'

TAFE Queensland used a mixture of online and workbook learning. Each student's language, literacy and numeracy needs were carefully evaluated to determine an appropriate learning mode. Supplementary materials were developed to assist students in the transition.

Educator Fiona Wilkinson says,

'While it obviously is difficult for low level language students, most of whom have little to no technology skills, they have risen to the challenge with the support of their teachers, family members, and even their classmates. I've had an amazing response and I'm very proud of them, how much they've built on their English and technology skills, and what they continue to achieve.'



Challenges

1. **Self-paced learning:** For many students in the program's lower levels, one of the greatest challenges was the inability to have a teacher or tutor physically present to guide them through materials. To address this, students had access to weekly one-on-one support in order to discuss the learning materials in more depth.
2. **Digital Literacy:** Some migrants and refugees had little exposure to, or experience with, online technology. Many students had no direct access to a computer, email inbox, or online conferencing software. To support those with lower levels of digital literacy, TAFE Queensland developed a range of informative materials to guide students through how to install and use Zoom.
3. **Range of abilities:** preparing group activities that provided positive participation for all abilities was challenging at times, as there was a wide range of abilities within the program.

Key Learnings

This experience has generated 2 key learnings for TAFE Queensland

1. For new migrants and refugees, the stress imposed by abrupt changes (such as those during the COVID-19 response) is compounded exponentially.

'Imagine moving to a new country with an unfamiliar language,' says Program Co-ordinator Deb Favier. 'You don't have a wide network of friends to lean on for help and support, and often little or no family close by. Now, suddenly, you need to isolate and respond to a whole range of new and unexpected guidelines. For many of the students in the program, the link to and communication with their AMEP teachers has been a lifeline for support and up-to-date information.'

2. Online delivery provided students with a chance to develop critical technology skills for transitioning into work.

'I learned how to use Zoom to study with my teacher and classmates. I'm growing in my abilities and learning something new for me,' says AMEP student Ibrahim Khalif Hussein. 'It's improved my English a lot.'

More information

For more information, visit <https://tafeqld.edu.au/tells>

