

# Vocational Pathways helps Mathew live the dream

Trades Academy, Universal College of Learning, Palmerston North

Mathew Feekes has given the thumbs up to Jamie Oliver and the thumbs down to Gordon Ramsey.

Mathew's ambition is to work in the hospitality industry. He's not quite sure whether to be a chef or own or manage his own cafe. Whatever the outcome he doesn't want a "kitchen nightmare."

Mathew's moment of indecision occurred 18 months ago. He was on the verge of leaving St Peter's College, Palmerston North, but instead was interested in how Vocational Pathways could help him.

Being in the Trades Academy has allowed Mathew to continue his education and achieve NCEA Level 2 at school and spend a day a week at the Trades Academy at UCOL. Under the guidance of Kelly Gay, the Executive Dean of Trades and Technology, and his team, Mathew could explore options, receive work experience and successfully transition into the work force.

"We give them the space and environment to make better choices," Kelly says.

Mathew enjoyed cooking at home and raised the idea with the UCOL team. "They were positive, created an atmosphere for me to learn and gave me hand-on opportunities," he says.

"They prepared me for the real world. Suddenly I was doing it."

Doing it included mastering the coffee machine at UCOL's Ambitions Restaurant, knowing the difference between a latte and a flat white, preparing and cooking meals, serving customers in a formal setting and working front of house.

It's the same challenge for the Trades Academy that the students are fulfilled, mentored, gain life experience and explore options.



\* This image represents the Service Industries pathway only.



Seeing people enjoy something I have made is the best feeling. My path is Blue.

By the end of 2013 Mathew had achieved his National Certificate in Hospitality and, this year, he's tackling a one year Business Management Course. That means he has the flexibility to choose between managing his own restaurant or being creative in the kitchen.

"I love what Jamie Oliver does. I'd love to work with him and he doesn't swear at you," Mathew comments.

Already Mathew has a part-time job at Joe's Garage restaurant and, last year, was nominated for UCOL's Most Outstanding Student. And all this is happening while he's still a Year 13 student at St Peter's College.

"Seventy percent of students don't go to university. That's the bulk of them. We see our job is to provide pathways for students so they can make sense of the confusion before a student leaves school without knowing what to do," Kelly says.

"It's so important to create an environment where they grow and mature and make decisions for themselves. The Vocational Pathways framework supports that."

Seventeen year old Mathew Feekes is an ideal, walking, talking, cappuccino making example. He's one of 257 students at UCOL's Trades Academy who is taking charge of his future.

More than 4,200 senior secondary schools students, from 264 schools are currently enrolled at a Trades Academy this year, in 22 Secondary-Tertiary Programmes throughout New Zealand. Using the Vocational Pathways, students can plan their options from learning to earning.

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