

High fives for Vocational Pathways' hands-up

Hamish Mitchell has magic in his hands

He knew he had magic but didn't know where the passion in his fingertips would lead. A teacher at Ngaruawahia High School intervened and recommended the Waikato Trades Academy at Wintec, the Waikato Institute of Technology.

However even there, Hamish wasn't sure. He tasted hospitality and carpentry but there was something compelling about electrical engineering. It sparked an interest in more ways than one.

He excelled in the soldering and wiring and putting the components together. When he was challenged to assemble a motorbike which included making some of the parts himself, Hamish did more than "solder on." He achieved his goal. "I could make it go," he said proudly.

What Hamish has excelled at is what the Trades Academy and the Vocational Pathways set up to achieve – to provide young people with more relevant options to learn; get industry relevant qualifications, achieve NCEA Level 2 and find a pathway to their future.

By the end of 2013 Hamish had completed a National Certificate in Electrical Engineering Level 2 and achieved NCEA Levels 2 and 3. Hamish had magic in his mind as well as his hands.

He may have achieved it himself but he had help. "My tutor was great. He understood me and explained stuff I didn't know," Hamish says.

Now Hamish is back at Wintec studying for his Bachelor of Information Technology and learning about computers, databases and absorbing the essential knowledge and language of IT.

According to Wintec's Youth Pathways Manager, Rachel Bowley, his achievement is a "fantastic example of a student transitioning from Trades Academy into higher level study."

Vocational Pathways, which gave Hamish a feel for his future and then directed him into the world beyond Ngaruawahia High, "influenced my career and made the difference" he comments.



* This image represents the Manufacturing and Technology pathway only.



I want to create things that move. My path is Red.



Hamish had the hands, Wintec gave him the hands-on and Vocational Pathways the hands-up.

In the future Hamish wants a career in IT, either as a systems analyst or a database administrator. He also knows he has a profession which is portable and will take him anywhere in the world.

The driving force behind Wintec's Trades Academy is Rachel Bowley. Wintec started with 60 boys and one girl and now her team looks after, mentors and inspires 420 students who study a range of courses from manufacturing and construction to tourism, beauty and hospitality.

"Using the Vocational Pathways, we provide a range of programmes to meet the needs of students such as Hamish who come from many communities to Wintec's Hamilton campus and its satellite site in Thames," Rachel says.

"We focus our attention on the students and create opportunities for them. Many, who would have dropped out of school or weren't performing in the classroom, are given a renewed chance to transition to the workforce."

"Our tutors become the role models, give the students hands-on experience and make them work ready for an employer."

When students leave secondary school about 30 percent go on to university. Rachel was one of them but she now sees her role as giving the other 70 percent their opportunity to seek a pathway to future employment through the Vocational Pathways.

The Vocational Pathways have applied an easy lens for students, parents and employers to understand how learning relates to the world of work, so they can plan their future.

"When you see the changes the Academy is making to a young person's life, then it's all worthwhile," Rachel says.

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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