My name is Dylan, I’m in year 12 and I’m studying VET Laboratory Skills.

I’ve always wanted to have a career in the science industry, whether it just be a lab technician or a medical scientist and when I finish this course I can actually further my studies by studying a diploma or a Certificate IV, and with that I can actually use that as an entry into university. Another thing with the course is that it can actually contribute to your ATAR if you choose it to as a scored assessment.

My expectations for Laboratory Skills were, if I’m being honest, not that high. But it’s been totally different towards my expectations, have been totally blown out of proportion. It’s a lot of hands-on work, I mean, a lot of students will agree with me that a lot of subjects, especially science subjects, don’t have a lot of practical investigations but with VET, that’s totally different, there’s a lot of experiments, almost every week we’re doing something hands on.

It’s all about performing the experiments. We will rarely set up the experiments so we don’t do a lot of the boring part, we do the exciting part. In fact in the past few weeks we’ve done a lot of microbiology and working aseptically, so we’ve done a lot of transferring bacteria to microscope slides, and looking under a microscope. I actually love microbiology, it’s probably my favourite thing I’ve learnt about in my course so far. What was most exciting about the bacteria were we actually did culturing and so there’s just so many, and just the shapes, different shapes, different sizes. Also we’ve actually done animal cells, and we’ve actually seen animal cells being invaded by bacteria so that was certainly an interesting experience.

I’ve certainly surpassed my expectations of my abilities and what I can do, such as doing very complex procedures regarding bacteria. We’ve done gram staining, and then with the microscopes we actually studied a number of different microscopes, we’ve done microscopes that actually see in infrared and for dissecting specimens and we’ve done microscopes that have varying levels of magnification.

It does improve and complement my other subjects, particularly Chemistry, but it’s not a prerequisite. You don’t actually have to study any science at all.

In the course, it’s a mixture of theory and practical investigations, but the theory provides the foundation for what we’re going to do, from communication in the workplace all the way to microbiology. We are taught how to handle bacterial spills if we do accidentally spill a culture of bacteria or a solution of bacteria. So it’s not a daunting or scary experience.

How structured workplace learning fits into the course is that it’s not a compulsory thing, you can choose to do it if you want to but it’s highly recommended as it will greatly improve your knowledge and skills. Where I took mine was at my school actually, I actually worked in a lab prep room and I actually helped the lab technicians that were there.

Anyone will tell you that learning in a workplace is so much different to actually being in a workplace. So I actually did learn a lot of new skills working with professionals in the science industry. One of my first things was actually learning how to make a solution of chemicals. That greatly improved my understanding of science in general. I believe it has given me extremely relevant skills, not just in the science aspect but in just the work environment. I learnt a lot about how to present yourself in a work environment, what is ethical and unethical and it has certainly become like a hobby to me; I actually really enjoy going to this course.

I don’t consider it as like a school subject I have to learn. I mean, we willingly come to our subject, it’s not like we’re forced. And I definitely look forward to it each and every week I go.