



## Student Crosses Institutional Boundaries to Excel in IT

*After supplementing his high school studies with college-level networking courses, Chris Deigan received top honors on the New South Wales Higher School Certificate IT exam.*

Chris Deigan is an 18-year-old university student and part-time IT professional who lives in a suburb of Sydney, Australia. As a participant in the New South Wales Tertiary Vocational Education and Training (TVET) program, Deigan spent a portion of his last two years in high school taking all four of the Cisco® Networking Academy® CCNA® courses at Northern Sydney Institute Meadowbank vocational college. After completing the courses, Deigan received a Certificate II with Distinction in IT, which is recognized across Australia.

"The TVET program required us to participate in work placement," says Deigan. "In the second year, we worked at the Kings School, a large private school that uses Cisco equipment extensively on its grounds. That allowed us to gain experience working on an active network infrastructure. One of my classmates is now the administrator for network connectivity at the school."

Of the thousands of students in New South Wales who sat for the 2008 Higher School Certificate examination, which also serves as a university entrance test, Deigan scored highest in the state in the IT course category. This helped earn him a place in an IT degree program at the University of Technology, Sydney. It also helped him find a job in a difficult labor market. "I was able to go straight into an IT job after graduation, and I think the Cisco courses really helped with that," says Deigan. "The courses definitely gave me an advantage over people who leave school without the hands-on experience." When he isn't attending class, he performs network administrative tasks and provides customer support at Anchor, an Australian web hosting provider.

"The CCNA courses were the ones I really looked forward to each week," Deigan recalls. "Since our class was relatively small, just five students, we had a really close-knit, interactive classroom environment. We were able to use the lab equipment individually and in teams, which provided very realistic, practical experience and also allowed us to collaborate in analyzing problems with our setups. The theory is interesting, but it's more interesting when you actually get to do something with it. On the other hand, if you want to be really good at the practical aspects, you need the theory as well."

The process of comparing and matching the content of courses offered by secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, and universities is known as "articulation." Articulation helps ensure that a student who advances to the next education level has the prerequisite knowledge and skills implied by a diploma or certificate. Networking Academy courses are flexible enough to fit the requirements and pedagogical styles of a broad range of institutions, while still maintaining instructional quality and consistency.



**Chris receives an award for placing first on the Higher School Certificate IT Exam**