

About Us



NorQuest College empowers learners to excel in their academic pursuits, embark on new career paths, and contribute meaningfully to society. Through dynamic applied research initiatives, innovative collaborations, and customized training, NorQuest catalyzes transformative change in communities, organizations, and businesses. Our commitment to forging robust partnerships and delivering workforce-relevant resources underpins our mission to drive social and economic development in Edmonton and the surrounding regions. As a pivotal player in Edmonton's innovation ecosystem, NorQuest crafts essential training programs, and conduct groundbreaking research, paving the way for a stronger workforce.

Successes

The VR training program has evolved to cater to a broader audience. It equips diverse jobseekers with invaluable skills. Through realistic scenarios, training modules include interview simulations, teaching essential etiquette and practices, and empower individuals to advocate for themselves. The scenarios also help guide participants through conversations about potential accommodations, whether they relate to physical, mental health, or religious/cultural needs. The gamification of this training allows these scenarios to add an engaging challenge while ensuring accessibility.

Lessons Learned

The needs being addressed by this project are widespread across the province, and NorQuest aims to collaborate with other post-secondary institution to share the VR headsets and training materials.

FEATURED PROGRAM

Virtual Reality Soft Skills Training For Workforce Development

Virtual Reality (VR) Soft Skills Training at NorQuest offers immersive simulations for jobseekers, including newcomers and neurodivergent individuals, it equips them with real-world experience. Employers benefit from improved communication and HR processes, while post-secondary institutions aid graduates in transitioning to employment. Our practical modules boost job seekers' confidence, increasing their chances of landing jobs in their chosen fields. Tailored scenarios for employers reduce hiring hesitations and promote workplace inclusivity.

The Autism CanTech! (ACT!) Program at NorQuest College was the catalyst for this initiative. ACT! aims to tackle the high unemployment rate among neurodivergent adults in Canada by pinpointing employment barriers and promoting inclusive workplaces. The research underscored the need for a stress-free environment for neurodivergent individuals to develop social and communication skills based on real-world scenarios. It also revealed a gap in training employers to address expectations and biases when hiring and working with neurodivergent individuals. Effective communication is crucial for both employers and employees, as missteps can impact confidence and workplace success.

Challenges

While there is a risk of VR sickness, participants are introduced the technology slowly in order to build up their tolerance and engage in the simulations without being overstimulated. For this reasons, scenarios have been segmented into 5 minute module to allow participants to take breaks from the headset. The training space is housed within NorQuest's Innovation Studio separate from the main college population and provides access to employers for training. However, to support training more workplaces, there is the potential to set up times with employers for VR trainers to schedule onsite training sessions.

Funding Partners

