VOCEDplus

NCVER's international tertiary education research database

USER GUIDE:

Searching VOCEDplus

NCVER

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NCVER's international tertiary education research database

About this guide

The aim of this guide is to provide help in searching the VOCEDplus database. It covers:

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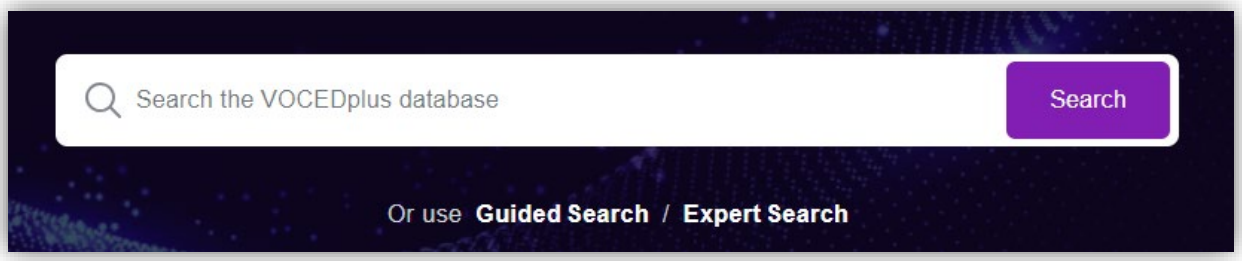
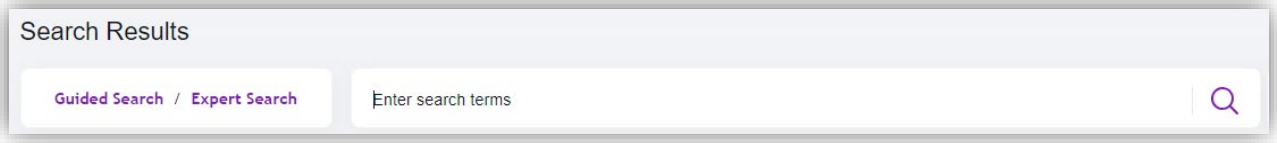
Basic search

Located on the VOCEDplus home page, Basic search is useful for doing quick Google-like searches when you're looking for broad general information on a topic:



and by clicking in the 'Enter search terms' bar at the top of all Search Results pages:



To run a basic search, type your search term in the search box and press enter. The default **BOOLEAN** operator between terms is **OR**, meaning if more than one search term is used, search results will identify all items that contain at least one of the terms entered. To retrieve items that contain ALL the terms entered, use **AND** between each word. To exclude a term from your search, add **NOT** between the search terms. To search for a phrase, enclose the words within double quotes i.e. " ".

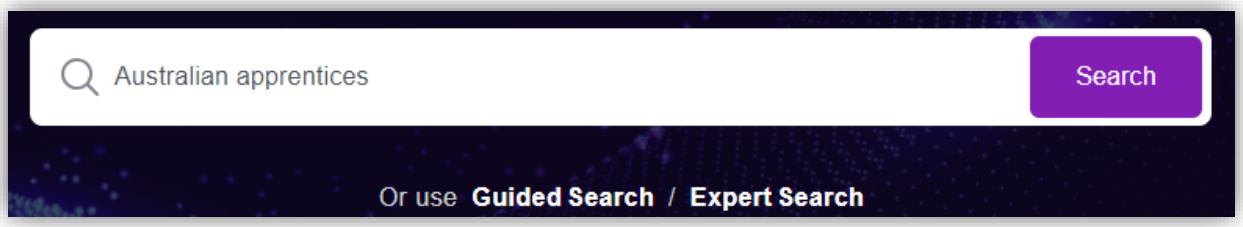
What are BOOLEAN operators?

BOOLEAN operators are words or symbols used to connect two or more search terms. In VOCEDplus, you can use:

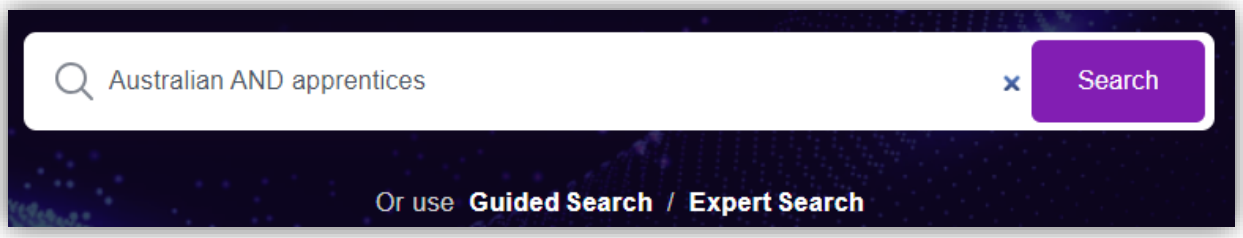
- **AND** to narrow a search by only retrieving items that contain ALL the search terms entered. For example, searching for *youth* **AND** *unemployment* will find all items that contain both youth and unemployment.
- **OR** to broaden a search by retrieving items that contain at least one of the search terms entered. For example, searching for *youth* **OR** *unemployment* will find items that contain either youth or unemployment.
- **NOT** to exclude terms from a search. For example, searching for *youth* **NOT** *unemployment* will find all items that contain youth but not unemployment.
- " " to enclose and search for a phrase. For example, "youth unemployment" will find items that have the terms youth and unemployment together as a phrase.
- * as a wildcard or truncation used in place of one or more characters in search terms with variant spellings or multiple endings. For example, apprentic*
- ? as a wildcard or truncation used in place of one character in search terms with variant spellings or multiple endings. For example, organi?ation

Examples

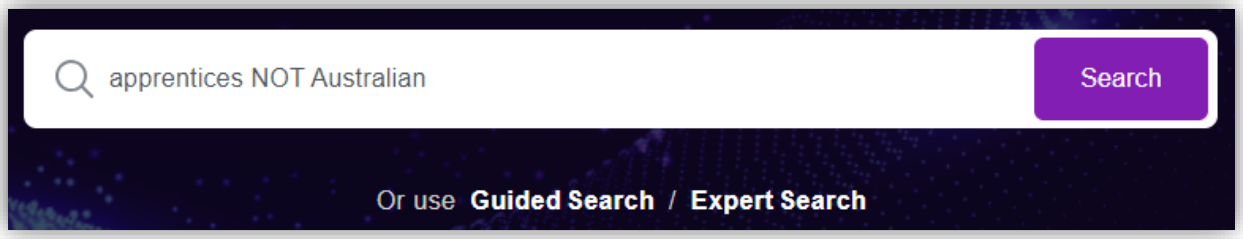
If you type *Australian apprentices*, the search will look for items with **either** Australian **OR** apprentices:



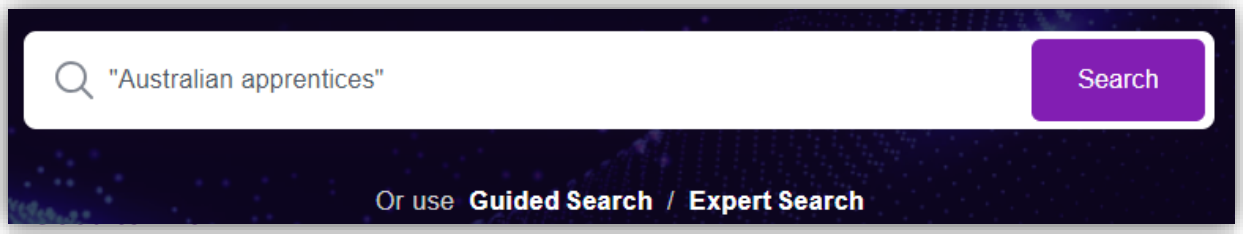
If you type *Australian AND apprentices*, the search will look for items with **both** Australian **AND** apprentices:



If you type *apprentices NOT Australian*, the search will look for all items with apprentices and **exclude** items with Australian:



If you enclose "Australian apprentices" in double quotes, the search will look for all items where Australian apprentices appears as a **phrase**:

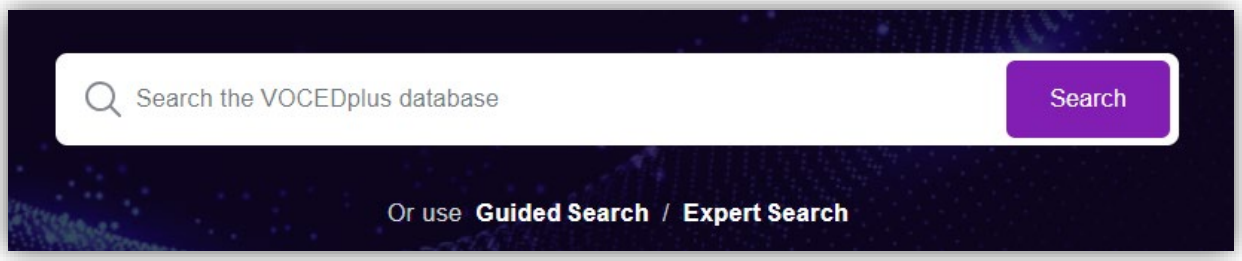


documents, so search results may sometimes be quite large.

Tip: If your search finds too many items: use the filters on the search results page to refine your search; or use the **Guided Search** or **Expert Search** options to limit your search to specific fields.

Guided Search / Expert Search

The **Guided Search** or **Expert Search** options can be accessed by clicking on the links under the basic search box on the home and search results pages:

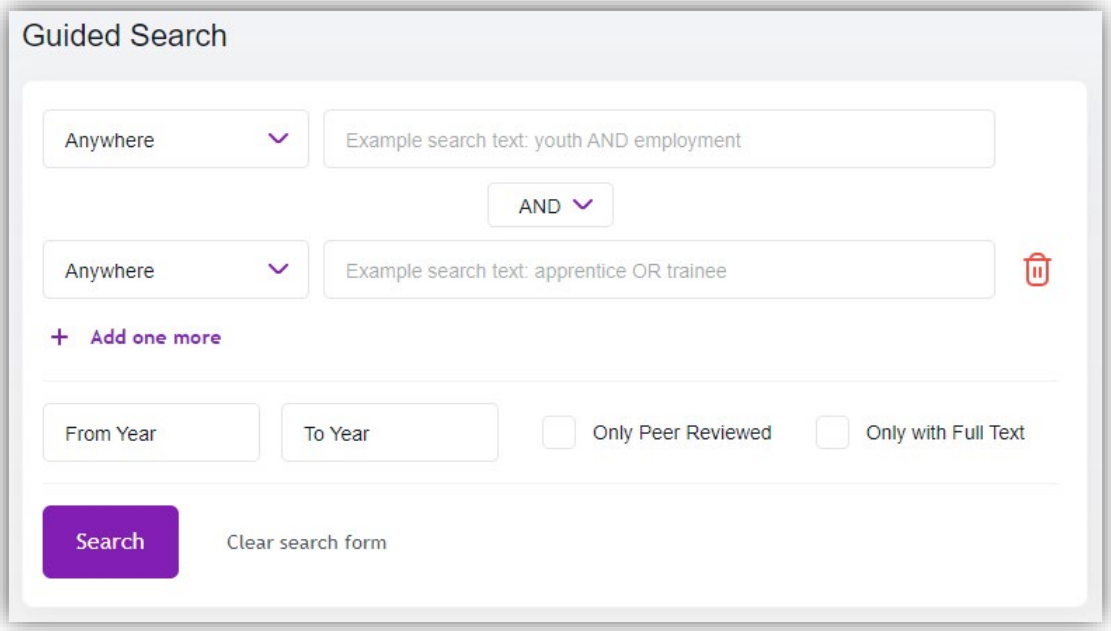


Guided Search

The Guided Search is useful for doing simple searches in key VOCEDplus fields such as author, title, abstract, subject/keyword, geographic subject.

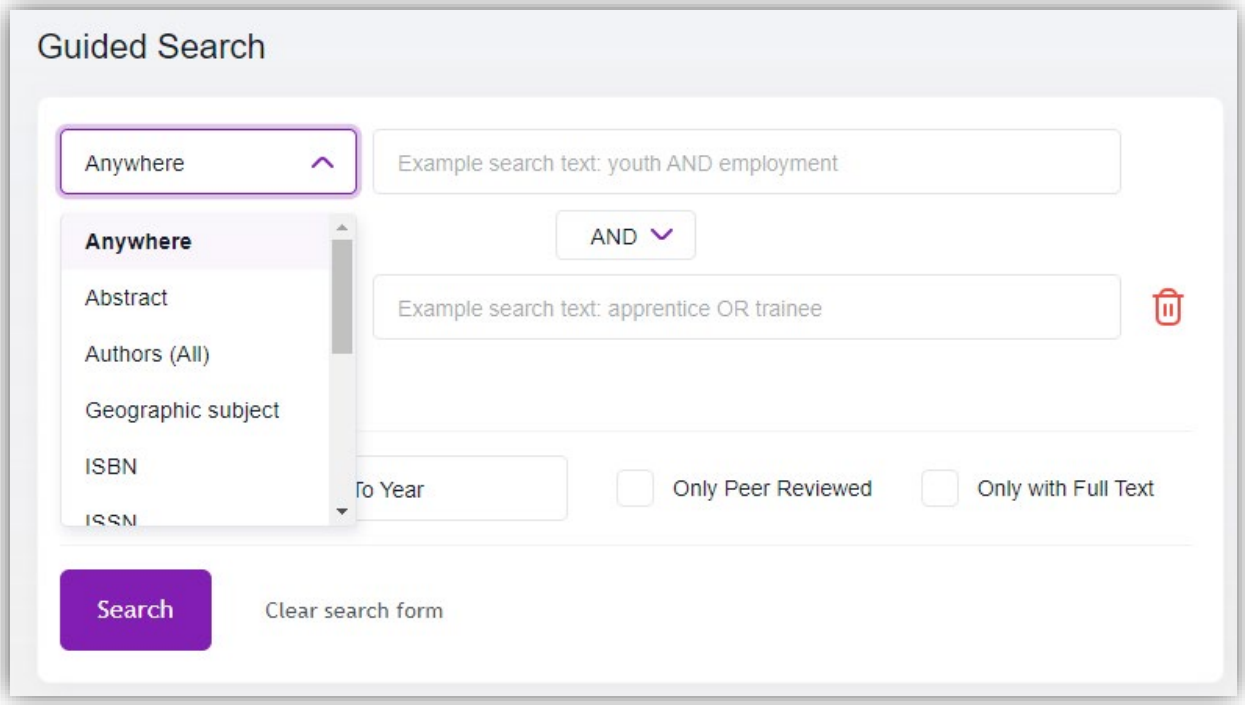
Searching in specific fields

The guided search displays two search rows by default. Additional rows can be added using the '**Add one more**' link. Additional rows can be removed by clicking on the red rubbish bin icon to the right of the row.



Each search row has a drop-down list in front of the search box allowing you to define the search field. The default is '**Anywhere**'. This is the same as searching using the basic search box on the home page. This search will look for your terms in the entire record. If the full text of the item is available in VOCEDplus, it will also search within the document.

Other searchable fields are: Abstract, Authors (All), Geographic subject, ISBN, ISSN, Journal title, Publisher, Series name, Titles (All), VOCEDplus Subjects/Keywords, and Year published.



To search in a specific field, select the required field from the drop-down list of fields and type in your search term in the search text box. If your search term contains multiple words, by default, the search will look for items that contain all these words. To refine your search:

- Use **AND** to find items that contain all search terms
- Use **OR** to find items that contain at least one of the search terms
- Use **NOT** to exclude terms
- Use double quotation marks " " to search for words as a phrase

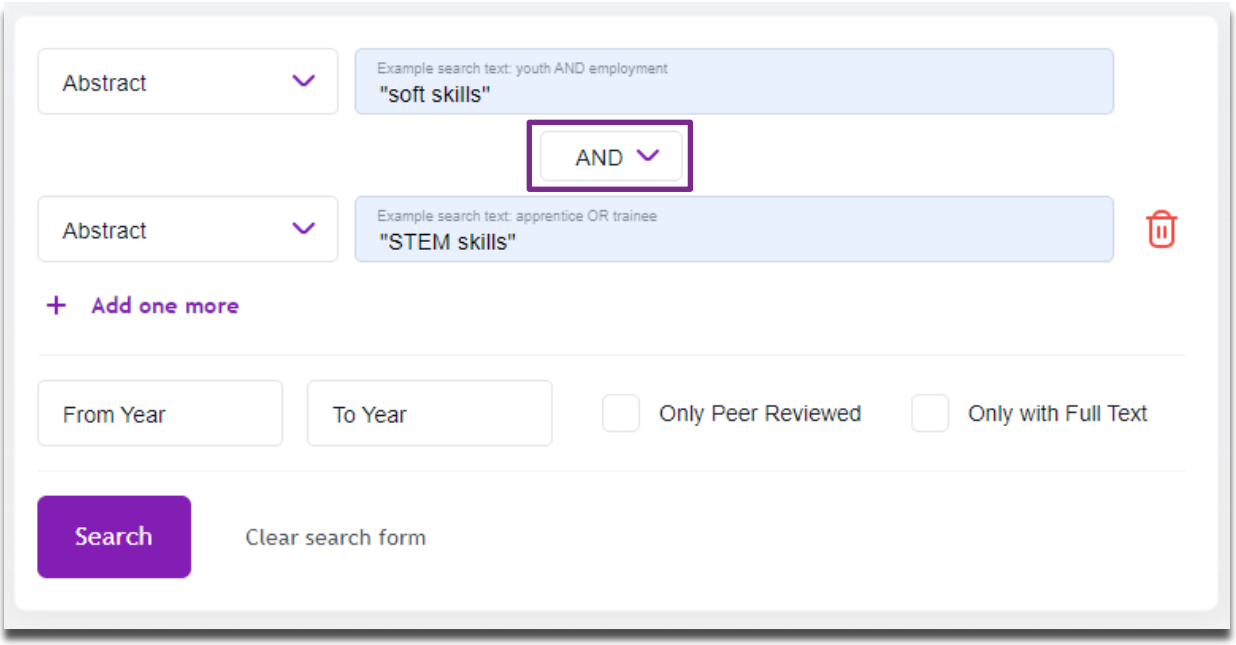
To search in multiple fields, use multiple rows and combine the rows using AND, OR, NOT from the drop-down list.

See page 2 for an explanation of these BOOLEAN operator terms.

Combining search rows

When you enter searches in multiple rows, you can determine how subsequent rows are to be combined with the previous row by selecting a BOOLEAN operator (**AND**, **OR**, **NOT**) from the drop-down list that appears in between the search fields.

For example, to find items that contain both phrases "soft skills" and "STEM skills" in the abstract, select '**Abstract**' from the drop-down list in the first row and type *"soft skills*" in double quotation marks in the first search box. Then select '**Abstract**' from the drop-down list in the second row and type in "STEM skills" in double quotation marks in the second search box. Check that the operator for combining the fields is set to the default '**AND**' and click the 'Search' button to run the search:



Free text and controlled fields
Title and Abstract are free text fields, and any search terms can be entered in these fields. Subject, Keyword and Geographic subject are controlled fields. You must enter only the terms that are in the VOCEDplus Subjects, Keywords and Geographic subjects lists. Subjects are the 52 broad topics covered in VOCEDplus. Keywords are the narrower terms that sit under the subjects. If you enter terms not on the list, your search results will be incorrect. For example, if you enter the search term women in the 'Subject/Keyword' field, the search will not find any items because the preferred term is 'gender'. You must enter only the terms that are in our Subjects, Keywords and Geographic subjects lists (available from the VOCEDplus Help page).

Note: try to avoid combining too many rows and different operators here. For complex queries, use the '**Expert search**' (see below).

If your search finds only a few items, you can try broadening the search by searching across all fields and using synonyms and variant forms of the search terms. Synonyms and variant forms of search terms can be used in basic search and in the title and abstract fields in Guided and Expert (see below) searches. For example, to search for items in VOCEDplus that relate to COVID-19, use all variations such as coronavirus, covid*, pandemic, etc.

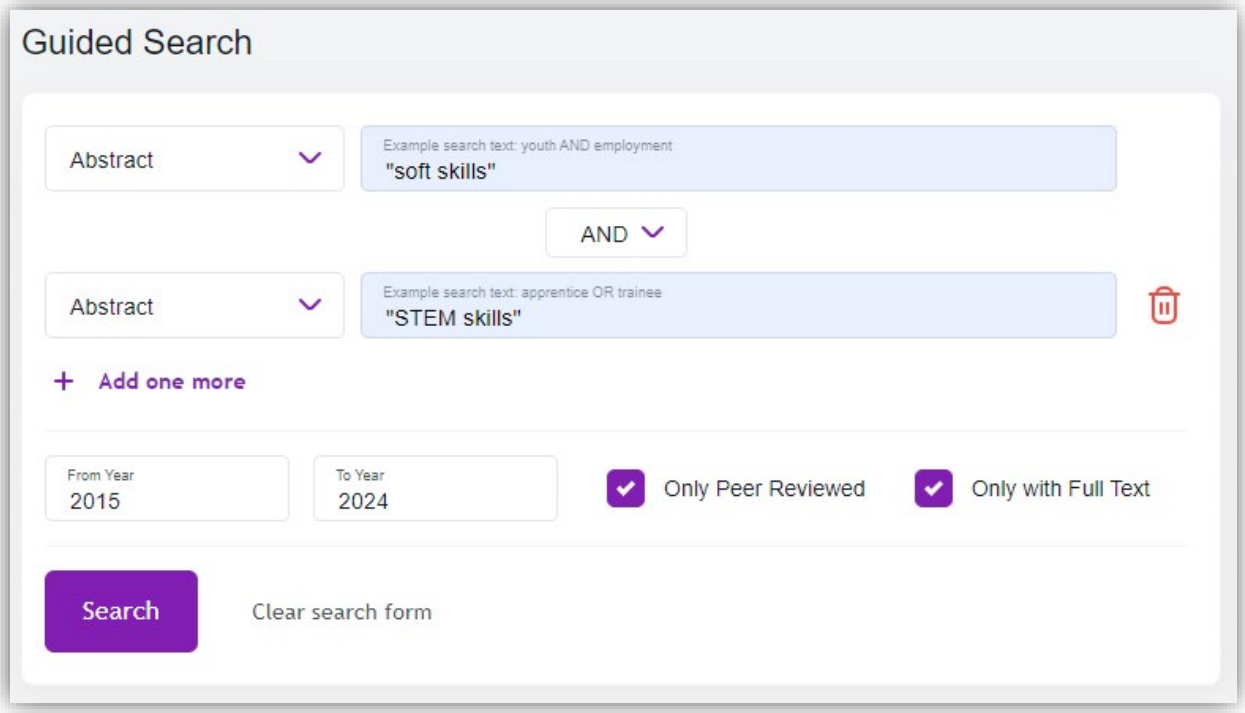
Applying limits

You can narrow your search by applying limits. There are several ways to limit your search results, including: Date range; Peer reviewed items; Full text only.

To only search for items published within a specified period, enter the earliest year in the '**From Year**' box and the latest year in the '**To Year**' box.

To limit your search to peer reviewed items only, tick the '**Only Peer Reviewed**' checkbox.

To limit your search to items where the full text is available in VOCEDplus or free online, tick the '**Only with Full Text**' checkbox:



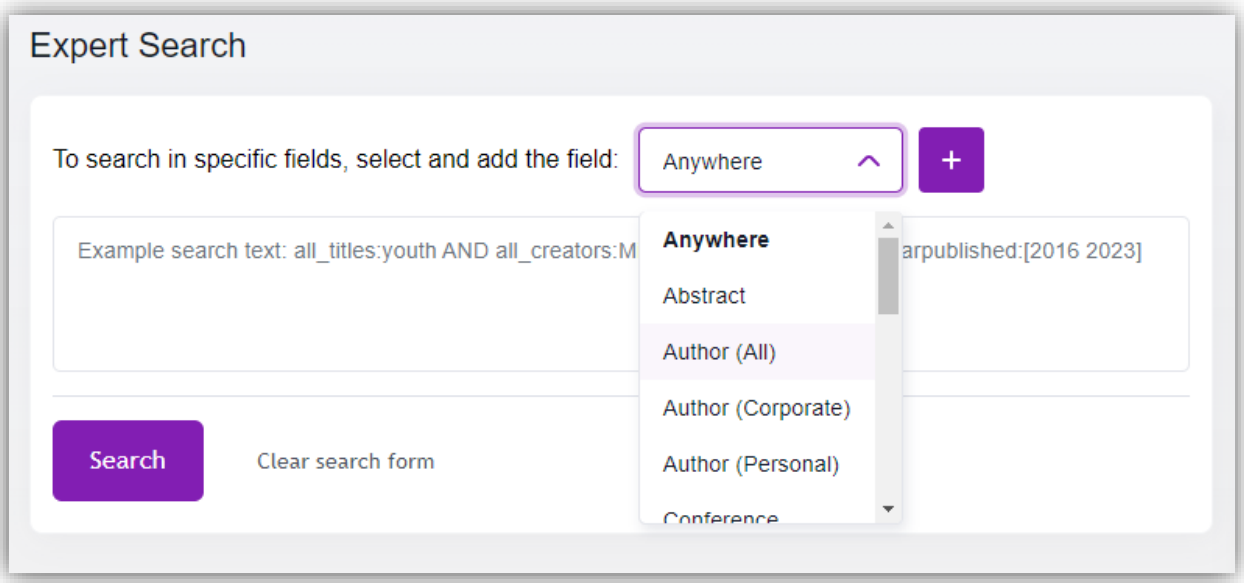
You can also apply limits to your search after you have run the search by using the filters available on the search results page (refer to the VOCEDplus search results user guide on the Help page for further information).

Expert search

The expert search allows you to execute complex searches of the VOCEDplus database.

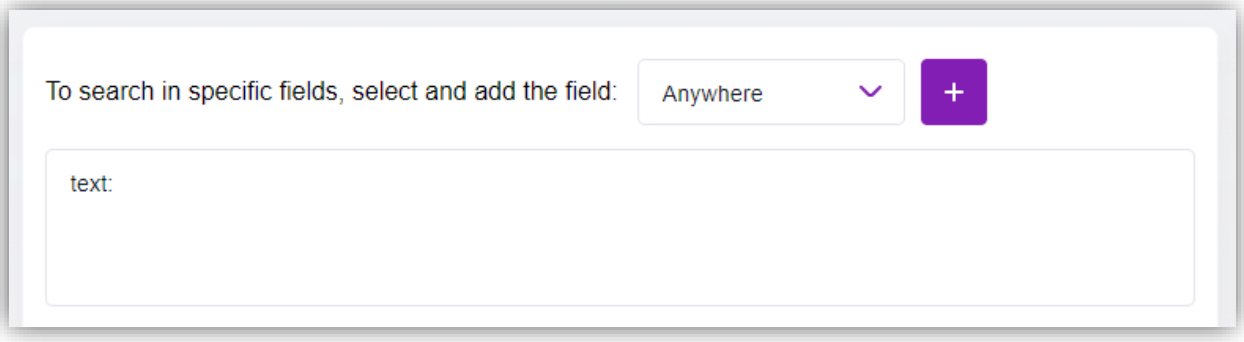
Constructing an expert search requires knowledge of the VOCEDplus indexed field names and an understanding of the search syntax. Information about the indexed fields and search syntax is provided below.

If you are familiar with the VOCEDplus indexed fields and search syntax, you can type your query directly into the expert search box. If not, use the field options in the drop-down box to construct your search.



Query builder

The expert search includes a query builder. The query builder enables you to select and add VOCEDplus search fields into the search box from a drop-down list. The drop-down list contains VOCEDplus field labels. The query builder converts these field labels to indexed field names and enters them in the correct format in the search box. For example, if you select the label 'Anywhere' and click on the purple add button, the query builder enters this as '**text:**' in the search box:



To search in a specific field, select the required field from the drop-down list of fields and the following operators can be used in the search area:

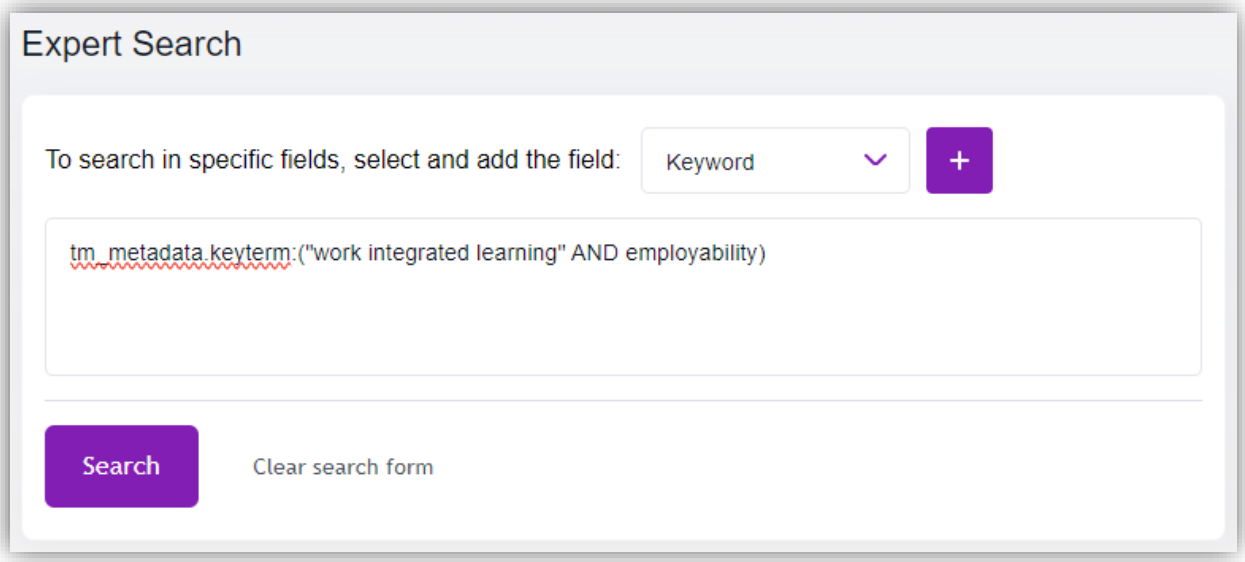
- Use **AND** to find items that contain all search terms
- Use **OR** to find items that contain at least one of the search terms
- Use **NOT** to exclude terms
- Use double quotation marks " " to search for words as a phrase
- Use round brackets ( ) to search for multiple terms within the same field
- Use square brackets and 'TO' between dates [date TO date] to search for date ranges

For example, to find (only) **journal articles** on **work integrated learning** and the **employability** of graduates in **Australia** and **New Zealand** over the last **10 years**:

1. Select the **Keyword** field from the query builder drop-down list and click the plus button. The following indexed field name will appear in the box: **tm_metadata.keyterm:**

   Add your text directly after the indexed field name: **("work integrated learning" AND employability)** – ensure no spaces are included between the field name and search term – see example further below

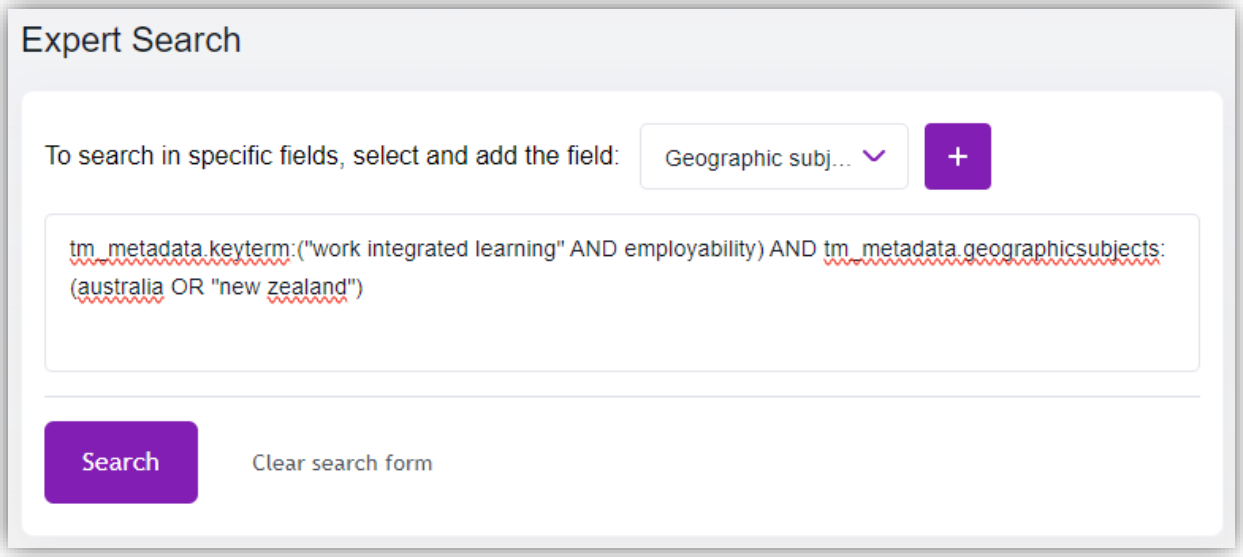
   - The brackets are used to group the two search terms under the keywords field
   - The quotation marks indicate the words **work integrated learning** is a phrase
   - **AND** is used between the two search terms because we want to find items that include both these terms.



2. Type **AND** then select the **Geographic subject** field from the query builder drop-down list and click the plus button. The following indexed field name will appear in the box: **tm_metadata.geographicsubjects:**

Add the text: **(australia OR "new zealand")**

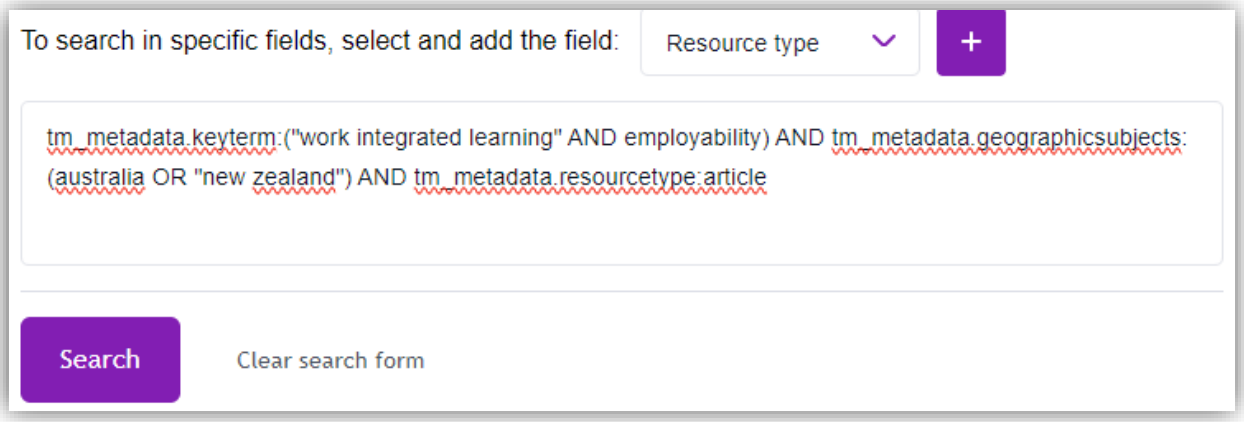
- Using **OR** between the search terms returns items that have either Australia or New Zealand in the Geographic subject field.



Good to know:
A list of the geographic subjects used in VOCEDplus can be found in the '**Geographic subjects**' document located on the **Help** page.

3. Type **AND** then select the **Resource type** field from the query builder drop-down list and click the plus button. The following indexed field name will appear in the box: **tm_metadata.resourcetype:**

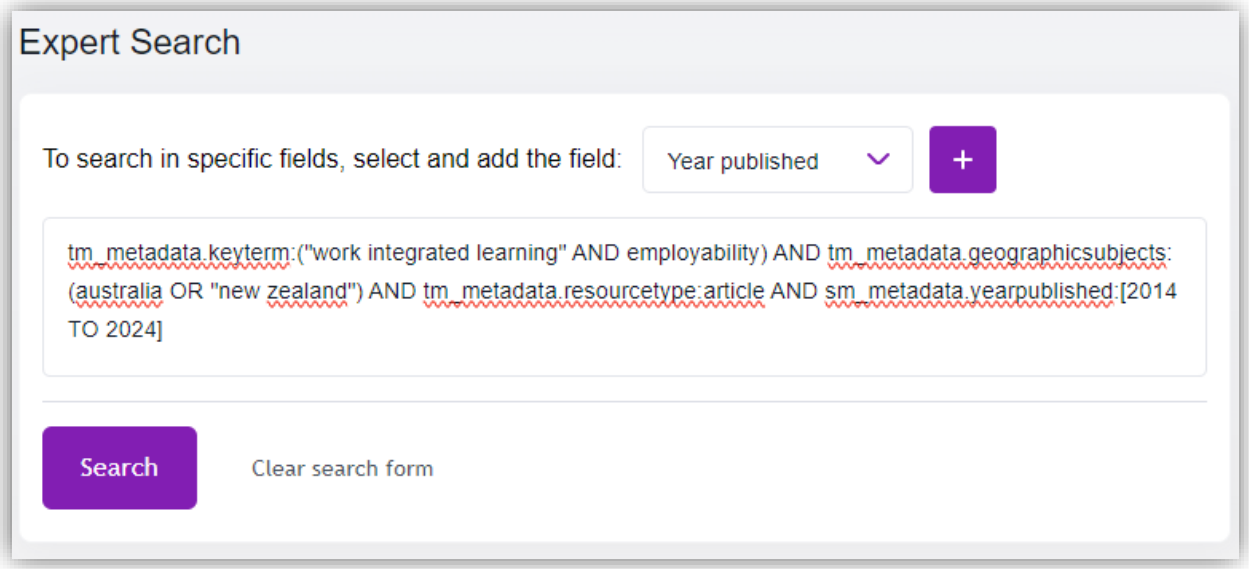
   Type in: **article**



4. Type **AND** then select **Year published** from the query builder drop-down list and click the plus button. The following indexed field name will appear in the box:

sm_metadata.yearpublished:
Then type in: **[2014 TO 2024]**

- Square brackets are used for an inclusive date range. **Note**: the word TO (upper case) between the dates is required (see example below)
- **Note**: use round brackets instead of square if you require items published in specific years rather than a range of years.



5. Click the **search** button to execute the search.

Good to know: If the results of your expert search don't look right, check your search string and make sure there are no missing or extra brackets, punctuation or BOOLEAN operators.

Tip: Do not copy and paste quotation marks in the search box - quotation marks with serifs don't work i.e. they should look like " " and not “ ”

Indexed fields

VOCEDplus indexed fields are the searchable fields in the VOCEDplus database. They may be a single field or formed by combining two or more fields. The table below explains how each of the indexed fields available in the VOCEDplus expert search query builder behave when used in a search:

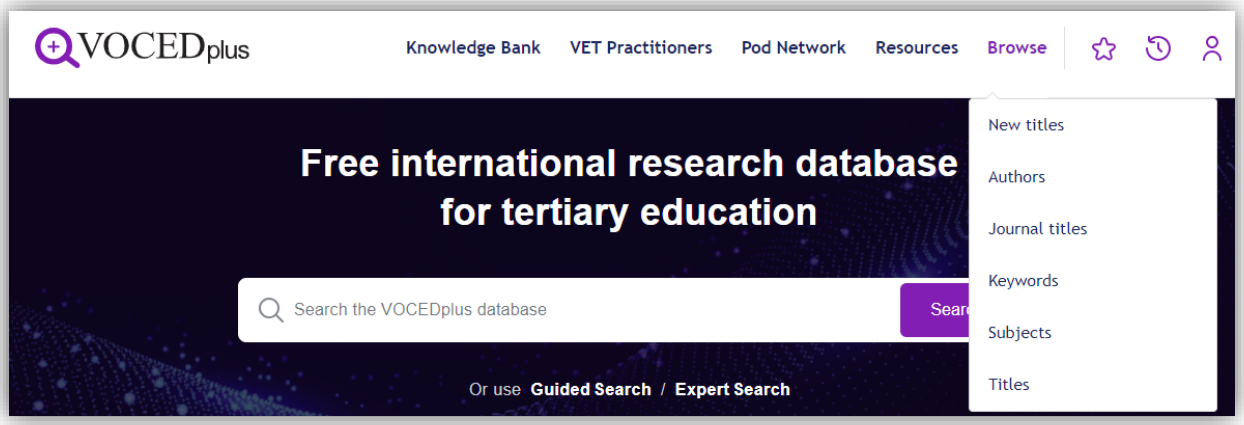
Query builder field labels	VOCEDplus indexed fields	What will be searched
All fields	text:	All fields in VOCEDplus records and the full text of document if available
Abstract	tm_metadata.abstract:	The abstract provided in VOCEDplus records
Authors (All)	all_creators:	Both personal and corporate authors fields
Authors Corporate)	all_corpauthors:	Only corporate author fields
Authors (Personal)	all_authors:	Only personal author fields
Conference	tm_conferencename:	The field in which the name of a conference is entered if the item is related to a conference.
Geographic subject	tm_metadata.geographicsubjects:	The field in which the geographic subjects are entered
Journal title	tm_metadata.jnltitle:	The field in which the title of a journal is entered when the item in VOCEDplus is from a journal
Keywords	tm_metadata.keyterm:	The keywords field – see the *Guide to subjects and keywords* for more information
Publisher	tm_metadata.publisher:	The field in which the name of the organisation that published the item is entered
Resource type	tm_metadata.resourcetype:	The field which indicates what type of resource an item is
Series	tm_metadata.seriesname:	The field in which the name of the series is entered if the item is part of a series of publications
Subject	tm_metadata.subject:	The subjects field – see the *Guide to subjects and keywords* for more information
Title (All)	all_titles:	Includes the following title fields in VOCEDplus records – the title of the item, the title of a journal if the item is a journal article, the title of the book if the item is a book chapter
Title (Main)	tm_metadata.title:	The field in which the title of an item is entered
Year published	sm_metadata.yearpublished:	The field in which the year an item was published is recorded.

Search operators

AND	Use **AND** to find items that contain all search terms **Examples** • To find all items that contain both youth and employment in the subject field, enter: *tm_metadata.subject:(youth AND employment)* • To find all items that contain STEM in both the abstract and title fields, enter: *tm_metadata.abstract:stem AND tm_metadata.title:stem*
OR	Use **OR** to find items that contains at least one of the search terms **Examples** • To find all items that contain either apprentice OR trainee in the keyword field, enter: *tm_metadata.keyterm:(apprentice OR trainee)* • To find all items that contain STEM in either the abstract or title field, enter: *tm_metadata.abstract:stem OR tm_metadata.title:stem*
NOT	Use **NOT** to exclude terms **Examples** • To find all items that contain apprentice but not trainee in the keyword field, enter: *tm_metadata.keyterm:(apprentice NOT trainee)* • To find all items that contain apprenticeship in the subject field but not Australia in the geographic subject field, enter: *tm_metadata.subject:apprenticeship NOT tm_metadata.geographicsubjects:australia*
" "	Use double quotation marks " " to search for words as a phrase **Example** • To find all items that contain competency based training in the abstract field, enter: *tm_metadata.abstract:"competency based training"*
( )	Use round brackets **( )** to search for multiple terms within the same field **Example** • To search for apprentice and trainee in the keyword field, enclose apprentice and trainee in brackets *tm_metadata.keyterm:(apprentice AND trainee)* Round brackets are also used to search for items published in specific year(s) **Example** • To find items published in 2010 and 2015, enter: *sm_metadata.yearpublished:(2010 2015)* - a space is required between dates
[TO]	Use square brackets and TO between dates **[date TO date]** to search date ranges. **Example** • To find items published between 2010 and 2015, enter: *sm_metadata.yearpublished:[2010 TO 2015]* – 'TO' is required between dates

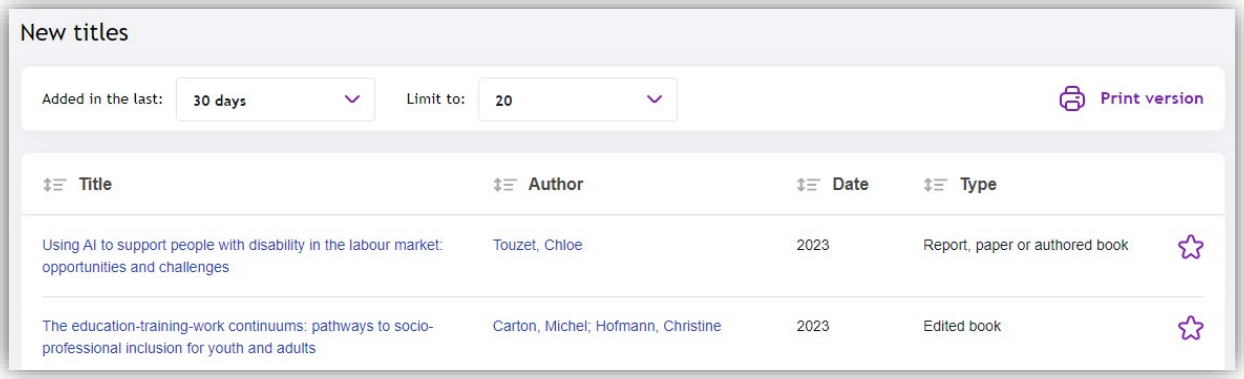
Browse options

Browsing is another way to find information in VOCEDplus. VOCEDplus offers several different browse options to provide quick access to items.

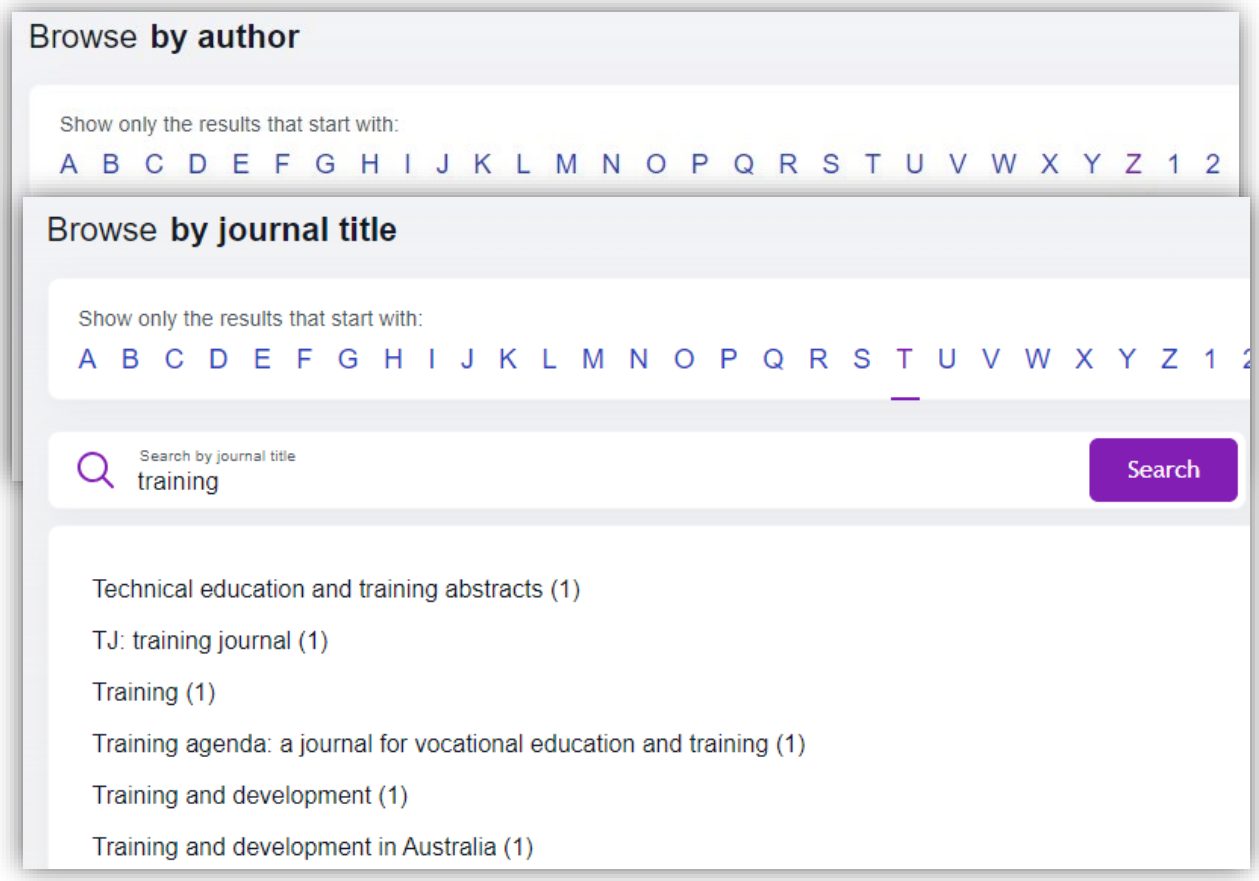


You can browse by:

New titles: view new items added to VOCEDplus. Drop-down boxes allow the options of viewing items added within the last 24 hours, 7 days or 30 days, 3 months or 6 months, and the display of 20, 50, 100, 150, or 200 results. By default, 20 results in the last 30 days are displayed:

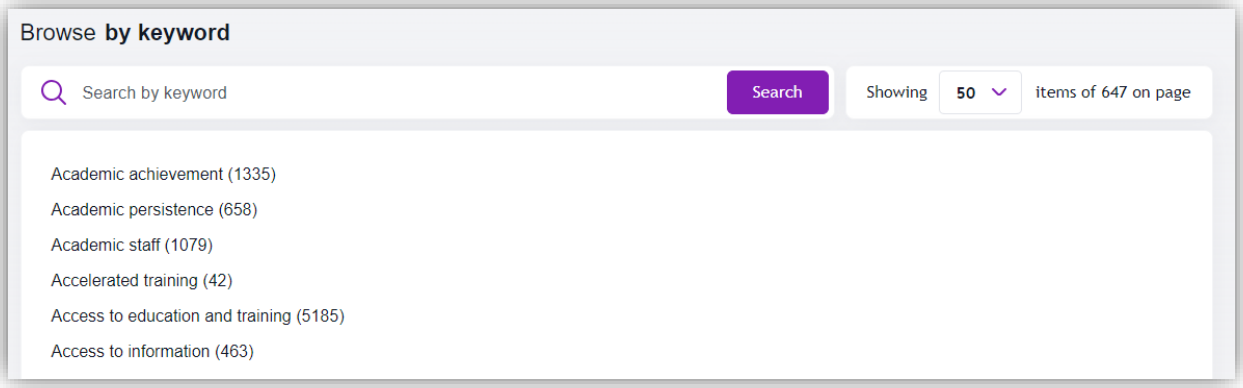


Authors: view an alphabetical list of all authors in VOCEDplus. Each author's name is hyperlinked to all items in VOCEDplus by that author. Select the **Show only the results that start with** letter (of the surname of the author) and type in your search (surname of the author) in the **Search by author** box and click on the Search button:

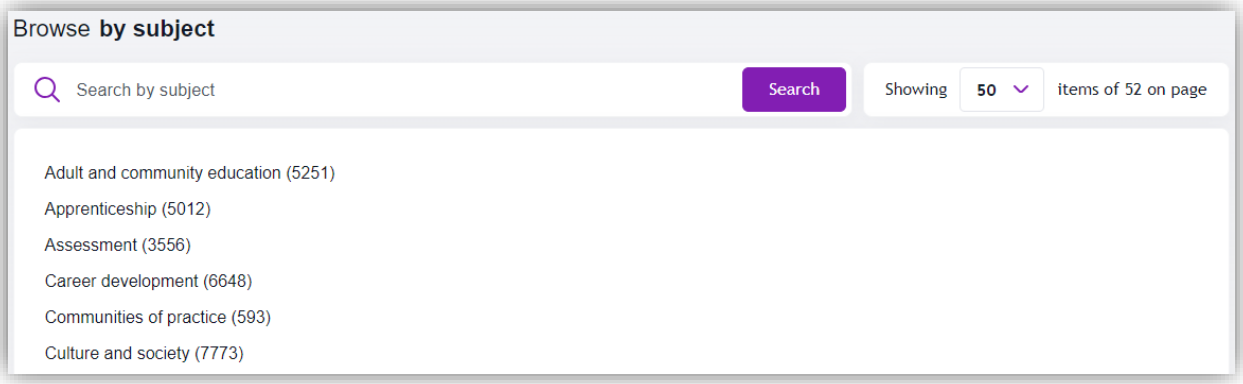


Journal titles: an alphabetical list of all the key journals indexed in VOCEDplus. Each journal title is hyperlinked to its full record. The full record page for the journal includes a link to all articles from that journal. Select the **Show only the results that start with** letter and type in your search (journal title) in the **Search by journal title** box and click on the Search button:

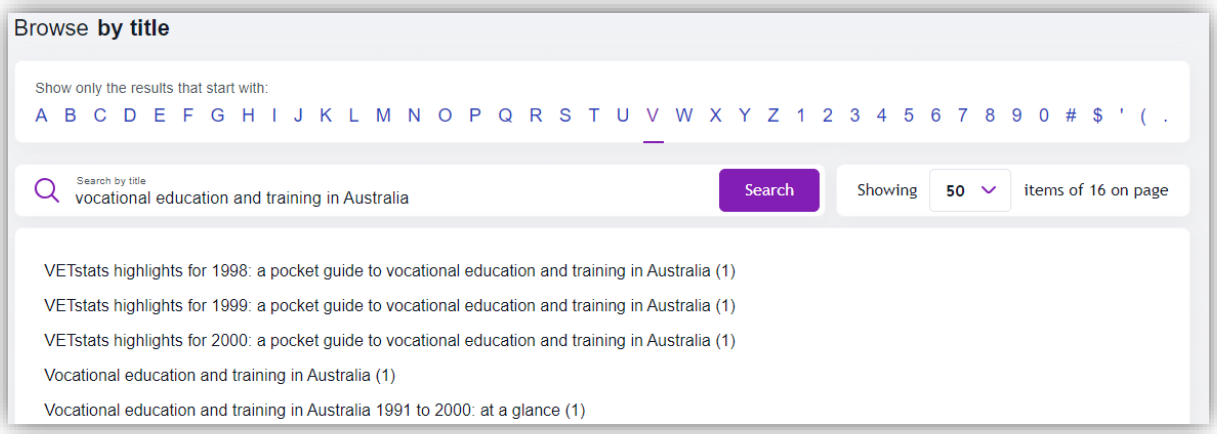
Keywords: access all items in VOCEDplus by keywords. Here you can browse and search for (using the 'Search by keyword' box) the keywords (or narrower terms) that sit under the subjects. Each keyword heading is hyperlinked to all items in VOCEDplus assigned that keyword.



Subjects: access all items in VOCEDplus by subject. Here you can browse and search the 52 broad topics covered in VOCEDplus. Each subject heading is hyperlinked to all items in VOCEDplus assigned that subject.



Titles: view an alphabetical list of all titles in VOCEDplus. Each title is hyperlinked to its full record. Select the '**Show only the results that start with:**' letter, type in your search in the **Search by title** box and click on the Search button - the search term can appear anywhere in the title:



Developing a search strategy before you start a literature search

Planning your search and developing a strategy before you start searching can help save time and give a better set of results.

- Asking a set of key questions about the topic is an important step in developing the search strategy. Questions to ask could include:
    - What terms describe the various aspects of your topic? Consider controlled VOCEDplus subjects/keywords + natural language
    - What geographic coverage are you interested in?
    - Do you know any publishers or authors that have written extensively on the topic?
    - Do you want to limit to a date range?
    - Do you want particular resource types?
- Do a couple of quick searches using Basic search. This will help you come up with search terms.
- Once you have answered these questions, break down the search into components and for each component come up with a series of search terms:
    - Use the VOCEDplus Subject, Keyword and Geographic Subject lists (found on the VOCEDplus Help page)
    - Think of additional search terms - synonyms, related terms variant forms
- Think about what search operators you'll use and how you will formulate the query.
- Construct the search by combining the different components using the relevant Boolean operators to connect all the components into a single string.