

THE WORKPLACE LEARNING GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS



- › Your guide to hosting students undertaking workplace learning programs from NSW public schools and TAFE NSW Institutes.



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“ Work experience acts as a vital link between young people and the world of business, so it is my firm belief that employers should play their part to ensure young people’s first experience of work is both challenging and rewarding.” Host employer

1. About workplace learning

This guide introduces you and your staff to the concepts of workplace learning. It explains the workplace learning programs available in NSW public schools, the support available to employers, and your roles and responsibilities when hosting students in your workplace. It also includes a summary checklist for employers, both large and small, to help guide you through the workplace learning process.

What is workplace learning?

Workplace learning programs form part of the NSW secondary school curriculum. They enable students to spend a planned period of time – usually a week – in the workplace, gaining practical experience, assisting their career choices and building their industry skills.

Workplace learning is available to students in Years 9,10,11 and 12. Students are generally placed in an industry of their choice, reflecting the type of work they plan to do after completing their studies. For some students workplace learning is their very first experience of the workplace while others have done many hours of paid work in their part-time jobs.

What kinds of workplace learning programs are there?

NSW secondary schools offer two main types of workplace learning program – **work experience** and **mandatory work placement** for students studying Higher School Certificate (HSC) vocational education and training (VET) courses. Most students have the chance to participate in at least one of these programs during their time at high school.

Work experience

These programs are usually undertaken by students in Years 9 or 10 with some opportunities in Years 11 and 12.

Work experience provides a general introduction to the 'world of work'.

Young people are able to:

- observe a variety of work being done
- undertake supervised work appropriate to their skill level
- ask questions about the workplace
- gain general skills related to being at work
- learn how enterprises work and how to be enterprising
- complete course assignments relevant to the industry or workplace
- find out about careers and training and employment opportunities
- fine-tune their career aspirations and career and transition planning.

HSC VET work placement

Work placement programs are intended for students enrolled in Higher School Certificate (HSC) industry-recognised courses. These vocational education and training (VET) courses may be delivered by the school, a TAFE NSW Institute or by a private or community registered training organisation contracted by the school.

Work placement ensures that these students spend a period of time as voluntary workers in a relevant workplace. Employers supervise the students as they practise and extend the specific industry skills they have learned in their course work.

During their work placement, students work towards gaining specific industry competencies. They are assessed by their teachers in consultation with the host employer and, in some cases, a qualified workplace assessor. Students achieving competency receive an industry-specific VET qualification that is recognised throughout Australia.

Work placement is a **compulsory HSC requirement** for the following Industry Curriculum Framework (ICF) courses:

- Automotive
- Business Services
- Construction
- Electrotechnology
- Entertainment Industry
- Financial Services
- Hospitality
- Human Services
- Information and Digital Technology
- Metal and Engineering
- Primary Industries
- Retail Services
- Tourism and Events

How long will the student spend in your workplace?

This varies. Students usually spend a week with an employer but shorter or longer placements are possible. Some students come to a workplace for half or one day per week for an extended period of time. HSC VET students are generally required to complete two weeks of work placement over two years, each week with a different employer.

“ Through workplace learning we get to see what young people are learning in their courses and the talent that is out there. It’s good for our industry.”

The benefits for employers

Hosting students allows you to:

- participate in the education, career development and vocational training of young people in your community.
- talk to students about your industry, its career paths and future directions.
- promote the attitudes and skills you want in your workforce.
- identify young people with potential for your industry.
- strengthen your links with the community and raise your business profile.
- increase the supervisory, training and mentoring skills of your staff.
- give students knowledge of the value of work and raise the quality of those coming into your industry.

As you will see in this guide, there is plenty of support and resources available to host employers. If you have any queries or concerns, the school, TAFE or Work Placement Service Provider is only a phone call away.

2. How workplace learning works

Who organises the programs and work placements?

Schools generally arrange their own workplace learning programs. Where TAFE or a private or community registered training organisation delivers the course, they arrange the related placements in consultation with the school. An example of a private or community registered training organisation is NSW Health which delivers Certificate III in Aged Care to school students.

Employers may be approached by the school, TAFE or private or community registered training organisation to host students in their workplace. In the case of work experience, students may

make their own approach to an employer for a workplace position and then submit the position to their school for approval. For HSC ICF VET work placements, the approach may come from a Work Placement Service Provider which is funded to negotiate and coordinate these mandatory placements. See box below ▼

When can workplace learning occur?

Workplace learning is usually scheduled on weekdays during school or TAFE terms. This can be varied for individual students in Years 11 and 12 with the approval of their school or TAFE. For example, a student may wish to extend their skills by undertaking a placement during the school holidays. This does not include the December/January holidays.

Restrictions apply to younger students in work experience programs. Students in Years 9 and 10 cannot undertake workplace learning during school holidays. Students under 15 years cannot work before 7am or after 6pm.

Work placement service providers

These local organisations are funded to coordinate HSC ICF VET work placements, liaising between schools, TAFE NSW Institutes, private or community registered training organisations and employers.

You will find they have considerable expertise and resources to help you provide quality work placements for HSC VET students.

You are welcome to contact them directly:

Please go to www.workplacement.nsw.edu.au for their contact details.

What is the general procedure for a placement?

Before the placement

- Host employers receive workplace learning guidelines.
- Workplace positions are negotiated with employers and submitted to the school for approval.
- Arrangements are confirmed to support student safety.
- Students are matched to a position based on their course work and/or career planning. Their parents or carers sign off on the arrangements.
- Teachers conduct work ready activities to prepare students for the experience.

During the placement

- Students attend the workplace every day of the program.
- Host employers or nominated workplace supervisors supervise the students in the workplace, providing tasks that are agreed and appropriate and at times, challenging for the student.
- The employer and workplace supervisor take action to provide a safe working environment, in accordance with the requirements of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW), child protection and anti-discrimination legislation.
- Teachers make a supervisory visit or phone call to the employer and the student to check on their progress, safety and welfare. Where relevant, students are assessed for industry-based competencies.
- Host employers report any incidents involving the student to the school or TAFE.

After the placement

- Students record their experiences and review their career preferences and training pathways.
- Host employers report on the student's performance in the workplace.
- Teachers immediately follow up with the students to ensure maximum benefit and check on student safety.

Who has duty of care?

The school, TAFE NSW Institute, or private or community registered training organisation along with the school, maintains a duty of care to students undertaking workplace learning. They are each responsible for deciding if placements are suitable, preparing students for workplace learning, monitoring the student's progress and welfare during the placement and following up with them immediately afterwards. It is the responsibility of the host employer to provide a safe workplace environment and appropriate supervision for the student. Host employers must report WHS issues or concerns to the school. Parents and carers are required to be or to nominate an alternative emergency contact for any emergencies that occur outside normal business hours. See Section 4 of this guide.

Providing a richer, deeper, quality experience: Employers share their tips for success

- Engage the student straight away as the first hour can set the tone for the week.
- Talk to the student so that they understand their safety rights and responsibilities.
- Talk with the student about their current school work so you can set the work at the right skill level for them.
- Consider hosting students in pairs to give them buddy support to solve problems and get the work done.
- Busy students tend to be happier and learn more.
- Have a reserve list of jobs for them to do.
- Debrief with the student at the end of each day and plan tomorrow's work.

“ The placement was an opportunity for me to pass on my knowledge and skills. It was a good experience both ways.” Workplace supervisor, Tamworth



Working together: the workplace learning partnership

Workplace learning programs are a partnership between educators, employers, students and their parents or carers. We seek the input and approval of all parties in the arrangement of placements, with every party agreeing to certain roles and responsibilities.

Central to this process is the **Student Placement Record**, a form that records contact details, arrangements and approvals relating to the student's placement. Once everyone has completed their section of the form, copies are held by the school, host employer, student and the parent or carer, as well as TAFE or the private or community registered training organisation if applicable.

The Student Placement Record also records information regarding any disability, learning and support needs, medical condition, allergy or restriction that may affect the safety and supervision of the student in the workplace. It will indicate if employers need to make adjustments to accommodate a student's additional support needs or disability.

For further information on employers and the Student Placement Record, see Section 3 of this guide.

3. Legal requirements and documentation

Are the students paid?

No. Students on placement are classified as 'voluntary workers' and host employers are not required to make any payment to them under the Federal or State award covering their industry, the *NSW Annual Holidays Act* or the *Workers Compensation Act*. Any payment to the student may invalidate the Department's insurance and indemnity arrangements.

The **one exception** is where the student uses their part-time employment as part of their mandatory HSC VET work placement requirement. In this case, the student is not a voluntary worker and the

insurance arrangements of the employer apply to the student. This arrangement must be negotiated with the employer and approved by the school, TAFE or private or community registered training organisation.

Do I have to sign any documents?

Yes. Each student is issued with a **Student Placement Record** to document the arrangements for their placement. This important form allows for information to be shared and approved by all parties – the student, their parent/carer, the host employer and the school or relevant TAFE or private or community registered training organisation.

As an employer, you will be asked to record your workplace details, the student's working hours, arrangements for their supervision, the activities they will undertake during their placement, any pre-training required and the measures you are taking to enable them to do the work safely.

Once all parties have provided and approved the information on the Student Placement Record, the Department's insurance and indemnity arrangements for you and the student are in place. A full copy of the Student Placement Record with all sections approved will be provided to you before the placement starts. In the case of mandatory HSC VET work placements, Work Placement Service Providers can help streamline this process for you.

“ It's our role to inspire young people to pursue jobs in this industry. I always try to showcase an exciting range of work and aim to provide a balance between structure and flexibility.” Host employer, Wollongong



Are there any other conditions?

- Participating students must be aged 14 years or over.
- No student can be directed to carry out any task that is not safe.
- Employers and employees must respect the rights of students to a safe and healthy host workplace, free from harassment, discrimination and any conduct that is unacceptable in terms of child protection. See host employer responsibilities on page 9.
- Host employers are expected to consult and cooperate with the student's school or TAFE under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW).
- Host employers must notify the school or TAFE immediately of any health and safety incidents involving a student while on placement, including near misses, to enable the NSW Department of Education and Communities to fulfil its WHS obligations and support a safe placement.
- Host employers must advise the school or TAFE immediately if they need to change sites, redirect students to another location, or find asbestos on the site.

What about insurance?

Insurance and indemnity requirements are arranged by the NSW Department of Education and Communities under the NSW Treasury Managed Fund Scheme. Specific cover relevant to workplace learning is provided for Department of Education and Communities (policy no. MF100003) and TAFE NSW (policy no. MF100007) under the terms and conditions of the Miscellaneous Insurance Policy.

These insurance and indemnity provisions also apply to approved interstate placements, e.g. in Victoria; to teachers undertaking industry placements as part of their VET teacher training program and to teachers supervising students participating in workplace learning programs.



For details, go to *Additional Information for Employers* or scan the QR code.

Will my business need to change its insurance arrangements?

No, as long as you follow the requirements in this guide, you will not need to change your insurance or WorkCover arrangements when taking on a student for workplace learning. You are expected to have current public liability coverage as is standard business practice. If you are a private or community registered training organisation, arranging workplace learning activities for students within your own organisation, your company's own insurance and indemnity arrangements will apply.

Can I claim compensation for damaged property?

The NSW Department of Education and Communities can compensate employers participating in approved workplace learning programs to the full extent of any damage to their property, the property of employees or property in the employer's physical or legal control up to the value of \$200,000 per incident provided that:

- any claim for compensation is immediately notified to the relevant school or Institute.
- the employer cooperates fully with the Department and the Department's legal representatives in the investigation of the claim.
- the damage does not stem from a lack of supervision or instruction by the employer.

All claims for injury, loss of property or damage to property should be referred to the school or relevant TAFE in the first instance. Depending on the nature of the claim, the school or TAFE may then forward the claim to the Insurance, Risk and Claims Management Team, NSW Department of Education and Communities, Locked Bag 5068, Parramatta, NSW 2124, telephone 1300 338 772.

Further details about workplace learning programs can be found at <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/worklearn/worklearnpolicy.html>





Workcover NSW advice on safety of young workers: Young workers can lack the experience, knowledge, confidence and skills to identify and deal with potential hazards. For details please go to: *Young Workers* or refer to page 12.

4. Accidents and emergencies

If a student is sick or injured:

- Seek medical help immediately, using the student's Medicare number as provided on the Student Placement Record. As students are not employees, **do not treat this as a workers compensation claim.**
- Contact emergency services for Ambulance or other emergency services immediately where required.



If a student is at risk of anaphylaxis, they must carry an adrenaline auto-injector. e.g. EpiPen and ASCIA action plan. Adrenaline auto injectors are easy to administer and are a life saving device for those suffering an anaphylactic reaction. Anaphylaxis is a life threatening condition and always requires an emergency response. If the student shows any of the following signs, contact emergency services and take action in accordance with the ASCIA action plan to administer the adrenaline auto-injector. (Instructions on how to administer should also be on the auto-injector).

Signs of anaphylaxis

Any one of the following are signs of anaphylaxis:

- difficult/noisy breathing
 - swelling of tongue
 - swelling/tightness in throat
 - difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
 - wheezing or persistent cough
 - persistent dizziness or collapse
 - pale and floppy (young children).
- During normal business hours, contact the school, TAFE or private or community registered training organisation and the parents or carers.
 - Outside normal business hours, contact the student's parents or carers or their nominated emergency contact.
 - If the student doesn't have a Medicare number, ask if they wish to contact their general practitioner (GP). Contact details should be provided on your copy of the Student Placement Record.

- Medical invoices should be made out to the student.
- Ask the doctor attending for a medical certificate.
- Contact the school immediately to advise of the situation. As a follow up when time permits, complete a written report of the accident and forward it to the school, or where relevant, to the TAFE NSW Institute or private or community registered training organisation along with the school. The report must include a full statement from the student, the supervisor and relevant witnesses.

5. Providing a safe workplace for students

The safety and wellbeing of students during work placement is our number one priority. Before any placement can be approved, employers need to satisfy the school, TAFE NSW Institute or private or community registered training organisation that they can provide a safe and healthy host workplace for students, compliant with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW), child protection and anti-discrimination legislation.

You will be asked to provide the following information on the Student Placement Record:

- areas of possible risk in the student's workplace tasks and your strategies to eliminate or minimise the risk.
- any pre-training or induction required by the student to undertake certain tasks.
- your supervision arrangements for the student.
- any special clothing required by the student e.g. enclosed footwear.
- any steps you will take or adjustments you will make to support students with a disability or other additional needs as described on their Student Placement Record.
- awareness of your child protection responsibilities when working with school students.
- commitment to reporting any health and safety incidents or near misses involving students to the school or TAFE.

During the placement you will need to provide:

- a site-specific workplace induction for students at the beginning of the placement, including relevant safety matters.
- activities and skill development tasks appropriate to the student's skill level.
- ongoing instruction and supervision by a capable and trustworthy employee briefed for the task.
- any personal protective equipment (PPE) required and training in its correct use.

Likewise, the students are expected to comply with the employer's workplace safety requirements and procedures. They are not to act in any way that could jeopardise the safety of themselves or others.

Students must:

- **Participate** in orientation and any pre-training or induction identified.
- **Use** safety equipment and protective gear where relevant.
- **Follow** safety rules and procedures.
- **Not** do anything to jeopardise the safety of themselves or others.
- **Report** any risks or hazards immediately.
- **Understand** and follow emergency procedures.
- **Cease** work if they have a concern about their health and safety and contact their supervisor and school.
- **Report** any concerns about the placement or incidents to their school or TAFE.

Are any activities prohibited for workplace learning students?

Yes. Some activities are completely prohibited e.g. working on a roof or working where asbestos is present, while other activities have conditions attached. There are restrictions on the operation of machinery and equipment, the service of alcohol, work on construction sites and adventure or sporting activities in industries like tourism.

Students are not allowed to undertake activities requiring a licence (e.g. a driver's licence), permit or certificate of competence unless they already hold the relevant licence, certificate or permit. Even then, the activity must relate directly to the learning activities of the placement. **Employers must list these activities on the Student Placement Record prior to approval.**

Some higher risk industries will require the students to undertake training prior to their work placement. For example, all students doing workplace learning in the **construction industry** must complete the general construction induction training (GIT) as a prerequisite to placement.

For the full list of prohibited activities and the pre-requisite training requirements for workplace learning students, go to *Prohibited activities and activities that need special consideration* or scan the QR code below.



The school, TAFE or a Work Placement Service Provider can also advise you if you have any further queries.

Note that students are not expected to drive their own vehicles whilst undertaking activities on behalf of the host employer.

Child protection - your responsibilities

Working with children and young people is very rewarding. However, to ensure the safety and welfare of young people in your workplace, you and your staff must comply with a few simple rules.

It is your responsibility as the employer to ensure that your staff know how to conduct themselves appropriately with children and young people. They must avoid any conduct that could make a young person feel threatened or coerced or belittled. This could include initiation activities or horseplay involving the student; physical or verbal abuse such as swearing at students; physical assault; inappropriate conversations, remarks or jokes of a sexual nature; the showing of sexually suggestive publications, electronic media or illustrations and any unwarranted and/or inappropriate touching or personal communication with students regarding their sexual feelings. This includes texting or using social media.

As an employer, you will be asked to indicate on the Student Placement Record that, to your knowledge, there is nothing in the background of any staff member or person in close contact with the student that would make them unsuitable for working with children.

Host employers must report any allegations against an employee in the area of child protection to the Principal of the school or the relevant TAFE NSW Institute Manager. Child protection legislation requires that allegations about employee conduct be reported to the NSW Ombudsman. Allegations involving suspected abuse, harm or risk of significant harm to the student must also be reported to the Community Services Child Protection Hotline **13 36 27** and, in some cases, to the NSW Police.

For more information on working with children, contact the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian on **(02) 8219 3600** or email kids@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au

6. A checklist for employers

BEFORE - planning and preparing for workplace learning

- **Decide when it is convenient for you to host students for work experience or HSC VET work placement.**
- **Decide the duration of the placements and how/when students should apply.**
- **Appoint an experienced staff member to coordinate your workplace learning programs for students.**
- **Consult with staff to draw up a list of activities that can be achieved and safely managed by students.**

These activities should:

- offer insight into the industry and workplace.
- be varied, safe, interesting and sometimes challenging.
- not contravene the prohibited activities indicated in Section 5 of this guide and at: <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/worklearn/ProhibitedActivities.html>
- include tasks and skills appropriate to the student's coursework requirements (eg. VET course competencies). For HSC work placements, see Suggested Student Activities in the relevant student journal at www.ezwp.det.nsw.edu.au
- provide time for some career conversations.

Appoint supervisory staff for each student:

- Supervisor.
- Assistant Supervisor (if applicable).
- Other employees able to help.

Supervisory staff should be capable and trustworthy with good communication and delegation skills. They should be briefed for the task and given sufficient time to instruct and monitor the student and provide feedback. We also advise you appoint a separate workplace advisor or mentor to provide the students with general support and advice.

// We ask the students for feedback on how we went, so we can make the next placement even better." Host employer, Sydney

Prepare your staff by ensuring they:

- understand the purpose of the workplace learning activity.
- are aware of the responsibilities of working with young people, including child protection responsibilities (see page 9).
- do not use the students in place of regular paid employees.
- receive a timetable of proposed student activities and arrangements for their supervision and induction.
- understand special needs including how to respond to medical conditions e.g. anaphylaxis.
- comply with agreed arrangements.

Complete the employer section of the Student Placement Record (see Sections 3 and 4 of this guide) and return it to the relevant school, TAFE or private or community registered training organisation.

An employer's coaching tips

Tell ... Them about it

Show ... Them how it's done

Watch ... Them do it

Praise ... What they do well

Correct ... Any shortcomings

Repeat ... For practice

DURING - providing a quality workplace learning experience

Ensure that the student completes a first day induction and orientation tour.

The student's induction should include:

- ✓ a welcome and introduction to supervisors and co-workers.
- ✓ a brief overview of your business, products, purpose and values.
- ✓ an outline of the planned activities and supervision arrangements.
- ✓ clear expectations of behaviour, attitude and dress.
- ✓ clarification of working hours, breaks and other workplace routines.
- ✓ a tour of facilities including the student's work area/desk, toilets, change rooms, exits, food outlets etc.
- ✓ consideration of any student health matters.
- ✓ an explanation of safety - its importance, reasons and procedures.
- ✓ how to report work health and safety issues and to whom.
- ✓ an explanation that the student has the right to cease work if they believe it is unsafe.
- ✓ first aid and evacuation plans and other emergency drills.
- ✓ a brief outline of policies on bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- ✓ procedures for lateness or absence.
- ✓ codes and passwords (doors, photocopier, computer access etc.).
- ✓ contacts at school or TAFE in case of an emergency.
- ✓ rules regarding security, privacy, confidentiality and the use of computers, the internet, mobile phones, cameras etc.

Students should be given the opportunity to ask questions about the workplace and to be told to whom they can go for advice or help.

Ensure that the student is sufficiently challenged and supervised in the workplace.

Supervisory staff will need to ensure that the student:

- ✓ undertakes varied activities appropriate to their skill level and workplace learning requirements.
- ✓ is not inadvertently put at risk by undertaking a task away from the view of others or with just one employee or client - unless this is unavoidable.
- ✓ does not undertake any prohibited activities as indicated in Section 5 of this guide and at: <https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/worklearn/ProhibitedActivities.html>
- ✓ does not undertake any activity requiring a licence, permit or certificate of competence unless they already have the relevant qualification and the activity has been approved by all parties before the placement.
- ✓ is provided with all necessary safety equipment required to complete a task.
- ✓ receives full instruction on how to complete activities including the risks, the purpose of safety equipment such as PPE, and how to use it appropriately.
- ✓ is given appropriate feedback and encouragement.
- ✓ has sufficient time to complete diaries, work placement journals or research projects provided by their school, TAFE or private or community registered training organisation.

AFTER - providing feedback on the student's time in the workplace

Before the placement ends, please:

- ✓ complete the student report or evaluation form supplied by the school, TAFE or private or community registered training organisation.
- ✓ ensure that any property or identification cards on loan have been returned.
- ✓ take time to provide the student with helpful feedback and encouragement.

7. Important contacts

Thank you for taking time to read the information in this guide. We hope that you feel confident and well-prepared to support a student as they take up these valuable workplace learning opportunities. If you have any queries, please contact one of the following:

- for HSC VET work placements, your Work Placement Service Provider.
- the VET Coordinator, careers adviser, or the contact for the private or community registered training organisation at the student's school.
- the HSC VET coordinator for school or HSC students at the relevant TAFE.
- the TVET consultant at the relevant TAFE.
- the Senior Pathways Adviser at the local office of the NSW Department of Education and Communities.
- the Workplace Learning Adviser, Senior Pathways, NSW Department of Education and Communities State Office - **tel. (02) 9244 5425**.

Your first point of contact:



For further assistance, advice and information:



<https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/worklearn/worklearnpolicy.html>

See the Employers section for Additional Information.



<http://go2workplacement.com/Auth/Login?ReturnUrl=%2f>

Go2workplacement assists students enrolled in HSC VET courses to get the most out of their work placement.



www.inworkingorder.com.au

In Working Order, an injury prevention and workplace safety toolkit for educators, employers, supervisors and parents of young workers.



<http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/newlegislation2012/youngworkers/Pages/default.aspx>

For information on supporting young workers in your workplace.



<http://workplacement.nsw.edu.au/sydneyaccess/index.php>

Employers may choose to participate in the *Sydney Access Program* which offers high quality placements for students enrolled in school or TAFE delivered HSC Industry Curriculum Framework courses.



<http://www.workinspiration.com.au/employer-toolkit>

Work Inspiration provides an easy framework for making work experience meaningful, relevant and inspiring.



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