



Catholic  
Schools Office

DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

# AN EMPLOYERS GUIDE TO STUDENT WORKPLACE LEARNING

Thank you for your interest and involvement in our workplace learning program. As an employer who can provide quality workplace learning, you will be helping students to gain valuable practical experience which will assist them in their school courses and help ready them for work.

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## 1 ABOUT WORKPLACE LEARNING

This guide introduces you and your staff to the concepts of workplace learning. It explains the workplace learning programs and the procedures and responsibilities when hosting students in your workplace. It also includes a handy 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 time in the workplace, gaining practical experience, assisting their career choices and building their industry skills. Workplace learning is available to students in Years 10,11 and 12. Students are generally placed in an industry of their choice or study requirements, reflecting the type of work they plan to do after completing their studies. For some students workplace learning is their first experience of the workplace.

### What kinds of workplace learning are there?

NSW secondary schools offer two main types of workplace learning – **work experience** and mandatory **workplacement** for HSC vocational education and training (VET) courses.

### Work Experience

These programs are usually undertaken by students in Years 10 or 11. Work experience provides a general introduction to the 'world of work'. Work experience can assist the social and vocational development of students and enable students to test tentative career choices against the realities of the workplace.

### HSC VET Work Placement

- Work Placement Courses are accredited by: industry, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and the Board of Studies of NSW.
- Work placement is a compulsory component 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 a private training provide.
- 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.
- Students achieving competency receive an industry-specific VET qualification that is recognised throughout Australia.

Work placement is a **compulsory HSC requirement** for the following Framework courses:

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

It is school policy and subject required to be completed for Board Endorsed Courses:

- Sports Coaching
- Furniture Making
- Hairdressing

### Workplace learning assists students to:

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

### Benefits for employers

- Host employers have the opportunity to:
- participate in the education, career development and vocational training of young people in your community
  - promote the attitudes and skills you want in your workforce

- identify and train young people with potential for your industry or business
- strengthen your links with the community and raise your business profile
- increase the supervisory, training and mentoring skills of your staff
- give students the knowledge of the value of work and raise the quality of those coming into your industry or business

## 2 HOW WORKPLACE LEARNING WORKS

### Who organises work placements?

Schools will generally arrange their own workplace learning programs working with private providers involved in the delivery of coursework. Employers may be approached by the student, school, TAFE, third party or private provider to host students in their workplace. For HSC VET work placements, the approach often comes from a Work Placement Service Provider who is funded to negotiate and coordinate these mandatory placements. 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

### Work placement service providers

These local organisations are funded to coordinate HSC VET work placements, liaising between schools, TAFE NSW institutes, private providers 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](http://www.workplacement.nsw.edu.au) for their contact details.

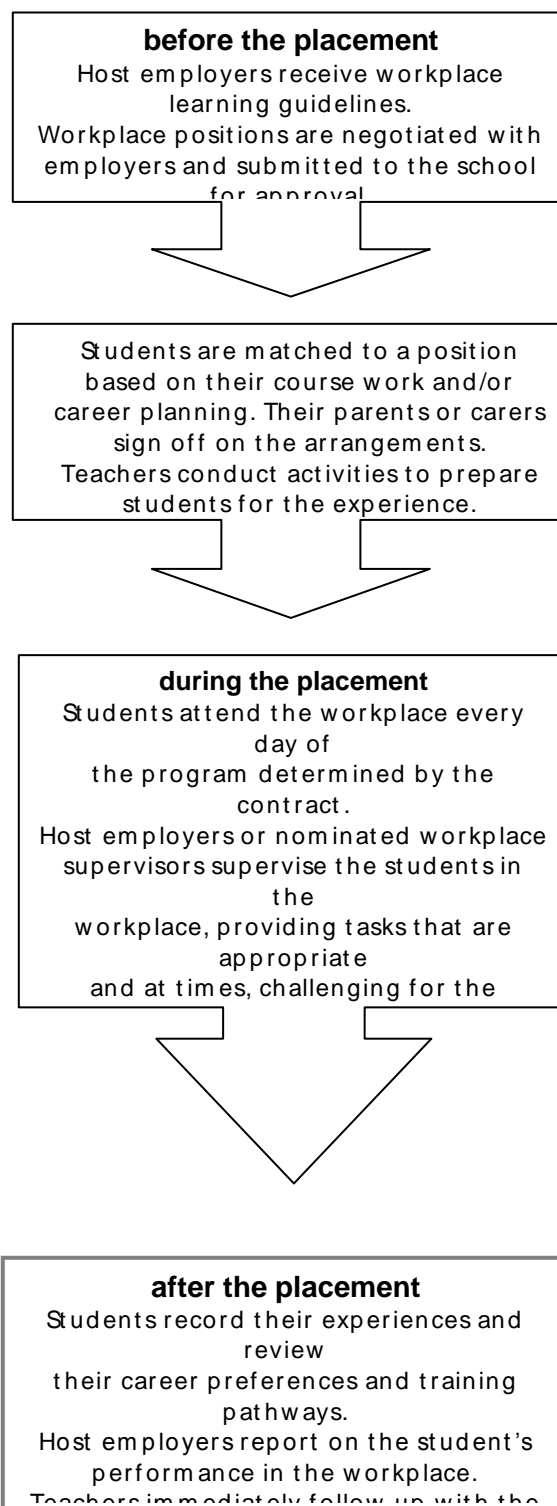
The Diocese currently has agreements with – Youth Express for the Upper Hunter and Maitland area schools 49537099  
Career Links for Newcastle region schools 49312723

### 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. A student may wish to extend their skills

by undertaking a placement during the school holidays. Conditions apply. Restrictions apply to younger students in work experience programs. Students in Years 10 cannot undertake workplace learning during school holidays. **Students under 15 years age cannot work before 7am or after 6pm.**

### What is the general procedure for a placement?



## Who has duty of care?

The school maintains a duty of care to students undertaking workplace learning. Schools are 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. Parents and carers are required to nominate emergency contact for any emergencies that occur outside normal business hours.

## 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 contacts, 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. The Student Placement Record also records information regarding any disability, 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.**

## Is there a cost involved?

NO! There is no financial outlay involved in having a student on placement but it is acknowledged that there is an indirect cost in terms of the time involved in implementing the program and training the student.



## Are students paid for workplacement?

Students are voluntary workers and should not be paid. If you decide to pay the student, this will change your relationship to that of employer/employee and may invalidate the 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.

## Who do I contact if there is a problem?

If you have any concerns or difficulties during the placement regarding the student or other matters, **please contact the school** as indicated on the Student Work Placement Record that you will receive before the placement.

Contact should be made as soon as possible so that solutions can be found quickly.

### *Useful tips from employers*

*Engage the student straight away as the first hour can set the tone for the week.*

*Chat 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, having a reserve list of jobs helps with this.*

*Debrief with your student at the end of each day and plan the next day's work.*

## 3 Legal Requirements and Paperwork

### 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 provider.

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.

The student's educational institution must then approve the placement as described. Parents and students must also provide their consent, emergency contacts and details of any disability or additional support needs the child may have. In the case of mandatory HSC VET work placements, Work Placement Service Providers help streamline this process for you.

### Are there any other conditions?

- Participating students must be aged 14 years or over.
- Students under 15 years cannot work before 7am or after 6pm.
- No student can be directed to carry out any task that is not safe.
- Employers and employees are to 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.

### What about insurance?

Insurance and indemnity requirements are arranged for NSW Catholic schools. A copy of the policy and the currency certificate are attached to the back of this booklet.

### Will my business need to change its insurance arrangements?

**All claims for damage should be referred to the school or relevant provider.**

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 under a workplace learning program. You are expected to have current public liability coverage as is standard business practice. If you are a private provider 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 Catholic schools can compensate employers participating in approved workplace learning programs for damage to their property, the property of employees or property in the employer's physical or legal control provided that:

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

**As students are not employees, Workers' Compensation does not apply.**

### 3a. What to do if an accident or emergency occurs involving the student

- Seek medical help immediately, using the student's Medicare number as provided on the Student Placement Record.
- Do not treat this as a workers' compensation claim.*
- During normal business hours, contact the school, TAFE or private provider (and the parents or carers depending on the seriousness of the injury).
  - Outside normal business hours, contact the student's parents or carers or their nominated emergency contact.
  - Ask the doctor attending for a medical certificate.
  - Complete a written report of the accident and forward it to the school or relevant provider. The report must include a full statement from the student, the supervisor and relevant witnesses.

## 4 Providing a Safe Workplace

### How can I make my place safe for students?

Before any placement can be approved, employers need to satisfy the school, TAFE NSW Institute or private provider that they can provide a safe and healthy host workplace for students, compliant with the NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and anti-discrimination legislation.

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

It is also expected that employers will give students a site-specific Workplace Health & Safety briefing at the commencement of, or prior to, the workplace learning program.

### Are any activities prohibited for workplace learning students?

Yes. Some activities are completely prohibited e.g. working on a roof, while others 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 license (e.g. a driver's licence), permit or certificate of competence unless they already hold the relevant license, 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 such as construction require the students to undertake training prior to their work placement. For example, all students must complete the WH&S Construction Induction training as a prerequisite to placement.

A limited range of work involving animals is available. The school, TAFE or a Work Placement Service Provider can also advise you if you have any further queries.

### You will need to indicate upfront:

- areas of possible risk in the student's 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 eg. 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 responsibilities under child protection legislation.

### What are my responsibilities regarding the supervision of students?

Employers are expected to act in accordance with workplace responsibilities as set out for all employees and members of the public. That is, responsibilities that flow from legislation such as Workplace Health & Safety, Child Protection, Privacy, Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Legislation.

### During the placement you need to provide:

- 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
- a workplace induction for students at the beginning of the placement, including relevant safety matters
- 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.
- Report any risks or hazards immediately.
- Understand and follow emergency procedures.

**Employers must be aware** that complaints of harassment or abuse of student in the workplace will require investigation and possible notification according to *Part 3a NSW Ombudsman's Act 1974* and *Section 39 Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*.

## Child Protection

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. This could include initiation of activities or horseplay involving the student; physical or verbal abuse; 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. 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 abuse, harm or risk of significant harm to the student must also be reported to the Department of Community Service and in some cases, to the NSW Police

## Privacy

The Commonwealth Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 regulates the collection and storage of personal and sensitive information that may be held by organisations. In order to meet duty of care responsibilities and to facilitate the design of suitable workplace learning experiences, employers are provided with relevant information regarding students who are on workplacement or work experience. This may include name, address, age, emergency contact details and possibly sensitive health information.

In accordance with privacy requirements, it is expected that employers will:

- keep all personal student information secure and confidential, particularly any health information.
- ensure that information regarding the student is used only for the purpose of the workplace learning program.
- dispose of all student details once the workplace learning program is completed
- provide student access to any student records held by the employer, including the supervisor's report.

This legislation applies to the information collected about students by the school and passed on to employers, regardless of whether or not it directly applies to your organisation. Similarly, all information provided by the host employer to the school or the Business Education Partnership will be used only for the purpose of the workplacement or work experience program.



## Do I need to consider any Industrial Relations issues?

Certain conditions that have been negotiated with the ACTU need to be taken into consideration. Three important conditions are that:

- the hours of placement that a student does in your workplace should be in accordance with the award for your industry
- the student should not replace a paid employee (including employees who are on paid annual leave or sick leave) or reduce the hours which a paid employee would otherwise be paid to work
- the student should not be used to replace employees engaged in industrial disputes

## 5 A Checklist for Employers

### BEFORE

- *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*
- 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](http://www.ezwp.det.nsw.edu.au)*

#### **Appoint supervisory staff for each student:**

- Supervisors*
- 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.*

#### **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 guidelines*
- 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*

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 provider.

### DURING

*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, product, mission and values*
- an outline of the student's planned activities and supervision arrangements*
- 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.*
- an explanation of safety - its importance, reasons and procedures*
- first aid and evacuation plans and other emergency drills*
- a brief outline of policies on bullying, harassment and discrimination*
- procedures for lateness or absence*
- rules regarding confidentiality and the use of PCs, the internet etc.*

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

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





## Your supervisors will need to ensure that the student:

- undertakes varied activities appropriate to their skill level and workplace learning requirements
- does not undertake any prohibited activities as indicated in Section 5 of this guide
- does not undertake any activity requiring a license, 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 given appropriate feedback and encouragement
- has sufficient time to complete diaries, work placement journals or research projects provided by their school, TAFE or private provider

## AFTER -

### Before the placement ends, please:

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

## 6. 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 young person as they take up these valuable workplace learning opportunities. If you have any queries, please get in touch with one of the following:

- for HSC VET work placements, your Work Placement Service Provider
- the VET coordinator, careers adviser, or school-to-work coordinator 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 vocational education officer at the Catholic Schools office

Employers section

[www.ezwp.det.nsw.edu.au](http://www.ezwp.det.nsw.edu.au)

*Work Placement Made Easy!* with easy to follow materials developed by an experienced employer for fellow employers hosting HSC VET Also, *suggested student activities for HSC work placements*

[www.inworkingorder.com.au](http://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

[www.workplacement.nsw.edu.au/sydneyaccess/index.php](http://www.workplacement.nsw.edu.au/sydneyaccess/index.php)



Procedures for Workplace learning programs within the Diocese of Maitland – Newcastle, are in line with and referenced from the Department of Education and Communities.