This guide introduces the concept of workplace learning, what’s involved and the support available to parents, carers and students.

THE WORKPLACE LEARNING GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

› Your guide to hosting students undertaking workplace learning programs from NSW government schools and TAFE NSW institutes.
1. ABOUT WORKPLACE LEARNING

This guide introduces you and your staff to the concepts of workplace learning. It explains the workplace learning programs running in NSW government schools, the support available to employers, and your roles 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 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 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 training and employment opportunities
- fine-tune their career aspirations and career and transition planning.

“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
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.

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 the 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.

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.

Host employer, Sydney
2. HOW WORKPLACE LEARNING WORKS

Who organises the programs and work placements?

Schools will generally arrange their own workplace learning programs working, where relevant, with TAFE and private providers involved in the delivery of coursework. An example of a private provider might be an aviation company that, as a registered training organisation or RTO, delivers an aeronautics course to school students.

Employers may be approached by the school, TAFE or private provider 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 VET work placements, the approach may come from a Work Placement Service Provider who is funded to negotiate and coordinate these mandatory placements. See Box ▶

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.

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 appropriate and at times, challenging for the student. Teachers make a supervisory visit or phone call to the employer and the student to check on their progress and welfare. Where relevant, students are assessed for industry-based competencies.

AFTER THE PLACEMENT

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 activities to prepare students for the experience.

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.

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 for their contact details.

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. Conditions apply.

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.
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 be or nominate the 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.
- 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.
- Have a reserve list of jobs for them to do.
- Debrief with your student at the end of each day and plan tomorrow’s work.

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.

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

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

Workplace supervisor, Tamworth
All relevant safety, health and welfare legislation that protects employees also protects students and support staff engaged in workplace learning programs.

3. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND PAPERWORK

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 provider.

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 black and white 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.

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 the approval 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.

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 by the NSW Department of Education and Communities under the NSW Treasury Managed Fund Scheme. Specific cover relevant to workplace learning is provided for DET (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 vocational education teachers undertaking industry placements as part of their VET teacher training program and to teachers supervising students participating in workplace learning programs.

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 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 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.

4. ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES

If a student is injured:

- 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.
- 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.
- Ask the doctor attending for a medical certificate.
- Complete a written report of the accident and forward it to the school, or where relevant, to the TAFE NSW institute or private provider. The report must include a full statement from the student, the supervisor and relevant witnesses.

Further details of the insurance and indemnity for workplace learning programs can be found at [https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/worklearn/workleampolicy.html](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/worklearn/workleampolicy.html)

We like to share strategies on how to work in teams, solve problems and communicate in the workplace - the stuff of success.

Host employer, Orange
5. 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.

You will need to indicate upfront:

- 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 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.

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.
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 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 WH&S Construction Induction training as a prerequisite to placement.

For the full list of prohibited activities and the pre-requisite training requirements for workplace learning students, go to [www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/worklearn/worklearnpolicy](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/worklearn/worklearnpolicy).

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

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. This could include initiation 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 Services and, in some cases, to the NSW Police.

For more information on working with children, contact the NSW Commission for Children and Young People on (02) 9286 7219 or email them at check@kids.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: www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/worklearn/worklearnpolicy
- 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
- 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
- codes and passwords (doors, photocopier, PC access etc.)
- rules regarding confidentiality and the use of PCs, the internet etc.

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.

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 - 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, 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
- codes and passwords (doors, photocopier, PC access etc.)
- 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 and at: www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/worklearn/worklearnpolicy
- 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 - 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 provider
- ensure that any property or identification cards on loan have been returned
- take time to provide the student with helpful feedback and encouragement.

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

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 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 consultant at the relevant regional office of the NSW Department of Education and Communities
- the Senior Coordinator for Workplace Learning, Vocational Education in Schools Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Communities - tel. (02) 9244 5252
- Administration Policy Unit, Administrative Services Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Communities - tel. (02) 9561 8641.

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

YOUR FIRST POINT OF CONTACT:

For further assistance and advice


Employers section

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

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


For Information on supporting young workers in your workplace


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.