

Vocational Education & Training Courses



Student Guide to Workplace Learning

January 2025

About this guide

This guide contains important information to help you get the most out of your workplace learning. It contains information about your rights and responsibilities, the skills to be learned and how they will be assessed. Please read it carefully.

You should also give your parents or guardian an opportunity to read this guide so that you have a chance to discuss this information with them and address any concerns or questions you may have.

What is workplace learning?

Workplace learning provides you with the opportunity to develop vocational skills, knowledge and attitudes in real work environments. Two main types of workplace learning programs are organised and approved by individual Independent schools:

- Work Experience programs
- Work Placement programs

What is work experience?

Work Experience gives you the opportunity to learn more about career options in a workplace chosen by you. During work experience, you are generally restricted to observing various aspects of the workplace and completing tasks nominated by your supervisor.

Work Experience:

- involves students 14 years of age or over.
- provides an orientation to the world of work in a general field but **without** a planned program of industry accredited skill development, such as Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses.
- may or may not be part of a course.
- has no formal recognition towards a VET course.

PLEASE NOTE: if you commence a two-year course and withdraw at the end of Year 11 without completing work placement, the course WILL NOT count towards your Preliminary unit requirements.

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What is work placement?

Work placement is structured workplace learning that prepares you for the workforce. The experience in the workplace will help you to better understand theory learnt off the job by putting it into practice in the workplace.

It is different from work experience in that you will be given the opportunity to undertake tasks that enable you to develop skills and knowledge related to your vocational course.

Work placement:

- involves Year 10, 11 and/or Year 12 students undertaking VET courses as part of their HSC study program.
- is a mandatory component of NSW Educational Standards Authority (NESA) Industry Curriculum Framework VET courses that are accredited by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)
- involves the integration of off-the-job and on- the-job learning
- may involve competency-based assessment and recording of industry-recognised skills and knowledge

Which skills do I learn in the workplace during work placement?

The skills you learn in the workplace are negotiated between your teacher and the employer. They form part of your vocational course and appear in your Student Workplace Learning Journal (described later). When you are on work placement, you may wish to discuss with your workplace supervisor when these skills will be covered.

How are the skills I gain for work placement recorded?

Prior to the placement your teacher may give you an assessment sheet to be completed by the employer. It is your responsibility to hand this sheet to your supervisor on the first day, collect it before you leave and ensure it is passed on to your teacher at school. The skills and knowledge recorded on this sheet may contribute to your final assessment.

How do I prepare for workplace learning?

It is important that you are familiar with any workplace learning program requirements that have been specified by the employer and also that you understand your responsibilities.

Make sure you:

- carefully read the placement details form that has been provided by the employer.
- contact the employer no later than one week prior to the starting date of your workplace learning (or as otherwise indicated by the employer) to introduce yourself and confirm details.

What are my responsibilities?

In the workplace, you will be expected to behave like a new employee and follow the rules of the workplace and the reasonable directions of the workplace supervisor and other employees.

1. Have the right attitude

- show enthusiasm and initiative
- accept and complete duties planned by the supervisor
- be willing to learn
- listen to instructions and ask questions when unsure
- accept and act on advice given by workplace supervisors

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- ask for jobs when you have nothing to do
- be polite, courteous and well mannered
- avoid distracting other employees unnecessarily from their work
- dress appropriately to industry standards and the workplace

2. Attendance and punctuality

- start work on time each day
- take only the allocated time for morning tea, afternoon tea and lunch breaks and return promptly to work
- contact the workplace supervisor and the supervising teacher immediately if unable to attend work
- account for any absence to the workplace supervisor and the supervising teacher because the hours lost through absence may be required to be made up at some other time
- attend for the normal hours of work for that job, unless prior arrangements have been negotiated by the school

Travel Arrangements

Before your work experience or work placement begins, check travel arrangements to make sure you arrive on time. Your free school travel pass cannot be used for travel to and from work. You will need a current Travel Concession Pass for travel on public transport.

Child Protection

Employers should have been asked to make sure all staff are aware of the special responsibilities associated with working with students. There is ongoing and close cooperation and communication between employers and schools both before and during the workplace learning program.

Remember these points:

- you have the right to feel safe and secure within the workplace
- you have the right to refuse to undertake tasks that involve one-on-one contact with employees or clients, particularly if this is to be done in confined spaces
- if you feel that you are being harassed or in any way abused in the workplace you must immediately report the matter to your school coordinator. Make sure you have your school's phone number before you commence your placement

Safety

Your employer should make sure you do not work in unsafe conditions or carry out work that could endanger the health or safety of yourself or other [staff members](#).

Before entering the workplace, you should be aware of the Work Health Safety (WHS) requirements of the industry. Usually, your school will give you general information about WHS legislation and workplace practices. In addition, some employers have a structured induction program which includes WHS issues.

You must never carry out a task that may be dangerous to yourself, other workers or members of the public or equipment. If you feel you do not have the skills or knowledge to safely use equipment or carry out a task, you must ask your supervisor for advice or assistance. If you are asked to work in an unsafe environment you may politely refuse. Contact your school coordinator immediately.

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Remember, most workplace accidents can be prevented if you:

- obey reasonable instruction
- work safely and wear the personal protective equipment provided and required
- do not put other workers or the public at risk
- report accidents or near misses

What activities are prohibited?

You must not do any of the following activities during workplace learning:

1. use of machinery or equipment which may be dangerous for new or young workers to operate, unless each of the following occurs:
 - the activity is first risk-assessed as suitable and safe for student operation by the host employer
 - you have been given appropriate information, instruction and training and a checklist for the safe operation and handling of the equipment
 - the equipment is in safe working order, complete with required safety devices or guards
 - a suitably qualified or experienced person in the workplace who has good communication skills and the ability to give clear instructions, provides on-going, close supervision.
2. the service of alcohol where you are under 18 is prohibited unless:
 - you are aged 18 or over and
 - the activity is essential to the placement and has been agreed to by the school and
 - you have completed the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) Training Course.
3. any work of a sexual or explicit nature
4. travel by helicopter is prohibited
5. air travel on charter flights and aircraft other than those providing a regular public transport service (i.e., on a regular route with paying passengers) is prohibited
6. travel outside the 12-nautical mile limit at sea.
7. scuba and deep-sea diving are prohibited
8. the following 'high risk construction work' as defined in the NSW WHS Regulation (2017):
 - construction work in tunnels or confined spaces
 - work involving the use of explosives
 - work in and around pressurized gas distribution mains
 - piping and energised electrical installations or services
 - work near traffic or mobile plant
 - demolition work other than simple stripping of walls etc.
 - any excavation work at a depth greater than one metre or near utilities is prohibited
 - at a depth less than one metre without direct supervision by a competent person is prohibited
 - work on permanent or temporary structures used to enable excavation and construction work in marine environments is prohibited
 - working on a roof or in a cavity is prohibited
 - working where asbestos is present is prohibited
 - any activities involving or adjacent to the repair, removal or demolition of any construction work containing asbestos or in the clean-up process following the activity
 - attendance at a site while chimney stacks or buildings are being demolished
9. scheduled work as set out in Chapter 4 of the *NSW WHS Regulation (2017)*, is prohibited, unless there are exceptional circumstances and the student, aged 18 or over, already has achieved the necessary certification

10. scheduled work as set out in the *NSW WHS Regulation (2017)* regarding the operation and use of load-shifting machines; the application of pesticides, except when used in horticulture, husbandry or the growing of fruit and vegetables; the use of fumigant is prohibited unless there are exceptional circumstances, the students are aged 18 or over and the students have already achieved the necessary certification.
11. any activity requiring a licence (e.g., a driver's licence), permit or certificate of competence is prohibited unless:
 - the student already has the relevant current licence, permit or certificate, and
 - the activity is directly related to the learning outcomes of the placement, and
 - the activity is included in the AISNSW Student Placement Record prior to approval.
12. driving any old or unregistered vehicles commonly known as 'bush bashers' is prohibited.

Note: students are not expected to drive their own vehicle while undertaking activities on behalf of the employer.

Special consideration is needed with the following activities that have conditions.

Golf Carts, Quad Bikes, Tractors or other Farm Vehicles

Placements involving the student's operation of golf carts, quad bikes, tractors or other farm vehicles must be carefully considered, even where these activities are considered to be essential to achieving the outcomes of the placement.

For these placements to be approved, the vehicle and the activity must be adequately risk assessed as being safe for the student. You must have successfully completed an accredited formal training course or related course competencies or have demonstrated substantial experience in the safe operation of these vehicles. Students riding quad bikes must be at least 16 years of age and wear an approved helmet with the strap in place. Required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) other than helmets include:

- eye protection for example goggles
- hand protection for example gloves
- long sleeve shirt and full-length pants
- sturdy footwear for example boots.

Note: Helmets must comply with Australian Standard AS/NZS 1698.

You must be closely supervised and must not be reckless or careless.

Students with **little or no experience** must not operate these vehicles unless:

- Prior to the placement, the principal or delegate gives approval to the placement activity and is satisfied that the employer can satisfactorily manage the activity for the student and can provide appropriate quality training and on-going supervision.
- The student has successfully completed a relevant formal training course, or the related course competencies, or have demonstrated substantial experience in the safe operation of such vehicles. The student must be closely supervised.

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To ensure the school or EVET provider is satisfied that the activity is safe, a risk assessment must be documented and sighted by the school principal or nominee/EVET provider or nominee, prior to approval.

Placements in meat processing plants

Placements in meat processing plants are subject to mandatory requirements. The Australian Meat Industry Council can be contacted on telephone (02) 9086 2200 for the information package to support student workplace learning in meat processing plants.

Placements involving horses

A risk assessment must be undertaken, in consultation with the school, to ensure the activity is appropriate and safe and that the horse is fit for purpose and the age and experience of the rider. Use the [Guide to managing risks when new and inexperienced persons interact with horses](#) including Appendices B and C. See also SafeWork NSW information about [horse-related injuries](#).

Placements in the construction industry

All workplace learning in the construction industry requires a pre-requisite that the student completes Work Health and Safety induction training for construction work and holds the General Construction Induction Card (White Card).

The Construction, Plumbing and Services Training Package and SafeWork NSW mandate delivery and assessment via face-to-face or via real time audio and visual media.

- you already have the relevant current licence, permit or certificate **and**
- the activity is directly related to the learning outcomes of the placement **and**
- the activity is included in the AISNSW RTO Student Work Placement Record and approved by the school prior to the commencement of the placement.

Confidentiality

You may be exposed to information about the organisation and its clients that will be confidential. You will be expected to maintain privacy by not repeating any of this information. In some cases, employers may want you to sign a confidentiality contract.

Police clearance

Some employers may require you to obtain a police clearance, particularly if some of your tasks include handling cash or valuables. Enquiries for a police clearance may be made at any police station.

Medical conditions

Let your supervising teacher and workplace supervisor know if you suffer from any medical condition or disability that may affect your work performance.

Insurance

As a student on work placement, you are covered by insurance while you are in the workplace. Your supervising teacher can provide you with details.

What if there is a misunderstanding?

If there is a misunderstanding during your work placement you should discuss it firstly with your employer or workplace supervisor and then inform your supervising teacher. If you find it difficult to discuss the misunderstanding with your employer or workplace supervisor, speak to your teacher who can then address the matter with them for you.

Misunderstanding may include the following:

- unsafe work health and safety practices.
- inadequate supervision or learning opportunities provided in the workplace.
- unreasonable work requests by the employer or workplace supervisor
- problems regarding assessment (during work placement)

What do I do if I need to cancel/vary my work experience or work placement?

An enormous amount of time and effort is spent in recruiting employers to provide work places for students and employers spend time and effort preparing for students. Cancelling or withdrawing can potentially jeopardise future opportunities for other students.

Consequently, work experience or work placement may only be cancelled or varied under special circumstances. If you need to do so you must contact your school coordinator.

What happens if I am in an accident at the workplace?

Make sure you are familiar with the procedures required. The following steps should be taken.

- report the accident to your employer or workplace supervisor and seek medical help
- contact your school coordinator as soon as possible
- have your Medicare number with you in case you need medical treatment. As a volunteer worker you are covered by insurance taken out by your school, not by Workers' Compensation
- keep all the relevant medical certificates and accounts for any insurance claims that may be made

What is a Student Workplace Learning Journal?

This is a journal in which you can record the skills and knowledge gained in the work place. It is your responsibility to maintain the workplace learning journal by recording details of activities performed on a daily basis and ensuring your workplace supervisor signs and dates skills achieved. You need to take your workplace learning journal with you every day that you are in the workplace.

Your journal can be used for:

- monitoring of your progress by the supervising teacher or workplace supervisor
- contributing to advanced standing or recognition of prior learning for further training programs
- supporting your applications for employment

Note: you are not expected to drive your own vehicle while undertaking activities on behalf of the employer.

Do I receive any feedback?

It is important that you receive feedback on your progress during your workplace learning. It is appropriate for you to ask your workplace supervisor to comment verbally on your progress throughout your workplace learning and not just at the end. Comments made should not be taken as personal criticism but viewed as a way to help you gain the skills and knowledge you require.

What do I do when my workplace learning program has finished?

Your supervising teacher may conduct a debriefing session with you and other students. This session will give you the opportunity to discuss:

- the benefits and problems of your workplace learning
- any successes or difficulties of your placement A letter of thanks should be sent to your employer for providing you with the opportunity to use their workplace for your learning.

Further information

If you would like further information, please contact your school's VET Compliance Officer.