

Vocational Education & Training Courses



Student Guide to Workplace Learning

July 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 carer 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 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.

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

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.

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 or workplacement journal to be completed by the employer. It is your responsibility to hand this sheet/ journal to your supervisor on the first day, collect it before you leave and ensure it is passed back to your teacher at school. The skills and knowledge recorded on this sheet/journal 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.

All students attending workplacement are required to complete the Go2workplacement modules. Your teacher will explain how to create an account and complete the modules. Your teacher will need to view your certificates once you have completed the modules.

If attending work experience your school may ask you to complete the MyExperience modules.

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
- 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:

Use of machinery or equipment which may be dangerous for new or young workers to operate is prohibited **unless** the activity is first risk-assessed as suitable and safe for student operation by the host employer and each of the following occurs:

- the student is 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.

The service of alcohol where the student is under 18 years of age is prohibited. If the student is over 18 years, the activity must be essential to the placement and have been agreed to by the school or EVET provider and the student must have completed the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) training course.

Air travel on charter flights and aircraft is prohibited, other than those providing a regular public transport service such as on a regular route with paying passengers.

- any work of a sexual or explicit nature
- travel by helicopter
- travel outside the 12-nautical mile limit at sea
- scuba and deep-sea diving
- any excavation work at a depth greater than one metre or near utilities
- any excavation work at a depth less than one metre without direct supervision by a competent person
- work on permanent or temporary structures used to enable construction work in marine environments
- working on a roof, roof trusses or in a roof cavity
- any work at an elevated level higher than two metres
- working where asbestos is present
- 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
- any activities involving the manufacture, supply and installation of engineered stone benchtops, panels and slabs
- construction work in tunnels, confined spaces or involving the use of explosives
- work in and around pressurised gas distribution mains or piping and energised electrical installations or services
- cannot be in close proximity to traffic or mobile plant operating on a worksite. Students are to attend onsite induction and traffic management meetings. Host employers are to closely supervise students, especially when plant is operating, and question students to ensure understanding of no-go areas and related safety procedures
- demolition work other than simple stripping of walls
- attendance at a site while chimney stacks or buildings are being demolished is prohibited
- drive their own vehicles while undertaking activities on behalf of the host employer
- be asked or directed to drive the employer's vehicles or any client vehicles while they are on a workplace learning experience
- driving any old or unregistered vehicles commonly known and 'bush bashers'

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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.

Some workplace activities are potentially high-risk. Inexperience and a lack of awareness can also increase the chances of a young worker being injured.

Host employers must closely supervise students to keep them safe.

The following activities have special requirements before they can be considered for workplace learning

Construction Industry

Before working in the construction industry, students must:

- complete work health and safety induction training
- obtain a general construction induction card (white card).
 - The training package mandates delivery and assessment via face to face or real time audio and visual media. Both forms of delivery and assessment are recognised as valid. Schools are in the best position to understand the learning style of their students when determining the mode of delivery of the white card, ensuring the safety of the student is paramount.
 - Where a student has obtained a White Card issued by another state, the school must undertake additional actions to meet its duty of care obligations.
 - A white card is not valid if the student has not undertaken work in the construction industry, such as workplace learning, in the 2 years since the white card was issued.

Where there is concern regarding the student's ability to manage their own safety and the safety of others on a construction site, irrespective of holding a White Card, the school principal should not approve the activity. Ultimately, the school principal is responsible for meeting duty of care requirements.

Workplace supervisors must carry out an induction for students, including training in procedures and how to manage site-specific risks. Handling and operating of all tools and equipment must be explained, along with associated risk management.

Horses and Livestock

Working with horses and livestock can be dangerous, no matter how experienced the student. Any workplace learning involving horses or livestock needs extreme caution.

Horses

Schools must comply with the following additional precautions for students working or riding horses during workplace learning.

- Host employers must follow the [SafeWork NSW code of practice](#) 'Managing risks when new or inexperienced riders or handlers interact with horses in the workplace'. Schools should keep records in accordance with the factors described in the code of practice:
 - Appendix B – assessing a horse
 - Appendix C – assessing a new or inexperienced rider or handler who will interact with horses in the workplace.

Livestock

Students must learn how to reduce the risk of Q fever infection and receive the [NSW Health – Q fever fact sheet](#) before attending.

Additionally, students must not be exposed to Q fever bacteria through:

- observing or assisting with animal birthing
- handling birth products
- cleaning up birth products and animal excreta
- handling an animal's carcass.

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Driving, including farm vehicles and golf carts

Any activity requiring a licence, permit or certificate of competence is prohibited unless:

- the student already has the relevant current licence, permit or certificate
- the activity is directly related to the learning outcomes of the placement
- the activity is included in the Student Placement Record prior to approval.

Quad bikes, 2-wheel motorbikes and farm vehicles

Schools and EVET providers must undertake the following precautions before students use farm vehicles, quad bikes or motorbikes.

- Students must successfully complete the appropriate accredited training course for the operation and maintenance of the machinery and equipment. This includes tractors, implements, equipment attached to a tractor power take-off and side-by-side utility vehicles.
 - Students with a long record of safe use of quad bikes or motor bikes on farms might not need to complete accredited training. This decision is made on a case-by-case basis.
- Host employers complete a risk assessment to ensure the activity is safe for students. These are submitted to the school or EVET manager before workplace learning approval.
- Students must be closely supervised when using any vehicles, machinery or equipment.
- When riding quad bikes and motorbikes, students must be at least 16 and wear:
 - an approved helmet with strap fastened
 - eye protection such as goggles
 - hand protection such as gloves
 - a long-sleeved shirt and full-length pants
 - sturdy footwear such as boots.

Students with little or no experience must not operate vehicles, machinery or equipment unless the host employer has demonstrated substantial experience in providing quality training to manage the student under close supervision.

Golf carts

A risk assessment must be conducted prior to students driving golf carts. Students are to be closely supervised.

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, it is the school's responsibility to take out insurance that covers you while you are in the workplace. Your school can provide you with the Certificate of Currency 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 allowed 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.