

Workplace Learning Guide for Employers

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About Workplace Learning

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

What is Workplace Learning?

Workplace learning programs form part of the NSW secondary 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 aged 14 years and older. 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 first experience of a workplace while others have done many hours of paid work in their part-time jobs.

There are two main types of workplace learning programs - work experience and work placement.

Work Experience

Work experience programs provide a general introduction to the world of work and assist students to develop a more informed opinion about their career aspirations. They are usually undertaken by students in Years 9 or 10 with some opportunities in Years 11 and 12. Work experience allows students 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
- find out about careers, training and employment opportunities.

Work Placement

Work placement is different from work experience as it is an integral part of Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses being completed by students for their Higher School Certificate (HSC). These courses lead to nationally recognised VET qualifications. Real work contexts provide students important opportunities to apply their classroom learning.

During work placement, employers supervise the students as they practice and extend the industry skills they have learned in their course. Students work towards gaining specific industry competencies and gather evidence that can contribute towards their course assessment.

What are the benefits of workplace learning?

Employers hosting students have the opportunity to:

- be involved 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 and help raise the quality of those coming into your industry
- meet students from diverse backgrounds who may have skills which can be useful to your organisation
- identify young people with potential for your industry
- increase the supervisory, training and mentoring skills of your staff
- strengthen your links with the community and raise your business profile.

Students have the opportunity to:

- experience real work situations
- access industry standard facilities, equipment and experienced staff
- develop self-confidence, skills and understandings that will assist them in their transition to meaningful work
- evaluate their abilities and interests in relation to career choices.

How Workplace Learning Works

Who organises the programs and placements?

Schools are generally responsible for arranging workplace learning programs. Where TAFE or a private or community registered training organisation delivers the course, they arrange the related placements in consultation with the school.

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 VET work placements, the approach may come from a Work Placement Service Provider which is funded to negotiate and coordinate these mandatory placements. These organisations have considerable expertise and resources to help you provide quality work placements. You can also contact them directly. Details are available at: workplacement.nsw.edu.au

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 a half or one day per week for an extended period of time. For a range of HSC VET courses, work placement is mandatory and students are required to complete two to four weeks over two years. Each placement is usually with a different employer.

When can workplace learning occur?

Placements are usually scheduled on weekdays during school terms. This can be varied for individual students with the approval of their school Principal. For example, placements in school holidays may be approved on the condition that the same level of duty of care supervision is provided.

Restrictions apply to younger students in work experience programs. Students under 15 years cannot work before 7am or after 6pm or during school holidays.

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 to nominate, an alternative emergency contact for any incidents or accidents that occur outside normal business hours.

What is the general procedure for a placement?

BEFORE The Placement

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

DURING the placement

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

AFTER the placement

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

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

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

Legal requirements and paperwork

Are 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 students may invalidate 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.

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.

For safety and insurance purposes, employers are asked to take particular care to provide sufficient detail when completing the activities questions on the *Host Employer Details* section of the Student Placement Record. Guidance for completing this document is provided in Appendix 1.

Once all parties have provided and approved the information on the Student Placement Record, the school’s insurance and indemnity arrangements are activated for you and the student.

A full copy of the Student Placement Record 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
- No student can be directed to carry out any task that is not safe
- Employers and employees must respect the student’s right to a safe and healthy host workplace, free from harassment, discrimination and any conduct that is unacceptable in terms of child protection. See host employer responsibilities in Section 5
- Host employers are expected to consult and cooperate with the student’s school under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)*
- Host employers must notify the school immediately of any health and safety incidents involving a student while on placement, including near misses, to enable the school to fulfil its WHS obligations and support a safe placement
- Host employers must advise the school immediately if they need to change sites, redirect students to another location, or find asbestos on the site.

What about insurance?

Insurance and indemnity requirements are arranged through the Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW). NSW Catholic diocesan schools and most congregational schools subscribe to this insurance annually.

Two separate policies provide workplace learning cover for students and their host employers:

- Student personal accident and disability policies
- Work Experience/Work Placement Public Liability Policy.

Congregational schools which do not take out employer liability cover through the CSNSW make equivalent insurance arrangements.

A summary of the insurance cover for workplace learning will be provided for your information and is also available on the CSNSW website, Vocational Learning webpage.

Any incident that may result in a claim against the employer or the school must be notified immediately (within 7 working days) in writing to the student's school. Diocesan schools then notify the CSNSW through their diocesan office. Congregational schools notify CSNSW directly. Suspected spinal injuries must be notified to CSNSW within 24 hours.

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 SafeWork arrangements when taking on a student for workplace learning. You are expected to have current public liability coverage as is standard business practice.

Accidents and emergencies

If a student is sick or injured:

- seek medical help immediately, using the student's name and date-of-birth for access to their medical records. Students are not employees, *do not* treat this as a Workers Compensation claim
- contact emergency services for Ambulance or other emergency services immediately, where required
- contact the student's parent/carer and their school contact person or Principal (depending on the seriousness of the injury)
- medical invoices should be made out to the student
- ask the doctor attending for a medical certificate
- contact the school immediately to advise of the situation. As a follow up when time permits, complete a written report of the accident and forward it to the school. The report must include a full statement from the student, the supervisor and relevant witnesses.

Anaphylaxis

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

Signs of Anaphylaxis

- Any one of the following is a sign of anaphylaxis:
 - difficult/noisy breathing
 - swelling of the tongue
 - swelling/tightness in throat
 - difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
 - wheezing or persistent cough
 - persistent dizziness or collapse
 - pale and floppy (young children)

Providing a safe workplace for students

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

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

- areas of possible risk in the student's workplace tasks and your strategies to eliminate or minimise the risk
- any pre-training or induction required by the student to undertake certain tasks
- your supervision arrangements for the student
- any special clothing required by the student 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 child protection responsibilities when working with school students
- commitment to reporting any health and safety incidents or near misses involving students to the school.

During the placement you will need to provide:

- a site-specific workplace induction for students at the beginning of the placement, including relevant safety matters
- activities and skill development tasks appropriate to the student's skill level
- ongoing instruction and supervision by a capable and trustworthy employee briefed for the task
- 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
- Not do anything to jeopardise the safety of themselves or others
- Report any risks or hazards immediately
- Understand and follow emergency procedures
- Cease work if they have a concern about their health and safety and contact their supervisor and school
- Report any concerns about the placement or incidents to their school.

Are any activities prohibited for workplace learning students?

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

Students are not allowed to undertake activities requiring a licence, permit or certificate of competence, including a driver's licence. Additionally, students are not permitted to drive their own vehicles whilst undertaking activities on behalf of the host employer.

Some higher risk industries will require the students to undertake training prior to their placement. For example, all students doing workplace learning in the construction industry must complete the relevant state/territory construction induction training (WhiteCard) as a prerequisite to the placement.

For a full list of prohibited activities or those requiring special approval, refer to the insurance documentation provided to you and also available on the CSNSW website. The school or 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 or belittled. This could include initiation activities or horseplay involving the student; physical or verbal abuse such as swearing at students; physical assault; inappropriate conversations, remarks or jokes of a sexual nature; the showing of sexually suggestive publications, electronic media or illustrations and any unwarranted and/or inappropriate touching or personal communication with students regarding their sexual feelings. This includes texting or using social media.

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

To assist in providing a safe work environment, employers should take all possible steps to ensure that students:

- do not undertake an unsupervised task that involves contact with children or students under the age of 18 years (applicable to child-related employers only)
- do not undertake a task that involves unsupervised contact with just one employee or client. Supervision can be provided by visual contact or the physical presence of another employee.

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

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

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 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 appropriately challenging
 - not contravene the prohibited activities indicated in this guide or in the insurance documents
 - include tasks and skills appropriate to the student's coursework requirements (eg, VET course competencies)
 - provide time for some career conversations.

Appoint supervisory staff for each student.

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 adviser or mentor to provide the student 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
- ☒ understand special needs including how to respond to medical conditions eg, anaphylaxis
- ☒ comply with agreed arrangements.

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 this guide or in the insurance documents
- does not undertake any activity requiring a licence, permit or certificate of competence unless they already have the relevant qualification and the activity has been approved by all parties before the placement
- is provided with all necessary safety equipment required to complete a task

- receives full instruction on how to complete activities including the risks, the purpose of safety equipment such as PPE, and how to use it appropriately
- is given appropriate feedback and encouragement
- has sufficient time to complete diaries, work placement journals or research projects assigned by their school.

During - Providing a quality workplace learning experience

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

The student's induction should include:

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

After - Provide 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
- ☒ ensure that any property or identification cards on loan have been returned
- ☒ take time to provide the student with helpful feedback and encouragement.

Further information

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 contact one of the following:

- ➡ The VET Coordinator or Careers Adviser at the student's school
- ➡ Your Work Placement Service Provider (WPSP) for HSC VET work placements
- ➡ Your Diocesan VET Adviser

Contacts, insurance and workplace learning information are available on the CSNSW VET webpage.

Appendix 1

Completion of the Student Placement Record to meet required standards

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.

The Student Placement Record is central to the process of arranging the placement and ensuring that important information is communicated to all parties. We ask you to take particular care in completing the Host Employer Details section of this document and to provide specific, exact information about:

- the tasks/duties the student will be doing
- the risks to a student doing that work (and the likelihood and severity of injury)
- how you will manage any risks to the student
- induction, supervision and use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

By thinking about these questions carefully and putting the details on the *Student Placement Record*, you are in effect completing a written risk assessment of the tasks you are setting for the student. If you need more space, please attach extra information to the *Student Placement Record*.

A planned program of activities reduces the chances of students being exposed to risks from unplanned activities. Additionally, this helps you meet your responsibilities under Work Health and Safety legislation. See guidance and advice below on how to complete key risk assessment responses.

Your information alerts the school to exactly what is planned so the school can make a considered decision to approve – or not approve – the planned activities as being suitable for the student and for the purpose of their workplace learning. This is part of the school's duty of care. We understand that sometimes you need to change the activities and if these are significant or involve risk to the student, we ask you to tell the school.

Sample Responses to Host Employer Details Section of *Student Placement Record*:

Q. Activities/duties to be undertaken by the student

Standard: Undertaking [activity] and/or using a [name of machine, tools] to [do what] under the close supervision of [level of responsibility].

Employer 1 response: Suitable duties as directed.

This response would be **unsatisfactory**, there's no clear indication of what the student will be doing.

The following responses would be **satisfactory**. They each indicate what the student will primarily be doing and the level of seniority of the supervisor:

Employer 2 response: Using a press to make flanges under the close supervision of production manager or similar experienced supervisor.

Employer 3 response: Shadow an architect; attend meetings/site visits; student assignment involving CAD; independent visits to nearby city buildings; use printers.

Employer 4 response: Aspects of cabinet making using machinery including panel saw, edge bander, nail guns and drills. The student will be supervised by a qualified tradesperson.

The school can then consider if this is a suitable activity and whether they need more information before going ahead with the placement.

Q. Any activities or tasks the student is not to undertake

(eg, no-go areas, machinery or equipment that is too dangerous for new or young workers to operate) Note that this question does not require you to consider every aspect of your workplace, just those aspects relevant to the student.

Where the activities are usually safe for students such as in office environments, you should still aim to identify at least one thing the student must not do, eg, must not operate guillotine without training and supervision, beware of extremely hot water in the kitchen tap. This is evidence of your conscientious consideration of potential risks to the student.

Standard: There needs to be a meaningful response to this question. Note the prompts above to help the host employer.

Employer 1 response: Nil or See section 5 of the Employer Guide to Workplace Learning

A Nil response would be **unsatisfactory**. Some detail would need to be provided to identify potential risks in the industry setting where the student will complete their work placement. Referring to the Employer's Guide is far too general. It does not provide evidence that relevant risks have been identified.

The following responses would be **satisfactory** as they identify exact risks alerting the school of details to emphasise in preparing the student. Depending on the industry and the student, the school might decide it is not a suitable activity for some students or might need extra information before deciding whether or not to approve the proposed activities or tasks.

Employer 2 response: Must not use nail gun or use press without close supervision as they can be dangerous for a new or young worker.

Employer 3 response: Student must not use any tools or machinery that we have not trained the student to use.

Q. Indicate any risks to the student in the planned activities

(eg, manual handling, repetitive activities, exposure to sun, chemicals, fumes, use of particular tools or equipment, proposed horse riding or use of farm equipment)

Standard: Precise identification of potential risks to the student in regard to the tasks they will do.

You are asked to assess the particular risks in the planned activities for a student and the tools of the trade they will be using. Consider the examples provided to prompt your responses.

- Use your Safe Operating Procedures and experience of hosting students to identify risks.
- Be exact about risks. This is very important if students are to use tools or machinery.

Employer 1 response: Slips, trips, cuts, burns, manual handling and use of machinery and tools.

This response would be **unsatisfactory** as these risks are expressed generically. Potential risks need to relate specifically to the tasks the employer plans for the student to do.

The following responses would be **satisfactory**:

Employer 2 response: Potential for burns in operating the press above level 2. Manual handling of packaged goods over 4 kg and moving wheelie bins.

Employer 3 response: Touching the foot pedal will automatically engage the machine. This can result in high speed machine operation beyond student control. Student must always be fully alert to this risk.

Employer 4 response: All equipment in the workshop carries some risks and consequently the student will be supervised at all times. Induction on Day 1 will emphasise workshop safety.

Q. How will those risks be eliminated or controlled?

Standard: Precise actions the host employer will take to eliminate or control the identified risks to the student.

Employer 1 response: Instruction in use of equipment and supervision in the workplace.

This response would be **unsatisfactory** as more detail is required to inform the school of the potential risks involved.

The following response would be **satisfactory**:

Employer 2 response: Training will include identification of potential risks associated with the operation of all equipment and Safe Operating Procedures (SOP) will be demonstrated to ensure the student is equipped with the knowledge to mitigate risks. For example, in the case of a panel saw the students will be trained to ensure: the environment around the machine is clear from obstruction; that the safety guard is engaged; that use of the on and off switching, especially the emergency shut off switch, is clearly understood.

While these controls are likely to be covered in detail in the student's Day 1 workplace induction, it is essential that major risks are identified clearly on the *Student Placement Record*. This ensures that the school and parent/carer are fully informed before agreeing to the proposed placement. In some cases, the school might decide not to proceed with a placement because the risks are inappropriate for the school student.

Quality assurance of student placement records

Each semester, a range of completed *Student Placement Records* for both Work Experience and Work Placement may be examined. The purpose of this standard procedure is to encourage and instill a high level of commitment to conscientious provision of precise information and conscientious consideration of the suitability of placements. This is to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safe placement of students in high quality host workplaces.

- Students are young, voluntary workers who often lack experience in your industry.
- Help us all keep students safe by providing exact, commonly understood information from the start.
- Add to this with effective training and on-going close supervision and feedback.
- Tell the school if you have any concerns or plan to make changes that increase the potential for risk to the student.

Together we balance the employer's risk assessment of the activities for students and responsibilities under the WHS legislation with the duty of care of the school to students. This includes:

- School conscientious preparation of students
- Supervisory contact with the student and host employer during the placement; and
- High quality immediate follow up with students.

For high-risk industries, students on placement are visited in the host workplace by the teacher on the first or second day wherever possible and this contact is documented. If a visit is not possible, there must be documented details of the teacher's phone discussions with the host employer/supervisor and with the student.