



**RTO**

Registered Training Organisation  
RTO No: 90413

# **Vocational Education & Training Courses**

## ***An Employer Guide to Workplace Learning***

### **Welcome**

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Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses provides students with skills, knowledge and experiences to improve their job prospects and prepare them for work and further study after school.

The Association of Independent Schools NSW is the Registered Training Organisation (RTO 90413) for independent schools. We are responsible for ensuring a high quality of VET course delivery and assessment. This handbook has been prepared to provide you with the information that you need prior to student's commencing workplacement in your organisation.

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## Section 1

### About Workplace Learning

This guide introduces you and your staff to the concepts of workplace learning. It explains the workplace learning programs available in Independent 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.

#### What workplace learning programs are available?

There are two main types of program:

- Work Experience
- 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 the student's skill level
- ask questions about the workplace
- gain 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 that can be completed by students for their Higher School Certificate (HSC). These courses lead to nationally-recognised VET qualifications and it is important for students to have opportunities to apply their classroom learning in real work contexts.

These VET Courses may be delivered by the school or by an external VET provider eg TAFE.

During work placement students act as voluntary workers and are supervised by employers 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.

Work Placement is a mandatory Higher School Certificate (HSC) requirement for students who elect to study an industry-based HSC Vocational Education and Training (VET) course at school.

Courses include:

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

### **How long are the programs?**

Each program varies. Students usually spend a week with an employer, but shorter or longer placements are possible to arrange. Some students attend a workplace one day per week for an extended period of time.

HSC VET Work Placement usually requires a minimum of two week-long placements over two years, each placement usually being with a different employer to provide students with a range of different industry experiences.

### **Who is responsible for workplace learning programs?**

- Workplace learning programs are organised by individual schools and approved by Principals or their delegate.
- Each student's placement details are recorded on the *AISRTO Student Work Placement Record*. This needs to be signed by the student, the employer and the parent or guardian before final approval by the Principal or their delegate.
- To streamline mandatory HSC VET Work Placements, incorporated associations called Work Placement Service Providers (WPSP) coordinate the programs. They are funded to liaise between their designated schools and employers.

### **When can workplace learning take place?**

- In independent schools, placements vary in structure from school to school. Some schools schedule placements on weekdays during school terms while others prefer to do so during school holidays.
- Student working hours usually reflect the hours of the industry.

### **How does an employer benefit from hosting students?**

Being involved:

- gets you participating early on in the education, career development and vocational training of young people in your community

- gives you the opportunity to talk to students about your industry and the career and job directions you anticipate
- gives you some input into developing an enthusiastic and skilled workforce with the attitudes you want, especially for your industry
- lets you identify young people with potential that might be interested in joining your industry or your organisation
- raises the profile of your enterprise and develops more links for you with the local community
- provides your staff with good opportunities to increase their supervisory skills. For example, by developing and delivering the company's induction for students and acting as a coach or mentor for students while they are on placement.

## Section 2

### Legal Requirements

#### Are students paid?

- No. Students are voluntary workers and should not be paid. Any payment to the student may invalidate the school's insurance and indemnity arrangements.
- **There is one exception:** where a student uses their current part-time employment to fulfil a mandatory HSC VET Work Placement requirement. This arrangement must fulfil the NESAs requirements and must be negotiated with the employer and approved by the school. **In this case, the student is not a voluntary worker and the insurance arrangements of the employer apply to the student.**

#### What about insurance and indemnity?

- Schools can provide students with a copy of the current insurance cover to present to the employer on request.

#### Is there paperwork? Do I have to sign anything?

- Yes. Each student is issued with an AISRTO Student Work Placement Record to document the placement arrangements. Along with the parent/guardian and the student, you will be asked to provide some information and sign the Record.
- The Principal or delegate must approve the placement described on the Student Work Placement Record before the student can start. The approval activates the School's insurance and indemnity arrangements for you and the student.
- A copy of the Student Work Placement Record, with the approval signatures, should be provided to you before the program starts.
- For mandatory HSC VET Work Placements, if a Work Placement Service Provider is involved, they will help you coordinate your part of the Student Work Placement Record.

#### Are there any special industrial conditions?

- Yes. Students must be aged 14 years or over.
- Students under 15 years of age must not undertake workplace learning before 7.00am or after 6.00pm.
- No child is to be directed to work on any dangerous machine.
- Students must not be used in place of regular employees.
- Students must not work in unsafe environments.

*Note: All relevant safety*

*health and welfare legislation that protects employees also protects any student and where relevant any support staff engaged in a workplace learning program.*

#### How do I ensure my workplace is safe for students?

It is important that employers and their staff supervising students are aware of and are prepared to do the following while hosting students:

- provide a safe and positive environment compliant with the Work Health and Safety (WHS), Anti-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity legislation and associated Regulations. More information is available from WorkCover NSW ([www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au)) and the NSW Office of Industrial Relations (<http://www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au>)
- provide activities and skill development tasks appropriate to the student's skill level, while under supervision of a capable and trustworthy employee briefed for the task.
- ensure that any special needs of students, particularly students with a disability, are appropriately supported in the workplace. Some adjustments may be needed to accommodate their special needs. This should be done in consultation with the school.
- identify areas of risk and implement strategies to eliminate or minimise risk associated with activities undertaken by the student. These are to be identified on the AISRTO Student Work Placement Record.

- provide appropriate information, instruction, training and on-going supervision to ensure the student's safety during the placement.
- provide a workplace induction including relevant safety matters to orientate students at the beginning of the placement.
- provide personal protective equipment (PPE) where required and training in its correct use.

Likewise, students are expected to comply with the employer's workplace safety requirements and procedures and not to act in any way that could jeopardise the safety of themselves or others in the workplace.

### **Working with children and young people**

- Providing opportunities for children and young people can be valuable and rewarding. To participate in this program, you must provide a safe and non-threatening work environment and comply with child protection laws.
- You need to ensure that all staff are aware that they must conduct themselves appropriately with children and young people at all times. For example, unacceptable conduct by employers or their employees would include any initiation activities or practical jokes directed at or involving the student; physical or verbal abuse of students; physical assault or exposure of students to violence; inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature; showing sexually suggestive publications, electronic media or illustrations; unwarranted and/or inappropriate touching; personal correspondence with students regarding sexual feelings for the student.
- You are asked to indicate on the AISRTO Student Work Placement Record that as far as you are aware there is nothing in the background of any staff member or other person who will have close contact with the student that would make them unsuitable for work with children and young people. Your judgement is made in good faith, based on your day to day knowledge of the conduct and services of the people with whom the student will be working. For this purpose, employers that are not engaged in child-related employment as defined in the legislation below are not required to undertake background checks.

- Employers with staff engaged in child-related employment in NSW as defined in the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, are required to observe mandatory obligations for background checks through the relevant approved screening agency.
- Child protection legislation requires that allegations about employee conduct must be reported to the NSW Ombudsman. Allegations that involve abuse, harm or risk of harm to the student must also be reported to the Department of Community Services and also in some cases to the NSW Police.
- Employers must report any allegations against an employee in the area of child protection to the Principal of the school.
- More information about working with children can be found on the NSW Commission for Young People web-site:  
<http://kids.nsw.gov.au/kids/working/prohibitedemployment.cfm> and  
<https://check.kids.nsw.gov.au/>

## Section 3

### Working Together

Employers, schools, parents and guardians, students and Work Placement Service Providers all aim to work closely together to provide a safe, productive and meaningful industry exposure for students.

#### The role of independent schools

Some of the actions taken by school staff responsible for workplace learning programs can include:

- reviewing the suitability of proposed placements
- approving, or not, the proposed placement for an individual student
- preparing students for workplace learning
- making a supervisory visit or telephone contact with the employer or supervisor and with the student during the placement
- following up with the student at the end of the placement
- providing the employer with the appropriate information needed to optimise the safety and success of the program
- monitoring student safety, learning and work activity
- reporting to the school Principal any suspicion, on reasonable grounds, that a student is at risk of harm
- reporting to the Principal any allegations against an employee in the area of child protection

#### The role of employers and supervising staff

- Employers play a critical and valued role in hosting students. You and your supervisory staff set the tone for the success of the program and this will influence both the student and your staff.
- Employees should respect the rights of students to a safe and healthy workplace, free from harassment and discrimination and any conduct that is unacceptable in terms of child protection.
- Employers and supervisors should recognise that some students have considerable employment experience, confidence and maturity. Others have little or no personal or immediate family employment experience of participating in the

workplace and may need extra support and advice.

- It often helps with the success of the program if, in addition to the student's supervisor, an appropriate and willing member of staff acts as a mentor or adviser for students during the program.
- Risks to students can be eliminated and minimised by planning a variety of tasks and activities that the student can manage safely; focusing on what the student can learn and the skills they can develop and providing good instruction and supervision.
- If a student becomes ill or is injured in the workplace, as well as the appropriate first aid response, you should notify the school as soon as possible. Contact details will be on your copy of the Student Work Placement Record.
- If the student is absent without explanation or behaving inappropriately you should notify the school immediately.

## Section 4

# Quality Workplace Learning Experience

### Setting up the placement

Workplace learning enables students to learn in a different environment and to meet a range of people beyond their usual circle of friends.

Before students start their placement:

- Consult with staff and draw up a list of activities that can be achieved and safely managed by students. These should:
  - *not include any prohibited activities and take into account any licensing restrictions and the management of higher risk activities (see Section 5: Prohibited Activities.)*
  - *be varied, safe, interesting and sometimes challenging*
  - *give insight into the industry and the workplace*
  - *promote practise of relevant, specific skills such as VET course competencies appropriate to the level of the qualification*
- Consider when it will be convenient to host students, the duration of each program, and how and when applications from students should be made.
- Ensure that employees, including union representatives, understand the purpose of the placement. Emphasise:
  - *students are to be treated with respect and courtesy, just as they should treat you and your staff*
  - *the special responsibilities of working with young people relating to their safety, welfare and well-being*
  - *students must not be used in place of regular paid employees*
- Consider who will coordinate and/or supervise the placement. Placements usually work best when they are coordinated by an experienced staff member. Ideally the supervisor should be a capable and trustworthy employee with good communication, delegation and interpersonal skills. They should be briefed for the task, be positive about supervising the student and have

sufficient time to instruct and monitor the student and to provide constructive feedback.

- A timetable of proposed student activities and the staff who will be supervising them is recommended.
- Where possible, identify a work space for the student.
- Decide who will be responsible for inducting the student into the workplace and document what topics will be covered and how and when the induction will occur.
- Well before the program, the AISRTO Student Work Placement Record should be provided to you by the school. Complete the employer section and return it to the school. It is then passed on to the parent or guardian for their signature.
- The details you complete on the Student Work Placement Record will help you and the school to manage the health and safety of the student. They will become a record of your agreement to host the student and your compliance with relevant responsibilities.
- Before the placement starts, the Student Work Placement Record details must be given final approval by the Principal or delegate and a completed copy provided to you. This copy should be stored safely in case of an emergency and to prevent unauthorised access to the student's personal details.

### During the placement:

Ensure that students:

- are regarded as voluntary workers, not visitors
- complete a first day induction and orientation tour. You may wish to include relevant parts of the safety induction that you already provide to new workers. Experience shows that a quality induction sets up the best chance for a successful program for you and the student. Remember that students are young people, and this might be their first experience of the workplace. The following points are very important from a student's perspective:
  - *a welcoming introduction to the business and supervising staff and mention of key managers.*
  - *opportunities for questions from students*



- *a brief outline of what the business does, key clients and relationships, its mission and value statements and what you believe the business provides to customers, clients and the community. This helps students feel proud to participate and keen to contribute to the enterprise. of the planned activities including any variations or choices and any related safety issues; any required personal protective equipment (PPE), no-go areas and excluded activities*
- *the overall importance of taking safety seriously in the workplace, relevant safety concerns including manual handling and safety requirements in the organisation, and importantly, reasons for these*
- *expectations about behaviour, attitude and dress*
- *working hours and breaks; facilities and food outlets*
- *a clear explanation of supervision arrangements for the student*
- *what to do if first aid is required, emergencies happen, or evacuations are required*
- *a brief outline of the organisation's policies on bullying, harassment and discrimination and what the student should do if any safety or other issues arise*
- *other relevant company policies, for example, confidentiality, making telephone calls*
- *any medical or other circumstances that need to be noted*

Also ensure that students:

- do not undertake any prohibited activities
- work the normal hours of the industry (except where there is age restrictions)
- have a range of appropriate and interesting work tasks and are encouraged to ask questions
- are always supervised in the workplace. Do not assume previous experience.
- are trained and closely supervised if the student is expected to operate equipment or machinery. A simple checklist for the safe operation and handling of the equipment should be provided to the student and used in the training and supervision of the student.
- are given appropriate feedback and encouragement
- have sufficient time to complete diaries, work placement journals or research projects provided by the school
- return to their school if the workplace is affected by industrial action

If there are any difficulties during placements, immediately contact the school.

Before students conclude their placement please:

- complete any student report or evaluation forms supplied by the school
- ensure that any identification cards or property on loan have been returned
- take time to provide the student with helpful and encouraging feedback

## Section 5

### Prohibited Activities

**An appropriate risk assessment should be completed for all activities.**

Students must not undertake any of the following activities during workplace learning:

**1. use of machinery or equipment which is dangerous for new or young workers to operate, unless :**

- the activity is first risk-assessed as suitable for student operation by the employer **and**
- students have been given appropriate information, instruction and training and a checklist for the safe operation and handling of the equipment **and**
- the equipment is in safe working order, complete with required safety devices or guards **and**
- on-going, close supervision is provided by a suitably qualified or experienced person in the workplace who has good communication skills and the ability to give clear instructions.

**2. the service of alcohol; unless:**

- students are aged 18 or over **and**
- the activity is essential to the placement and has been agreed to by the school **and**
- students have completed the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) Training Course.

**3. travel outside the 12-nautical mile limit at sea.**

**4. scuba and deep-sea diving.**

**5. the following 'high risk construction work' as defined in the NSW WHS Regulation (2012):**

- work in tunnels.
- work involving the use of explosives.
- work in and around gas and electrical installations.
- work near traffic or moving plant.
- 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.
- demolition work other than simple stripping of walls etc.
- any excavation work at a depth of one metre or more; at a depth less than one metre without

direct supervision by a competent person; near utilities.

- work on caissons or cofferdams (permanent or temporary structures respectively, used to enable excavation and construction work.)
- work on a roof.
- attendance at a site while chimney stacks or buildings are being demolished.

**6. scheduled work as set out in the NSW WHS Regulation (2012):. (The operation and use of loadshifting machines; the application of pesticides except when used in horticulture, husbandry or the growing of fruit and vegetables; the use of fumigants) unless:**

- there are exceptional circumstances **and**
- students are aged 18 or over **and**
- students have already achieved the necessary certification.

**7. any activity requiring a licence, permit or certificate of competence unless:**

- students 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 AISRTO Student Work Placement Record and approved by the school prior to the commencement of the placement.

**8. any work of a sexual or explicit nature.**

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

#### Managing particularly higher risk activities

##### *Agriculture Industry Placements*

It is important to carefully consider the suitability of placements involving student operation of tractors or farm vehicles such as quad bikes, even where these activities are essential to achieving the outcomes of the placement.

Students with little or no experience of farm vehicles *must not* operate them unless:

- Prior to the placement, the Principal or delegate gives approval to the placement and is satisfied that the employer can satisfactorily manage the activity for the student and can provide appropriate quality training and on-going close 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.

No students are to drive any old or unregistered vehicles commonly known as 'bush bashers'.

#### Meat Processing Industry Placements

Placements in meat processing plants are subject to mandatory requirements. If you are an employer in the meat processing industry, contact the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) <http://www.amic.org.au>, for an information package to support school student workplace learning in meat processing plants.

#### Construction Industry Placements

A pre-requisite for all placements in the construction industry is student completion of the Construction Induction Card (White Card) course. Workplace supervisors must make students aware of the risks associated with handling and operating all tools and equipment the student is to use and how to manage those risks. Some tools and equipment common in the construction industry are not permitted for use by students in a school setting. Advice is available from the student's school.

## Section 6

### Insurance Requirements and Related Information

Independent schools arrange their own insurance cover as part of their Registration and Accreditation process. This insurance extends to cover the school's, the teacher's and the student's liability arising out of workplace learning and work experience programs.

The insurance also applies to:

- vocational education teacher training programs for example, teachers undertaking an industry placement as part of their VET teacher training program
- teachers supervising students participating in workplace learning or work experience programs.

The insurance is not available where workplace experiences are arranged independently of the school between students, parents or others and the workplace learning and work experience provider.

#### Other important information

- Students participating in approved work placements are regarded as voluntary workers. As such, employers are not required to make any payment to them under the Federal or State award covering the particular industry, the NSW Annual Holidays Act or the Workers' Compensation Act.
- If students sustain an injury during the program, the school will arrange a benefit payment based on the NSW Workers' Compensation Act scale. Because the students are not paid, the payment would not normally include loss of income, but students retain the right to seek compensation at Common Law if they are able to establish that their injury was caused by the negligence of the employer, the school or a third party.

#### Host Employer indemnity and General Liability Insurance

Each school can have different insurance arrangements, so it is important that the host employer clarifies the level of cover with the school.

As a general rule, the school's insurance will indemnify the host employer for injury to or damage to property owned by students or teachers participating in approved workplace learning or work experience programs subject to the provisions listed below.

As a general rule, the school's insurance will normally indemnify the host employer for injury to or damage to property owned by third parties caused by students or teachers participating in approved workplace learning or work experience programs subject to the provisions listed below.

- any claim made or threatened against the host employer is notified immediately to the school.
- the school and the school's insurer have full conduct and control of the claim against the host employer
- the host employer cooperates fully with the school and the school's insurer or their legal representatives in the management of the claim
- the host employer has complied with relevant occupational health and safety legislation
- the injury or damage was not as a result of a lack of proper instruction or supervision by the host employer.

As a general rule, the school's insurance will provide indemnity to the school, students and teachers for legal liability arising out of damage to property owned by the host employer subject to the provisions listed below.

- any claims made for compensation is made immediately to the school

- the host employer cooperates fully with the school, the school's insurer or legal representatives in the investigation of the claim
- the damage was not as a result of a lack of proper instruction or supervision by the host employer

### Student Injuries

In the case of a student suffering injury, please:

- seek expert medical assistance immediately.
- Inform the school or if after school hours, the student's parents or guardians, or the person nominated by the school to be informed in such circumstances.
- ask an attending doctor for a medical certificate.
- use the student's Medicare number - do not treat as a Workers Compensation matter.
- for students not entitled to Medicare, ask if their usual doctor should be contacted. These details should be on the host employer's copy of the Student Work Placement Record.
- complete a written accident report and send it to the school. The report should include a full statement from the student, the host employer's supervisor and witnesses.

**All claims or incidents that have caused an injury or damage to property should be reported to the school.**

## Section 7

### Important Contacts

Thank you for considering the opportunity to provide a student with a workplace learning opportunity. We hope you find this a rewarding experience, not just for the student but for you and your staff. You are well-supported throughout the entire process. If you have any queries, please get in touch with one of the contacts below:

- The school contact shown on the Student Work Placement Record
- A Vocational Education Consultant at the AIS, telephone: 02 9299 2845
- WorkCover Assistance Service, telephone: 13 10 50
- NSW Commission for Children and Young People, telephone: 02 9286 7276
- NSW Industrial Relations, telephone: 131 628
- For HSC VET Work Placements, contact your Work Placement Service Provider (WPSP) [workplacement.nsw.edu.au](http://workplacement.nsw.edu.au)

#### Further information

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