



# THE WORKPLACE LEARNING GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

Your guide to hosting students undertaking workplace learning programs from NSW public schools and External VET (EVET) providers

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“ Work experience acts as a vital link between young people and the world of business, so it is my firm belief that employers should play their part to ensure young people’s first experience of work is both challenging and rewarding. ”

## 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 NSW public schools, the support available to employers, and your roles and responsibilities when hosting students in your workplace. It also includes a summary checklist for employers to help guide you through the workplace learning process.

### What is workplace learning?

Workplace learning programs form part of the NSW secondary school curriculum. They enable students to spend a planned period of time – usually a week - in the workplace, gaining practical experience, informing their career choices and building their employability skills.

Workplace learning is available to students aged 14 and over. Students are generally placed in an industry of their choice, reflecting the type of work they plan to do after completing their studies. For some students workplace learning is their very first experience of the workplace while others have done many hours of paid work in their part-time jobs.

### What kinds of workplace learning programs are there?

NSW secondary schools offer a variety of workplace learning activities. The two common types of workplace learning are **work experience** and mandatory **work placement** for students studying Higher School Certificate (HSC) vocational education and training (VET) courses. Most students have the chance to participate in at least one of these programs during their time at high school.

## Work experience

These programs are usually undertaken by students in Years 9 or 10 with some opportunities in Years 11 and 12.

Work experience provides a general introduction to the 'world of work'.

Young people are able to:

- observe a variety of work being done
- undertake supervised work appropriate to their skill level
- ask questions about the workplace
- identify skills or adjustments they may need to participate in workplace tasks
- gain important employability skills
- learn how enterprises work and how to be enterprising
- complete course assignments relevant to the industry or workplace
- find out about careers and training and employment opportunities
- fine-tune their career aspirations and career and transition planning.

## HSC VET work placement

Work placement programs are intended for students enrolled in Higher School Certificate (HSC) industry-recognised courses. These VET courses may be delivered by the school or by an External VET (EVET) provider.

### External VET (EVET) provider

EVET refers to VET courses delivered to school students by a non-NSW public school provider eg. TAFE and other registered training organisations. EVET providers consult with schools to ensure that placements are timely, appropriate and accessible for students' learning needs and wellbeing.

Work placement ensures that these students spend a period of time as voluntary workers in a relevant workplace. Employers supervise the students as they practise and extend the specific industry skills they have learned in their course work.

During their work placement, students work towards gaining specific industry competencies. They are assessed by teachers. Students achieving competency receive an industry-specific VET qualification that is recognised throughout Australia.

Work placement is a **mandatory HSC requirement** for the following Industry Curriculum Framework (ICF) VET courses:

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

## How long will the student spend in your workplace?

This varies. Students usually spend a week with an employer but shorter or longer placements are possible. Some students come to a workplace for half or one day per week for an extended period of time. HSC ICF VET students are generally required to complete two weeks of work placement over two years, each week with a different employer.

“ Through workplace learning we get to see what young people are learning in their courses and the talent that is out there. It's good for our industry. ”



## The benefits for employers

Hosting students allows you to:

- participate in the education, career development and vocational training of young people in your community
- talk to students about your industry, its career paths and future directions
- promote the attitudes and skills you want in your workforce
- identify young people with potential for your industry
- strengthen your links with the community and raise your business profile
- increase the supervisory, training and mentoring skills of your staff
- give students knowledge of the value of work and raise the quality of those coming into your industry.

As you will see in this guide, there is plenty of support and resources available to host employers. If you have any queries or concerns, the school, EVET provider or Work Placement Service Provider is only a phone call away.

## 2. How workplace learning works

### Who organises the programs and work placements?

Schools generally arrange their own workplace learning programs. Where an EVET provider delivers an HSC ICF VET course, they arrange the related work placements in consultation with the school.

Schools may approach employers to host students in their workplace.

In the case of work experience, students may make their own approach to an employer for a workplace position and then submit the position to their school for approval. For HSC ICF VET work

placements, the approach may come from a Work Placement Service Provider. They are funded to negotiate and coordinate these mandatory placements. See box below.

### When can workplace learning occur?

Workplace learning is usually scheduled on weekdays during school terms. This can be varied for individual students in Years 11 and 12 with the approval of their school or EVET provider. For example, a student may wish to extend their skills by undertaking a placement during the school holidays. This does not include the December/January holidays.

Restrictions apply to younger students in work experience programs. Students in Years 9 and 10 cannot undertake workplace learning during school holidays. Students under 15 years cannot work before 7am or after 6pm.

### Work Placement Service Providers

These local organisations coordinate HSC ICF VET work placements, liaising between schools or EVET providers and employers.

You will find they have considerable expertise and resources to help you provide quality work placements for HSC ICF VET students.

They will be able to assist you to complete the necessary documents and other essential information needed to support a safe placement.

Go to <http://workplacement.nsw.edu.au/wpsp.php>

## What is the procedure for a placement?

### Prior to the placement

- Host employers receive workplace learning guidelines with essential information about completing documents to meet the department's standards.
- Placement details are negotiated with employers and submitted to the school for approval.
- Reasonable adjustments are identified to support students with disability and additional learning and support needs.
- 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 caregivers sign off on the arrangements.
- Teachers conduct work ready activities to prepare students for the experience.
- Schools encourage students to contact the host employer prior to placement.

### 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 and appropriate and at times, challenging for the student.
- The employer and workplace supervisor takes 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 will make a supervisory visit or phone call to the employer and the student to check on their progress, safety and welfare. In high risk placements teachers may make more frequent contact.
- Where relevant, students are assessed for industry-based competencies.
- Host employers must report any incidents including near misses involving the student immediately to the school or EVET provider.

### Post 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.

## Duty of care

The school and where relevant the EVET provider have a duty of care to students. This includes 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. Host employers must immediately report Health & Safety issues or concerns to the school or where relevant to the EVET provider.

Parents and caregivers are required to be or to nominate an alternative emergency contact for any emergencies that occur outside normal business hours. See Section 4 of this guide.

### Providing a richer, deeper, quality experience - employers share their tips for success.

- Engage the student straight away as the first hour can set the tone for the week.
- Talk to the student so that they understand their safety rights and responsibilities.
- Talk with the student about their current school work so you can set workplace tasks 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.

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

Workplace supervisor, Tamworth





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

## Working together: the workplace learning partnership

Workplace learning programs are a partnership between educators, employers, students and their parents or caregivers. We seek the input and approval of all parties in the arrangement of placements, with every party agreeing to certain roles and responsibilities.

Central to this process is the **Student Placement Record**, a form that records contact details, arrangements and approvals relating to the student's placement. Once everyone has completed their section of the form, copies are held by the school, host employer, student and the parent or caregiver, as well as the EVET provider if applicable.

The Student Placement Record also records information regarding any disability, learning and support needs, medical condition, allergy or restriction that may affect the safety and supervision of the student in the workplace. It will indicate if employers need to make adjustments to accommodate a student's additional support needs or disability.

## 3. Legal requirements and documentation

### Are the students paid?

No. Students on placement are classified as 'voluntary workers' and host employers are not required to make any payment to them under the Federal or State award covering their industry, the NSW Annual Holidays Act or the Workers Compensation Act. Any payment to the student may invalidate the department's insurance and indemnity arrangements.

The one exception is where the student uses their part-time employment as part of their mandatory HSC ICF 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 or EVET provider.

### Do I have to complete any documents?

Yes. The host employer completes their section of the Student Placement Record.

You will be asked to record your workplace details. This includes the student's working hours, arrangements for their supervision, the activities they will undertake during their placement, any pre-training required and the measures you are taking to enable them to do the work safely.

To assist you to complete the Student Placement Record, please refer to *Completion of the Student Placement Record to meet the Department's standards* available at: <http://bit.ly/CompleteSPR>



A full copy of the Student Placement Record with all sections approved will be provided to you before the placement starts.

**Once all parties have provided and approved the information on the Student Placement Record, the department's insurance and indemnity arrangements for you and the student are in place.**

“ It's our role to inspire young people to pursue jobs in this industry. I always try to showcase an exciting range of work and aim to provide a balance between structure and flexibility.”



Host employer, Wollongong



Please note that these insurance provisions **only** apply to workplace learning positions that have been **approved** by the school or relevant EVET provider. Approval is recorded on the **Student Placement Record**.

## Are there any other conditions?

- Employers and their staff must respect the rights of students to a safe and healthy host workplace, free from harassment, discrimination and any conduct that is unacceptable in terms of child protection. See *Child protection – your responsibilities* on page 9.
- No student can be asked or directed to carry out any task that is not safe. See Prohibited Activities on page 9.
- Host employers are expected to consult and cooperate with the student’s school or EVET provider under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW).
- Host employers must notify the school or EVET provider immediately of any health and safety incidents involving a student while on placement, including near misses, to enable the NSW Department of Education to fulfil its WHS obligations and support a safe placement.
- Host employers must advise the school or EVET provider 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 by the NSW Department of Education with the NSW Treasury Managed Fund Scheme. Specific cover relevant to workplace learning is provided for the Department of Education under the terms and conditions of the Miscellaneous Insurance Policy (policy no. MF100003) and TAFE NSW (policy no. MF100007). These arrangements are conditional on the completion and approval of the Student Placement Record.

The NSW Department of Education indemnifies employers participating in approved workplace learning programs for any amount which they may be legally liable to pay for injury to students or teachers arising out of an approved workplace learning program, up to \$20,000,000 and for damage to property belonging to or in the care, custody or control of the host employer, up to \$200,000 provided that:

- any claim made against the employer in respect of a student or teacher participating in an approved workplace learning program is immediately notified to the relevant school or EVET provider

- the department has full conduct and control of the claim against the employer as is normal practice for the party providing the indemnity
- the employer cooperates fully with the department and the department’s legal representatives in the conduct of the claim
- the employer has complied with their obligations under relevant legislation, including work health and safety legislation.

For details, go to *Additional Information for Host Employers* available at:  
<http://bit.ly/Employers-Additional-Info>



These insurance and indemnity provisions also apply to approved interstate placements, e.g. in Victoria; to teachers undertaking industry placements as part of their VET teacher training program and to teachers supervising students participating in workplace learning programs.

## Will my business need to change its insurance arrangements?

No, as long as you follow the requirements in this guide, you will not need to change your insurance or SafeWork NSW arrangements when taking on a student for workplace learning. You are expected to have current public liability coverage as is standard business practice. If you are an EVET provider, arranging workplace learning activities for students within your own organisation, your company’s own insurance and indemnity arrangements will apply.

## What is the claims process?

All claims for injury, loss of property or damage to property should be referred to the school in the first instance. Depending on the nature of the claim, the school may then forward the claim to the EDConnect Insurance, Risk and Claims Management team, NSW Department of Education, Locked Bag 5068, Parramatta, NSW 2124, telephone 1300 32 32 32.

[EDConnect.InsuranceClaims@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:EDConnect.InsuranceClaims@det.nsw.edu.au)

Further details about workplace learning programs can be found at  
<http://bit.ly/WorkLearnPolicy>



## 4. Accident and emergency procedures

### If a student is sick or injured:

- Seek medical help immediately, using the student's Medicare number as provided on the Student Placement Record or on the Student Contact Card. As students are not employees, **you must not treat this as a workers compensation claim.**
- Contact emergency services for Ambulance or other emergency services immediately where required.



If a student is at risk of anaphylaxis, they must carry an adrenaline auto-injector eg. EpiPen and current ASCIA action plan. Adrenaline auto injectors are easy to administer and are a life saving 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 are signs of anaphylaxis:

- difficult/noisy breathing
  - swelling of tongue
  - swelling/tightness in throat
  - difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
  - wheezing or persistent cough
  - persistent dizziness or collapse
  - pale and floppy (young children).
- During normal business hours, contact the school or EVET provider, and the parents or caregivers.
  - Outside normal business hours, contact the student's parents or caregiver or their nominated emergency contact.
  - Note that students should carry their personal Student Contact Card with details of their teacher/parent/caregiver contact numbers and their Medicare number.

- If the student doesn't have a Medicare number, ask if they wish to contact their general practitioner (GP). Contact details should be provided on your copy of the Student Placement Record.
- Medical invoices are to be made out to the student and are payable by the parent/caregiver.
- Ask the doctor attending for a medical certificate.
- Contact the school immediately to advise of the situation. Where relevant, also contact the EVET provider. As soon as possible, complete a written report of the accident and forward it to the school, or where relevant, to the EVET provider along with the school.
- The report must include a full statement from the student, the supervisor and relevant witnesses.

## 5. A safe workplace for students

The safety and wellbeing of students during a placement is our number one priority. Employers need to satisfy the school and EVET provider 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:

- your supervision arrangements for the student
- areas of possible risk in the student's workplace tasks and your strategies to eliminate or minimise the risk in detail
- any special clothing required by the student eg. enclosed footwear
- confirmation of your 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 or EVET provider
- any steps you will take or adjustments you will make to support students with disability or other additional needs as described on their Student Placement Record
- any vaccination compliance, or any pre-training or induction required by the student to undertake certain tasks.



## Which activities are prohibited for workplace learning students?

The list of prohibited activities and the pre-requisite training requirements for some placements can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/ProhibitedActivities>

Activities such as working on a roof or where asbestos is present are prohibited. Other activities have conditions attached for example, restrictions on the operation of machinery and equipment, the service of alcohol, and work on adventure or sporting activities in industries like tourism.

Students undertaking a placement in the **construction industry** or for the **VET entertainment industry course** must complete the general construction induction training (GIT) as a prerequisite to placement. This also applies to work experience.

Students are not expected to drive their own vehicles whilst undertaking activities on behalf of the host employer. They should not be asked or directed to drive the employer's vehicles or any client's vehicles while they are on a workplace learning experience.

The school, EVET provider or a Work Placement Service Provider can 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.

Host employers must report any allegations against an employee in the area of child protection to the Principal of the school or the relevant EVET provider RTO manager. 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 Family and Community Services Child Protection Helpline **13 21 11** 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) 9286 7219** or email [check@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au](mailto:check@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au)



“Working with Children Check” is not required by people under the age of 18 or employers not normally engaged in child-related activities.

## 6. A checklist for employers

### BEFORE - planning and preparing for workplace learning

- **Decide when it is convenient for you to host students for work experience or HSC VET work placement.**
- **Decide the duration of the placements and how/when students should apply.**
- **Appoint an experienced staff member to coordinate your workplace learning programs for students.**
- **Consult with staff to draw up a list of activities that can be achieved and safely managed by students.**

#### These activities should:

- ✓ offer insight into the industry and workplace.
- ✓ be varied, safe, interesting and sometimes challenging.
- ✓ not contravene the prohibited activities indicated on page 9 of this guide and at: <http://bit.ly/ProhibitedActivities>
- ✓ 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:

- ✓ Supervisor.
- ✓ Assistant Supervisor (if applicable).
- ✓ Other employees able to help.

Supervisory staff should be capable and trustworthy with good communication and delegation skills. They should be briefed for the task and given sufficient time to instruct and monitor the student and provide feedback. We also advise you appoint a separate workplace advisor or mentor to provide the students with general support and advice.

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

#### 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 responsibilities (see page 9).
- ✓ 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 e.g. anaphylaxis.
- ✓ are aware of their obligations under the Disability Discrimination ACT 1992 (DDA).
- ✓ comply with agreed arrangements.

**Complete the employer section of the Student Placement Record (see Sections 2,3 and 5 of this guide) and return it to the relevant school, or EVET provider.**

### An employer’s coaching tips

**Tell ...** them about it

**Show ...** them how it’s done

**Watch ...** them do it

**Praise ...** what they do well

**Correct ...** any shortcomings

**Repeat ...** for practice

## 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, purpose and values.
- ✓ an outline of the planned activities and supervision arrangements.
- ✓ a safety induction - including how to report work health safety issues and to whom.
- ✓ 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 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.).
- ✓ contacts at school or EVET provider in case of an emergency.
- ✓ rules regarding security, privacy, confidentiality and the use of computers, the internet, mobile phones, cameras etc.

**Students should be given the opportunity to ask questions about the workplace and to be told who they can go to for advice or help.**

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.

**Ensure that the student is sufficiently challenged and supervised in the workplace.**

**Supervisory staff will need to ensure that the student:**

- ✓ undertakes varied activities appropriate to their skill level and workplace learning requirements.
- ✓ is not put at risk by undertaking a task away from the view of others or with just one employee or client - unless this is unavoidable.
- ✓ is not assigned any prohibited or restricted activities as indicated in Section 5 of this guide and at: <http://bit.ly/ProhibitedActivities>
- ✓ only undertakes a task requiring a licence, permit or certificate of competence if they hold the relevant qualification and the activity has been recorded on the placement record.
- ✓ receives full instruction on how to complete activities including the risks, the purpose of safety equipment such as personal protection equipment (PPE), and how to use it appropriately.
- ✓ is provided with all necessary safety equipment required to complete a task.
- ✓ is given appropriate feedback and encouragement.
- ✓ has sufficient time to complete diaries, work placement journals or research projects provided by their school or EVET provider.

## AFTER - providing feedback on the student's time in the workplace

**Before the placement ends, please:**

- ✓ complete the student report or evaluation form supplied by the school or EVET provider.
- ✓ ensure that any property or identification cards on loan have been returned.
- ✓ take time to provide the student with helpful feedback and encouragement.

# Important contacts

Thank you for taking time to read the information in this guide. We hope that you feel confident and well-prepared to support a student as they take up these valuable workplace learning opportunities. If you have any queries, please contact one of the following:

- The Work Placement Service Provider for HSC ICF VET work placements.
- The VET Coordinator, careers adviser, or the contact for the EVET provider at the student's school.
- The EVET provider RTO manager.
- The Senior Pathways Adviser at the local office of the NSW Department of Education.
- The department's state office **telephone (02) 9244 5425**.

Your first point of contact:

For further assistance, advice and information:



**bit.ly/WorkLearnPolicy**

See the Employers section for Additional Information.



**talkingsafety.org**

Information, tips and resources to help improve young worker safety and ensure compliance with NSW WHS legislation.



**go2workplacement.com**

Go2workplacement assists students enrolled in HSC VET ICF courses to get the most out of their work placement.



**bit.ly/SydneyAccess**

Employers may choose to participate in the Sydney Access Program which offers high quality placements for students enrolled in school or EVET provider-delivered HSC Industry Curriculum Framework courses.



**www.workinspiration.com.au/  
employer-toolkit**

Work Inspiration provides an easy framework for making work experience meaningful, relevant and inspiring.



**bit.ly/importance-collaboration**

What is the Importance of Collaboration? A fact sheet on supporting employer involvement with schools.



Education