

Parents and Carers Guide to Workplace Learning

for students in NSW government schools
and students undertaking HSC courses
in TAFE NSW institutes



Section 1

About Workplace Learning

- Workplace learning programs are part of the NSW secondary school curriculum. The programs encourage students to spend a planned period of time – usually a week – in a workplace of their choice as a valuable enhancement to their learning in the classroom.
- Workplace learning is relevant to all students in NSW government schools and all levels of ability.

Why is workplace learning important?

Workplace learning helps students to:

- gain first-hand knowledge of the changing world of work and enterprise
- test their job or career aspirations
- complete course work in a relevant industry setting
- directly experience the attributes employers are looking for
- gain general work skills such as workplace communication and ‘people skills’ and/or specific industry skills, such as vocational education and training (VET) course competencies
- gain increased confidence and maturity as well as greater self-knowledge through participating in a busy adult working environment
- explore the relationship between studies at school, training at TAFE NSW or at a private or community registered training organisation (P/C RTO), study at university, and future employment and training
- manage their transition through and from school to further education, training and work.

What are the two main types of workplace learning program?

Work Experience

- Students participate in a general orientation to the ‘world of work’, usually in a field chosen by the student. Students can observe a variety of work as well as undertake supervised work appropriate to their skill level.
- Work experience builds on work, career and enterprise education programs as well as other course work and the school’s career planning activities.
- These programs are usually first undertaken in Years 9 or 10. Additional opportunities may also be available in Years 11 and 12.

Work Placement

- Work placement involves students in Years 11 and 12 who are studying an industry-recognised course as part of their Higher School Certificate (HSC). Courses include Business Services, Construction, Entertainment, Hospitality, Information Technology, Metal and Engineering, Primary Industries, Retail and Tourism.
- These vocational courses may be delivered by the school or by a TAFE NSW institute, or sometimes by a private or community registered training organisation (P/C RTO), also known as a ‘private provider’ that has been contracted by the school to deliver a particular industry-based course to students.
- Work placement is a **compulsory HSC requirement** for the courses listed above. During work placement, a host employer supervises the student as they participate as a voluntary worker in the host employer’s workplace, practising and extending the specific industry skills that the student has been learning in their off the job training at school, TAFE NSW or at a P/C RTO.
- Work placement is used by teachers to gather evidence of student achievement of competence at industry standard. This may be in partnership with a suitably qualified workplace assessor.
- Student competency leads to an industry-specific VET qualification that is recognised throughout Australia.

Are there other workplace learning programs?

- Yes. These include enterprise education programs, community learning, and student mentoring programs conducted by employers in the workplace.

If you have any difficulty understanding this document or would like further information, please ring the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450, ask for an interpreter in your language and ask them to telephone the school, or where relevant the TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO for you. This service will be free of charge to you.

Section 2

How Workplace Learning Works

- Workplace learning programs are organised and approved by the school, and where relevant by TAFE NSW or a contracted P/C RTO.
- Most students will have the opportunity to participate in workplace learning at some stage during high school.
- Placements are arranged for students based on their course work, career planning or other learning.

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- Students participate in activities arranged by teachers before the placement so that students are well prepared for the experience.
- Students are supervised by the host employer or a nominated supervisor in the workplace. Their job is to make sure that the student has suitable activities to stimulate and challenge them.
- Your school, TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO also has a duty of care to the students in the workplace. A teacher will make a supervisory visit or phone call to the host employer or workplace supervisor and the student to check the progress and welfare of the student. Follow up with students after placement must also occur.

How do students obtain a position?

These are some of the ways students are matched to positions.

- The school, or where relevant the TAFE NSW institute or the P/C RTO obtains the workplace positions and then allocates them according to employers' requirements and students' interests, needs and career plans.
- Mandatory HSC VET **work placements** are obtained through Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) established to coordinate these placements. The teacher matches the students to the quality placements offered by the LCP.
- Students locate their own **work experience** positions with support from the school and their parents or carers and submit these for approval by the school or where relevant, by the TAFE NSW institute. Where students find their own positions with host employers, the school or TAFE NSW institute will provide them with guidelines and introductory letters for the employer.

At what age can students participate?

Students aged 14 years and over can participate. There are restrictions on the times when students can participate if they are under 15 years.

When do students undertake workplace learning?

- The school, TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO decides when during the year workplace learning activities will be held and which students will be involved, usually in consultation with their community. They will provide you as parents or carers with details of each program.

- Students are expected to attend the workplace every day of the program.
- As workplace learning is part of the curriculum, programs operate during the school or TAFE NSW term.
- Year 9 and Year 10 workplace learning programs can only operate during term time.
- Students under 15 years cannot work before 7 am or after 6 pm.
- In exceptional circumstances, the Principal might approve workplace learning by individual Year 11 and Year 12 students during school holidays. This does not include the Christmas holidays.
- Workplace learning may be extended into the weekend with special approval from the Principal, but only if weekend work is an essential requirement of the industry.

How far will students need to travel?

- Most placements will be within commuting distance of home.
- Students may be given special approval for a placement involving accommodation away from home. This special approval depends on evidence that the educational value for the student is exceptional. It also depends on satisfactory arrangements for workplace supervision, transport, accommodation and overnight supervision.
- It is rare for an interstate placement to be warranted unless the school is located on or near an interstate border or the industry does not exist in NSW. If you are considering an interstate placement, you should first contact the school or relevant TAFE NSW institute.

What about travel arrangements?

- Parents and carers need to help students to plan their travel arrangements carefully. The school, TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO must also support students in travel planning.
- Call the **Transport InfoLine** on 131 500 or check the website **www.131500.com** for timetables and other information relevant to public transport.
- As a parent or carer you must be satisfied that the travelling arrangements can be safely managed by your child. If you have any concerns, you should discuss these with the program organiser directly.

- All travel is at the student's own expense. You are expected to support your child's travel costs for the duration of the workplace learning program.
- Concession fares are available for travel on public trains, buses and ferries. These may also be available on private buses.
- If required, your school can arrange for proof-of-age or identification cards to be issued to students at their request.

What approvals are needed?

- The school, or where relevant the TAFE NSW institute or the P/C RTO will seek your permission for the student to undertake each proposed workplace learning activity.
- Each workplace activity must be documented on the Student Placement Record provided to the student.
- The Student Placement Record must be signed by the student, the host employer and you, before the school, or where relevant the TAFE NSW institute or the P/C RTO gives final approval. Once the placement has been approved, you will be provided with a copy of the completed Student Placement Record. Please retain for easy reference.
- Sometimes, your preferred employer or the requested time for your son or daughter's workplace activity cannot be accommodated. You will need to discuss this with the school or TAFE NSW institute.
- The school, TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO must be satisfied that the placement offers a safe and appropriate experience for the student and that their duty of care can be managed.
- The host employer must indicate on the Student Placement Record how the student will be kept safe during the placement.
- As a condition of approval for placements for HSC VET courses and any workplace learning in the construction industry, students will need to complete particular occupational health and safety training before undertaking the placement. For more information, please contact the school, or where relevant the TAFE NSW institute or the P/C RTO.

Does my child receive payment?

- No. Students are classified as 'voluntary workers' and therefore will not be paid. Host 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.

- The Department of Education and Training provides insurance coverage for students on workplace learning programs. However, the insurance cover is **not valid** for any student who takes payment for the workplace learning program.
- There is **one** exception and this is where your son or daughter has a part-time job and he or she uses that employment for the *mandatory* HSC VET work placement requirements.
 - This arrangement has to be negotiated with the employer and approved by the school, and where relevant also by the TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO.
 - In this case, the student is not a voluntary worker, and the insurance arrangements of the employer apply to the student.

What about licenses and permits?

- Students should not be doing any work requiring a permit or licence unless they already have the relevant current permit or licence and the activity is directly related to the learning outcomes of the placement.
- The details of the activity requiring a permit or licence must be included in the Student Placement Record and approved by all parties (including parents or carers) before the placement is undertaken.

Section 3 Keeping Students Safe

- At all times the safety of students and child protection are of the highest importance to the Department of Education and Training (The Department). This includes when students are participating in workplace learning programs.
- Regular and effective communication with parents and carers and with host employers is an essential aspect of all workplace learning programs.
- The Department provides employers with *An Employer's Guide to Workplace Learning* to support host employers provide safe and effective opportunities for students to learn in the workplace. This detailed *Employer's Guide* includes advice about young people and safety matters, prohibited activities and introducing students to the host workplace. The guide also contains important information about child protection matters. Employers are required to ensure that all staff are aware of the special responsibilities associated with working with students.

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- Departmental staff must report any reasonable suspicion that a child or young person is at risk of harm. They are also required to report any allegations against the employer or their employees in the area of child protection.
- Any conduct of a sexual nature with a student is unacceptable and will result in immediate action being taken. Any employer or Departmental staff member must notify the school Principal or the responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager of allegations against any employee in the area of child protection. In this context, *employee* includes employers.

The Principal or TAFE Institute Manager, in turn, is required to notify the Department's Employee Performance and Conduct Unit which can take the matter further if appropriate. Also, serious allegations will be reported to the Department of Community Services and/or where relevant to the NSW Police.

- Where students plan to undertake their workplace learning program in a child-related workplace, for example, a school, childcare centre or hospital, your young person will need to first complete a Prohibited Employment Declaration. This is to ensure that only suitable people work with children and is a mandatory requirement under the guidelines of the Commission for Children and Young People. The school or TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO will provide a copy of the Declaration to students who need to complete it.

What about emergencies?

While care is taken in arranging workplace learning programs and nearly all placements proceed without any problems, there may be rare and unexpected circumstances when things can go wrong.

The Department has provisions in place to support students in case they face an emergency. One is the requirement that the student has a **contact for emergencies** for the hours of their placement and the other is that the student has a small card (*Safety and Emergency Procedures – Student Contact Card*) with them throughout the placement indicating who to contact in an emergency. The card is usually the size of a credit card and can be used inconspicuously. It may also contain some safety advice.

- *The Safety and Emergency Procedures – Student Contact Card* is provided by the student's school, or where relevant the TAFE NSW institute or the P/C RTO. The student completes the contact details for use in emergencies, under supervision and drawing on

information provided on the completed Student Placement Record. The Card is used only by the student – and only in an emergency.

- During **normal business hours**, if your young person genuinely believes they are at risk but does not feel confident to bring the matter to the attention of the host employer or workplace supervisor, the student should phone their **nominated contact** provided by the school or where relevant, by the TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO and listed on their Student Contact Card. If they sustain a significant injury, they should also contact you. Your phone contact details will also be recorded on the Card.
- If no appropriate teaching staff member is available to volunteer to be the contact in case of an emergency, including between the hours that face to face classes finish and normal business hours end, then the placement cannot take place during those hours.
- In a relatively small number of cases, usually in Years 11 and 12, placements may extend **outside normal business hours**. This will be indicated by the school, or where relevant by the TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO on the Student Placement Record. If the student believes they are at risk during the period outside normal business hours, they must contact you, their **parent or carer**. You are NOT required to investigate or resolve any issues: simply remove your son or daughter from risk of harm. It is the responsibility of the school, or where relevant the TAFE NSW institute or the P/C RTO to follow up the issue in the workplace as soon as possible after you have reported it. They will advise you of the outcome.
- For the period only **outside normal business hours**, you may wish to nominate another responsible adult the student trusts to be their contact on your behalf. That person's details must be provided on the Student Placement Record which they must sign. The contact cannot be the host employer or any of their employees, nor the boyfriend or girlfriend of the student.
- **You, or the contact you nominate**, must report any emergency that involves the student during the period of the placement outside normal business hours to the student's school, or where relevant to the TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO. This must be as soon as possible after it happens, for example, as soon as possible the next day. The school, or where relevant the TAFE NSW institute or the P/C RTO will deal with the incident and take the appropriate action.

- Prior to final approval by the school, or where relevant, by the TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO, it is important that you first provide the relevant contact details and **Medicare number** on the Parent/Carer section of the Student Placement Record. The Medicare number is in case medical attention is required during the placement. Students ineligible for a Medicare number may wish to record the contact details of their general practitioner (GP). Your assistance is much appreciated.
- The Medicare number also needs to be recorded by the student on their *Safety and Emergency Procedures – Student Contact Card*.
- If you have any queries about the arrangements for your young person's placement, please contact the school or TAFE NSW institute. This includes any requests for placements by students in Years 8-10 that may extend outside regular normal business hours.

Section 4 Insurance and Indemnity Provisions

The Department has a number of provisions for protecting students and employers, including:

- insurance arrangements for students injured while on workplace learning, including travelling to and from the workplace. Parents and carers will need to first claim from their Medicare and private health funds before a request can be made to the Department to cover any outstanding expenses
- protection for employers in the event of a claim against them as a result of an injury to a student or compensation for damage to property caused by a student on a workplace learning program. Conditions apply.

If a student sustains a significant injury as a result of participating in an approved workplace learning program, the Department ensures the student will not be worse off than someone undertaking paid employment who sustains the same injury and who is covered by the Workers' Compensation Act. For that reason, the Department uses the NSW Workers Compensation Act as a benchmark to compensate students for medical treatment and rehabilitation costs. Because the students are not being paid, compensation does not include loss of income. Similarly to paid employees, students also have a right under common law to seek compensation if it can be established that the injury was caused by the negligence of the host employer, the Department or a third party.

These insurance provisions only apply to workplace learning programs that are approved by the school, or where applicable approved by the TAFE NSW institute, or by the P/C RTO for external placements only. Approval is recorded on the Student Placement Record.

The P/C RTO will provide details of insurance arrangements for any student placements within their own organisation. However, your son or daughter's school continues to have a duty of care while he or she is participating in a course conducted by a private or community RTO (P/C RTO) that has been contracted to deliver a course for the students. They liaise regularly with P/C RTOs arranging work placement programs for their school students.

Section 5 The Best Ways to Help Your Child

Before the placement is arranged read over the information about workplace learning provided by the organiser and attend related information sessions. If you are not sure about anything, please ask for it to be explained further.

Encourage your son or daughter to:

- discuss their developing career interests and work preferences
- research preferred industries and related careers, for example – using the Australian national career information service website: www.myfuture.edu.au
- complete the two Workplace Learning Research pages in their *Employment Related Skills Logbook*
- discuss what they plan to learn from the placement and possible questions they might ask their supervisor or host employer
- find out what else the student needs to do to be ready for the placement. For example, completing pre-placement activities arranged by the school or where relevant by the TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO.

As a parent or carer you can also help by:

- advising the school of any suitable placements you know about or could offer
- advising the school, or where relevant the TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO of any disabilities, medical condition, medication, allergies or restrictions affecting the student that should be taken into account, particularly if this might affect the safety and supervision of the student in the workplace. There is space for you to provide this information

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on the Student Placement Record or you can attach information to that Record. **If your child needs any adjustments in the workplace to accommodate their special needs, you should also contact the school or TAFE NSW institute.**

When a position has been confirmed, help your son or daughter to find out about:

- rescheduling other activities to give priority to their workplace learning
- clothing and any other requirements to undertake the placement, for example – enclosed footwear
- start and finish times (students are expected to work the normal hours of the position, but not before 7 am or after 6 pm if your child is under 15)
- what the student needs to know for the first day (travel arrangements, time of arrival, contact person)
- what meal facilities are available at the workplace, or do they need to take food with them.

During the placement encourage your child to:

- complete any assignments or learning journals
- speak to their nominated contact immediately if there are any difficulties, for example – safety concerns, accident, injury, industrial dispute, harassment or bullying.

Encourage your son or daughter to discuss with you:

- how the host organisation works, from their perspective
- what are the education and training requirements of the job(s)
- what are the working conditions and the role of unions
- occupational health and safety (OH&S) in the workplace
- what are employees' responsibilities and rights at the workplace
- what your son or daughter is learning about his or her strengths, attributes and preferences for working in this field in the future.

Directly after the placement talk to your son or daughter about:

- discussing the employer's report with you and also with relevant teachers
- completing an entry in their *Employment Related Skills Logbook*
- reviewing your young person's career planning and future employment, education, training and career options

- building and maintaining a network of contacts from this and any other placements for advice, assistance and opportunities in the future. This information should be recorded for future reference.

Section 6 Important Contacts

Thank you for taking time to read the important information in this *Guide*. We hope that you feel confident and well-prepared to support your young person as they take up valuable workplace learning opportunities provided by the school or TAFE NSW institute.

If you have any queries, please get in touch with one of the contacts below:

- the workplace learning program coordinator at your school, TAFE NSW institute or P/C RTO. This might be the careers adviser, VET coordinator or School to Work coordinator
- the vocational education consultant at the relevant regional office of the NSW Department of Education and Training
- the TAFE NSW institute consultant – TVET at the relevant TAFE NSW institute
- the Senior Coordinator Workplace Learning, Vocational Education in Schools Directorate on telephone 02 9244 5071.

Student's host employer:

(to be filled out on placement)

Host business:	
Contact person:	
Telephone:	
Mobile:	
Address:	



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