The workplace learning guide for parents and carers

Your guide to workplace learning programs provided for students from NSW public schools and those undertaking HSC courses with External VET (EVET) providers

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Can you remember your first time in the workplace?

What insights and advice can you give?

How can you support your student to make their workplace learning a valuable experience?

Free Interpreter Service:

Need support and assistance? Please ring the **Telephone Interpreter Service** on **131 450** and ask them to contact the school or EVET provider.

For information about workplace learning translated into 35 languages, go to:
Workplace learning information in other languages

1. About 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 a workplace of their choice, enhancing their classroom learning, informing their career choices and building their industry skills. These programs are relevant to all students in NSW public schools.

How does workplace learning benefit students?

Workplace learning helps students to:

- test their job and career choices
- engage with the wider community
- complete course work in a relevant industry setting
- learn what is required from a worker in the workplace
- build general work skills like good communication, team work and critical thinking
- develop specific industry skills, including vocational education and training (VET) course competencies
- gain confidence, maturity and self-management skills through participation in an adult work environment
- make informed decisions when planning their transition through school and on to further education, training and work
- demonstrate reliability, motivation, work ethic and good personal presentation.

What kinds of workplace learning programs are there?

NSW secondary schools offer two main types of workplace learning activities - **work experience** and **work placement**. Most students will 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'. Students are able to observe a variety of work, usually in a field of their choice, and undertake supervised tasks appropriate to their skill level.

Work experience builds on a student's career planning and transition activities in school and can assist their course and subject choices in senior high school.

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.

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

The host employer supervises your child in the workplace, allowing them to practise and enhance the specific industry skills they have learned in their off-the-job course work.

During their work placement, students aim to achieve industry competencies 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

"Work placement was a totally different environment to school. I got hands-on experience and a better understanding of the industry. It helped me to see where I wanted to go and how to get there."

2. How workplace learning works

Schools generally arrange their own workplace learning programs.

Where an EVET provider delivers a VET course, they arrange the related placements in consultation with the school. The student's school or the course deliverer will provide parents and carers with the relevant information and advice.

How will students find a placement?

- In the case of work experience, students may need to locate their own placements with support from the school and their parents or carers. These placements need to be submitted to their school for approval.
- The school will provide introductory letters and guidelines to the employer.
- Some host employers are very popular and students will need to book their work experience dates well in advance.
- Mandatory HSC VET work placements are provided to the school or EVET provider by Work Placement Service Providers who coordinate these quality placements. Teachers then individually match the students to the placements.

"I like this approach to learning. You actually get out in the field and practise what you learn."

What is the procedure for a placement?

Before the placement

- Host employers receive workplace learning guidelines and return written details of the placement.
- Parents receive workplace learning information and give their consent by signing and returning the Student Placement Record.
- Parents can contact the school's careers adviser or VET teacher with queries or concerns.

- Discuss with your student and school any adjustment the student may require to be able to participate successfully in workplace learning.
- Placements are arranged and approved for the students based on their course work and/or career planning.
- Potential safety risks and how these will be managed are identified in section 3 of the Student Placement Record.
- Teachers conduct activities to prepare students for the experience.
- Parents or carers help the student with their preparations and arrangements.

During the placement

- Students attend the workplace every day of the program (usually one week).
- Host employers or nominated workplace supervisors supervise the students.
- A teacher will make a phone call or supervisory visit to the employer or supervisor and the student to check on their progress, safety and wellbeing. Students may be assessed by the teacher for industry-based competencies.
- Parents or carers provide support and encouragement at home.
- Students will advise their school and host employer if they are ill and unable to attend the placement.
- Incidents and issues are reported to the school and where relevant to the EVET provider.

After the placement

- Host employers report on the student's performance in the workplace.
- Teachers follow up with the students to ensure maximum benefit and check on any student safety and wellbeing issues.
- Parents and students discuss their experience and possible education and training pathways.

As a parent or carer, you **must** complete all documentation. This includes providing an emergency contact number (your own or that of a nominated person) on the Student Placement Record along with your child's Medicare number or doctor's details.

When can students undertake workplace learning?

- Students can participate in workplace learning programs from the age of 14.
- Year 9 and 10 workplace learning programs can only operate during term time.
- Students under 15 years cannot work before 7am or after 6pm.
- Workplace learning may be extended into the weekend with special approval from the school.
- In exceptional circumstances, the principal may approve workplace learning for individual Year 11 and 12 students during school holidays. This does not include the December/January school holidays.

Will your child be paid?

- No. Students are not paid and are classified as 'voluntary workers'.
- Any payment to the student may invalidate the department's insurance and indemnity arrangements.
- The **one** exception is where a student uses their part-time employment as part of their mandatory HSC VET work placement requirement. This arrangement must be negotiated with the employer and approved by the school or EVET provider. The employer's insurance will apply.

How far will students need to travel?

- Most placements will be within commuting distance of home.
- If a student is considering a placement away from home or an interstate placement, they should discuss this with the school, or the relevant EVET provider before making any arrangements.
- To receive approval for a placement away from home, there must be exceptional educational value.
- Transport, accommodation, and overnight supervision arrangements must be suitable and have written approval from the school principal or relevant EVET provider RTO Manager as well as the parent or carer. Additional documentation must be completed.

What about travel arrangements?

- All travel is at the student's expense.
- Concession fares are available for travel on public trains, buses, ferries and some private buses.
- To be eligible for a concession, older students may need to show their concession card available through the school.
- As a parent or carer, you must be satisfied that the travelling arrangements can be safely managed by the student. If you have concerns, you should discuss them directly with the student and with the program organiser.

For timetables and other information relevant to public transport, call the **Transport InfoLine** on **131 500** or check the website **www.131500.com**.

If the student has a disability or medical condition

You will need to advise the school, or EVET provider where relevant, of any disability, learning and support needs, medical condition, (eg. diagnosed at risk of anaphylaxis) or restriction affecting the student that may affect the safety, wellbeing and supervision of the student in the workplace. This important information should be included or attached to the Student Placement Record. Health Care Plans may need to be made available to host employers. If you are not sure, speak with your general practitioner.

If a student needs any adjustments in the workplace to accommodate their **additional support needs or disability**, you must discuss this with the school's Learning and Support Team during the planning process.

For more information on child protection, emergency procedures, prohibited activities, insurance and other topics related to workplace learning, go to: Workplace learning policy

For Additional Information for Parents and Carers about workplace learning conditions and provisions go to Guides and Forms.

Keeping students safe

Student safety and child protection are the first priority for the NSW Department of Education.

Host employers must notify the school and where relevant the EVET provider immediately of any health and safety incidents, including near misses involving a student while on placement. This will enable the NSW Department of Education to fulfil its Work Health and Safety (WHS) obligations.

All host employers receive The Workplace Learning Guide for Employers to help them provide safe and effective learning opportunities for students attending their workplace. Some activities are completely prohibited, such as working on a roof, in a roof cavity or working with asbestos. Others have conditions attached, eg. prior training or in some cases particular vaccinations.

The employer will ensure that all staff are aware of child protection issues and of their special responsibilities when working with school students. Departmental staff will follow clear procedures in response to any reasonable suspicion or allegation of misconduct by employers or their employees against students. Students must report any immediate safety concerns, risks or incidents to their employer. They must also report any safety issues or incidents to their school or EVET provider as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours.

In emergencies

There are provisions in place to support students in the rare event of an accident or emergency during their time in the workplace.

Students will carry a Student Contact Card listing their Medicare number and nominated contacts both during and outside normal business hours. This lets them know who to contact should they sustain an injury or feel at risk and are unable to raise the matter with their host employer.

During normal business hours the nominated contact will be provided by their school or EVET provider.

Outside normal business hours, the student must contact you, their parent or carer. You are NOT required to investigate or resolve the issue: simply remove the student from risk of harm and notify the school or EVET provider as soon as possible (e.g. the next day). The school or EVET provider will follow up the issue with the workplace and advise you of the outcome.

If a student has **any concerns**, they **must call** the school or EVET provider immediately.

Insurance and indemnity

There are insurance arrangements for students injured while participating in approved workplace learning. This also includes students injured while travelling directly to or from their placement.

Parents/carers are initially responsible for any expenses incurred by a student as a result of

accident or injury, prior to a claim being submitted under these insurance provisions.

For more information, please go to: Keeping students safe

The Student Placement Record

All contacts, arrangements and approvals relating to a student's placement will be recorded on their Student Placement Record. This enables important information to be shared, signed and approved by all parties.

Please make sure you locate the Student Placement Record in the information package and provide the information as required by the school or EVET provider. Once the form has been completed and signed by all parties, you will receive a copy to keep.

The Student Placement Record lists the student's individual work arrangements (start and finish times, lunch breaks, clothing requirements etc), the tasks they will be undertaking, any vaccination or pre-training they may need, their Medicare number, emergency contacts and any additional adjustments for students with disability and learning and support needs.

3. How you can best help your child

The role of parents and carers is vital to the success of any workplace learning program. By taking steps to understand what's involved and by providing the necessary support at home, you can help your child get the most out of their placement and make important decisions about their future.

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

A checklist for parents and carers

Before the placement

- Become familiar with workplace learning by reading the information provided and attending information sessions.
- Encourage your student to discuss with you their developing career interests and work preferences.
- Suggest your student goes to myfuture.edu.au to find out more about preferred industries and related careers. This website is also useful for you as a parent to visit. You may like to look at the information together.
- Urge your student to complete the Workplace Learning Research pages in their Employment Related Skills Logbook Online.
- Discuss with your student any adjustments they may require in the workplace to allow them to complete a successful placement.
- Discuss what they hope to learn from the placement and any questions they might want to ask their host employer.
- Encourage them to complete all pre-placement activities arranged by their school, or EVET provider.

- Discuss the safety arrangements for the placement and be aware of any activities that are banned or restricted.
- Advise the school of any suitable placements you know about or could offer.
- Inform the school or EVET provider of any disability, learning and support needs or medical history e.g. anaphylaxis, that may require adjustments in the workplace.
- Complete the relevant part of the Student Placement Record provided by the school or EVET provider.
- Complete the accommodation away from home documentation if applicable.

When a position is confirmed

- Make workplace learning a priority. This may mean rescheduling other activities.
- Help prepare your student's clothing (e.g. enclosed footwear, business attire) and other requirements for the placement.
- Help your student to find out more about Work Health and Safety legislation and make sure they know and understand what it means while they are at work.
- Make sure your student has safe travel arrangements to and from work.
- Check your student has the information they will need on the first day (starting time, address and contact person) including their completed Student Contact Card.
- Confirm your student's meal arrangements. They may need to take food with them.
- Explain to your student that their safety and wellbeing is very important during the placement. If they feel unsafe they should report the issue immediately to their school or EVET provider.

During the placement

- If your student has a diagnosed medical condition, ensure that they have access to appropriate medication.
- If your student is at risk of an anaphylactic reaction, they must carry an adrenalin auto-injector e.g. EpiPen within easy reach each day.
- Encourage your student to complete any assignments or journals.
- Have a conversation about your student's day in the workplace. For example:
    - tell me what you do during the day at work.
    - have you learned anything unexpected and especially interesting?
    - what are the education and training requirements of the job(s)?
    - what are the working conditions like? Is there a union?
    - if there is anything of concern, have you raised it with the employer or the school?
    - do you think this might be the right industry for you?
    - did you receive clear advice about doing the job safely?

Immediately after the placement

- Encourage your student to discuss their host employer's report with you.

- Make sure your student records their experience in their Employment Related Skills Logbook Online.
- Review and discuss your student's career and work aspirations and their options for education and training.
- Encourage your student to value the networks they are making and to maintain a record of workplace contacts for advice, assistance and opportunities in the future.

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.

Your first point of contact: _____

For further assistance, advice and information

- Workplace learning policy
  See the Parents section for Important Additional Information.
- myfuture.edu.au
  Support and encourage your student in their career making decisions.
- Parents and Community
  Parents /carers and community can play an important role in students' career decision making.
- www.pssfw.myskills.gov.au
  Preparing Secondary Students for Work-a framework for vocational learning and VET delivered to secondary students.

If you have any further queries you can contact the student's school.

The department's state office can be contacted on **telephone (02) 9244 5425**.

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