VET Courses

A STUDENT’S / PARENT’S GUIDE TO WORKPLACE LEARNING

2015

Guidelines for students and parents regarding workplace learning opportunities
Student information

Welcome to the Work Placement Program. You will have the opportunity to participate in a program that involves structured and assessable workplace learning that is a mandatory part of your VET course. Your work-based learning will focus on linking your knowledge and skills from the classroom with situations in the workplace. It will provide you with the opportunity to put theory into practice and make you more ready for the world of work.

This booklet contains important information about your rights and responsibilities and the skills to be learned and how they will be assessed. You should read it carefully, as it will help you get the most out of your placement.

You should also give your parents or carers an opportunity to read this information booklet so that you have a chance to discuss this information with them and address any concerns or questions you may have.

What are work placements about?

A work placement is structured workplace learning that prepares you for the workforce. The experience in the workplace will help you to better understand the theory you have learnt by putting it into practice in the workplace.

It is different from work experience in that instead of just observing what goes on, you will be given the opportunity to undertake tasks that relate to your VET course.

What are the advantages for me?

By participating in work placements and completing this compulsory part of your training, you have the opportunity to:

- learn, develop and apply knowledge and skills relevant to the workplace;
- achieve skills that are recognised by industry
- achieve skills that will assist you in seeking employment and assist with credit transfer to further education and training
- gain knowledge of employers’ expectations
- make contacts with employers
- better plan your future career
- fulfil mandatory requirements for HSC VET courses.

How do I choose my work placement?

Your supervising teacher may select your placement for you. Because employers receive many requests for placements, it is better if you do not contact the employer yourself until the teacher has made arrangements. If you have a preference, you may suggest the name of the placement to your supervising teacher. However, when selecting your placement you need to take into account the following:

- the skills that you need to acquire for your course
• the skills that the work placement can offer
• the degree of supervision that can be provided
• the quality of training that can be provided.

What if I already have a part-time job?

If you already have a part-time job you may be eligible to apply for Recognition of Prior Learning. Your current employment would have to be relevant to the competencies covered in your course and specified hours would need to be covered. You would also need to consider the benefits of experiencing a variety of learning and workplace settings. Contact your teacher or VET Coordinator to discuss RPL further.

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<th>What are my responsibilities?</th>
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While in your work placement, you will be expected to behave like a new employee as much as possible by following the rules of the workplace and the directions of the workplace supervisor and other employees. Remember that you are representing your school and that your behaviour and attitude will directly influence an employer’s willingness to train other students in the future.

The right attitude

You will need to:
• show enthusiasm and initiative
• accept and complete duties planned by the workplace supervisor
• be willing to learn
• listen to instructions and ask questions when unsure because it is better to ask a silly question than to make a silly mistake
• assist in the planning of your program
• accept and act on advice given by workplace supervisors
• ask for jobs when you have nothing to do
• be polite, courteous and well-mannered throughout the placement
• avoid distracting other employees unnecessarily from their work
• dress appropriately to industry standards and the workplace.

Attendance and punctuality

You will be expected to:
• start your placement on time each day;
• take only the allocated time for morning, afternoon tea and lunch breaks and return promptly to your work
• contact your workplace supervisor and the supervising teacher immediately if you are unable to attend your placement
• account for any absences to the workplace supervisor and the supervising teacher because you may be required to make up the hours lost at another time
• attend your placement for the normal hours of work for that job, unless you have negotiated otherwise.
Safety
You will be required to comply with any Work Health and Safety (WH&S) guidelines:

- you may be required to wear protective clothing and safety equipment
- you will need to take care to protect yourself and other employees by working in a safe manner
- you need to report any accidents to your workplace supervisor and supervising teacher immediately
- you should notify your workplace supervisor if you see any hazards in the workplace
- Construction students are required to complete a WorkCover approved General WHS induction prior to work placement on a construction site
- There are special conditions that apply to any work placement that requires students to undertake ANIMAL HANDLING (please ask your teacher for further information if this applies to you)

Confidentiality
You may be exposed to information about the business and clients that will be confidential. You will be expected to maintain privacy by not repeating any of this information. In some cases, employers may want you to sign a confidentiality contract.

A sample confidentiality agreement form is included in the attachments in case the employer asks you to provide this.

Find out from your workplace supervisor what is considered confidential.

Police clearance
Some employers may require you to obtain a police clearance, particularly if some of your tasks include handling cash or valuables.

It is also a legal requirement that you obtain a police clearance if you are working with children at work places such as schools, child-care centres or hospitals with child patients.

Enquiries for a police clearance may be made at any police station but may take up to a month to obtain.

Alternatively, your employer may ask you to sign a Prohibited Employment Declaration if you will be working with children.

Medical conditions
Let your supervising teacher and workplace supervisor know if you suffer from any medical condition or disability that may affect your work performance.

In some cases the host employer may wish to have a medical examination before you can start your work placement.
Insurance

As a student on work placement, you are covered by insurance while you are travelling to and from your workplace and in the workplace, both for injury to yourself or damage to the employer’s property. Your supervising teacher will provide you with details. Be aware that accepting payment from the employer will void your insurance cover.

What if there is a problem?

If there is a problem during your work placement you should usually discuss it with your host employer or workplace supervisor first and then inform your supervising teacher. If you find it difficult to discuss the misunderstanding or problem with the host employer or workplace supervisor, speak to your supervising teacher. Problems may include the following:

- unsafe work, health and safety practices
- inadequate supervision or learning opportunities provided in the workplace
- unreasonable work requests by the host employer or workplace supervisor
- problems regarding assessment
- behaviour on the part of the employer or a staff member that makes you uncomfortable or embarrassed.

You should contact your teacher immediately if there is anything that embarrasses you or makes you uncomfortable. Your teacher will provide contact phone numbers before you start your placement.

What do I do if I need to cancel/vary my placement?

Cancellation of a work placement is a very serious matter. If you need to cancel or vary your placement, you must contact your supervising teacher before the placement commences. You may be required to put your request in writing and give this to your host employer.

What happens if I am in an accident at the workplace?

Make sure you are familiar with the procedures required. The following steps should be taken:

- Report it to the host employer or workplace supervisor immediately
- Contact the supervising teacher as soon as possible
- Complete an Accident Report Form and give it to the supervising teacher.

Keep all the relevant medical certificates and accounts for any insurance claims that may be made.

Do I need to consider any industrial relations issues?
Your supervising teacher should be able to assist you with this information. While on your work placement, you should not:

- Replace a paid employee, excluding employees who are on paid annual leave or sick leave, or reduce the hours which a paid employee would otherwise be paid to work
- Replace employees engaged in industrial disputes.

If work placements are affected by industrial action, you are to return to school. Under no circumstances should you be used to replace a striking worker.
How will my training proceed?

What is a student work placement journal?

You will receive a work placement journal for use during your work placement. It is a record of skills and experiences that you have demonstrated during your work placements. This information can be used to:

- Monitor your progress by the supervising teacher and the training provider
- Claim recognition of prior learning (RPL) for further training programs
- Support your applications for employment.

It is your responsibility to maintain the work placement journal by recording details of activities performed on a daily basis and ensuring your workplace supervisor signs and dates skills achieved. You need to take your work placement journal with you every placement day. If you lose your work placement journal, inform your supervising teacher immediately.

Which skills do I learn in the workplace?

The skills that you will be learning in the workplace will be negotiated between your teacher and the host employer. You may wish to discuss with the workplace supervisor when these skills will be covered. If you are having trouble getting the opportunity to cover the skills agreed in your work placement journal, discuss this with your workplace supervisor.

How are the skills I gain recorded?

Assessment is an important part of your work placement program and can happen at two stages.

- **Before your placement:** If you have gained skills identified in your work placement journal through education and training, part-time work and/or life experiences, you may receive recognition for these. Your supervising teacher will inform you about how you can gain RPL so you do not have to repeat what you already know.
- **During your placement:** As you practise the skills during your work placement, your workplace supervisor will determine when you are ready to be assessed. The workplace supervisor will watch you demonstrate the skill and if completed successfully, he/she will initial and date the relevant skill in your work placement journal. This can take place during or towards the end of your placement. Alternatively, your teacher may assess you during their visit to your workplace.

If the workplace supervisor is too busy to complete the records at the end of your placement, make arrangements to pick up the book at a later date. It is your responsibility to make sure that the work placement journal is passed on to the supervisor. Make sure your skills are signed off and dated in the work placement journal.

Do I receive any feedback?
It is important that you receive feedback on your progress from your workplace supervisor throughout the placement and not just at the end. Comments made should not be taken as personal criticism but viewed as a way to help you gain the skills you require for your course. Ask your workplace supervisor to comment verbally on your progress.

At the end of your placement, your workplace supervisor should complete the Work Placement Assessment Form. This would be a good opportunity to discuss the issues raised in the form.

What do I do when the placement has finished?

Your supervising teacher may conduct a debriefing session with you and other students. This session will give you the opportunity to discuss:

- benefits and problems of your placement
- ideas on how to negotiate learning and assessment procedures
- any difficulties and the successes of your placement.

A letter of thanks should be sent to your host employer for providing you with the opportunity to use their workplace for your learning. You may also like to ask the host employer/workplace supervisor for a written reference. You should carefully file your Work Placement Journal for future use.
GLOSSARY

Animal Handling
Any work placement requiring students to work with animals has to be notified to CECNSW and clearance obtained. Schools are required to apply for this authorisation on an annual basis.

Host employer
The organisation, company or business (government and non-government) which opens its workplace to students to enable them to practise skills gained at school.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
Refers to the skills and knowledge obtained through prior education and training, work experience and/or life experience being recognised and acknowledged. The student is given advanced standing in a particular course requiring the skills and knowledge.

Student / VET Student
A person enrolled in a vocational education and training (VET) course.

Student work placement journal
A record of the skills and experiences the student gains while in the workplace and reflections about this learning.

Supervising teacher
The teacher who is responsible for managing a student while on work placement.

White Card (Construction Induction WHS)
This is a mandatory WHS course that any student intending to work on a construction site must have. This is a legal requirement managed by WorkCover NSW.

Work Placement Service Providers
These are local community organisations that are engaged by schools to source and support student work placement with employers.

Workplace supervisor
A staff member appointed by the host employer to induct, train and supervise the student during the work placement.
Work placement involves achieving specific outcomes and skills in a workplace setting.

Tick the boxes when you have done each of the following:

**Talked to your teacher about:**

- [ ] the purpose of your work placement
- [ ] the work placement site
- [ ] the learning outcomes you are expected to achieve
- [ ] the approximate date by which you will have achieved the outcomes
- [ ] the expectations of your employer
- [ ] the appropriate clothing to wear
- [ ] how to address and speak to people in the workforce
- [ ] who to contact if you have any problems

**Collected and attended to all paperwork:**

- [ ] Student Placement Record
- [ ] Student Work Placement Log
- [ ] Confidentiality agreement

**Phoned or met the employer to discuss:**

- [ ] Your course and your goals for Work Placement
- [ ] How you get to the workplace and how long it will take you
- [ ] The time you report to the supervisor
- [ ] Who you report to and where upon your arrival

**When you arrived at your work placement, asked about:**
- Special clothing or equipment requirements
- The name and location of your supervisor
- How and where you sign on
- What to do in an accident or emergency
- Where you find change rooms, lunch rooms, canteens, exits, toilets
- The usual work routines, lunch and break times
THIS AGREEMENT made the _______________ day of ___________________ 2015, between
___________________________________ of __________________________ (thereinafter referred to as “The Employer”) and
________________________________ of ____________________________________  (thereinafter referred to as “The Student”)

(RECITALS:

(a) The Employer has agreed to have the student attend at its premises for the purpose of gaining work placement.
(b) The student agrees to abide by the following conditions as part of work placement.

AGREEMENT:

1. The student shall treat as confidential all information made known to the student during the course of the work placement program (hereinafter referred to as “the confidential information”).
2. The confidential information includes names of all clients, the employer’s methods of operation, details of clientele, computer programs (intellectual property) and all or any other information about the employer and/or its clients of which the student may become aware during the course of the work placement program.
3. The student shall not use or disclose or authorise the use or disclosure of the confidential information to any person or company whatsoever.

SIGNED by the said   }
this ______ day of ______________ } ______________________________________________
in the presence of:   }
______________________________________________

I am aware that my daughter/son _______________________ of ___________________________
will be expected to sign the above. I agree with these conditions. (Name of School)

Parent/Guardian (Please Print) _______________________________________________

Signature ____________________________________ Date ______________________________
This is just a very general idea of what to write and how to set the letter out. If possible use your own words to make the letter personal and sincere.

[Your address]

[Date]

[Host Employer Representative Name] [Title]

[Business name]

[Business Address]

Dear [Host Employer Representative Name],

Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to do a work placement and for being my host employer.

I have gained valuable work skills and improved my understanding of my HSC VET course in [name of course]. I believe I will be much better prepared for work in the future as a result of this experience.

I especially appreciated the direction and training I was given in [name the main skills that you had opportunity to practice].

I particularly wish to thank [name all the people who worked with you or helped you].

Thank you again for this valuable experience and the kindness and generosity of everyone during my placement.

Yours sincerely

[sign and then print your name under the signature]