
The standards and procedures outlined in this mandatory support document apply to all workplace learning programs for students enrolled in NSW government secondary, central and special schools or contracted private or community registered training organisations (RTOs) and school students enrolled in HSC and other vocational education and training (VET) courses in TAFE NSW institutes. The standards and procedures also apply to students solely enrolled in TAFE NSW and undertaking workplace learning for HSC courses. The standards and procedures should not limit the development of innovative programs.

Workplace learning programs are initiated by a school or TAFE NSW institute and approved by the Principal or responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager. These programs involve the cooperative engagement of local employers, business and industry, community agencies, RTOs and parents/carers. Local Community Partnerships are key partners in the implementation of work placements that are mandatory as part of some HSC VET courses.

It is the responsibility of the school or TAFE NSW institute to monitor and review its procedures and practices in operating workplace learning programs. This mandatory support document and the other Associated Documents and Forms provide the foundation for local implementation of these programs consistent with the Department’s Workplace Learning Policy (2005). The following advice expands on the Policy document.

1.1 Workplace learning programs are to be designed to achieve curriculum outcomes and enhance the vocational, educational and social development of all students.

1.1.2 The Department supports the provision of workplace learning for all students and access to HSC VET courses.

Curriculum activity other than career education, transition planning, enterprise education, community learning and mentoring is increasingly incorporating the benefits of a period of hands-on learning in an authentic work environment to apply and refine classroom learning.

In all instances Principals and the responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager must consider the overall educational requirements and benefits arising from a proposed workplace learning program, the capacity of the school or TAFE NSW institute or RTO to support the activity and ensure that curriculum objectives will be achieved effectively through the implementation of the program.
1.1.3 Workplace learning programs must meet mandatory requirements of HSC VET courses.

Learning in the workplace is a mandatory inclusion in a number of curriculum areas.

Student competency in HSC VET courses is assessed as part of their HSC and contributes to an Australian Qualification Framework VET credential. Work placement supports the development, enhancement and assessment of student competency in an authentic industry setting.

Mandatory work placement programs must be designed to meet the requirements set down in the relevant curricula and Board of Studies course content. More information is available in Principles Underpinning Work Placement in the Higher School Certificate endorsed by the NSW Board of Studies and reproduced in Associated Documents and Forms.

1.1.4 The value of workplace learning as a resource to enrich and extend learning in the classroom is well established in connection with enterprise, career and transition education, and VET courses. Consideration of other ways of utilising the resources of the community and the workplace should be encouraged to expand the range of teaching environments and expertise to improve student achievements in other curriculum areas.

1.2 Workplace learning programs include but are not limited to work experience etc

Programs must also take into account the capacity of the employer to host students and the workplace facilities as elements contributing to the learning experience of the student.

Suitable pre-placement activities must be provided by the school or where relevant, by the TAFE NSW institute or RTO to prepare all students for workplace learning and to optimise the planned workplace learning experience.

1.2.1 The scheduling of workplace learning placements in the implementation of workplace learning programs must take into account individual student needs, the full range of school and TAFE NSW institute activities, the need for student follow-up immediately after placement and should also be sensitive to host employers’ work cycles.
Workplace learning placements must take place during regular weekday working hours during school terms unless weekend participation is an essential requirement of the industry. Exceptions may be considered by the Principal or responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager for individual students enrolled in Year 11 or Year 12.

Workplace learning placements for students of 14 years of age may not be conducted outside the hours of 7.00am to 6.00pm, nor in school holidays.

Consideration should be given to ways of ensuring that workplace learning students are able to keep abreast of classroom learning that occurs while they are on placement.

1.2.2 **Mandatory HSC VET work placements must be scheduled** for completion prior to the dates that work placement-related information must be submitted to the NSW Board of Studies. Year 12 students must complete their mandatory workplace learning placements before their final HSC exam.

In exceptional circumstances, individual Year 12 students may undertake limited work experience to augment their school to work career planning or tertiary course selection after their final HSC exam. Departmental insurance and indemnity provisions will apply to these work experience opportunities provided:

I. all parties are in agreement to the work experience;
II. the Department’s duty of care and documentation requirements are adhered to; and
III. the student remains enrolled until completion of the work experience and follow up by the school or TAFE NSW institute.

In these exceptional circumstances, students must not be used in place of regular employees and must not undertake unpaid work trials.

Students undertaking a Life Skills pattern of study for the HSC may undertake workplace learning during term four with Departmental insurance and indemnity provisions if they are enrolled to the end of the school year.

1.2.3 **Non-local placements within NSW** may be considered if local options will not offer the opportunity or learning outcomes of genuine interest and educational benefit to the student. A ‘non-local’ placement is one outside the geographical area in which placements are customarily approved by the Principal or nominee or the responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager or delegate.
In addition to the procedures required for a local placement, arrangements for travel, accommodation and supervision must comply with the procedures outlined in *Placements Involving Accommodation Away from Home and Monitored, Coordinated and Other Placements*. See Associated Documents and Forms.

1.2.4 **Interstate placements** should only be canvassed after all suitable opportunities in NSW have been considered. Schools located on or near state borders may arrange interstate placements within geographic locations that are adjacent to state borders unless there are exceptional circumstances that warrant a distant placement.

Procedures for organising interstate placements are outlined in the *NSW-Interstate Agreements for Workplace Learning in ACT, Queensland and Victoria* (see Associated Documents and Forms).

1.3 **Employers have responsibilities and so do schools, TAFE and contracted RTOs.**

1.3.1 Employers have a responsibility under NSW Occupational Health and Safety legislation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of persons working in or visiting their work sites. This responsibility extends to all students and any support staff on workplace learning placements and includes:

- Ensuring that any plant, substance or product to be used by the student and where relevant any support staff is safe and without risks for the student
- Ensuring that systems of work and the working environment are safe and without risk to health for the student and support staff where relevant
- Providing information, instruction, training and supervision to the student and others to ensure health and safety in the work place
- Providing adequate facilities for the student’s welfare at work.

1.3.2 **School Principals and where relevant, the responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager or RTO Manager, have the primary responsibility for approving workplace learning programs. They must take reasonable steps to ensure that students, staff, community partners, parents and carers, and host employers are aware of their responsibilities in the implementation of workplace learning programs.**

School Principals and the responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager are responsible for authorising a workplace learning program for students enrolled in their organisations. They are responsible for ensuring that a program is conducted in accordance with this policy.
They may delegate the development of the program to nominees or delegates, including the approval of placements, but they take ultimate responsibility for the approval of the workplace learning program.

1.3.3 A key feature of workplace learning that differentiates it from learning in the classroom or on excursions is the range of non-school stakeholders participating in the activity as coordinators and knowledge/expertise sharers.

All stakeholders have responsibilities in the implementation of workplace learning programs. It is the duty of the Principal or the responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager to take reasonable steps to ensure that stakeholders are aware of, and prepared to take on, their responsibilities.

1.3.4 Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) support and coordinate work placements for senior students undertaking HSC VET courses. Their activity and responsibilities coincide with many responsibilities of the staff at schools or TAFE NSW institutes. These include selecting suitable host employers; outlining the aims and objectives of the proposed workplace learning program to employers, liaising with schools and regional support staff regarding the adjustments and accommodations for students with disabilities and clarifying lines of communication ahead of the placement.

1.3.5 Formal communications and agreements to enhance collaboration between the LCP, schools and colleges, and regionally based school RTOs must be established to ensure each partner’s role in the provision of workplace learning is effective and complementary to the whole process.

1.3.6 Staff organising workplace learning activities have responsibilities that include:

- Matching the student to the proposed placement to optimise the outcomes of the experience. Guidance is provided in the Support Document: Matching Students to Placements
- Ensuring that any special needs of students, particularly those students with a disability, are appropriately supported in the workplace, in consultation with school, and where relevant, TAFE personnel and parents/carers.
- Ensuring the Student Placement Record is complete, satisfactory and signed prior to the placement.
- Ensuring that any additional personal information necessary to student well-being and support needs is provided to the host employer or other appropriate supervisor, with the consent of the
student and parent/carer, and in keeping with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act.

- Ensuring that all students have undertaken preparatory support activity prior to the placement to optimise their safe and effective participation in workplace learning. Guidance about this activity is provided in Associated Documents and Forms: Preparing Students.

- Providing information to parents/carers including the Parents and Carers Guide to Workplace Learning.

- Carrying out and documenting supervisory visits to the workplace during the placement to meet with the student and the workplace supervisor and/or employer to review progress. Where a visit is not logistically possible due to distance or resources, the required telephone contact for the same purpose must be documented.

- Carrying out post-placement sessions with students to review the experience and optimise the learning. Post-placement interviews also permit the reporting and follow up of inappropriate or negative incidents not reported at the time.

Staff responsibilities also include the obligations listed in Staff and/or Local Community Partnership responsibilities for all workplace learning programs other than HSC VET courses operated in collaboration with an LCP. See 1.3.8 below

1.3.7 Local Community Partnership responsibilities include:

- The coordination of work placements for senior students undertaking HSC VET courses with mandatory work placement requirements

- Their obligation under common law to take reasonable steps to minimise the risks to students in workplace learning.

1.3.8 Staff and/or Local Community Partnership responsibilities include:

- The selection of host employers who will assess any risks to the health and safety of students in the proposed activities; remove or minimise those risks and who will deliver quality workplace learning experiences

- The selection of employers who understand and can make appropriate adjustments and accommodations for students with disabilities

- Promoting the benefits to the employer of offering workplace learning placements
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• Providing mandatory support documents, and explanations about them, to employers, students and parents or carers including the Department’s expectations and requirements in connection with child protection. Documents include *An Employer’s Guide to Workplace Learning, Parents and Carers Guide to Workplace Learning* and the *Student Placement Record*

• Ensuring that the employer is aware of the purpose, process and outcomes of the placement so they are better able to deliver a positive learning experience for the student. Personal contact is the preferable approach to meeting this responsibility. This may be by way of a personal visit or a telephone call

• Ensuring that the employer is aware of obligations regarding non-payment of students on placement and that, in the event of an industrial dispute, the placement is suspended or postponed

• Clarifying and documenting lines of communication between the stakeholders, but most importantly between the employer, the workplace supervisor and the workplace learning program coordinator at the school, TAFE NSW institute and LCP.

1.3.9 **Host employer responsibilities to school students include:**

• Providing a safe and positive environment compliant with the NSW Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 and Anti-Discrimination legislation

• Providing appropriate learning activities and skill development tasks for the student under the supervision of a capable and trustworthy employee briefed for the task

• Identifying areas of risk to students and where relevant any support staff and implementing strategies to eliminate or minimise risks to students who are inexperienced and potentially vulnerable

• Providing a workplace induction including relevant safety matters to orientate students

• Having current public liability coverage.

*An Employer’s Guide to Workplace Learning* provides more details. See Associated Documents and Forms.

1.3.10 **Parent/carer responsibilities include:**

• Understanding the purpose and nature of workplace learning programs

• Attending information sessions or meetings necessary to the sound implementation of workplace learning programs affecting their young person
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- Considering, commenting and providing permission for their young people to take up each planned placement
- Recognising that approval for placements rests with the school Principal or the responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager and might on occasion over-ride the planning of the parent or carer
- Assisting their young person to plan safely managed travel arrangements and later than school hour finish times
- Being available to be contacted in an emergency during school hours and in the case of students in Years 11 and 12, being the student’s contact in case of an emergency outside normal business hours. A parent/carer may nominate another reliable adult trusted and known to the student to be the contact in place of the parent or carer. See Section 1.4.8 below for details
- Removing their young person from the host workplace if contacted by the student outside normal business hours because the student has concerns about their safety or welfare. The incident must be reported by the parent/carer to the student’s school/TAFE NSW institute/RTO as soon as possible after the incident has occurred so that the matter can be dealt with by the school/TAFE NSW institute/RTO.

The Parents and Carers Guide to Workplace Learning provides more details. See also sample proforma Recording Emergency Out of Normal Business Hours as Reported by Parent/Carer/Nominated Contact.

1.3.11 Student responsibilities include:
- Understanding and using documents such as the Student Placement Record that support their workplace learning placement
- Participation in pre-placement activities to optimise their safety and achievements during workplace learning programs
- Making and using safe travel arrangements
- Paying for their travel to and from placements as outlined in Student Travel Arrangements. See Associated Documents and Forms
- Following the directions of their supervisor in the workplace
- Communicating concerns to the workplace supervisor and/or their school or TAFE NSW institute or RTO.

1.4 DET and TAFE NSW must, through their delegated officers, take reasonable care to keep students undertaking workplace learning
free from harm. Duty of care rests with the school or where relevant, also with the TAFE NSW institute and private or community RTO.

1.4.1 Prohibited activities cannot be included in workplace learning programs.

Some workplace learning activities are prohibited due to their nature, danger or inherent risk to students. Examples of prohibited activities include:

- Limitations on travel by air
- High risk construction work
- Use of dangerous machinery or equipment except under prescribed conditions indicated in the mandatory support document referred to below
- Any activity requiring a licence permit or certificate of competence except under prescribed conditions.

A full list is available in Prohibited Activities. See Associated Documents and Forms.

1.4.2 Some workplace learning placements may only be included in workplace learning programs subject to meeting special requirements.

Workplaces presenting a higher degree of risk may also represent a valuable learning experience for some students in connection with a particular vocational skill. A Principal or nominee or the responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager or delegate or the RTO manager or nominee may approve a workplace learning opportunity (other than a specifically prohibited activity), following careful consideration of the potential dangers, if the vocational goals and educational value of the proposed placement can be achieved with the application of the host employer's risk minimisation strategies. These strategies might include substituting activities or equipment for the student to do or use; isolating the hazard; introducing extra controls in the workplace and/or using personal protective equipment (PSE). The strategies must be clearly articulated in the workplace learning program and sighted by the Principal or nominee or the responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager or delegate or the RTO Manager or nominee.

Full details of higher-risk activities and workplaces, plus prerequisites to participation, are outlined in Guidelines for Workplace Learning in the Construction Industry; Guidelines for Workplace Learning in Workplaces with Particular Health Care Concerns and Guidelines for
Workplace Learning in Meat Processing Plants. (See Associated Documents and Forms)

Examples of higher-risk activities and workplaces include:
- Long-distance transport, commercial shipping and aircraft maintenance
- Construction, primary industries, meat processing plants, metal and engineering work sites and sites with moving vehicles
- Horse riding
- Use of farm or gardening machinery and equipment.

1.4.3 Where practicable, a pre-placement visit to all new workplaces should occur. A ‘new’ workplace is one that is either not known to the personnel responsible for managing the workplace learning program or that has not hosted school students for workplace learning. The risk associated with higher-risk activities must be reviewed through a pre-placement visit unless distance and resources preclude this. Resources should be allocated to support a pre-placement visit to proposed higher risk placements where feasible. In instances where a visit cannot be undertaken, the discussion by telephone with the employer must take place and must be documented. The sample proforma Recording Contact with Host Employer / Student provides guidance for staff. See Associated Documents and Forms.

See also Procedures and Standards 1.3ff above and 1.4.5ff below in this document that detail further risk minimisation processes to be undertaken by stakeholders in workplace learning programs.

1.4.4 Child-related workplaces are the subject of legislation that prevents unsuitable people from working with children and young people. The legislation applies to students and any support personnel undertaking workplace learning placement in child-related employment areas. Completing and meeting the terms of the Prohibited Employment Declaration is a prerequisite for students to undertake these workplace learning placements. Guidelines for Workplace Learning in Child-Related Employment provides more information. See Associated Documents and Forms.

1.4.5 Duty of care
DET and TAFE NSW must, through their delegated officers, take reasonable care to keep students undertaking workplace learning free from harm. Duty of care for students rests with the school or TAFE NSW institute and where relevant, also with the RTO and extends to workplace learning placements even where there is no direct daily supervision of the student by a school or TAFE NSW Institute or RTO staff member. Employers have responsibilities
for the health, safety and welfare of employees and visitors to their premises but this does not exempt the school or TAFE NSW institute or RTO from their responsibilities.

1.4.6 The duty of care owed to students by school, TAFE NSW Institute and RTO staff applies wherever students are engaged in authorised workplace learning programs. The application of duty of care is complex in relation to workplace learning because the location of the learning is external to the school or TAFE NSW institute, and in some cases, to the RTO and there is dependence on non-Department staff for the daily supervision of the student in the workplace.

1.4.7 Accordingly, procedures to address duty of care to ensure the inclusion of workplace learning as a valid and valued methodology of learning have been developed and must be followed. Documentation of the application of duty of care procedures must be maintained by the school, TAFE NSW institute and RTO. The procedures are set out in section 1.3 of this document and summarised below:

- The review of potential workplace learning placements in regard to suitability for student workplace learning must be carried out by the school or TAFE NSW institute and where relevant, also by the RTO. The review includes consideration of the proposed activities, their risk assessment by the host employer, the designated unsuitable tasks, the location of the worksite and the supervision in the workplace in view of the student’s individual needs.

- Establishing with the host employer and student’s workplace supervisor the expectations of the Department and their responsibilities required in hosting a student and supervising the placement.

- Ensuring that consideration has been given by the host employer to minimising potential risks to the student in the workplace and that any issues affecting the student’s safety or welfare that may have been identified by the school or TAFE NSW institute or RTO have been dealt with appropriately.

- Completion of the Student Placement Record, which includes advice to minimise risks, and actual approval or rejection of the placement by the Principal or nominee or responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager or delegate or RTO manager or nominee.

- Provision of suitable preparatory support activities for students to optimise their safe and effective participation in workplace learning. Guidance is provided in the Recommended Support Document Preparing students in Associated Documents and Forms.
• Completion and issuing of the Safety and Emergency Procedures Student Contact Card to the student before placement. See Mandatory Supporting Documents in Associated Documents and Forms

• Formal supervision of the student by school or TAFE NSW Institute or RTO staff during the placement and in post-placement activities. The school or TAFE NSW Institute or RTO must visit or make phone contact with the student and host employer during the placement. Guidance about post-placement activities is provided in Post Placement Follow up Activities in Associated Documents and Forms.

See also 1.4.1 Prohibited workplace learning activities and 1.4.2 Workplace learning placements subject to special requirements, in this document.

1.4.8 Each workplace learning student must have access, as needed, to a reliable contact person known and authorised by the Principal or responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager or RTO manager. The contact person must be someone the student trusts who is willing and will be immediately available to support the student, particularly in emergencies, including removing the student from risk of harm where host workplace responsibilities to the student have been overlooked or ignored.

During normal business hours, if a student faces an emergency in the workplace, they must contact their nominated contact from the school, TAFE NSW institute or RTO. Where relevant, students must also contact their parent or carer.

Outside normal business hours, the contacts for students in Years 11 and 12 must be their parent or carer or other responsible and reliable adult who is trusted by the student and authorised by the Principal (or nominee) or responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager (or delegate) or RTO Manager or nominee, and who understands the concept and context of workplace learning. The contact person must not be the host employer or any of their employees.

The contact must undertake to inform the school of any out of hours emergency as soon as possible after it happens. The contact person also has responsibilities as outlined in section 1.3.10 of this document. The contact is not required to investigate or resolve any issues but simply to remove the student from risk. The school, or where relevant the TAFE NSW institute or RTO will deal with the incident.

Where a student in Year 9 or 10 wishes to undertake a placement outside normal business hours, contact arrangements must be negotiated with the Principal by the parent or carer and the student.
Prior to the placement, the school, TAFE NSW institute or RTO will provide the student with a Safety and Emergency Procedures Student Contact Card. Students will be supervised in filling in the contact details and in supplying their Medicare Number (for use in case medical attention is required during the placement).

Teachers who volunteer to be the emergency contact person out of school or TAFE NSW institute hours are in the same position with respect to personal liability as they are during school/TAFE hours. The legal principle of vicarious liability means that DET/TAFE NSW is liable for any actions or omissions of the teacher, including if the teacher is found to have been negligent. Teachers will not be personally liable for any compensation claims arising from any accident or claim relating to accidents in the host workplace out of school or TAFE NSW institute hours (or similarly during school or TAFE NSW hours), unless the teacher is guilty of serious and wilful misconduct that leads to the student’s injury.

1.5 Insurance and indemnity provisions

1.5.1 Insurance and indemnity provisions of the Department will apply to all workplace learning placements approved by the school Principal and their nominee or responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager and their delegate. These provisions will not apply when the placement is not approved by the Principal or nominee or responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager or delegate.

The Department’s provisions also apply to workplace learning programs for government school students arranged by private and community registered training organisations with external host employers when approved by the school Principal. More detail is available in Private or community registered training organisations providing HSC VET courses Guidelines and Procedures.

1.5.2 All student workplace learning placements arranged privately, by parents or carers, that are not authorised and approved by the Principal or nominee or the responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager or delegate are excluded from the insurance and indemnity provisions of the Department.

Students on workplace learning placement are classified as voluntary workers. Payment to students on workplace learning placement invalidates these provisions.

1.5.3 The Department’s insurance and indemnity provisions do not apply to situations where a student uses a designated period of
regular paid part-time employment as part of their mandatory HSC VET work placement. In these cases the student is not a voluntary worker and the workers compensation and insurance arrangements of the employer apply. All arrangements must be documented as specified in the Associated Document: Student Placement Record: Using Current Employment for Mandatory Work Placement. This documentation will also delineate insurance coverage.

1.5.4 When a secondary student enrolled in a government school or in a TAFE NSW institute delivered HSC VET course is injured during a workplace learning placement or during travel to or from the place of work a School Accident Report Form must be completed immediately and the policy Reporting School Accidents must be followed. Legal Issues Bulletin No 21 – Preparation and Use of Accident Reports in Schools and TAFE NSW applies.

The Report must be completed irrespective of any claim (insurance or other). No liability is to be admitted by the Principal, director or staff.

In cases of a serious accident or occurrence in the workplace the reporting requirements specified in the NSW OHS Regulation 2001 must be implemented.

1.5.5 Claims for injury, loss of property or damage above the franchise must be referred through the Principal or responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager to the Department. The supporting document Claims for Injury and Damage to Property provides more information.

No liability is to be admitted by the Principal, responsible TAFE NSW Institute Manager or staff.

1.6 Regular and effective communication with stakeholders

1.6.1 Regular and effective communication with parents, carers and host employers, directly and through Local Community Partnerships, is an essential aspect of this policy.

Workplace learning programs are dependent upon the willing participation of a range of stakeholders. It is necessary for schools and TAFE NSW institutes to take a lead in building strong relationships with stakeholders. Respect for the skills and expertise of the stakeholder groups plus recognition of the different imperatives that have an impact upon them should be part of the understanding that underpins communication and cooperative activity.

1.6.2 Recognising the benefits to the stakeholder groups, including teachers, derived from building collaborative relationships should provide positive reasons to devote time and processes to regular communications via
personal visits, newsletters, meetings or some other effective approach to enriching the relationship between the school, TAFE NSW institute, Local Community Partnership, employers and the community.

1.7 Mandatory and recommended support documents

1.7.1 A range of mandatory and support documents has been developed to assist in the implementation of workplace learning programs.

This document, *Workplace Learning: Procedures and Standards*, the Student Placement Records, Emergency Procedures Student Contact Card, *An Employer’s Guide to Workplace Learning* and *Parents and Carers Guide to Workplace Learning* and *Prohibited Activities* are mandatory documents to be used in the implementation of workplace learning programs.

The mandatory documents must be seen as essential components to this policy. They provide detailed information for stakeholders on the practical, responsible and legal processes that contribute to sound workplace learning.

References to these and other support documents serve to emphasise the central role they play in guiding and establishing safe, positive workplace learning programs to support students and attain curriculum outcomes.

Other support documents and resources derived from proven workplace learning practices are available to assist the development and implementation of effective workplace learning programs.

See Associated Documents and Forms for the mandatory and supporting documents that apply to this policy.

1.8 DET and TAFE NSW must ensure that students with special needs are provided with opportunities on the same basis as other students. This includes identifying and liaising with the workplace around adjustments and accommodations that students with disabilities may require.

Further information is provided in the Recommended Support Document: *Supporting Students with Disabilities*. 