

Workplace Learning Procedures and Standards

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Introduction

This document for staff in Catholic schools in NSW and the ACT provides a thorough outline of the procedures and standards that apply to all workplace learning programs for secondary students (who must be over the age of 14 years) including work experience and work placement programs.

It is the responsibility of the school to monitor and review its procedures and practices in operating workplace learning programs to ensure they adhere to the procedures and standards outlined in this document.

The following documents available from the [CECG website](#) and [CSNSW: Vocational Education and Training webpage](#), are to be used when organising workplace learning programs. They identify essential components of implementing safe and engaging workplace learning activities for secondary students. Additionally, they provide detailed information for stakeholders on the practical, responsible and legal processes that contribute to sound and compliant workplace learning programs.

- Student Placement Record (SPR)
- Workplace Learning Guide for Employers
- Workplace Learning Guide for Schools
- Workplace Learning Guide for Students
- Workplace Learning Guide for Parents and Carers
- Applications for special approval for the following activities:
 - Working with animals
 - Working at meat processing plants (abattoirs)
 - Working on mine sites
 - Overnight (Non-Local) Workplace Learning
 - Vehicle Travel with Host Employer
- Workplace Visit Report
- [Work placement in construction student card](#) (can be used by Catholic schools in NSW and the ACT)

Workplace Learning programs

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

- *Work Experience* provides hands-on learning in an authentic work environment to further classroom experience and incorporate the benefits of career education, transition planning, entrepreneurial learning and community learning and mentoring to provide a general introduction to the world-of-work. Students observe a variety of work, usually in a field of their choice and undertake supervised tasks appropriate to their knowledge and skill level.
- *Work Placement* is a mandatory component of many NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) Higher School Certificate (HSC) VET courses. It supports the development, enhancement and assessment of student competency in an authentic industry setting. It provides opportunities for students to observe a variety of work in an authentic specific industry setting, undertake supervised tasks appropriate to their knowledge and skill level and complete tasks as required for assessment. Work Placement Service Providers (WPSPs) are key partners in the implementation of work placements that are mandatory as part of a range of HSC VET courses.

Workplace learning programs are initiated by a school or an EVET provider and approved by the principal or responsible EVET provider manager in consultation with the school. These programs involve the cooperative engagement of local employers, business and industry, community agencies, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and parents/carers.

- In all instances principals, and where applicable the responsible EVET provider manager, must consider the overall educational requirements and benefits from a proposed workplace learning program, the capacity of the school or EVET provider to support the activity. The aim is to ensure curriculum objectives will be achieved effectively through the implementation of the workplace learning program.
- The value of workplace learning as a resource to enrich and extend learning in the classroom is well established in connection with entrepreneurial learning, 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.

Scheduling Workplace Learning placements

The scheduling of workplace learning placements must take into account individual student needs, the full range of school and where relevant, the EVET provider activities, the need for student follow-up immediately after placement, host employer availability and sensitivity to host employers' work cycles. These include:

- pre-placement activities such as [myworkexperience](#) or [go2workplacement](#) are provided by the school, or where relevant by the EVET provider, to prepare all students for workplace learning and to optimise the planned workplace learning experience
- the capacity of the host workplace facility to contribute to the learning experience of the student
- workplace learning placements taking place during regular weekday working hours during school terms. Exceptions may be considered, where:
 - taking the above into account, school holidays are the only viable possibility. In general, this does not include the December - January school holidays.
 - weekend participation is an essential requirement of the industry
 - in both situations, the principal or delegate must be available should a Critical Incident arise.

- workplace learning placements must not be conducted outside the hours of 7.00am to 6.00pm, nor in school holidays for students 14 years of age
- consideration be given to ways of ensuring that students undertaking workplace learning are able to stay up-to-date with classroom learning that occurs while they are on placement
- mandatory HSC VET work placements must be scheduled for completion prior to the date that work placement hours are submitted to NESA. Students enrolled in the HSC year of a VET course must complete their mandatory workplace learning placements before their final HSC examination
- in exceptional circumstances, individual Year 12 students may undertake limited workplace learning after their final HSC examination, only if:
 - they are still enrolled in the school and to support their school-to-work career planning or tertiary course selection
 - an application for special approval has been granted by the applicable insurance and indemnity provider. A request needs to include that:
 - all parties (students, parents/carers, school, employer) agree to the placement
 - the school's duty of care and documentation requirements are adhered to
 - the student remains enrolled in the school until completion of the placement and follow up by the school.
 - in these exceptional circumstances, students must not be used by the employer to replace their regular employees, and the student must not undertake unpaid work trials
 - students undertaking a Life Skills pattern of study or mixed pattern of study for the HSC may undertake workplace learning during Term 4 if they are enrolled to the end of the school year and an application for special approval is granted by the applicable insurance and indemnity provider.

Non-local and interstate placements

Non-local placements within NSW and the ACT may be considered if local options will not offer the opportunity nor 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 EVET provider manager or nominee.
- In addition to the procedures required for a local placement, arrangements for travel, overnight accommodation and supervision must comply with the advice and procedures provided on the *Overnight workplace learning principal checklist on page 2 of the Application for overnight workplace learning*.

Interstate placements should only be arranged after all suitable opportunities in NSW or the ACT have been considered. Schools located on or near state or territory borders may arrange interstate placements within geographic locations that are adjacent to the borders unless there are exceptional circumstances that may warrant a non-local interstate placement.

Health and safety of students

The school and the host employer hold a concurrent duty under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of students whilst engaged in a workplace learning program.

- This duty requires the elimination of health and safety risks where possible and if it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate those risks, to minimise the risk so far as is reasonably practicable.
- This duty includes a mutual responsibility for host employers, the school and the EVET provider to consult and cooperate and extend to all students and any staff on workplace learning placements.

Employers have a responsibility under NSW and ACT Work Health and Safety Regulation to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of persons working in or visiting their work sites. Host employer responsibilities extend to all students and any staff on workplace learning placements and includes:

- ensuring so far as is reasonably practicable that any plant, substance or product to be used by the student and where relevant any staff is safe and without risks for the student and attending staff
- ensuring so far as is reasonably practicable that systems of work and the working environment are safe and without risk to health for the student and attending staff
- providing a quality induction and information, instruction, training and supervision to the student and any staff to ensure health and safety in the workplace
- providing adequate facilities for the student's welfare at work
- notifying the school or EVET provider immediately of any incidents involving or compromising the safety of a student while on placement, including near misses, to enable the relevant personnel to fulfil their Work Health and Safety obligations.

The school and EVET Providers have a duty of care to eliminate or minimise health and safety risks to students so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes the provider undertaking the following:

- providing quality preparatory activities for students, including likely scenarios that students might reasonably encounter, [myworkexperience](#) or [go2workplacement](#) to optimise their safe and effective participation in a workplace learning program
- ensuring that these activities are completed satisfactorily before the student starts their placement
- maintaining the duty of care to students during and after placement and not delegating this duty to any other party.

Along with the EVET provider, the school retains a duty of care while enrolled students are undertaking a HSC course delivered by an EVET provider.

Approval of workplace learning programs

School principals and where relevant, the responsible EVET provider manager, have the primary responsibility for approving workplace learning programs.

- School principals and the EVET provider manager 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 EVET provider manager are responsible for authorising a workplace learning program for enrolled students. They are responsible for ensuring that a program is conducted in accordance with the appropriate Workplace Learning Policy.
- They may delegate the development of the program to nominees, including the approval of placements, but they take ultimate responsibility for the approval of the workplace learning program.

Non-school stakeholders

A key feature of workplace learning that differentiates it from learning in the classroom or excursions is the range of non-school stakeholders participating in the activity as coordinators, brokers and subject matter experts.

- All stakeholders have responsibilities in the implementation of workplace learning programs. It is the duty of the principal or the responsible EVET provider manager to take reasonable steps to ensure that stakeholders are aware of, and prepared to take on, their responsibilities.
- Work Placement Service Providers (WPSPs) support, broker and coordinate work placements for students undertaking mandatory work placement requirements for HSC VET courses. Their activity and responsibilities include:
 - selecting suitable host employers
 - outlining the aims and objectives of the proposed workplace learning program to host employers
 - liaising with schools and school staff regarding reasonable adjustments for students with disability or learning and support needs
 - clarifying lines of communication ahead of the placement.
- Communication processes must be established to:
 - enhance collaboration between the WPSPs, schools, EVET providers and the relevant RTO.
 - ensure each stakeholder's role in the provision of workplace learning is effective and complementary to the whole process.
 - all stakeholders are obligated under common law to take reasonable steps to minimise the risks to students during workplace learning.

Students with special needs

The school and EVET providers 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 reasonable adjustments and accommodations that students with disability and learning and support needs may require.

Responsibilities

Staff organising workplace learning activities

Responsibilities of staff organising workplace learning activities include:

- ensuring that all students have undertaken preparatory support activity prior to the placement to optimise their safe and effective participation in workplace learning
- the placement has been discussed with the student and the student's work readiness has been assessed. The school cites the certificate indicating the student has completed [myworkexperience](#) or [go2workplacement](#), as appropriate, prior to the placement
- matching the student to the proposed placement to optimise the outcomes of the experience
- ensuring that any additional needs of students, particularly those students with disability, are appropriately supported in the workplace, in consultation with the school, and where relevant, EVET personnel and parents/carers
- ensuring the Student Placement Record is filled out and signed by the student, host employer, parent or carer and the school. Staff have checked the proposed activities on the Student Placement Record and they are satisfactory for the student's age, ability and skill level
- ensuring that any additional personal information necessary to student wellbeing and support needs is provided to the host employer or other appropriate supervisor, with the consent of the student and parent/carers, and in keeping with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act*
- providing information to parents/carers including the *Workplace Learning Guide for Parents and Carers*
- carrying out and documenting supervisory contact with both the student and the workplace supervisor or host employer during the placement to support the student's wellbeing and review their progress
- contact can be either by phone or if practical a site visit by the responsible teacher. Site visits have clear benefits for students, teachers and host employers. Although visits are not mandatory, a risk management approach to health and safety is required. It is pertinent to consider the needs of individual students and the most appropriate support to provide duty of care of them
- carrying out post placement debriefing sessions with students to review the experience and optimise the learning. Post placement interviews also permit the reporting and follow up of safety concerns, inappropriate and negative incidents not reported at the time of school contact.

Responsibilities of staff (and for work placements the WSPs) also include:

- the selection of host employers who will assess any risks to the health and safety of students in the proposed activities (as stated on the Student Placement Record), remove or minimise those risks so far as is reasonably practicable, and assess the quality of workplace learning experiences
- the selection of host employers who understand and can make appropriate (and reasonable) adjustments for students with learning and support needs, or disability, or with identified health condition/s
- promoting the benefits to the employer of hosting a student for workplace learning
- providing mandatory support documents, and explanations about them, to host employers, students and parents/carers including expectations and requirements in relation to child protection
- ensuring that the host 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 a personal visit or a telephone call

- ensuring that the host 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 host employer, the workplace supervisor and the workplace learning program coordinator at the school, or EVET provider, and the WPSP.

Host employers

Host employer responsibilities to school students include:

- providing a safe and positive environment compliant with each of the following:
 - *NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and *ACT Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
 - *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* and *ACT Discrimination Act 1991*
 - *Child protection legislation*
 - Information provided in the *Workplace Learning Guide for Employers*.
- providing appropriate learning activities and skill development tasks for the student under the supervision of a capable and trustworthy employee who is briefed on the tasks to be undertaken
- identifying areas of risk to students and where relevant any school or EVET/WPSP staff and implementing strategies to eliminate or minimise risks so far as is reasonably practicable to students who are inexperienced and potentially vulnerable
- providing a workplace induction including relevant safety matters to orientate students before they start any activities
- providing a culturally safe and supported working environment for Aboriginal students
- have current public liability coverage.

Parents and carers

Parent and carer responsibilities include:

- understanding the purpose and nature of workplace learning programs
- reading the *Workplace Learning Guide for Parents and Carers*
- attending information sessions or meetings necessary for the effective implementation of a workplace learning program affecting their young person
- considering, commenting and providing permission for their young person to take up each planned placement
- recognising that approval for placements rests with the school principal, or the responsible EVET manager in consultation with the school and might on occasion override the planning and approval by the parent/carer.
- assisting their young person to plan and manage safe travel arrangements during and outside normal school hours
- 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 or carer may nominate another reliable adult trusted and known to the student to be the contact in place of the parent or carer
- 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 or carer to the student's school or EVET provider as soon as possible after the incident has occurred so the matter can be dealt with by the school or EVET provider.

Students

Student responsibilities include:

- understanding and using documents, including the *Student Placement Record* and Emergency Contact Card that support their workplace learning placement
- participation in pre-placement activities such as [myworkexperience](#) or [go2workplacement](#) to optimise their safety and achievements during workplace learning programs
- knowing their rights and responsibilities including not using any mobile device to record conversations, video or take photos without permission
- contacting the school if they have concerns about the placement
- making and using safe travel arrangements
- paying for their travel to and from placements
- informing both the host employer and their teacher as soon as possible if unable to attend the workplace
- following the directions of their supervisor in the workplace
- communicating concerns, injuries or accidents that involves the student to the workplace supervisor and their school or EVET provider as soon as possible and ideally within 24 hours.

Prohibited activities

The school, TAFE NSW and other EVET providers 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 EVET provider.

- 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. Further, workplaces and supervisors will need to consider and take into account the competency, maturity and physical capabilities of the student in relation to all activities they will undertake.
- Students are not allowed to undertake the following activities, including:
 - limitations on travel by air
 - high risk construction work
 - working on a roof or in a roof cavity
 - working where asbestos is present
 - horse riding
 - use of dangerous machinery or equipment except under prescribed conditions indicated in the mandatory support document Prohibited Activities
 - any activity requiring a licence, permit, or certificate of competence except under prescribed conditions.

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 EVET 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 (PPE).

The strategies must be clearly articulated in the Student Placement Record and sighted by the principal or nominee, or the responsible EVET manager or nominee in consultation with the school.

Higher-risk activities and workplaces

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
- use of farm or gardening machinery and equipment.

Where practicable, a pre-placement visit to all new workplaces should occur unless distance and resources preclude this. 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.

During the visit or phone call the proposed activities and any risk should be discussed with the host employer to ensure all risk are eliminated or controlled successfully. These must be included in the *Student Placement Record*.

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 phone with the host employer must take place and must be documented.

For further details on risk minimisation processes to be undertaken by stakeholders in workplace learning programs, refer to *Health and safety of students* and *Duty of care* sections in this document.

Vulnerable-persons-related workplaces

Placements with Early Childhood Education and Care Centres, Schools, Health and Aged Care providers, involve working with vulnerable people and therefore are subject of legislation that prevents unsuitable people from these workplaces.

- Generally, students need to be a minimum of 16 years of age to undertake workplace learning programs.
- Students over 18 years may be asked to provide:
 - Working With Children Check - see [Office of the Children's Guardian](#) website or Working With Vulnerable People Check
 - [Nationally Coordinated Criminal History \(Police\) Check](#)

Insurance and indemnity provisions

Insurance and indemnity provisions of the relevant insurance policy will apply to all workplace learning placements approved by the school principal or their nominee.

- These provisions will not apply when the placement is not approved by the principal or nominee, or EVET provider or nominee.
- 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 EVET manager or nominee, are excluded from the relevant insurance and indemnity provisions.
- Students on workplace learning placement are classified as voluntary workers. Payment to students on workplace learning placements invalidates these insurance and indemnity provisions.
- The relevant 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.
- When a student is injured during a workplace learning placement or during travel directly to or directly home from the place of work, incidents and/or injuries are reported in accordance with the school's Incident Notification and Response Policy and the Incident Notification and Response Procedures. The report must be completed irrespective of any claim (insurance or other).
- No liability is to be admitted by the principal or staff. In cases of a serious accident or occurrence in the workplace the reporting requirements specified in NSW and ACT legislation and CECG's [Work Health and Safety Policy](#) and the incident response processes need to be followed.

Duty of care

The school and EVET providers 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 and extends to workplace learning placements even where there is no direct daily supervision of the student by school staff.
- Employers have responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare of their employees and visitors to their premises, but this does not exempt schools or EVET providers from their responsibilities.
- The duty of care owed to students by schools and EVET providers 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 classroom, and there is dependence on non-school staff for the daily supervision of the student in the workplace.
- 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. The *Student Placement Record* documents the application of duty of care procedures and must be completed by all stakeholders including schools and EVET providers.
- The procedures to address duty of care are summarised below:
 - review of potential workplace learning placements in regard to suitability for student workplace learning must be carried out by the school, or the EVET provider in consultation with the school. 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 the student's workplace supervisor the expectations of the school and their responsibilities 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 EVET provider have been dealt with appropriately
 - completion of the *Student Placement Record*, which includes advice to minimise risks, and an approval (signature) or rejection of the placement by the principal or nominee, or responsible EVET manager or nominee
 - provision of suitable preparatory support activities for students to optimise their safe and effective participation in workplace learning
 - issuing students a contact number for emergencies and outside school hours before the placement
 - formal supervision of the student by school or EVET provider staff during the placement and in post placement activities
 - the school or EVET provider must phone or visit both the student and workplace supervisor or host employer on the first or second day of the placement. These contacts and visits are to be documented using the *Workplace Visit Report* form available on the [CECG website](#) and CSNSW VET webpage
 - where placements involve a greater potential for risk such as in the construction industry, involving livestock, involving machinery, or where students are staying overnight as part of the placement, contact must be made on the first or second day of the placement
 - if an incident does occur the school needs to complete a formal Incident Report to be kept by the school, in the usual manner incidents and accidents are reported. The incident needs to be reported to the appropriate RTO and to the CSNSW State Manager VET, where the school participates in the insurance provided through CSNSW. Reporting needs to be ideally done within 24 hours.

- an EVET provider will need to immediately advise the student's school by phone and email to enable the school to complete the Incident Report

Emergency contacts

Each workplace learning student must have access to a reliable contact person known and authorised by the principal or responsible EVET 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 arranging 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 or EVET provider (who will immediately notify the school). 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 another responsible and reliable adult who is trusted by the student and authorised by the principal or nominee or responsible EVET 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 person:
 - must undertake to inform the school of any out of hours emergency as soon as possible after it happens
 - has responsibilities as outlined on page 9 of this document, Parents and Carers.
- The contact person is not required to investigate or resolve any issues but simply to remove the student from risk or harm. The school, or where relevant the EVET provider in consultation with the school, will deal with the incident.
- Where a student in Year 9 or Year 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 or EVET provider 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 details in case medical attention is required during the placement.
- Teachers who volunteer to be the emergency contact person out of business hours are in the same position with respect to personal liability as they are during school teaching hours.
- The legal principle of vicarious liability means that the school and EVET providers are liable for any actions or omissions of teachers, including if teachers are 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 normal business hours, unless the teacher is guilty of serious and wilful misconduct that leads to the student's injury.

Communication with stakeholders

Regular and effective communication with parents, carers and host employers, directly and through Work Placement Service Providers, is an essential aspect of a successful workplace learning program

- Workplace learning programs are dependent upon the willing participation of a range of stakeholders. It is necessary for schools 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.

- 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, EVET providers, the Work Placement Service Provider, host employers and the community.

Further information

The SafeWork NSW [Young Workers eToolkit](#) and [Young Workers Portal - WorkSafe ACT](#) include a range of resources specifically developed and is highly recommended to support young workers' safety.