

STUDENT WORK PLACEMENT A HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS AND EMPLOYERS



Australian Government
Australian Safety and Compensation Council



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STUDENT WORK PLACEMENT: A HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS AND EMPLOYERS

This guidance contains information on how to prepare students for work placements, in terms of occupational health and safety (OHS). Educators and employers need to work together to ensure the safety of students during their transition from school to work. This guide should be read in conjunction with *Getting Students to Work... Safely*, which contains information on how to plan student OHS education not only for work placement, but also for Australian School-based Apprenticeships programmes and other structured workplace learning. It is available on the Australian Safety and Compensation Council website, and includes links to state specific resources (www.ascc.gov.au).

WHY DO STUDENTS NEED OHS SKILLS?

Students can enter workplaces through part-time or casual paid employment while still at school, doing work placements as part of work experience programmes, Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses or structured workplace learning programmes.

Young and inexperienced workers make up a significant proportion of people killed or injured at work. This may be because they are unfamiliar with the work environment; are not aware of risks or lack sufficient maturity. They may also be more susceptible to specific hazards, are less aware than older workers of their workplace rights and responsibilities and may not have the confidence to speak up about health and safety issues that affect them.

It is therefore important that students acquire OHS skills to prepare them for the transition from school to work.

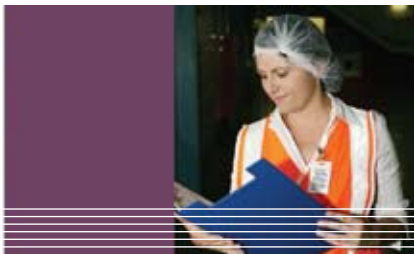
A work placement introduces young people to the world of work and is a valuable and essential part of their education. A work placement provides students with an opportunity to learn about their rights and responsibilities and create an awareness of common workplace hazards.

This guide is designed to provide basic information for employers and educators planning work experience.

HOW DO I PREPARE THE STUDENT?

The process of acquiring OHS skills must start before entry into each new workplace. A student may not have:

- > any experience in a workplace
- > an understanding of why they should follow safety instructions
- > the ability to make judgements about the safety of themselves and others
- > background knowledge or understanding of warning signs to recognise that they may be exposed to a hazard
- > experience in using personal protective equipment
- > the ability to work with minimum supervision.



A student needs to undertake an appropriate OHS induction programme before the work placement commences. It should be ensured that students have an understanding of:

- > their role, rights and duties under OHS legislation, including the right to be consulted about OHS matters that directly affect them
- > the obligation the employer has to ensure a healthy and safe workplace for the student and fellow workers, including providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where appropriate
- > what to do in an emergency situation and evacuation
- > what a hazard is, and the potential a hazard has to cause death, injury or disease
- > how the risks from workplace hazards are identified, assessed and controlled, and the role that students may play in identifying hazards
- > the procedures for students to follow if they become aware of any hazards
- > the reporting of OHS matters such as accidents, incidents and injuries
- > how to access first aid and how to complete hazard/incident report forms
- > the meaning of the colours and symbols of OHS signs and the importance of complying with them
- > what is appropriate behaviour for persons in the workplace and what is inappropriate behaviour, such as workplace violence and bullying
- > the tools and equipment that they are not permitted to use and the activities they must not engage in
- > the right to refuse to undertake work activities if they consider them to be unsafe
- > the way to communicate their OHS concerns to their workplace supervisor, school principal/teacher/work placement coordinator or vocational consultant. The student should also be introduced to their relevant health and safety representative.

It would also be beneficial for students entering the work placement to have an understanding of the more common workplace hazards, such as:

- > manual handling
- > slips, trips and falls
- > machinery
- > noise/vibration
- > bullying/harassment
- > stress/fatigue
- > extended/excessive hours
- > ventilation
- > hazardous substances
- > exposure to disease
- > contact with electricity
- > dust.



WHAT DO I NEED TO DO AS AN EDUCATOR?

Schools have an important role in ensuring students' safety whilst in transition to work as they can reach young people on a large scale, and schools are increasingly incorporating work-related learning experiences and programmes into their curricula, particularly during the latter part of the compulsory years.

In addition to OHS education incorporated into curricula, schools may also establish and maintain cooperative relationships with local businesses frequently used for student work placements.

In assessing whether the workplace is suitable for a work placement student, educators should:

- > Contact the placement host and discuss workplace safety to determine what types of health and safety risks exist in the workplace and how these risks are managed. If possible, educators should conduct a workplace visit
- > Review the records of previous student placements (where applicable) to determine if the workplace has ensured a safe working environment for students in the past
- > Establish a communication system involving the student, host employer and the student's placement co-ordinator
- > Ensure that students receive general OHS training before being placed with host employers
- > Consult with the host employer to ensure all relevant induction and training is covered.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO AS A HOST EMPLOYER?

Employers are required to maintain a safe work environment, not only for employees, but also for those visiting the workplace such as students on work placement. Australian OHS legislation requires an employer to:

- > provide and maintain a safe working environment and safe systems of work
- > provide and maintain plant that is safe and without risks to health
- > ensure that substances are used, stored, handled, processed and transported in a manner that is safe and without risks to health
- > provide adequate facilities for the welfare of employees
- > provide such information, instruction, training or supervision to employees that enables them to perform their work safely
- > consult with employees about OHS issues that directly affect them.

Employers need to undertake risk assessments that consider the special needs of young people in the workplace, such as their lack of experience in a work environment and their possible immaturity. Employers should also ensure that they can provide the extra supervision a work placement student may require.

Employers need to provide students with workplace and job specific training equivalent to that provided to any paid employee in the same position as the student. This training should be completed before students commence work at the workplace. Furthermore, employers should ensure that students are competent and able to work safely before students begin work.



The host employer should work with the educator to maintain an effective communication system involving the student, the employer and the student's placement coordinator to ensure that any OHS issues will be handled effectively. The host employer should consult with the student's vocational programme coordinator to determine the student's awareness of OHS issues.

ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY OF THE WORKPLACE

There are a number of considerations that both employers and educators will need to take into account prior to the work placement:

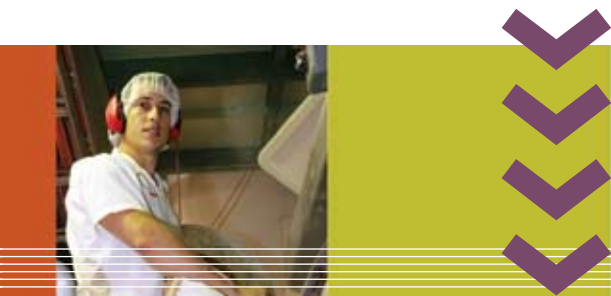
- > Does the workplace have a documented OHS policy, developed in consultation with employees, stating a commitment to a safe workplace?
- > Is there a process for consulting with all employees on OHS matters and enabling employees to report hazards?
- > Is there a specific induction programme for workplace students and does it include training on evacuation and emergency procedures, and safe and correct work practices, including the use of tools, machinery and equipment?
- > Are all foreseeable hazards that may cause injury to work placement students and other workers identified and controlled?
- > Are records of previous student placements including time spent at the workplace, details of induction, training, incidents and injuries reviewed?
- > Does the workplace have sufficient staffing resources to provide skilled and close supervision that students on a work placement are likely to require?

COMMUNICATION

Good communication between employer, educator, student, parents/guardians is essential to the success of the work placement. It is beneficial if the conditions of the work placement are put in writing and this may be combined with consent from the parent to the placement. This allows for all parties to see the workplace assessment and control measures and any details specific to the student.

What happens after the placement?

At the end of the work placement it is recommended that the student participate in a post placement debriefing with other post placement students at the school. This will provide the educational authorities with more information about the health and safety of the different workplaces for future work placement students. Any OHS issues should be recorded for future reference.



RESOURCES

Information on OHS can be obtained from:

Australian Safety and Compensation Council	www.ascc.gov.au
WorkCover NSW	www.workcover.nsw.gov.au
WorkSafe Victoria	www.worksafe.vic.gov.au
SafeWork South Australia	www.safework.sa.gov.au
Queensland Division of Workplace Health & Safety	www.whs.qld.gov.au
Workplace Standards Tasmania	www.wst.tas.gov.au
NT WorkSafe	www.worksafe.nt.gov.au
ACT WorkCover	www.workcover.act.gov.au
WorkSafe Western Australia	www.worksafe.wa.gov.au
Comcare	www.comcare.gov.au

OTHER RESOURCES:

Getting Students to Work...Safely

<http://www.ascc.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/C4B819CF-36D5-41F7-80F5-F44601953209/0/SchoolToWork2006.pdf>

The South Australian Workplace Learning Guidelines

http://www.youthengagement.sa.edu.au/files/links/Workplace_Learning_Guide__1.pdf

Workplace Learning Policy for Secondary Students in Government Schools and TAFE NSW Institutes

https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/curriculum/workplace_learn/wrkplc_lern/PD20050016.shtml