

Workplace Learning Guide for Employers

2025

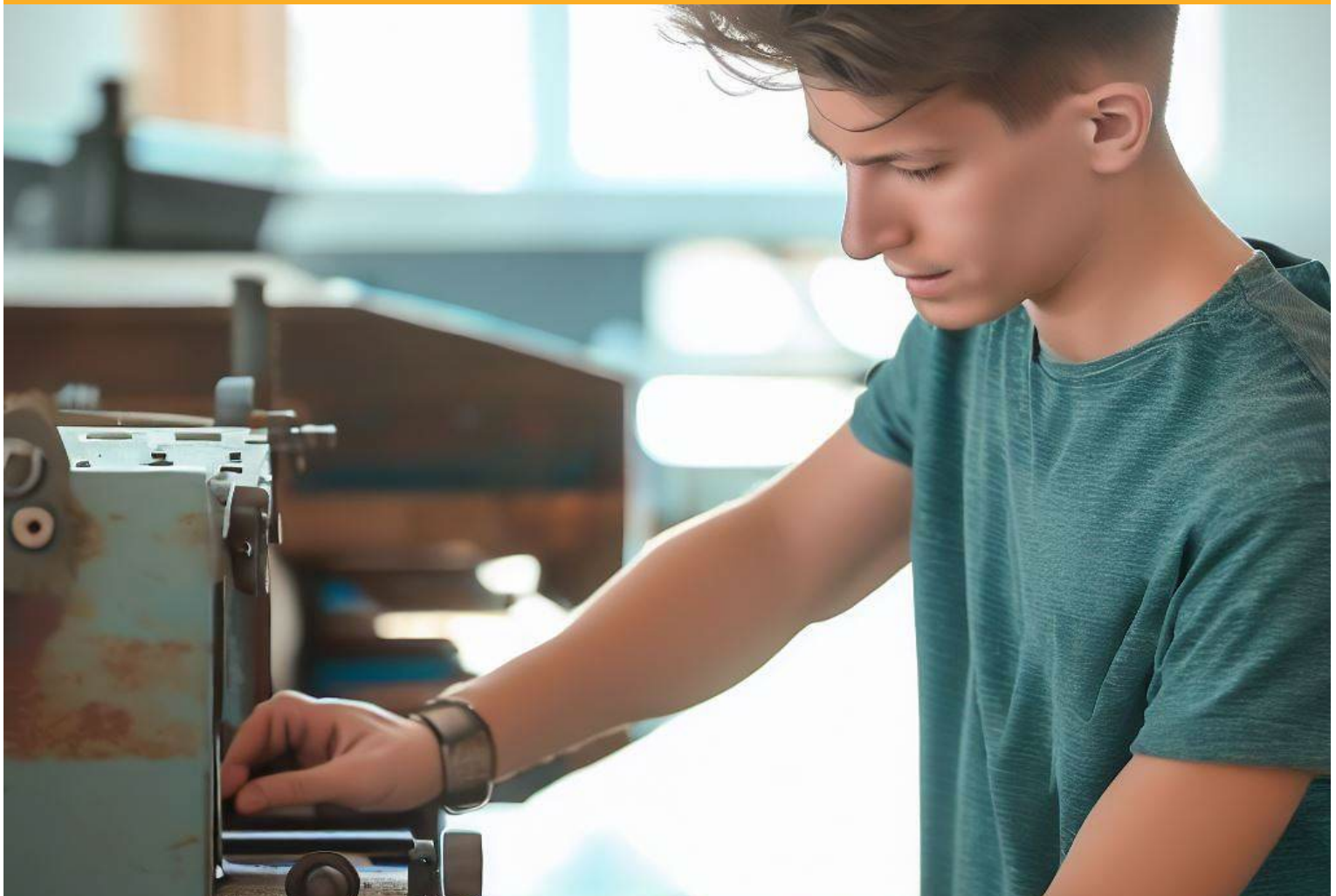
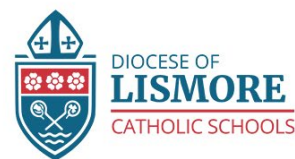


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This document is for use in both Diocesan and RI/MPJP Catholic schools in NSW and ACT.



About Workplace Learning

This guide introduces you and your staff to the concepts of workplace learning. It explains the workplace learning programs available in both Diocesan and RI/MPJP Catholic schools in NSW & ACT, the support available to employers and your roles and responsibilities when hosting students in your workplace. It also includes a summary checklist for employers, both large and small, to help guide you through the workplace learning process.

What is Workplace Learning?

Workplace learning (WPL) programs are part of the NSW and ACT secondary curriculum and link young people to the world of business. They enable students to spend planned periods of time - usually a week - in the workplace, gaining practical experience, assisting their career choices and building their industry skills.

WPL is available to students aged from 14 years. Students are placed in an industry of their choice, reflecting the type of work they plan to do after completing their studies. WPL allows employers to provide students with their first experience of work, particularly for those not in part-time jobs. There are two main types:

Work Experience

Work experience programs provide a general introduction to the world of work and assist students to develop more informed opinion about their career aspirations. They are usually undertaken by students in Years 9/10 with some opportunities in Years 11/ 12. Work experience allows students to:

- observe a variety of work being done
- undertake supervised work appropriate to their skill level
- ask questions about the workplace
- gain general skills related to being at work
- learn how enterprises work and how to be enterprising
- find out about careers, training and employment opportunities.

Work Placement

Work placement is different from work experience as it is an integral part of Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses being completed by students for their Higher School Certificate (HSC). These courses lead to nationally recognised VET qualifications. Real work contexts provide students with important opportunities to apply their classroom learning.

During work placement, employers supervise the students as they practice and extend the industry skills they have learned in their course. Students work towards gaining specific industry competencies and gather evidence that can contribute towards their course assessment.

What are the benefits of WPL?

Employers hosting students have the opportunity to:

- be involved in education, career development and vocational training of youth in your community
- talk to students about your industry, its career paths and future directions
- promote attitudes and skills your workforce needs and raise quality in those coming into your industry
- meet students from diverse backgrounds who may have skills which can be useful to your organisation
- identify young people with potential for your industry and workplace
- increase the supervisory, training and mentoring skills of your staff
- strengthen your links with the community and raise your business profile.

Students have the opportunity to:

- experience real work situations
- access industry standard facilities, equipment and experienced staff
- develop self-confidence, skills, understandings that assist them in their transition to meaningful work
- evaluate their abilities and interests in relation to career choices.

How WPL Works

Who organises the programs and placements?

Schools are generally responsible for arranging WPL programs. Where TAFE or a private or community registered training organisation delivers the course, they arrange the related placements in consultation with the school.

In the case of work experience, students may make their own approach to an employer for a workplace position and then submit the position to their school for approval.

For VET work placements, the approach may come from a Work Placement Service Provider which is funded to negotiate and coordinate these mandatory placements. These organisations have considerable expertise and resources to help you provide quality work placements. You can also contact them directly. Details are available at: workplacement.nsw.edu.au

How long will the student spend in your workplace?

This varies. Students usually spend a week with an employer, but shorter or longer placements are possible. Some students come to a workplace for a half or one day per week for an extended period of time. For a range of HSC VET courses, work placement is mandatory and students are required to complete two to four weeks over two years. Each placement is usually with a different employer.

When can WPL occur?

Placements are usually scheduled on weekdays during school terms. This can be varied for individual students with the approval of their school principal. For example, placements in school holidays may be approved on the condition that the same level of duty of care supervision is provided.

Restrictions apply to younger students in work experience programs. Students under 15 years cannot work before 7am or after 6pm or during school holidays.

Who has duty of care?

The school maintains a duty of care to students undertaking WPL. Schools are responsible for deciding if placements are suitable, preparing students for WPL, monitoring the student's progress and welfare during the placement and following up with them immediately afterwards. It is the responsibility of the host employer to provide a safe workplace environment and appropriate supervision for the student. The school should nominate an emergency contact for any incidents or accidents that occur outside normal business hours.

What is the general procedure for a placement?

BEFORE The Placement

- host employers receive these WPL guidelines
- workplace activities are negotiated with employers and submitted to the school for approval
- arrangements are confirmed to support student safety
- students are matched to a position based on their course work and/or career planning. Their parents or carers sign off on the arrangements
- teachers conduct work ready activities to prepare students for the experience.

DURING the placement

- students attend the workplace every day of the program
- host employers or nominated workplace supervisors supervise the students in the workplace, providing tasks that are agreed as appropriate although at times, challenging for the student
- the employer and workplace supervisor take action to provide a safe working environment, in accordance with the requirements of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW and ACT), child protection and anti-discrimination legislation

- teachers make a supervisory phone call and may visit the employer and the student to check on their progress, safety and welfare. Where relevant, students are assessed for industry-based competencies
- host employers report any incidents involving the student to the school.

AFTER the placement

- students record their experiences and review their career preferences and training pathways
- host employers report on the student's performance in the workplace
- teachers immediately follow up with the students to ensure maximum benefit and check on student safety.

Employers share tips for success to provide a richer, deeper, quality experience:

- engage the student straight away as the first hour can set the tone for the week
- talk to the student so that they understand their safety rights and responsibilities
- talk to the student about current schoolwork so you can set the work at the right skill level for them
- consider hosting students in pairs to give them buddy support to solve problems and get the work done
- busy students tend to be happier and learn more
- have a reserve list of jobs for them to do
- debrief with the student at the end of each day and plan tomorrow's work.

Legal requirements and paperwork

Are students paid?

No. Students on placement are classified as 'voluntary workers' and host employers are not required to make any payment to them under the Federal or State award covering their industry, the *NSW Annual Holidays Act* or the *Workers Compensation Act*. Any payment to students may invalidate insurance and indemnity arrangements.

The one exception is where a student seeks recognition for their part-time employment as part of their mandatory HSC VET work placement requirement. In this case, the student is a paid worker and the insurance arrangements of the employer apply. This arrangement must be negotiated with the employer and approved by the school.

Do I have to sign any documents?

Yes. Each student is issued with a Student Placement Record (SPR) to document the arrangements for their placement. This important form allows for information to be shared and approved by all parties – the student, their parent/carer, the host employer and the school.

For safety and insurance purposes, employers are asked to take particular care to provide sufficient detail when completing the activities questions on the *Host Employer Details* section of the Student Placement Record. Guidance for completing this document is provided under the heading '*Completing the Student Placement Record*'.

Once all parties have provided and approved the information on the SPR, the school's insurance and indemnity arrangements are activated for you and the student.

A full copy of the SPR will be provided to you before the placement starts. In the case of mandatory HSC VET work placements, Work Placement Service Providers can help streamline this process for you.

Are there any other conditions?

- Participating students must be aged 14 years or over
- No student can be directed to carry out any task that is not safe

- Employers and employees must respect the student’s right to a safe and healthy host workplace, free from harassment, discrimination and any conduct that is unacceptable in terms of child protection. See host employer responsibilities in section: ‘*Providing a safe workplace for students*’.
- Host employers are expected to consult and cooperate with the student’s school under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW and ACT)*
- Host employers must notify the school immediately of any health and safety incidents involving a student while on placement, including near misses, to enable the school to fulfil its WHS obligations and support a safe placement
- Host employers must advise the school immediately if they need to change sites, redirect students to another location, or find asbestos on the site.

What about insurance?

All participating Catholic schools and dioceses arrange and maintain their own public liability insurance to cover injury to students, loss or damage occasioned by students and indemnity cover for host employers (subject to individual policy terms, conditions, limits and exclusions).

The insurance also covers:

- vocational education teacher training programs (e.g. teachers undertaking an industry placement as part of their VET teacher training program)
- teachers supervising students participating in workplace learning or work experience programs.

Insurance is only available where workplace learning is arranged through the school and approved by the school principal. This is to be documented through the signed SPR.

Will my business need to change its insurance arrangements?

No, as long as you follow the requirements in this guide, you will not need to change your insurance or SafeWork arrangements when taking on a student for workplace learning. You are expected to have current public liability coverage as is standard business practice. Employers may ask the school to provide a copy of their current Certificate of Currency.

Insurance, Excluded and High-Risk Activities

As in all educational activities, the welfare of students participating in WPL programs is paramount.

Young workers need extra support to ensure they are safe. They often lack the experience, knowledge, confidence and skills to identify and deal with potential hazards. Inexperience and limited awareness can heighten the risk of injury for young workers.

For this reason, some activities are completely prohibited for workplace learning students while other high-risk activities may have conditions attached before they may be undertaken by students.

Insurance Requirements

From 31st March 2025, each RI/MPJP school and diocese will maintain public liability insurance to cover injury to students, loss or damage occasioned by students, and indemnity cover for host employers (subject to individual policy terms, conditions, limits and exclusions). These policies are updated and issued annually.

Each school’s insurance may have different policy terms, conditions, limits and exclusions, so it is important that the host employer clarifies the level of cover with the school.

Schools can provide students with a copy of the current Certificate of Currency insurance cover to present to the employer on request. Each school’s insurance policy will generally not respond to claims involving:

- asbestos, tobacco or tobacco or vaping smoke
- advertising liability
- aircraft products
- care, custody or control
- deductible amount
- employer liability

- fines, penalties, aggravated, punitive, multiple exemplary and liquidated damages
- intentional injury or damage
- loss of use of tangible property
- pollution
- professional liability
- radioactive contamination
- repair, replacement or recall of products
- occurrences as a result of the insured person being under the influence of intoxicating liquor or any narcotic or drug unless taken in accordance with the direction and prescription of a legally qualified medical practitioner
- any consequence of war, invasion, act of foreign enemy, hostilities (whether war be declared or not), civil war, rebellion, revolution, insurrection or military or usurped power or confiscation, nationalisation, requisition, destruction of or damage to property by or under the order of any government or public or local authority.

Host employers must also have current public liability insurance.

1. Excluded WPL Activities

Students cannot undertake the following activities in WPL:

- 1.1. any work of a sexual or explicit nature
- 1.2. travel by helicopter and/or private charter aircraft other than those providing a regular paid public transport service, except as part of an approved and supervised Australian Defence Force activity
- 1.3. travel outside twelve (12) nautical mile limit at sea
- 1.4. ownership, maintenance, use or operation of watercraft exceeding 10 metres in length
- 1.5. scuba and/or deep-sea diving
- 1.6. excavation work at a depth in excess of one (1) metre or near utilities
- 1.7. excavation work at a depth of less than one (1) metre without direct supervision of a competent person
- 1.8. any work at an elevated level higher than two (2) metres
- 1.9. work on a roof, roof trusses, or roof cavity
- 1.10. work where asbestos is present
- 1.11. any activities involving or adjacent to the repair, removal or demolition of any construction work containing asbestos or in the clean-up process following the activity
- 1.12. activities involving the manufacture, supply and installation of engineered stone benchtops, panels and slabs
- 1.13. construction work in tunnels, confined spaces or involving the use of explosives. Students are permitted to work above-ground at mine sites provided express permission has been given by the school/diocesan representative who has ensured appropriate risk mitigation has been undertaken
- 1.14. work on permanent or temporary structures used to enable construction work in marine environments (caissons or coffer dams)
- 1.15. work in and around pressurised gas distribution mains or piping and energised electrical installations or services
- 1.16. be in close proximity to traffic or mobile plant operating on a worksite. Students are to attend onsite induction and traffic management meetings. Host employers are to closely supervise students, especially when plant is operating, and question students to ensure understanding of no-go areas and related safety procedures
- 1.17. high-risk construction work, as defined in [Schedule 3, NSW Work Health and Safety Regulation \(2017\)](#), or ACT equivalent, [Appendix C, Licensing and registration - WorkSafe ACT \(2018\)](#), ie work involving:
 - risk of a person falling more than 2 metres
 - construction work involving the use of explosives
 - work near traffic or mobile plant
 - work around major gas and electrical installations
- 1.18. demolition work other than simple stripping of walls

- 1.19. attendance at a site while chimney stacks or buildings are being demolished
- 1.20. driving: (except as identified in 2.5 below) students are NOT permitted to:
 - drive their own vehicles while undertaking activities on behalf of the host employer
 - be asked/directed to drive employer's or any client vehicles while they are on WPL
 - drive any old or unregistered vehicles commonly known as 'bush bashers'
- 1.21. riding horses
- 1.22. attendance at abattoir killing areas (due to Q Fever exposure). Work is permitted at an abattoir or meat processing plant, other than killing areas with appropriate school/diocesan approval
- 1.23. activities involving guns or firearms except as part of an approved and supervised Australian Defence Force activity.

*This is not an exhaustive list. **Check with the student's school whether any other workplace activities are excluded.***

2. Potentially high-risk workplace activities

Some workplace activities are potentially high-risk. Care also needs to be taken to avoid placing students in a workplace where physical, emotional or cognitive limitations constitute a health or safety risk. If, following a risk assessment, it is determined that the placement provides a valuable learning opportunity, the school and employer might consider risk minimisation strategies such as:

- 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).

Inexperience and limited awareness also increase the chances of a young worker being injured. Host employers must closely supervise students to keep them safe.

Students can only undertake the following high-risk activities in the identified circumstances:

- 2.1. **use of machinery or equipment which may be dangerous for new or young workers to operate** is prohibited unless the activity is first risk-assessed as suitable and safe for student operation by the host employer and each of the following occurs:
 - 2.1.1. the student is given appropriate information, instruction and training and a checklist for the safe operation and handling of the equipment
 - 2.1.2. the equipment is in safe working order, complete with required safety devices or guards
 - 2.1.3. a suitably qualified or experienced person in the workplace who has good communication skills and the ability to give clear instructions provides ongoing close supervision.
- 2.2. **welding/hotwork** is prohibited - unless such welding or cutting was done in compliance with Australian [NSW Code of Practice: Welding Processes 2022](#) or [ACT Work Health and Safety \(Welding Processes Code of Practice\) Approval 2022](#)
- 2.3. **service of alcohol** is prohibited - unless the student is aged over eighteen (18) and the activity is essential to the placement, has been agreed by all stakeholders and the student has successfully completed the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) training course
- 2.4. **construction work** is prohibited - unless the student has:
 - 2.4.1 completed WHS training and has obtained a general construction induction (white card), noting:
 - the construction training package mandates delivery and assessment via face-to-face or real-time audio and visual media. Both forms of delivery and assessment are valid. Schools are in the best position to understand the learning style of their students when determining the mode of delivery of the white card, ensuring student safety is paramount
 - where a student has obtained a white card issued by another state, the school must undertake additional actions to meet its duty of care obligations
 - a white card is only valid if the student has undertaken work in the construction industry, such as WPL, in the 2 years since the white card was issued

- 2.4.2 demonstrated the ability to manage their own safety and the safety of others on a construction site; the school principal should not approve the activity where there is any concern
- 2.4.3 been provided an induction by the workplace supervisor, including training in procedures and how to manage site-specific risks. Handling and operating of all tools and equipment must be explained, along with associated risk management.
- 2.5. **driving of any vehicle** is prohibited - except as part of the NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority) *HSC Primary Industries Curriculum Framework* course, and **then only where the student is over 16 and under instruction and supervision by the employer. In addition:**
- 2.5.1. any activity requiring a licence, permit, or certificate of competence is prohibited unless:
- the student already has the relevant current licence, permit or certificate; and
 - the activity is directly related to the learning outcomes of the placement; and
 - the activity is included in the SPR prior to approval.
- 2.5.2. students must successfully complete the appropriately accredited training course for the operation and maintenance of the machinery and equipment. This includes tractors, implements, equipment attached to a tractor power take-off and side-by-side utility vehicles
- 2.5.3. students with a long record of safe use of quad bikes or motorbikes on farms might not need to complete accredited training. This decision is made on a case-by-case basis. Regardless,
- host employers complete a risk assessment to ensure the activity is safe for students. These are submitted to the school or EVET manager before WPL approval; and
 - students must be closely supervised when using any vehicles, machinery or equipment; and
 - when riding quad bikes and motorbikes, students must be at least 16 and wear:
 - an approved helmet with strap fastened; and
 - eye protection such as goggles; and
 - hand protection such as gloves; and
 - a long-sleeved shirt and full-length pants; and
 - sturdy footwear such as boots.
- 2.5.4. students with little or no experience **must not** operate vehicles, machinery or equipment unless the host employer has demonstrated **substantial experience in providing quality training** to manage the student under close supervision. See [SafeWork Farm machinery: Fact sheet](#).

3. Special Approvals

Special approval from the school or diocese may be required if students wish to undertake certain high-risk activities, as listed below.

Students wishing to undertake such activities must complete the relevant WPL Special Approval Self-Assessment Application form, available from the [CSNSW WPL webpage](#) for use by diocesan and RI/MPJP schools and follow the school's approval procedures.

- 3.1. **working with animals** – this can be dangerous, no matter how experienced the student. Any WPL involving animals, especially horses or livestock, needs extreme caution and special approval from the diocese (or RI/MPJP) school. Therefore, schools must comply with the following additional precautions for students working with animals, including horses or livestock during WPL.
- 3.1.1. students are to complete a *self-assessment* to demonstrate their experiences and capacity to work with animals, other than exempted sites (Taronga, including Western Plains Zoo) and/or participation in NESA Stage 6 Primary Industries course
- 3.1.2. activities involving horse handling: host employers must follow the [SafeWork NSW code of practice](#) *Managing risks when new or inexperienced riders or handlers interact with horses in the workplace*. Schools should keep records in accordance with the factors described in the code of practice:
- Appendix B – assessing a horse
 - Appendix C – assessing a new or inexperienced rider or handler who will interact with horses in the workplace.

- 3.1.3. activities involving livestock: see [SafeWork Working with Livestock Fact Sheet](#) and [Working with livestock on farms](#). Additionally, students must learn how to reduce the risk of Q fever infection and receive [NSW Health – Q fever fact sheet](#) before attending. Additionally, students **must not** be exposed to Q fever bacteria through:
- observing or assisting with animal birthing
 - handling birth products
 - cleaning up birth products and animal excreta
 - handling an animal's carcass.
- 3.2. **working above-ground at a mine site** providing students do **not** undertake any underground activities nor use explosives in connection with mining/ quarrying/tunnelling
- 3.3. **working at an abattoir or meat processing plant** providing students do not attend killing areas because of the risk of Q-fever, as outlined above
- 3.4. **accommodation away from home**, including placements outside the territory of the Commonwealth of Australia. Overseas placements are not advised. Placements in the USA or Canada and countries subject to their jurisdiction are generally not permitted. Any considerations of overseas placements should take into account the federal government website www.smarttraveller.gov.au and also consider the insurance regulations of the proposed country. Any proposed non-local placement must be referred to the school's insurer prior to approval.

Requirements for all WPL programs

The following requirements must be observed for all WPL programs:

- students must be at least 14 years of age and participating in a school approved activity/ placement, demonstrated through the signed Student Placement Record (SPR). Students under 15 years of age must not undertake WPL before 7:00am or after 6:00pm
- WPL during school holiday periods must be arranged and supervised by the school. Year 12 students cease to be insured by their school once they complete their last HSC examination and/or have withdrawn from enrolment as a student of the school
- interstate placements are permitted, if approved and supervised by the school
- where possible, students are not to undertake unsupervised tasks with just one employee
- if travel with the host employer is identified as a requirement of a specific placement, the vehicle is properly registered, insured and maintained; good practice for child protection is for the student to travel in the back seat of the vehicle where possible (see SPR)
- serious and wilful misconduct by a student during WPL may void (cancel) insurance cover
- the employer must, in all cases, provide appropriate and reasonable instruction and/or supervision with respect to each Work Experience/Placement student
- the employer and school must comply with all Department of Industrial Relations and SafeWork NSW or WorkSafe ACT requirements (including reporting requirements) for Work Experience/Placement Programs and observe any prohibited activities and SafeWork NSW or WorkSafe ACT regulations (including any age restrictions and requirements for safety equipment / personal protective equipment e.g. helmets and harnesses).

Working with Children/Vulnerable People:

- students must not be requested to undertake unsupervised tasks with children under the age of 18 years (Note: students involved in childcare placements are to be supervised at all times)
- persons **over** 18 working in paid or unpaid occupations classed as *child-related employment*, must complete a *Working with Children (NSW) / Vulnerable People Check (ACT)*. This includes WPL in schools, early childhood education and care settings, child welfare services, youth clubs, etc.

Accidents and emergencies

If a student is sick or injured:

- seek medical help immediately, using the student's name and date-of-birth for access to Medicare
- contact emergency services for Ambulance or other emergency services, where required
- contact the school contact person and any person nominated by the parent/carer to receive such communications from the employer
- ask the attending doctor for a medical certificate
- follow the school's advice and/or requests for accident reports.

Anaphylaxis

A student's risk of anaphylaxis will be noted on their SPR. If a student is at risk of anaphylaxis, they must carry an adrenaline auto-injector eg, EpiPen and ASCIA action plan. Adrenaline auto injectors are easy to administer and are a lifesaving device for those suffering an anaphylactic reaction. Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening condition and always requires an emergency response. If the student shows any of the following signs, contact emergency services and take action in accordance with the ASCIA action plan to administer the adrenaline auto-injector. (Instructions on how to administer should also be on the auto-injector).

Any one of the following is a sign of anaphylaxis:

- difficult/noisy breathing
- swelling of the tongue
- swelling/tightness in throat
- difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
- wheezing or persistent cough
- persistent dizziness or collapse
- pale and floppy (young children)

Providing a safe workplace for students

The safety and wellbeing of students during work placement is our number one priority. Before any placement can be approved, employers need to satisfy the school that they can provide a safe and healthy host workplace for students, compliant with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW and ACT), child protection and anti-discrimination legislation.

You will be asked to provide the following information on the SPR:

- areas of possible risk in student's workplace tasks and your strategies to eliminate or minimise the risk
- any pre-training or induction required by the student to undertake certain tasks
- your supervision arrangements for the student
- any special clothing required by the student (e.g. enclosed footwear)
- any steps you will take or adjustments you will make to support students with a disability or other additional needs as described on their Student Placement Record
- awareness of your child protection responsibilities when working with school students
- commit to reporting any health and safety incidents or near misses involving students to the school.

During the placement you need to provide:

- site-specific workplace induction for students at the beginning of the placement, including relevant safety matters
- activities and skill development tasks appropriate to the student's skill level
- ongoing instruction and supervision by a capable and trustworthy employee briefed for the task
- any site-specific personal protective equipment (PPE) required and training in its correct use.

Likewise, the students are expected to comply with the employer's workplace safety requirements, procedures and reasonable and lawful instruction. They are not to act in any way that could jeopardise the safety of themselves or others.

Students must:

- participate in orientation and any pre-training or induction identified
- use safety equipment and protective gear where relevant
- follow safety rules and procedures
- not do anything to jeopardise the safety of themselves or others
- report any risks or hazards immediately
- understand and follow emergency procedures
- cease work if they have concern about their health and safety and contact their supervisor and school
- report any concerns about the placement or incidents to their school.

Child Protection – Your Responsibilities

Working with children and young people is very rewarding. However, to ensure the safety and welfare of young people in your workplace, you and your staff must comply with a few simple rules.

It is your responsibility as the employer to ensure that your staff know how to conduct themselves appropriately with children and young people. They must avoid any conduct that could be interpreted as inappropriate, offensive, or unlawful. This could include initiation activities or horseplay involving the student; physical or verbal abuse such as swearing at students; physical assault; inappropriate conversations, remarks or jokes of a sexual nature; the showing of sexually suggestive publications, electronic media or illustrations and any unwarranted and/or inappropriate touching or personal communication with students regarding their sexual feelings. This includes texting or using social media.

As an employer, you will be asked to indicate on the *Student Placement Record* that, to your knowledge, there is nothing in the background of any staff member or person in close contact with the student that would make them unsuitable for working with children.

To assist in providing a safe work environment, employers should take all possible steps to ensure that students:

- do not undertake an unsupervised task that involves contact with children or students under the age of 18 years (applicable to child-related employers only)
- do not undertake a task that involves unsupervised contact with just one employee or client. Supervision can be provided by visual contact or the physical presence of another employee.

Host employers must report any allegations against an employee in the area of child protection to the principal of the school. You may be required to report these allegations to the Police.

Child protection legislation requires that allegations about employee conduct be reported by the school within 7 days to the Office of the Children's Guardian. Allegations involving suspected abuse, harm or risk of significant harm to the student must also be reported by the school to the Department of Community and Justice Child Protection Hotline 13 21 11 and, in some cases to the NSW Police.

More information is available through [NSW Office of the Children's Guardian \(nsw.gov.au\)](http://nsw.gov.au).

A checklist for employers

Before - Planning and preparing for workplace learning

- Decide when it is convenient for you to host students for WPL
 - decide the duration of the placements and how/when students should apply
 - check that your organisation has current public liability cover
 - appoint an experienced staff member to coordinate your WPL programs for students
 - consult staff to draw up a list of activities that can be achieved and safely managed by students. These activities should:
 - offer insight into the industry and workplace
 - be varied, safe, interesting and appropriately challenging

- not contravene the prohibited activities indicated in this guide
 - include tasks/skills appropriate to coursework requirements (eg, VET competencies)
 - provide time for some career conversations.
- Appoint supervisory staff for each student:
- Supervisor and Assistant Supervisor (if applicable)
 - Other employees **able to help**.

Supervisory staff should be capable and trustworthy with good communication and delegation skills. They should be briefed for the task and given sufficient time to instruct and monitor the student and provide feedback. We also advise you to appoint a separate workplace adviser or mentor to provide the student with general support and advice.

- Prepare your staff by ensuring they:
- understand the purpose of the WPL activity
 - are aware of the responsibilities of working with young people, including child protection guidelines
 - do not use the students in place of regular paid employees
 - receive timetable of proposed arrangements for student supervision and induction activities
 - understand special needs including how to respond to medical conditions eg, anaphylaxis
 - are aware of their obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992) (DDA)*
 - comply with agreed arrangements.

During - Providing a quality workplace learning experience

- Ensure that the student completes a first day induction and orientation tour. The student's induction should include:
- a welcome and introduction to supervisors and co-workers
 - a brief overview of your business, products, mission and values
 - an outline of the student's planned activities and supervision arrangements
 - a safety induction – including risks, safety procedures, reporting work health and safety issues:
 - clear expectations of behaviour, attitude and dress
 - clarification of working hours, breaks and other workplace routines
 - facilities tour, including work area/desk, toilets, change rooms, exits, food outlets, etc.
 - consideration of any student health matters
 - explanation that the student has the right to cease work if they believe it is unsafe
 - first aid and evacuation plans and other emergency drills
 - brief outline of policies on bullying, harassment and discrimination
 - procedures for lateness or absence
 - codes and passwords (doors, photocopier, computer access etc.)
 - contacts at school or EVET provider in case of an emergency
 - rules regarding security, privacy, confidentiality, computer use, internet, mobiles, cameras, etc.

Students should be given the **opportunity to ask questions about the workplace** and told who they can go to for **advice or help**. Ensure that the student is sufficiently challenged and supervised in the workplace. Employer's coaching tips:

- Tell ... them about it
- Show ... them how it's done
- Watch ... them do it
- Praise ... what they do well
- Correct ... any shortcomings
- Repeat ... for practice

Students are expected to comply with the employer's workplace safety requirements and procedures. They are not to act in any way that could jeopardise the safety of themselves or others.

Ensure that the student is **sufficiently challenged and supervised** in the workplace. Supervisory staff will need to ensure that the student:

- undertakes varied activities appropriate to their skill level and workplace learning requirements
- is not put at risk by undertaking a task away from the view of others or with just one employee or client – unless this is unavoidable
- is not assigned any prohibited or restricted activities as indicated in this guide
- only undertakes a task requiring a license, permit or certificate of competence if they hold the relevant qualification and the activity has been approved by all parties on the SPR
- receives full instruction on how to complete activities including the risks, the purpose of safety equipment such as personal protection equipment (PPE), and how to use it appropriately
- is provided with all necessary and appropriate safety equipment required to complete a task
- is given appropriate feedback and encouragement
- has sufficient time to complete school assigned WPL diaries/journals, research projects.

After - Providing feedback

- Before the placement ends, please:
 - complete the student report or evaluation form supplied by the school
 - ensure that any property or identification cards on loan have been returned
 - take time to provide the student with helpful feedback and encouragement.

Completing the Student Placement Record

WPL programs are a partnership between educators, employers, students, and their parents/carers. Thank you for your high level of commitment to providing precise information so that together we can ensure the placement is suitable for the student. Students are young, voluntary workers who often lack experience in your industry.

The SPR is central to the process of arranging the placement and ensuring that important information is communicated to all parties. The *Host Employer Details* section of the SPR provides an opportunity to complete a written risk assessment of the tasks you are setting for the student. This helps you meet your responsibilities under work health and safety legislation.

Please provide specific, exact information, attaching extra information if necessary about:

- ACTIVITIES/TASKS the student as a young, voluntary worker will be doing (and NOT DOING)
- RISKS to a student doing that work and the likelihood and severity of injury
- MITIGATION of associated risks through induction, training, use of PPE, on-going close supervision
- SPECIAL CONDITIONS/prior training required such as a white card or Food Handler Training.

Your information alerts the school or EVET provider to exactly what is planned so the principal can make a considered decision to approve (or not approve) the planned activities as being suitable for the student and for the purpose of their WPL. This is part of the school/EVET provider's duty of care so they can:

- conscientiously prepare students
- maintain supervisory contact with the student and host employer during placement
- ensure high quality immediate follow up with students
- document contact with students by phone or visit in the host workplace on the first or second day.

A planned program of activities reduces chances of students being exposed to risks from unplanned activities.

Sample employer responses that do/do not meet the required standards

Here is some specific guidance and advice on completing key risk assessment responses in the Host Employer Details section of the SPR.

1. Activities/duties to be undertaken by the student

Employer 1 response: Suitable duties as directed.

This response would be **unsatisfactory** as the school/EVET provider would not be able to gain a clear indication of what the student will be doing.

The following responses would be satisfactory.

Employer 2 response: Using press to make flanges under close supervision of production manager or similar experienced supervisor.

Employer 3 response: Shadow architect; attend meetings/site visits; student assignment involving CAD; independent visits to nearby city buildings; use printers.

Employer 4 response: Aspects of cabinet making using machinery including panel saw, edge bander, nail guns and drills. The student will be supervised by a qualified tradesperson.

These responses are satisfactory as they indicate what the student will be doing and the supervisor's training/experience. The school can consider if this is a suitable activity for the student.

2. Activities/duties NOT to be undertaken by the student

Employer 1 response: Nil / N/A

Nil/N/A responses are **unsatisfactory** as a young inexperienced worker cannot undertake all aspects of the industry setting where the student will complete their WPL.

The following responses would be satisfactory:

Employer 2 response: Must not use nail gun or use press without close supervision.

Employer 3 response: Student must not use any tools/machinery that we have not trained the student to use.

These responses indicate the employer recognises aspects of the workplace that are unsuitable for young, inexperienced workers. Depending on the industry and the student, the school can then decide if it is a suitable activity or if extra preparation is needed before deciding to approve the proposed activities or tasks.

3. Risks to the student in the planned activities

Employer 1 response: Slips, trips, cuts, burns, manual handling and use of machinery and tools.

This response would be unsatisfactory as these risks are expressed generically. Potential risks need to relate specifically to the tasks the employer plans for the student to do.

The following responses would be satisfactory:

Employer 2 response: Potential for burns in operating the press above level 2. Manual handling of packaged goods over 4 kg and moving wheelie bins.

Employer 3 response: Touching the foot pedal will automatically engage the machine. This can result in high-speed machine operation beyond student control. Students must always be fully alert to this risk.

Employer 4 response: All equipment in the workshop carries some risks and consequently, the student will be supervised at all times. Induction on Day 1 will emphasise workshop safety.

4. Mitigation: How will those risks be eliminated or controlled?

Employer 1 response: Instruction in use of equipment and supervision in the workplace.

This response would be **unsatisfactory** as more details are required to inform the school of the potential risks involved.

The following response would be satisfactory:

Employer 2 response: Training will include identification of potential risks associated with the operation of all equipment and Safe Operating Procedures (SOP) will be demonstrated to ensure the student is equipped with the knowledge to mitigate risks. For example, in the case of a panel saw the students will be trained to ensure:

- the environment around the machine is clear from obstruction
- that the safety guard is engaged
- that use of the on and off switching, especially the emergency shut-off switch, is clearly understood.

While these controls are likely to be covered in detail in the Day 1 workplace induction, major risks must be identified clearly on the SPR to ensure the school and parent/carer are fully informed before agreeing to the proposed placement. In some cases, the school might decide not to proceed with a placement because the risks are inappropriate for the student concerned.

Further information

Thank you for taking time to read the information in this guide.

We hope that you feel confident and well-prepared to support a young person as they take up these valuable workplace learning opportunities. If you have any queries, please contact one of the following:

- ➔ The VET Coordinator or Careers Adviser at the student's school
- ➔ Your Work Placement Service Provider (WPSP) for HSC VET work placements
- ➔ The Diocesan VET Adviser where applicable.