What is workplace learning?

Workplace learning is all about doing some great learning – but in a workplace instead of a classroom. You learn about work – and also through work – using opportunities you and your teacher can plan together. Your involvement with planning will help customise those opportunities just for you!

Work experience, work placement for HSC VET courses, community learning, volunteering, student mentoring programs by employers in the workplace and some enterprise learning programs are all examples of workplace learning programs.

What's the difference between work experience and work placement?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Work experience ...</th>
<th>Work placement ...</th>
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<tr>
<td>gives you a ‘taste’ of the world of work, usually in a workplace or career area of your choice.</td>
<td>is a planned and compulsory part of many HSC VET courses in a workplace relevant to your course.</td>
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<td>is usually undertaken in Years 9 and 10, but may occur in Years 11 and 12.</td>
<td>is usually undertaken in Years 11 and 12.</td>
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<td>is organised by the school, or by you and the school.</td>
<td>is organised through the school or TAFE using the Work Placement Service Provider.</td>
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<td>involves observing and carrying out tasks nominated by your supervisor.</td>
<td>lets you practise and develop on-the-job industry skills that you learnt off-the-job at school or TAFE.</td>
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<td>helps you learn about what employers expect, what responsibilities people have, and what skills and attributes employers are looking for.</td>
<td>helps you learn specific skills or competencies on-the-job.</td>
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<td>helps you learn how enterprises work.</td>
<td>involves you participating in the industry relevant to your VET studies.</td>
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<td>gives you a chance to experience working life and test your career aspirations.</td>
<td>helps you find out more about employment and training opportunities in the industry.</td>
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<td>improves your Employment Related Skills and gets you thinking about your next step in education or training.</td>
<td>contributes to your HSC and a nationally accredited qualification recognised by industry.</td>
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<td>gives you increased confidence and maturity by working with adults.</td>
<td>builds your capacity to meet industry standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>helps you to find out what you like and don’t like.</td>
<td>helps you decide if this industry is the right one for you.</td>
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What work can I do?

Talk to your careers adviser, VET teacher, other teachers or support teacher transition about what work you can do. Any workplace activities involving risks to your health and safety need to be carefully risk assessed by the host employer before approval is considered.

Some workplace learning placements also require you to know about specific work health and safety (WHS) before you can work in the workplace. For example, to be on a building site, you and any accompanying support staff must first complete the WHS Induction Training for Construction Work. Similarly, to take part in any VET work placements, you must have done the WHS training in the course beforehand. Ask your careers adviser about the WHS requirements of your chosen job area. For more information about WHS, see page 13 of this guide.

Can I do workplace learning with my family or at a place where I already work?

It is better to go somewhere different so you can learn new skills and experience being supervised by another host employer. It is often better not to work with your family in case you get treated differently because you are a family member. You can talk this over with your organising teacher if you need to.

How will I get to the workplace?

You will have to plan your own safe way to and from work and meet any travel costs. Try the Transport Info line at www.131500.com.au or phone 131500.
I will be expected to ...

- attend a workplace induction
- suggest ideas about what I would like to learn during my workplace learning placement
- participate like a new employee
- behave and communicate appropriately, recognising I am in an adult workplace
- fit in with the rules of the workplace
- dress appropriately for the workplace
- carry out directions I am given by my workplace supervisor, especially about safety.

I also need to ...

- be at least 14 years of age
- have a positive attitude
- show enthusiasm and initiative
- be pleasant and appreciative
- be willing to learn
- listen to instructions
- accept and complete duties planned by the workplace supervisor
- ask questions if I am not sure what I am supposed to be doing
- ask how to do something if I am finding it difficult
- ask for another task if a task is completed
- be polite, courteous and well-mannered with all staff, clients and customers
- accept and act on advice given by workplace supervisors
- avoid distracting other employees from their work unnecessarily
- avoid distracting myself by using my mobile phone or checking my messages all the time.

Be on time!
I will be expected to ...

- start on time each day
- take only the allocated time for morning and afternoon tea and lunch and return to my work promptly after all breaks
- contact my workplace supervisor and the supervising teacher as soon as possible if I am unable to attend my placement
- account for absences to my workplace supervisor and my supervising teacher. Check whether these absences need to be made up as lost hours at another time
- attend my placement for the normal hours of work for that job, unless I have negotiated otherwise.

Do I have to do school work there?

- You may be asked to keep a journal of your experiences
- You may also be asked to conduct some research while you are there. For example, find out about work health and safety, work practices, role of unions, duties of employees, etc. Check with your supervisor before you start your research
- Work placement students may have some industry-specific work skills (competencies) formally assessed while they are in the workplace.

What happens if I don’t like it?

Give it a real go! Talk to your supervisor at work. If you have really tried to make it a positive experience and it’s still not working for you, let your school/TAFE know as soon as possible. Remember that this is a new experience and you may find it takes a day or two to settle in. Talk to your nominated contact if you’re having any problems.

If things don’t improve, your placement at the workplace might be postponed to another date.

Can I talk about what happens at work?

Of course you’ll want to tell your family and friends all about your workplace. However, remember that the client and business information of your workplace is private. Keep those things confidential! If in doubt, talk to your supervisor at work about what you can and can’t discuss outside of work.

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Spotlight on workplace learning programs – the placement

Interview with Bertha And Tiana from Year 10 who did workplace learning with with one of Australia’s leading fashion labels.

We went to one of Australia’s leading diverse fashion houses, The Discovery Group for a week of work experience. The Discovery Group boasts a strong stable of brands, including Charlie Brown, Howard Showers, Lily and Princess Charlotte.

As soon as we arrived on Monday morning we were introduced to the majority of the staff and made welcome before being instructed to work on various tasks.

During the week we bar-coded the latest range of clothes, steamed the range, dressed mannequins, assisted in the photo shoot in the new summer range.

It was inspiring seeing the designers, pattern makers and the like at work.

Am I ready to start?

Before you start your workplace learning program, use this checklist to make sure you are ready. Follow up any gaps before you start your placement.

I am ready! or I need to work on this!

I have chosen an area of work that suits my interests, skills and career planning Yes No I have done the preparation activities arranged by my school/TAFE Yes No I have completed the WHS training requirements for this particular placement Yes No My Student Placement Record has been signed by me, the host employer, my parents (for my care) and approved by the school/TAFE Yes No I have a photocopy of my Student Placement Record along with details of my placement Yes No I have called my host employer to check final details Yes No I know how I will get to work safely Yes No I have my completed Safety and Emergency Procedures Card Yes No When I return to school/TAFE I will:

- complete the follow up activities
- write and thank my workplace supervisor and other staff
- return the relevant evaluation sheets
- note any suggestions or comments on the employer’s report
- consider my choices of subjects for the future
- consider my next workplace learning opportunity – it could be in a different industry area
- purposefully build my personal network of connections and contacts for the future.

I know what food will be available at, or near, my workplace Yes No I have packed my journal/day and I am ready to do the planned activities Yes No I am aware of my rights and responsibilities in the workplace Yes No I understand what might be an emergency and who I should contact in these circumstances Yes No I understand the importance of follow up activities when I return to school/TAFE Yes No

Overall participating in the work experience program at The Discovery Group was a positive experience as it gave us both a very good insight into the life of working in the world of fashion.

When we returned to school the next week, we spoke to the school’s careers adviser, to investigate more about the courses we could do at TAFE next year as part of our HSC in Years 11 and 12.

I am ready!         or         No