

TAFE PRACTICAL PLACEMENT GUIDELINES

There are three kinds of workplace learning arrangements for secondary school and VET students under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*:

- structured workplace learning;
- work experience; and
- practical placements.

DEFINITIONS

Structured Workplace Learning (SWL)

Undertaken by students aged 15 years and over who are enrolled in a VET course with a non-school Registered Training Organisation (RTO), such as VU, and undertaking a senior secondary certificate (VCE or VCAL). SWL is organised and managed by the secondary school for secondary school students or VU if undertaking VCE or VCAL at VU. They cannot undertake practical placements.

Work Experience

Undertaken by secondary school students aged 14 years and over and involves short placements which are part of a student's general secondary education. Students are placed with employers primarily to observe and learn, not to undertake activities which require extensive training or experience. Work experience placements are not a requirement as part of a particular subject or course. *VU students do not undertake Work Experience.*

Practical Placement

Undertaken by VU's VET students and are intended to develop job-related skills in the area of the particular post-secondary course. They vary widely in duration and content from course to course, the minimum requirements are set out in this guide – refer to section H: References and Resources. Some programs may also refer to work placement or field placement, however the regulatory framework for VET students' is governed by the Practical Placement requirements outlined in this guide.

At VU, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is undertaken by students in higher education coursework at all levels, postgraduate coursework, higher degrees by research dissertations or research projects. The relevant policy and procedures for WIL can be found in VU's policy library.

OUTLINE OF VU'S RESPONSIBILITIES

A: THE STRUCTURE AND DURATION OF PLACEMENTS

What is the maximum number of hours for placement?

The recommended maximum duration for a practical placement related to a course of study is 240 hours. If additional hours are required for any reason, eg by professional bodies or regulators such as the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) for the Diploma of Nursing (Enrolled / Division 2 Nursing), VU program areas must determine in writing why those longer hours are justified to meet the course outcomes for the students(s) concerned, and having regard to the welfare of the student concerned. Evidence of the need to extend the placement hours beyond the recommended 240 hours should be supported by documented industry feedback and/or recommendations by professional bodies.

How are placement arrangements embedded in courses?

When planning for course delivery for new or existing programs, documented evidence of industry feedback – refer TAFE Industry Engagement Procedure – and regulatory body directions (eg ANMAC) must be considered for the scheduling of placements, selection of work environment/s and critical assessment tasks to enhance the learning outcomes for students while meeting the qualification requirements of the course.

The Training and Assessment Strategy must show how industry placements form part of the learning and assessment in a course. Learning and Assessment Plans at unit level must show skills and tasks to be demonstrated and assessed in the work place. The volume of learning assigned to placements should be clearly documented and communicated to students via the Unit or Cluster Guides.

Placements should be sourced and assessed as suitable learning environments by VU staff. Refer to section B of this document for Health and Safety Considerations. Students must be supervised at all times – on site – by a qualified and/or experienced operator/supervisor relevant to the work environment.

How are work placement arrangements communicated to students?

Details of Practical Placement requirements must be made available to prospective students prior to enrolment. This requirement is mandated in Standard 5: *Each Learner is properly informed and protected*, of the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 that stipulates that RTOs must make it clear whether the training includes mandatory work placements.

If work placements are part of the training, learners must be provided with clear information on who will arrange the placement. Wherever possible, VU program areas should source and assess the suitability of industry placements.

Unit or Cluster Guides must clearly articulate the work place assessment requirements for each unit for students. Placement Guides – as described later in this document – also provide guidance to students on the expectations in relation to the type of work they will undertake and how they will be assessed.

Details of uniforms, safety gear, etc, required during placement should also be provided to prospective students as part of the course materials information provided prior to enrolment.

What are mandatory and non-mandatory placements?

Mandatory practical placements are documented in course or unit information in Training Packages where specific licences or checks are required, eg Engineering. A professional or registration body may also deem mandatory demonstrated competency of specific units in a regulated workplace setting before a qualification can be issued, eg Division 2 Nursing, Early Childhood Education and Care.

Where the placement is not mandated but simply an enhancement to the course and learning experience for the students, alternative assessment arrangements could be made to assess individuals who cannot complete the placement due to unavoidable circumstances such as health issues. Wherever possible, simulated work place experiences should be incorporated into assessment tools to form part of reasonable adjustments for the demonstration of competency. For example courses could incorporate the use of practical labs in community services and health courses; and simulated businesses in business, trades and design courses.

Refer to the TAFE Marketing Materials Procedure for guidance on Police and Working with Children Checks required for placements and VU's [Police Checks for Students Undertaking Industry Experience Policy and Procedures](#).

Here is an example from the Training Package for Early Childhood Education and Care:

Unit Code and Name: CHCECE005 – Provide care for babies and toddlers

There must be demonstrated evidence that the student has completed the following tasks:

- Provide care to at least different three babies and toddlers of varying ages using safe and hygienic practices, including:
 - assessing and responding appropriately to babies' needs, including hunger, distress, tiredness and pain
 - setting up a safe environment conducive to rest
 - changing nappies
 - heating breast milk and formula, preparing bottles and preparing and heating food
 - cleaning equipment and utensils
 - feeding babies
 -

This unit has specific directives stating that the activities must be performed as outlined in the performance criteria during a period of at least 120 hours of work in at least one regulated education and care service. Given this condition, this placement is a **mandatory requirement** to obtain the qualification.

The mandated minimum 120 hours of work covers the assessment requirements for other units of competency in the qualification. During the course planning phase, the volume of learning required to develop the underpinning skills and knowledge required for each unit and mode of delivery, ie face to face, online, etc, along with the hours allocated to perform activities and demonstrate competency in the workplace, must be determined and documented on the Training and Assessment Plan and Unit/Cluster Guides.

At VU, the Early Childhood Education and Care students generally complete more than the mandated minimum 120 hours of placement. The rationale for the additional hours of placement is evidenced in industry validation and student feedback documentation. The tasks to be demonstrated during placement – refer to the sample list in the example above – must be clearly documented for the student, workplace supervisor and assessor.

B: GOOD PRACTICE—PLACEMENT GUIDES

A handbook or practical placement guide must be developed to ensure all parties in the agreement are all aware of the competencies that must be demonstrated in the workplace for assessment purposes.

Student	has a clear understanding of what is required of them in the workplace
Workplace supervisor/s	<p>will provide OHS instruction relevant to the workplace to the student</p> <p>is able to schedule work that meets the training needs of the course</p> <p>will be within sight and sound of the student during the placement</p> <p>responsible for carrying out the employer's obligations by ensuring the student is not subject to any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment and/or exploitation</p>
Assessing teacher / Placement Supervisor	<p>is equipped with a tool to complete the workplace assessment with a signature and date verifying achieved competency</p> <p>monitors practical placement arrangements</p>

An excellent example of work placement resources for students, based on the Diploma of Nursing (Enrolled / Division 2 Nursing) can be found at: 2015 Clinical Placement Handbook; and Diploma Nursing Skills List. [Y:\Projects\ASQA Re-Registration 2015\Prac Placement Best Practice](#)

Placement guides should also contain contact details for VU staff for emergencies, reporting absences, rescheduling placements, etc. Nominated staff must be available during the scheduled placement times to respond to contacts from students and/or placement supervisors.

C: HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

It is the responsibility of Victoria Polytechnic teaching program staff to ensure that the placements provide safe and appropriate work environments. Students must work under the direct supervision of a suitability qualified worker and/or experienced supervisor. The designated workplace supervisor/s must be on site for the full duration of the placement.

There are many environmental considerations that must be checked before a placement can be deemed a suitable learning experience for a student. These considerations will vary from one industry sector to another. For example, employee safety considerations will be different in an engineering workshop where equipment and chemical safety guidelines must be documented and adhered to, compared to personal safety considerations in a drug rehabilitation centre. A site inspection should be undertaken before a workplace agreement between VU and the host organisation can be entered into. This is equally important if a student has sourced their own work placement.

Placements organised for students under 18 must follow the requirements under the [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) including

1. Assessing whether there are any risks of child abuse or harm and develop strategies to remove or reduce such risks.
2. Ensuring that the host organisation has policies and procedures relating child safety that meet the Victorian Child Safe Standards or equivalent.
3. Provide the Dean of Students details of the placement activity, name of the VPoly staff member responsible for the activity, and whether an assessment of risks of child abuse or harm has been carried out.

Students must be provided with a workplace induction at the commencement of their placement. They should also be prepared prior to placement via their learning program, eg OHS, safe handling of equipment, etc. During this pre-placement briefing, teaching staff should stress the importance of the induction process and the need to familiarising themselves with workplace procedures such as the location of fire exits, emergency procedures, etc.

If a student has a medical treatment for which the student may require treatment or other consideration during the placement, Victoria Polytechnic teaching program staff should seek permission from the student – and parent/guardian if under 18 years – to disclose the condition to the employer. Written assurance must then be obtained from the employer to ensure confidentiality of that health information, and that the employer will only disclose that health information to another party if treatment is required for a known medical condition or in the case of a medical emergency.

Safety gear and individual equipment required during the placement should be communicated as required course materials in all course information provided to students prior to enrolment.

A checklist is available at the end of this guide to assist in work site assessments for placement purposes.

D: THE PRACTICAL PLACEMENT AGREEMENT

A written practical placement agreement is a mandatory component of any practical placement. It is a legal agreement and must stipulate the rights, obligations and duties of the host organisation, VU and the student.

VU must enter into an agreement IN WRITING with the host organisation about the placement of a particular student PRIOR to the placement. If the agreement is not in writing, the student will not be entitled to Workcover in the event an injury occurs during the placement.

When designing and documenting course structures, VU program areas must ensure that the practical placement is a meaningful experience for the student, linked to the assessment requirements of nominated competencies. The learning obtained during the practical placement should relate directly to the course outcomes at the appropriate skill level and to the actual competencies required for employment.

In addition to the relevant details about VU, employer and student, the written practical placement agreement the RTO enters into with an employer about a practical placement student should include:

- the course of study and the relevant skills required as part of that course to be developed, reinforced and/or assessed during the practical placement; and
- the length of the practical placement expressed as hours; and
- payment arrangements, if any (see further below under minimum rate of pay); and
- signatures of the student (and parent/guardian if under 18 years of age), the employer and the designated VU representative.

The original of the written, signed practical placement agreement is to be securely filed by VU program area for future reference. A copy should be given by the VU program area to both the employer and the student.

A copy of the practical placement agreement may be requested by the Department of Education and Training should concerns regarding the placement arise which may require investigation.

It is important to remember that the practical placement agreement defines and protects the students' WorkCover entitlements in relation to the location, employment type, dates and times of work, etc. If any details of the placement change, eg a student is ill and not able to undertake the placement on the scheduled dates, a new or revised agreement must be entered generated and signed by all parties. The placement cannot exceed the maximum scheduled hours defined on the Training and Assessment Strategy.

VU's Practical Placement – Learning in the Workplace and Community Agreement form can be found at: <http://intranet.vu.edu.au/CDE/Agreements.asp>

E: MINIMUM RATE OF PAY

A 2009 Order of the Governor in Council has fixed the minimum rate of pay under ETRA for each student on a practical placement at \$5.00 per day.

Employers who are a Commonwealth Government department or a body established by a Commonwealth Act are NOT required to make this payment.

Further, on 23 December 2010, the Acting Secretary of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) signed an Order (new Secretarial Order) under section 5.4.20 of ETRA to the effect that students enrolled in a post-secondary education course of an RTO undertaking a practical placement under ETRA are NOT REQUIRED TO BE PAID FOR THE WORK ON THAT PLACEMENT. This new Secretarial Order came into effect on 1 January 2011.

Whilst students are not *required* to be paid as a result of the new Secretarial Order, payment *can* still be made. Discussions about payment should occur between the employer, student and RTO as part of the development of the required practical placement agreement.

F: WORKCOVER / INSURANCE

Ideally, students should not be placed in a work place setting where they are currently engaged in paid work. If the student is required to demonstrate competency in a qualification relevant to their current paid work, eg office administration, then an assessment of competency in the workplace should be conducted, similar to RPL, without entering into a placement agreement with the employer.

If the student is undertaking a qualification in a different field of work than their paid work with the same employer, eg employed as a receptionist in a health spa and undertaking placement in competencies in a beauty therapy qualification, then it is strongly recommended that advice from the WorkCover insurer is obtained prior to organising the placement.

Students who are injured while undertaking a practical placement with an employer should be eligible to make a claim under the WorkCover insurance policy held by the Department of Education and Training.

Based on current advice, whether or not a practical placement student has been paid the minimum payment should not affect a student's WorkCover insurance eligibility. However, it should be noted that in the absence of a payment the student may not be eligible to claim for loss of earnings related to that placement.

If a workplace injury is reported, the event must be immediately directed to Vicki Hildebrand, on 9919 7023 / Vicki.Hildebrand@vu.edu.au and escalated to the relevant Victoria Polytechnic Director.

The Operations Manager and/or Victoria Polytechnic Director are responsible for communication relating to WorkCover insurance eligibility matters, to be directed to **CGU** (and not the Department of Education and Training) as follows:

Claims Manager
CGU Worker Compensation
p. 03 8630 1986
e. Clare.Murphy@cgu.com.au

Note that if no insurance claim has been lodged in relation to an injured practical placement student at the time of making such a query, CGU will only be able to provide general information related to WorkCover insurance.

Current details of VU's Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance coverage for students can be found on the intranet at: <http://intranet.vu.edu.au/CDE/Insurance.asp>

G: FAQs

Q: One of my students has benefited from his placement and wants to continue working with this employer to consolidate his skills, is this OK?

A: If the student has successfully completed the placement, ie deemed competent, then the placement cannot be extended. Also, if the maximum number of hours allocated to the placement per the Training and Assessment Strategy (TAS) has been reached, then the student will not be covered for WorkCover purposes.

Q: Two of my students would like to do their placement with their current employers as they cannot get time off work to do unpaid work elsewhere. Do we need to enter into a practical placement agreement with the employer?

A: Generally placing students in their current work places is discouraged as there can be issues relating to insurances (employers vs state government responsibility), and potential limitation of students' abilities to acquire new skills and knowledge in their regular work environment.

The placement can be undertaken with the students' current employers if the work environments provide the necessary learning experiences for them to be able to demonstrate competency according to course requirements. The placement should provide an extension to the students' current work duties. The suitability of this arrangement varies for different industries and must be assessed carefully on a case by case basis. This arrangement is not recommended in nursing and some other industry sectors.

VU does not enter into a work placement agreement in this situation. Teachers conduct work place assessments of relevant competencies per TAS requirements.

Q: What happens if students do not complete successfully their placement in the scheduled timeframe?

A: If the student has provided evidence of illness or other personal barriers to completing the scheduled placement, then the practical placement agreement must be varied according to the new times and dates of placement. The unit end date should also be changed to accommodate the new placement. Ideally rescheduled placements are scheduled in the academic year. If the student is not able to complete the placement in the academic year then they must re-enrol in the following year.

If a student fails a placement, then they must re-enrol in the unit/s and repeat the placement, ideally in another work environment.

Q: Is it OK for a student to negotiate with the host employer to work through breaks so that they can leave early?

A: Generally, no. Students must work to the same workplace health and safety framework as paid employees, eg minimum 30 minute break for lunch. A lunch break cannot be forfeited; however the student may under exceptional circumstances, such as a medical appointment, family crisis, etc, with prior approval from the host organisation leave work early. For example, a scheduled one hour lunch break could be reduced to 30 minutes. This variation should be documented and the VU supervisor should be made aware of the arrangement. Tea/health breaks cannot be forfeited as these breaks are included as part of the scheduled hours of duty. It is essential that the Practical Placement prepares the students for real world experiences.

Q: What happens if a student's placement is located interstate?

A: WorkCover for students on Practical Placement is provided by the Victorian Department of Education and Training for placement in the state of Victoria. Contact VU's Legal Services team prior to negotiating interstate placements to ensure that the student's WorkCover entitlements are in place.

H: RECORDS RETENTION

All Practical Placement Agreements plus evidence of supervision and assessment forms must be retained for at least seven years after completion of the placement.

Practical Placement documentation must be forwarded to Student Records for archiving at course completion.

I: REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Ministerial Orders

Ministerial Orders have been developed to assist providers to arrange structured workplace learning and work experience for their students and provide clarity around the roles and responsibilities of parties entering into these arrangements. Ministerial Order 723 commenced operation on 1 January 2014.

Structured Workplace Learning Resources

- [Amended Ministerial Order 723](#)
- [Amended Structured Workplace Learning Arrangement Form](#)
- [Amended Structured Workplace Learning Travel and Accommodation Form](#)

Structured Workplace Learning and Work Experience: Interim Guidelines

Ministerial Orders 723 and 724 replace the Interim Guidelines that were released by the Department in 2012 as a result of amendments to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

For more information, see:

- [Structured Workplace Learning and Work Experience Arrangements: Interim Guidelines \(pdf 1 \(pdf - 252.05kb\)\)](#)
- [Structured Workplace Learning and Work Experience Arrangements: Interim Guidelines \(doc 1 \(doc - 1.29mb\)\)](#)

The Interim Guidelines do not cover students who are undertaking School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs). For information about SBATs, see: [School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships](#)

Practical Placements

Practical placements are undertaken by students in post-secondary vocational education and training (VET) courses and vary widely in duration and content from course to course, although the minimum requirements are set out in the Practical Placement Guidelines:

- [Practical Placement Guidelines \(doc 69 KB\) \(doc - 71kb\)](#)

Fair Work Australia Information for Employers and Training Organisations

- <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/pay/unpaid-work/student-placements>

VU Documentation

- [Learning in the Workplace and Community Policy](#)
- [Police Checks for Students Undertaking Industry Experience Policy and Procedures](#)
- [TAFE Industry Engagement Procedure](#)
- [TAFE Learner Feedback Procedure](#)
- [Practical Placement Agreement](#)
- [Training and Assessment Strategy](#)
- [Learning and Assessment Plan Template](#)
- [Unit Guide Template](#)
- [Cluster Guide Template](#)
- [TAFE Practical Placement Procedure](#)

J: WORKPLACEMENT CHECKLIST

ACTION	WHO
Accessed and adhered to relevant Ministerial Orders and VU policies, procedures and guidelines for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCE / VCAL Structured Workplace Learning • Practical Placement for VET students 	Mgr <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence supporting structure and duration of placements supported and documented via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory / professional body requirements, eg ANMAC • TAFE Industry Engagement Procedure • Student feedback (procedure) Note: recommended max 240 hrs for placement (refer to page 1 of this guide)	Dir <input type="checkbox"/> Mgr <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Training and Assessment Strategy clearly articulates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling of placements to accommodate underpinning skills requirements • Host employers / range of work environments (if applicable, eg acute care, aged care, customer service, etc) • Hours allocated to work placement aligned to unit/s • Alternative assessment strategies if non mandatory placement • Other — 	Mgr <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Practical placement requirements are communicated to prospective students prior to enrolment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory work placements described pre-enrolment • Details of uniforms, safety gear, etc listed • Requirements for Police and / or Working with Children Checks explained 	Mgr <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Learning and Assessment Plans developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit specific information per TAS requirements 	Teachers <input type="checkbox"/>
Unit / Cluster Guides developed clearly documenting for students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling and duration of placements • Pre-requisite skills and knowledge required prior to placement, eg OHS • Assessment requirements • Uniform, safety gear or other dress requirements • WHS 	Teachers <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Training Plans include hours allocated to placement and units assessed in the workplace	Manager <input type="checkbox"/>

ACTION	WHO
Placement Guides developed:	
STUDENTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is being assessed including space for comments and sign off on assessment 	□
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHS, work wear, etc 	□
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VU contact details, reporting absences, etc 	□
WORKPLACE SUPERVISORS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of course requirements 	□
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is being assessed in work place 	Teachers □
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision responsibilities, induction to workplace inc WHS, reporting absences, sight of student in workplace, etc 	Mgr □
ASSESSING TEACHER/S	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing teacher, equipped with a tool to complete the workplace assessment, protocols of arranging work site visits, etc 	□
Health and Safety checks of work sites undertaken prior to placement:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous workplace supervision in place provided by experienced, qualified supervisor/mentor 	Teachers □
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work site is safe in line with contemporary WHS industry requirements 	Mgr □
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazards or accident/incident reports directed to – the relevant Director and Vicki Hildebrand, on 9919 8426 / Vicki.Hildebrand@vu.edu.au 	□
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interstate placements prior approval via VU's Legal Services 	□
Practical Placement Agreements in place:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice to employers issued 	□
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written, signed agreement in place 	Mgr □
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If student is under 18, Agreement signed by parent/guardian 	□
Conduct pre-placement workshop for students	Teachers □
Nominated VU contact teacher available during the scheduled placement times	Mgr □
Diploma of Nursing Field Placements reported to ANMAC twice yearly	Mgr □
Post placement review / evaluation:	
Feedback from students	□
Feedback from employers	Teachers □
Feedback from assessing workplace teachers	Mgr □
Review / evaluation results noted on Continuous Improvement Plan	Mgr □
All placement records forwarded to Student Records at course completion, to be retained for seven years after completion of placement	Mgr □