

# Work Experience

Guidelines for Employers

*'Learning about work  
through observation'*

## What is work experience?

Work experience is the short term placement of secondary school students with employers, to provide insights into the workplace and industry. It forms part of the schools' educational program where students experience working life, often for the first time. Students are placed with employers primarily to observe and learn – not to undertake activities which require extensive training or experience.

## Why is it important?

Many businesses will have heard of such terms as: employability skills, competitiveness and lifelong learning and wondered how such concepts apply to them. Yet with the workforce changing rapidly, organisations are facing significant skills shortages and demanding more capable employees. Accepting a work experience student is one way employers can contribute to training the future workforce. By hosting a work experience student, employers benefit by building better links with educational institutions and the community.

## When can work experience be done?

Work experience is usually completed during Years 9 and 10. The timing depends on the school. Many schools have a set time, others release small groups of students during the year and some schools encourage students to take their placements during the school holidays. However, work experience cannot be undertaken during the end of year holidays.



## Benefits to employers



Every  
child,  
every  
opportunity



## Induction and supervision

Students will not be familiar with the workplace, or the way things are done. Like any new employee, it will take them a few days to remember names and find their way around.

The first thing you must do – on their first morning with you – is induct the student. This should be done by the employer or the nominated supervisor – don't assume that the induction will happen if you have not given someone specific responsibility for it!

Take it slowly, and reinforce key information (e.g. supervisory arrangements, no-go areas and excluded activities).

## What is your 'duty of care' as an employer?

You have a legal obligation to provide a safe and healthy working environment for all your employees and contractors. Work experience students are no different. They are owed the same duty of care, and you must take all the same steps to safeguard them during their placement period.

You must assess your workplace to determine which activities can be safely managed. Students should be given tasks which are interesting and which will give them an understanding of your business. However, you must take care NOT to place them at risk, and you must provide supervision at all times.

## The importance of planning

The most rewarding work experience programs – and the safest – are those planned in advance. It's useful to draw up a timetable for students before they arrive, setting out proposed activities for each day and identifying the people who will supervise them at different times.

Even though your timetable may have to change, a planned program enables supervisors to prepare meaningful activities, and reduces the chances of exposing the student to risks resulting from unplanned activity.

## Safe systems of work

Your safe systems of work should already be built on knowing your hazards, assessing the risks they present and taking steps to control those risks.

Your employees will know the risk controls, but your work experience student will not. It's important to take time to explain to the student what the hazards are, why the risk controls are in place and how they are put into practice.

A comprehensive induction (see example), and a well thought out program, will help you provide a safe and rewarding work experience.

**Note:** Criminal record checks are required for employers and persons who will supervise students under 15 years of age. There are separate guidelines in regard to these checks. See the website for details. <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/sensecyouth/careertrans/worklearn/default.htm>

## Work Experience

*'Learning about work'*

For more information, contact your local school.

# Sample Work Experience Induction Checklist

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Induction by (Name & Signature): \_\_\_\_\_

Date placement commenced: \_\_\_\_\_ Date this induction completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Induction Prompts	Elements	✓ When Covered
Introduction and responsibilities	Welcome and introduction to co-workers	
	Overview of the week's program	
	Work area / desk	
	Hours of work / expectations	
	Times of breaks / lunch	
	Need to notify if going to be late or absent	
	Tasks assigned to student	
	Codes for doors, photocopier, PC password	
	Rules regarding use of PC and access to internet	
Supervisory arrangements, role of HSR	Supervisor	
	Assistant supervisor (if applicable)	
	Other employees able to help	
	Health and safety representative – introduction and explanation of their role	
First aid and emergencies	First aid officer(s)	
	First aid kit/room; procedures for obtaining first aid and use of kit	
	Emergency arrangements / exits / evacuation plans / warnings / drills	
Health and safety and reporting arrangements	Priority of OHS	
	OH&S responsibilities – employer and employee	
	Potential hazards/no go areas	
	How to report hazards and safety concerns	
	How to report OHS incidents, injuries and 'near misses'	
	Encourage prompt communication and reporting in regard to OHS	
Workplace policies on bullying, harassment and discrimination	Bullying policy	
	Harassment policies	
	Discrimination/EEO	
Orientation tour of workplace	Tour of workplace	
	Organizational overview	
	Toilets/kitchen/lunchroom/tea and coffee facilities	
	Does the student have any questions?	
Confirm student's details	Name/contact details	
	Medical information	
	School contact details	

